



Higher Education Students and Qualifiers at Scottish Institutions 2020-21



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

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Summary: This release contains information on HE provision and attainment in higher education institutions (HEIs) and colleges in Scotland from 2011-12 to 2020-21

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

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

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Adverse Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic

1. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March 2020 by the World Health Organisation, part way through the 2019-20 academic year. The pandemic did not have any notable impact on student enrolment figures for 2019-20, however it did impact on students who were studying at the time and their ability to complete their qualification as planned. Therefore, some qualifications that were not reported in 2019-20 were carried over in to 2020-21 or future academic years.
2. Throughout the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years, numerous issues impacted students' ability to complete their qualification, such as:
 - Students may have been medically affected by the pandemic either directly or via their families and/or dependants.
 - Students who have childcare or caring responsibilities were also impacted by the pandemic, and this may have made it more difficult for these students to complete their course as originally intended.
 - Colleges and HEIs did act quickly to move provision online where possible, however, students on courses containing a practical element or a work placement may not have been able to complete their course as intended, and therefore had to defer receiving their qualification to the following academic year.
 - The entire student population was also affected by the 'softer' impacts of the pandemic on their education, such as losing access to peer support and in-person lecturer support. While institutions took steps to address digital poverty, supported by additional funding, in the immediate aftermath of lockdown some students did not have readily-available access to the necessary equipment to immediately start learning online.
3. In spite of the challenges faced by the two sectors and their students, 108,715 students successfully achieved a higher education (HE) qualification in 2020-21 from Scotland's colleges and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Other students who may initially have expected to graduate in 2019-20 or 2020-21 but were impacted by the pandemic are instead expected to obtain their awards in future years.

For the reasons outlined above, this publication does not make direct comparisons between 2019-20 and 2020-21 qualifier figures and previous years due to the vastly different circumstances these students were faced with.

4. In this report, qualifier data for 2019-20 and 2020-21 is separated in tables by a grey row indicating a break in the time series and is represented in charts by a dashed line.
5. The data on HE qualifiers and deferrals in the college sector is the latest we have available at the time of publication. The [College Performance Indicators 2020-21](#) report was published on 26 April 2022 and provides further information on qualifiers from Scotland's colleges.

Executive Summary

- There were 332,815 higher education (HE) students in Scotland's universities and colleges in 2020-21 (HE being courses at SCQF level 7 and above like HNCs or undergraduate degrees). This is the highest number on record and 25,600 more students than in 2019-20; an increase of 8.3%. The largest increase was at Taught Postgraduate level, which grew by 22.4% (+12,525) from 2019-20. This may be a reflection of the challenging economic circumstances at the time, with Postgraduate study becoming an increasingly attractive option to students given the contracting labour market at the time. An increase in the number of students undertaking First Degrees (+8,815/5.1%) also contributed to this increase in student numbers. See Table A.
- In 2020-21, females accounted for 58.1% of students studying HE, 16.5pp more than males at 41.6%. At HEIs, females accounted for 59.1% of students whereas at colleges, females account for 52.4% of students. See Table B.
- In 2020-21, there were 163,710 entrants to HE courses at Scottish institutions, an increase of 16,550 (11.3%) since 2019-20. Just over three quarters (76.9%) of these were entrants to HEIs, at 125,900 (up 14,055/12.6% since 2019-20), and colleges delivered just under a quarter (23.1%) of entrants to HE courses in Scotland in 2020-21. In colleges, there were 37,805 new entrants (up 2,490/7.1%) year on year. See Table D.
- Following SQA Results Day 2020, more young candidates held suitable qualifications for undergraduate HE university and college entry than in previous years given larger Higher and Advanced Higher pass rates, as a result of the SQA's COVID-19 pandemic moderation process. This has been reflected in the increase in university First Degree entrant numbers. SFC funded [1,297 additional places](#) for 2020-21 to reflect the increase in qualified applicants.
- There were 82,850 HE Qualifiers from universities and 25,865 from colleges in 2020-21, despite the direct impact the Coronavirus pandemic had on the higher education sector in Scotland and the inability for students to successfully complete the practical element of their courses. See Table G.
- Of the HE qualifiers, 69.6% achieved a First Degree or Postgraduate qualification (either research or taught). See Table G.

A record
332,815
HE students
(+8.3% since
2019-20).



69.6%
of qualifiers
received First
Degree or Postgraduate
qualifications.



163,710
entrants to HE courses
(+11.3% since 2019-20).



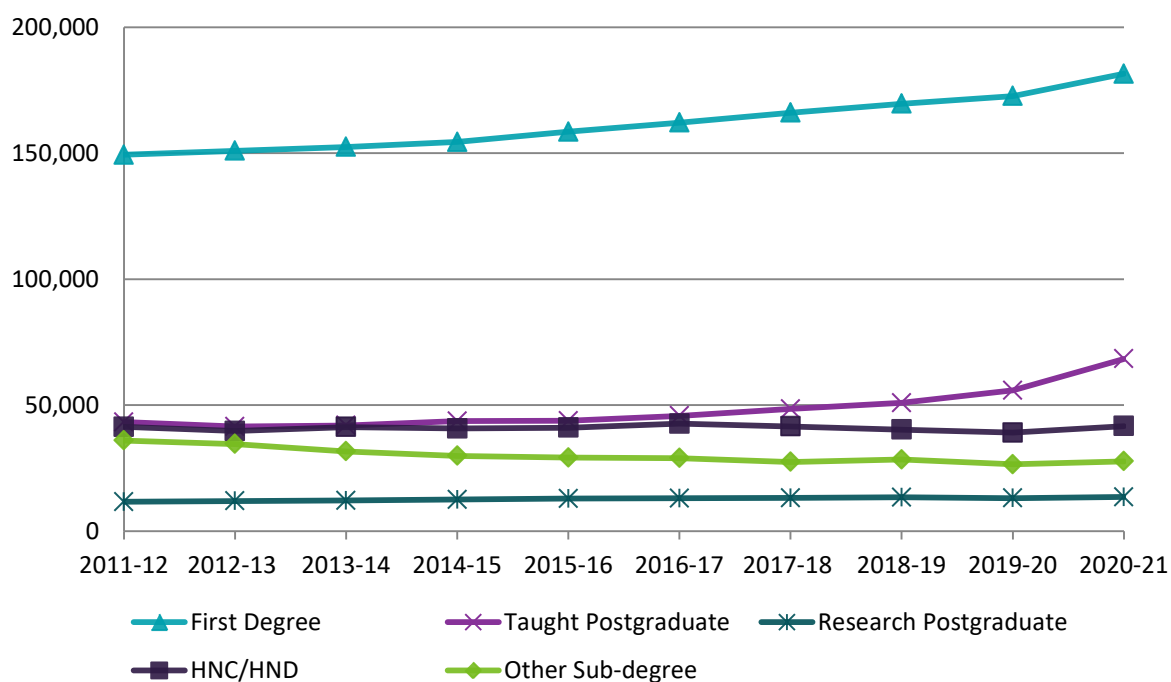
Introduction

1. This report contains information relating to higher education (HE) provision and attainment in higher education institutions (HEIs) and colleges in Scotland. Student data from Scottish HEIs and colleges have been combined to allow reporting on all HE provision delivered in Scotland. HE provision consists of courses delivered at SCQF level 7 and above. See the [SCQF Interactive Framework](#) for a breakdown of qualifications at each level.
2. This report includes information on a number of different HE student populations, including the total number of students, the number of entrants and the number of qualifiers from HE courses. These populations are considered by multiple breakdowns including level of study, mode of study, domicile and protected characteristics, such as age and gender. Prior to the 2017-18 edition of this report, it contained information relating to access and inclusion measures, however these are now covered in the Report on Widening Access (RoWA). The RoWA contains detailed coverage of the access measures for Scottish-domiciled entrants to higher and further education in Scotland.
3. This report follows on HESA's Higher Education Student Data release for 2020-21, with focuses on Scottish institutions and Scottish-domiciled students. Scottish Funding Council (SFC) also publishes an annual report on [College Statistics](#) detailing further and higher education students at colleges in Scotland.
4. This report covers a ten-year time period – 2011-12 to 2020-21 – and is accompanied by background tables which include additional tables and further breakdowns that are not included within the main body of the report. For the reasons outlined in the introduction to this report, this publication does not make direct comparisons between 2019-20 and 2020-21 qualifier figures and previous years due to the vastly different circumstances these students were faced with. Qualifier data for 2019-20 and 2020-21 is separated in tables by a grey row indicating a break in the time series and are plotted in charts using a dashed line.

Section 1 – Student Numbers and Characteristics

5. This section addresses the number of students studying HE in all years and at all levels of study, across HEIs and colleges. The term ‘student numbers’ refers here to student enrolments, or instances of study. A small number of students may enrol more than once, particularly to part-time courses. Student enrolments are considered in relation to student characteristics such as age, gender and mode of study across the last ten years (2011-12 to 2020-21). This report discusses trends occurring over this timeframe.
6. There were 332,815 HE students studying in Scotland in 2020-21; a large increase of +25,600/8.3% driven primarily by upticks in students studying Taught Postgraduate and First Degree courses (Table A).
7. Student numbers increased for all HE levels of study. There were +12,525/22.4% more students on Taught Postgraduate courses, +8,815/5.1% more students undertaking First Degrees and +425/3.2% more students on Research Postgraduate courses; the highest number on record for each level of study (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Students in Higher Education in Scottish HEIs and Colleges by Level of Study, 2011-12 to 2020-21



8. There were also year-on-year increases in HNC/HND and Other Sub-degree students, with +2,590/6.6% and +1,235/4.7% increases respectively. HNC/HND student numbers are roughly unchanged from a decade ago but Other Sub-degree student numbers remain -8,255/-22.9% lower.
9. Meanwhile the total number of HE students at college increased by +3,215/6.9% after a decade low in 2019-20.

Table A: Students in Higher Education at Scottish HEIs and Colleges by Institution Type and Level of Study, 2011-12 to 2020-21

Institution Type/ Academic Session	Level of Study					
	All Levels	Postgraduate		First Degree	Sub-degree	
		Research Postgraduate (1)	Taught Postgraduate		HNC/HND	Other Sub-degree
Total						
2011-12	281,630	11,660	43,280	149,350	41,345	35,990
2019-20	307,215	13,110	55,850	172,680	39,080	26,500
2020-21	332,815	13,535	68,375	181,495	41,670	27,735
All students at HEIs (2)						
2011-12	233,010	11,660	43,245	148,425	3,875	25,800
2019-20	260,490	13,110	55,850	171,565	4,420	15,540
2020-21	282,875	13,535	68,375	180,255	4,560	16,145
All students at colleges (2)						
2011-12	48,620	-	35	925	37,465	10,190
2019-20	46,725	-	-	1,110	34,660	10,955
2020-21	49,940	-	-	1,240	37,110	11,590

Sources: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Refer to notes to tables.

10. The gap in the proportion of HE students who are male or female has widened in both the HEI and college sectors over the decade. In 2020-21 58.1% of HE students were female (16.5pp gap) whereas a decade ago 55.9% of HE students were female (11.9pp gap) (Figure 2, Table B).

Figure 2: Higher Education Student Numbers at Scottish Institutions by Mode of Study, Gender and Sector 2020-21

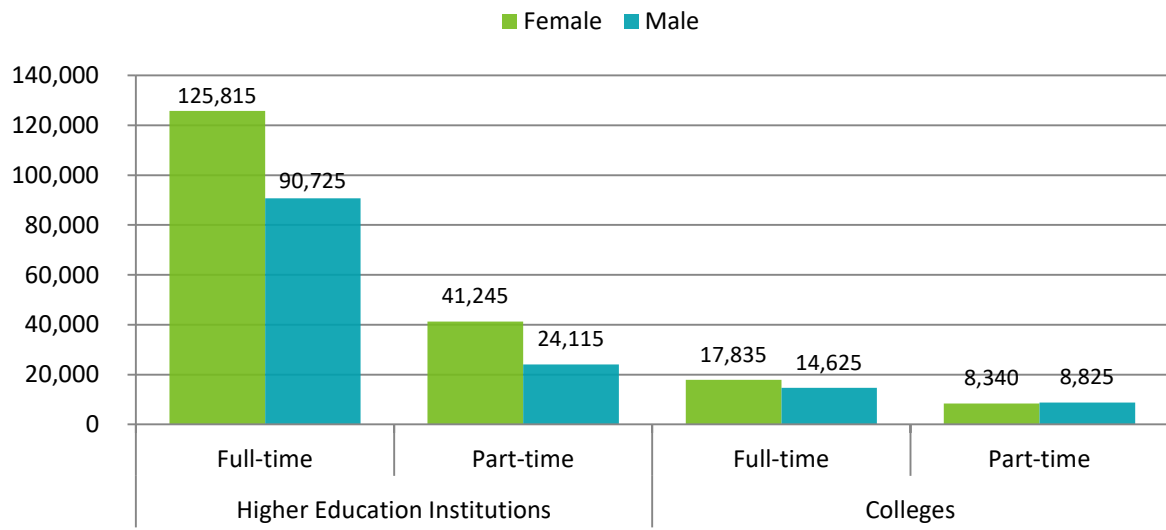
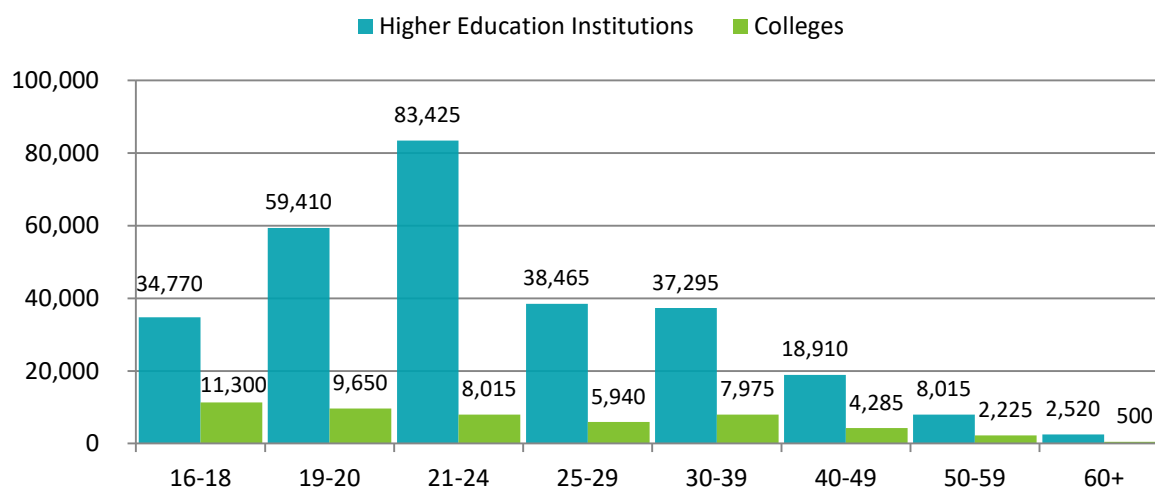


Table B: Students in Higher Education in Scottish HEIs and Colleges by Mode of Study and Gender, 2011-12 to 2020-21

Academic Session	Total			Full-time			Part-time		
	Total (7)	Male	Female	Total (7)	Male	Female	Total (7)	Male	Female
Total									
2011-12	281,630	124,100	157,525	199,430	89,150	110,280	82,200	34,950	47,245
2019-20	307,215	127,855	178,375	232,010	97,880	133,595	75,205	29,975	44,780
2020-21	332,815	138,290	193,230	249,835	105,350	143,645	82,980	32,940	49,585
All students at HEIs (2)									
2011-12	233,010	99,995	133,010	167,365	73,545	93,820	65,640	26,450	39,190
2019-20	260,490	105,530	154,140	200,805	83,510	116,890	59,685	22,020	37,250
2020-21	282,875	114,835	167,060	217,145	90,725	125,815	65,725	24,115	41,245
All students at colleges (2)									
2011-12	48,620	24,105	24,515	32,065	15,605	16,460	16,555	8,500	8,055
2019-20	46,725	22,325	24,235	31,210	14,370	16,705	15,520	7,955	7,530
2020-21	49,940	23,455	26,175	32,685	14,625	17,835	17,255	8,825	8,340

Sources: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Refer to notes to tables.

Figure 3: HE Student Numbers at Scottish Institutions by Age Group and Sector, 2020-21



11. Overall, students aged 21-24 accounted for the largest age group of students studying HE in Scotland’s HEIs and colleges in 2020-21, at 27.5% (Figure 3). However, table C shows that between 2019-20 and 2020-21, the number of students aged 25+ increased by more than those 24 and under (by 13.1% and 5.7% respectively).

Table C: Students in Higher Education in Scottish HEIs and Colleges by Age, 2011-12 to 2020-21

Institution Type/ Academic Session	Total (10)	16-18	19-20	21-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
Total									
2011-12	281,630	41,735	62,835	69,725	34,735	35,705	23,010	9,225	4,565
2019-20	307,215	43,205	67,825	84,485	38,750	39,375	20,650	9,425	3,295
2020-21	332,815	46,070	69,060	91,440	44,405	45,270	23,195	10,240	3,015
All students at HEIs (2)									
2011-12	233,010	29,515	52,605	61,630	29,030	29,280	18,705	7,780	4,395
2019-20	260,490	32,435	58,960	77,085	33,380	31,865	16,455	7,320	2,865
2020-21	282,875	34,770	59,410	83,425	38,465	37,295	18,910	8,015	2,520
All students at colleges (2)									
2011-12	48,620	12,220	10,230	8,095	5,705	6,430	4,305	1,445	170
2019-20	46,725	10,770	8,860	7,400	5,370	7,510	4,195	2,105	425
2020-21	49,940	11,300	9,650	8,015	5,940	7,975	4,285	2,225	500

Sources: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Refer to notes to tables.

Section 2 – Entrant Numbers and Characteristics

12. This section concerns students beginning a higher education course in a given academic year (i.e. entrants in that academic year), rather than the total student population as is shown in the previous section.
13. Table D shows that in 2020-21 there were 163,710 entrants to HE courses at Scottish institutions. Entrants to HE have increased by 16,550/+11.2% since 2019-20, mainly driven by an additional 14,055 entrants at HEI's.
14. Taught Postgraduate entrants grew by 9,055/22.5% year-on-year. Overall, this qualification group has almost doubled in entry numbers over the last ten years, from 25,915 in 2011-12 to 49,250 in 2020-21.

Table D: Entrants to Higher Education in Scottish HEIs and Colleges by Institution Type and Level of Study, 2011-12 to 2020-21

Institution Type/ Academic Session	Level of Study					
	All Levels	Postgraduate		First Degree	Sub-degree	
		Research Postgraduate	Taught Postgraduate		HNC/HND	Other Sub-degree
Total						
2011-12	132,365	3,800	25,915	44,945	29,275	28,430
2019-20	147,160	4,240	40,195	53,035	27,140	22,555
2020-21	163,710	4,535	49,250	57,030	29,550	23,345
All entrants at HEIs (2)						
2011-12	95,350	3,800	25,905	44,140	2,465	19,040
2019-20	111,845	4,240	40,195	52,260	2,755	12,395
2020-21	125,900	4,535	49,250	56,210	3,040	12,865
All entrants at Colleges (2)						
2011-12	37,015	-	10	805	26,810	9,385
2019-20	35,315	-	-	775	24,385	10,155
2020-21	37,805	-	-	815	26,510	10,480

Sources: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Scottish Funding Council (SFC).
Refer to notes to tables.

Figure 4: Entrants to Higher Education in Scottish HEIs and Colleges by Level of Study, 2020-21

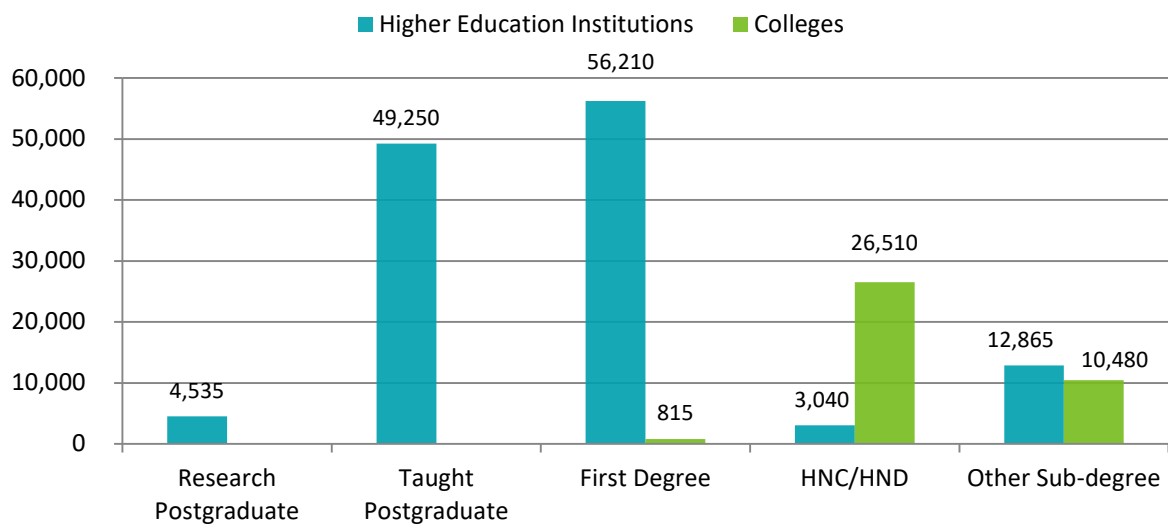
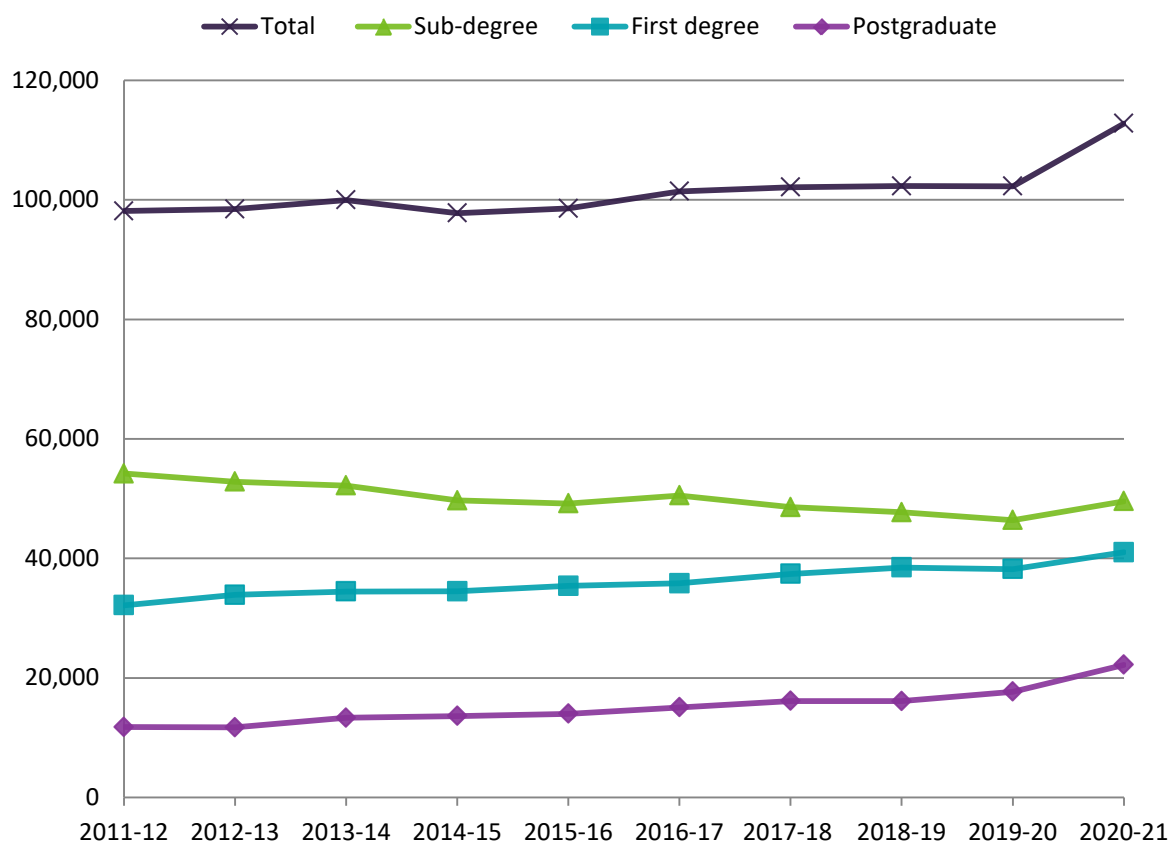


Table E: Entrants to Higher Education in Scottish HEIs and Colleges by Level of Study, Subject and Gender, 2020-21

Subject Area (26)	All levels			Postgraduate			First degree			Sub-degree		
	Total (7)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (7)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (7)	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total	Male (%)	Female (%)
Total	163,710	41.0%	58.5%	53,785	40.3%	59.3%	57,030	40.2%	59.4%	52,895	42.5%	56.6%
Medical Studies												
Medicine and Dentistry	3,505	35.7%	64.2%	1,770	35.7%	63.9%	1,705	35.5%	64.4%	30	36.7%	63.3%
Subjects Allied to Medicine	17,700	16.2%	83.7%	5,100	21.8%	78.0%	7,830	15.1%	84.9%	4,765	12.0%	87.9%
Total	21,200	19.4%	80.5%	6,870	25.4%	74.4%	9,535	18.8%	81.2%	4,795	12.1%	87.7%
Science and Engineering												
Biological and Sport Sciences	5,925	42.1%	57.3%	1,840	36.8%	62.8%	3,215	45.0%	54.4%	870	42.8%	56.5%
Psychology	5,240	21.5%	77.7%	1,780	22.6%	77.1%	2,965	19.5%	80.3%	500	29.6%	64.4%
Veterinary Sciences	575	17.7%	82.1%	135	26.8%	73.2%	435	14.9%	84.9%	-	-	-
Agriculture, Food and Related Studies	1,695	39.8%	59.5%	380	43.5%	55.9%	345	35.7%	64.0%	970	39.9%	59.3%
Physical Sciences	3,185	53.4%	46.3%	915	59.0%	40.7%	1,695	54.6%	45.3%	575	41.3%	58.1%
Mathematical Sciences	2,190	55.8%	43.9%	905	51.9%	47.5%	1,220	58.5%	41.5%	65	60.4%	39.6%
Engineering and Technology	13,135	82.5%	17.3%	3,255	71.7%	28.0%	4,115	80.5%	19.4%	5,765	89.9%	9.7%
Computing	10,115	75.2%	24.1%	3,325	66.3%	33.3%	3,830	79.9%	19.2%	2,960	79.0%	19.9%
Geography, Earth and Environmental Studies	2,290	41.4%	58.3%	1,165	41.4%	58.0%	1,020	40.5%	59.4%	110	48.6%	51.4%
Architecture, Building and Planning	4,115	67.3%	32.2%	1,510	55.5%	43.5%	1,215	66.0%	33.9%	1,390	81.2%	18.4%
Total	48,465	60.8%	38.7%	15,205	53.6%	46.0%	20,060	57.0%	42.6%	13,200	74.9%	24.3%
Business and Social Studies												
Social Sciences	17,620	25.0%	74.6%	4,195	31.8%	67.9%	5,815	30.0%	69.8%	7,610	17.4%	82.0%
Law	6,285	33.0%	66.9%	2,080	36.1%	63.8%	2,155	33.7%	66.2%	2,045	29.0%	70.6%
Business and Management	27,760	45.9%	53.5%	10,840	49.7%	50.2%	7,955	45.0%	53.8%	8,970	42.2%	57.3%
Media, Journalism and Communications	2,650	41.6%	58.0%	1,085	26.5%	73.1%	830	45.3%	54.6%	730	59.6%	39.5%
Total	54,315	37.4%	62.1%	18,205	42.6%	57.2%	16,760	38.3%	61.0%	19,355	31.7%	67.8%
Education and the Arts												
Language and Area Studies	5,730	29.5%	68.4%	1,420	30.4%	68.4%	2,310	24.4%	75.3%	2,000	34.7%	60.5%
Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies	4,570	40.8%	58.1%	1,680	39.5%	59.9%	2,455	42.2%	57.5%	440	38.0%	54.4%
Design, and Creative and Performing Arts	10,835	31.6%	67.1%	1,385	29.0%	70.0%	3,285	34.7%	64.5%	6,165	30.5%	67.8%
Education and Teaching	9,875	25.0%	74.7%	6,770	24.3%	75.5%	1,825	13.6%	86.3%	1,280	45.0%	54.2%
Total	31,010	30.5%	68.4%	11,255	27.9%	71.6%	9,875	30.2%	69.3%	9,885	33.6%	64.0%
Combined and General Studies (11)	8,715	42.9%	56.9%	2,255	40.0%	59.8%	800	36.5%	63.4%	5,660	45.0%	54.9%

15. Figure 5 shows that in 2020-21, 112,785 Scottish-domiciled students entered HE in Scotland, 10,500/10.3% more than in 2019-20. This is the largest increase in Scottish Domiciled entrants in a decade.

Figure 5: Scottish-Domiciled Entrants to Higher Education at Scottish HEIs and Colleges by Level of Study, 2011-12 to 2020-21



16. As of 2020-21 there were 28,160 non-European international entrants to HE, an increase of 3,910/16.1%. The number of non-European international entrants has increased by 79.1% since 2011-12, equivalent to 12,435 additional entrants (Table F).
17. Meanwhile, the number of EU entrants for all levels of study has decreased by 150/1.8% from 2019-20 at 8,225. EU entrants remain a significant part of the student body, forming 5.0% of all HE entrants.

Figure 6: Non- Scottish-Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants to Higher Education at Scottish HEIs and Colleges by Domicile, 2011-12 to 2020-21

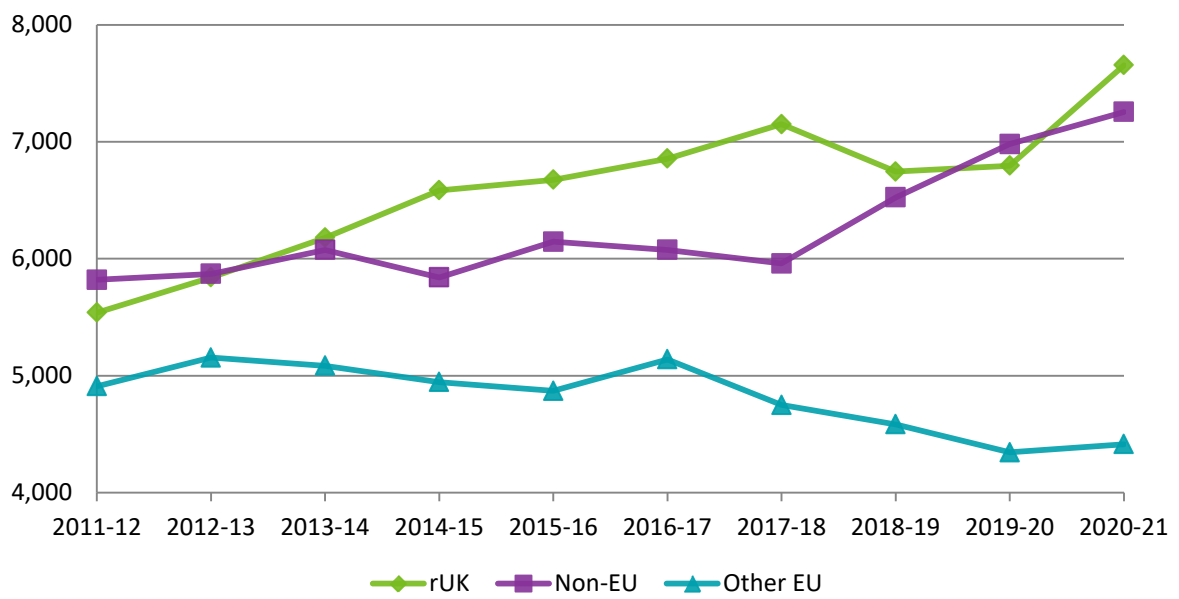


Table F: Entrants to Higher Education at Scottish HEIs and Colleges by Domicile and Level of Study, 2011-12 to 2020-21

Level of Study/ Academic Session	Total all domiciles (16)	Scotland	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	Other UK	Total UK (28)	EU	Non-EU Europe	Non- European
All levels										
2011-12	132,365	98,150	7,495	260	1,375	75	107,380	8,380	880	15,725
2019-20	147,160	102,285	9,785	350	1,195	90	113,705	8,375	835	24,250
2020-21	163,710	112,785	11,985	465	1,160	95	126,505	8,225	825	28,160
Postgraduate										
2011-12	29,715	11,780	3,280	115	255	15	15,465	3,470	400	10,380
2019-20	44,435	17,680	4,155	180	255	30	22,305	4,030	495	17,610
2020-21	53,785	22,190	5,465	260	295	35	28,250	3,805	495	21,235
First Degree										
2011-12	44,945	32,160	3,495	95	1,070	50	36,865	4,210	410	3,455
2019-20	53,035	38,205	4,750	125	875	35	43,990	3,905	300	4,835
2020-21	57,030	41,030	5,440	155	780	35	47,445	3,925	290	5,370
Sub-degree										
2011-12	57,705	54,210	720	50	50	10	55,045	700	65	1,890
2019-20	49,695	46,400	880	45	65	20	47,410	440	40	1,805
2020-21	52,895	49,560	1,080	50	85	30	50,810	490	40	1,555

Sources: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

Refer to notes to tables.

Section 3 – Qualifier Numbers and Characteristics

As noted at the beginning of this report, this publication does not make direct comparisons between qualifier figures prior to 2019-20 due to the vastly different circumstances students were faced with in the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic sessions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

18. This section considers students qualifying from Scottish institutions with a HE qualification. The number of qualifiers is shown across different levels and modes of study as well as for selected protected characteristics. Further breakdowns are available in the accompanying background tables.
19. Information on the destinations of qualifiers was previously contained in HESA's Destination of Leavers publication (discontinued in 2016-17). This information can now be found in the HESA Graduate Outcomes report, available on the [HESA website](#). Information on destinations of HE students in colleges is available in SFC's [College Leaver Destinations](#) publication, with the 2020-21 edition scheduled for release in October 2022. Further information on outcomes and success rates for HE and FE students at college for 2020-21 was released earlier this year as part of the [College Performance Indicators](#) report.
20. In 2020-21 there were 82,850 qualifiers from HEIs and 25,865 from colleges, making a total of 108,715 HE qualifiers for 2020-21. These qualifications were achieved despite the direct impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the higher education sector in Scotland and the ability for students to successfully complete their courses (Table G). In 2020-21, three-quarters of HE qualifiers were from HEIs (76.2%).
21. Figure 7 details the number of qualifiers by qualification type and sector. In 2020-21, those qualifying from a First Degree course accounted for 36.7% of all qualifiers, Research Postgraduate 2.5%, Taught Postgraduate 30.4%, HNC/HND 18.8% and Other Sub-degree 11.6% of all HE qualifiers.
22. Of the HE qualifiers across both sectors, 69.6% achieved a First Degree or postgraduate qualification (either research or taught).

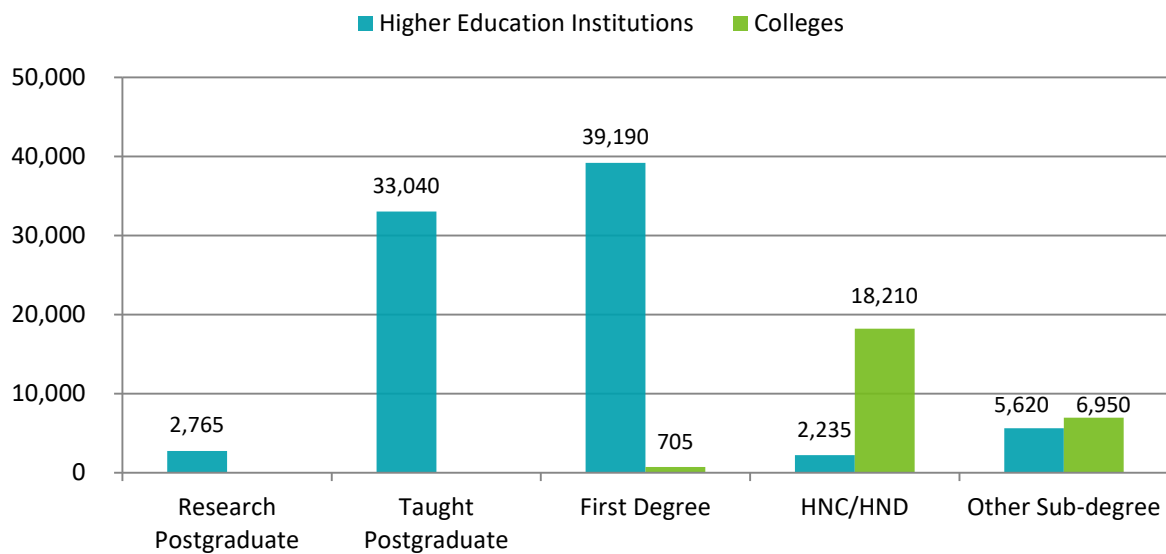
Table G: Qualifiers from Higher Education Courses at Scottish Institutions by Institution Type and Level of Qualification Obtained, 2011-12 to 2020-21

Institution Type/ Academic Session	Level of Qualification Obtained					
	All Levels	Postgraduate		First Degree	Sub-degree	
		Research Postgraduate (1)	Taught Postgraduate		HNC/HND	Other Sub-degree
Total						
2011-12	92,870	2,710	22,360	34,585	20,530	12,675
2019-20	101,365	3,320	28,575	37,990	21,015	10,460
2020-21	108,715	2,765	33,040	39,895	20,445	12,570
All qualifiers from HEIs						
2011-12	67,930	2,710	22,350	34,085	1,865	6,925
2019-20	75,705	3,320	28,575	37,300	2,060	4,450
2020-21	82,850	2,765	33,040	39,190	2,235	5,620
All qualifiers from colleges						
2011-12	24,935	-	15	505	18,670	5,750
2019-20	25,660	-	-	690	18,995	6,015
2020-21	25,865	-	-	705	18,210	6,950

Sources: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Scottish Funding Council (SFC).
Refer to notes to tables.

Please note that Qualifier figures in 2019-20 and 2020-21 are not directly comparable with those of prior academic years due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 7: Qualifiers from Higher Education Courses at Scottish Institutions by Institution Type and Level of Qualification Obtained, 2020-21



23. As is shown in Table H, throughout the last ten years those aged 21-24 have accounted for the largest proportion of qualifiers at Scottish institutions, of which there were 47,410 qualifiers in 2020-21, 43.6% of the total qualifiers population. There is a clear difference in age profiles of qualifiers from First Degrees and those from postgraduate level qualifications. In 2020-21, of the 35,805 qualifiers from postgraduate degrees, 67.6% were aged 25 or over. Meanwhile, 26.4% of the 39,895 First Degree qualifiers were aged 25 and over (Figure 8).

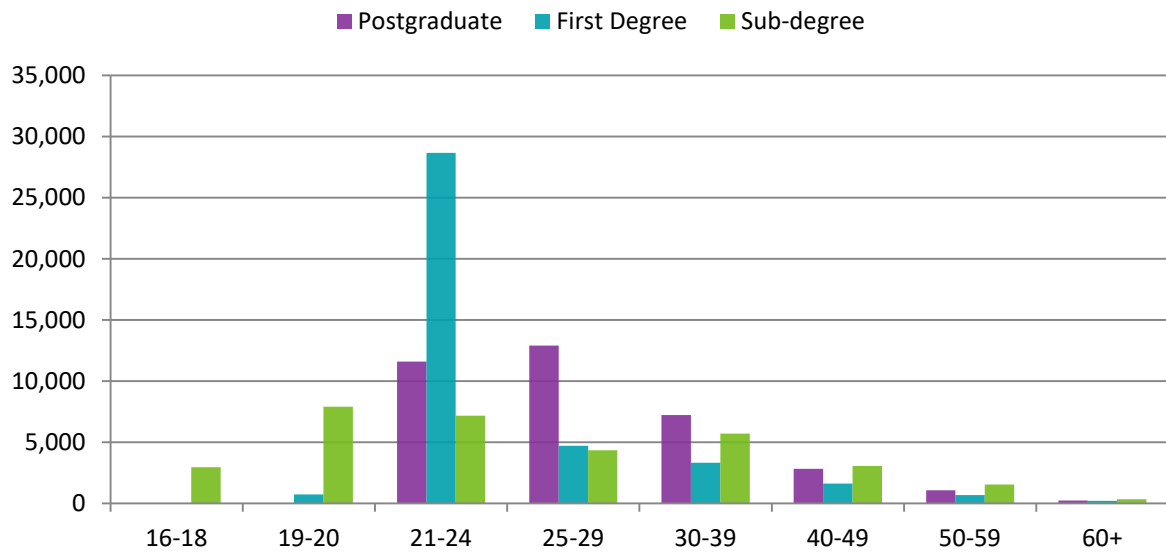
Table H: Qualifiers from Higher Education Courses at Scottish Institutions by Age and Level of Qualification Obtained, 2011-12 to 2020-21

Level of Qualification/ Academic Session	Total (10)	16-18	19-20	21-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+
All levels									
2011-12	92,870	3,140	9,360	37,945	18,360	13,320	7,450	2,705	580
2019-20	101,365	3,095	8,350	45,020	19,990	14,630	6,585	2,980	710
2020-21	108,715	2,960	8,620	47,410	21,955	16,220	7,485	3,290	765
Postgraduate									
2011-12	25,075	-	5	6,140	9,740	5,835	2,275	930	150
2019-20	31,895	-	5	9,355	11,720	6,870	2,585	1,115	250
2020-21	35,805	-	-	11,580	12,905	7,210	2,805	1,075	225
First Degree									
2011-12	34,585	-	955	24,230	4,300	2,715	1,740	530	120
2019-20	37,990	-	730	28,840	4,310	2,500	1,110	435	60
2020-21	39,895	5	710	28,660	4,710	3,305	1,625	670	210
Sub-degree									
2011-12	33,210	3,140	8,405	7,575	4,320	4,770	3,435	1,250	315
2019-20	31,480	3,095	7,610	6,830	3,965	5,260	2,890	1,430	395
2020-21	33,015	2,955	7,910	7,170	4,340	5,700	3,050	1,545	335

Sources: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Scottish Funding Council (SFC).
Refer to notes to tables.

Please note that Qualifier figures in 2019-20 and 2020-21 are not directly comparable with those of prior academic years due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 8: Qualifiers from Higher Education Courses at Scottish Institutions by Age Group and Level of Qualification, 2020-21



24. Table I shows that 65.3% of all HE qualifiers from Scottish institutions are domiciled in Scotland, whilst 8.7% are domiciled from the rest of the UK, 6.8% from the EU (excluding the UK) and 19.2% are from non-EU international.

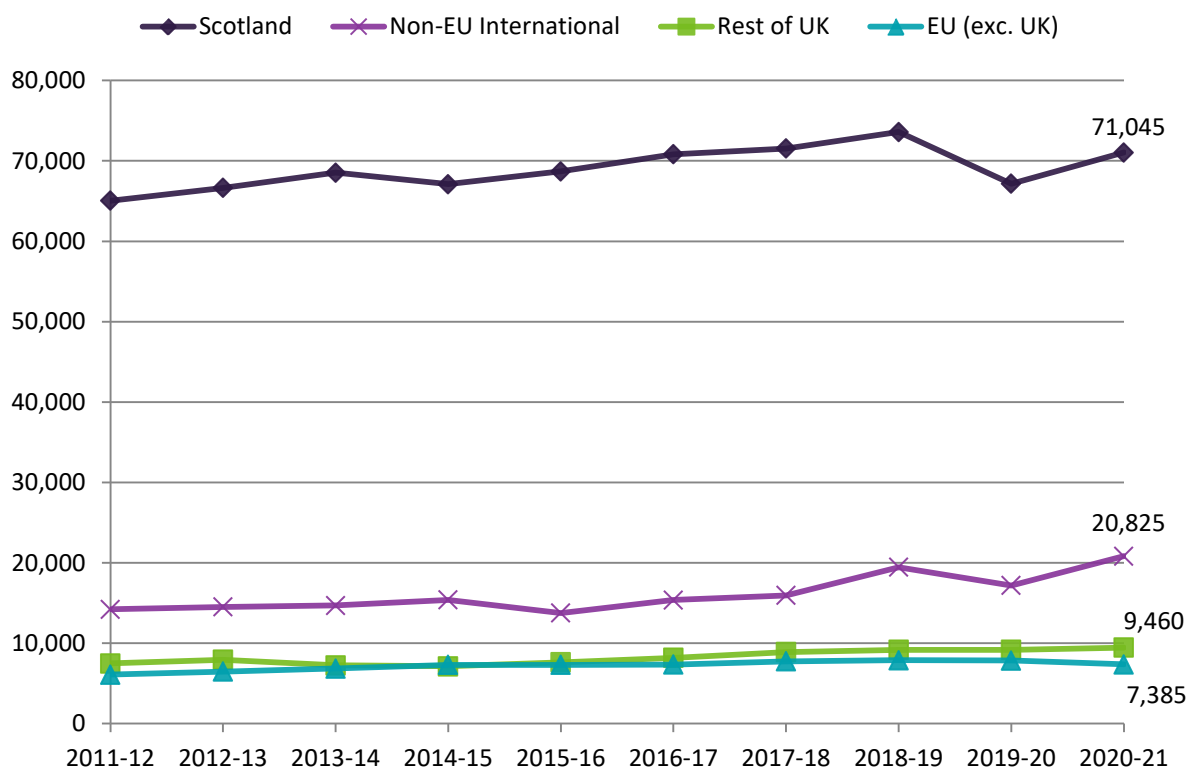
Table I: Qualifiers from Higher Education Courses at Scottish Institutions by Domicile and Qualification Obtained, 2011-12 to 2020-21

Level of Qualification/ Academic Session	Total	Scotland	Rest of UK	EU (excluding UK)	Non-EU International
Total					
2011-12	92,870	65,045	7,500	6,095	14,230
2019-20	101,365	67,150	9,185	7,845	17,180
2020-21	108,715	71,045	9,460	7,385	20,825
Postgraduate					
2011-12	25,075	9,610	2,335	2,850	10,275
2019-20	31,895	12,170	3,385	3,895	12,450
2020-21	35,805	12,620	3,410	3,605	16,165
First Degree					
2011-12	34,585	24,375	4,630	2,805	2,775
2019-20	37,990	25,420	5,130	3,630	3,810
2020-21	39,895	27,450	5,250	3,395	3,800
Sub-degree					
2011-12	33,210	31,055	535	440	1,180
2019-20	31,480	29,565	675	320	925
2020-21	33,015	30,975	800	385	860

Sources: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Refer to notes to tables.

Please note that Qualifier figures in 2019-20 are not directly comparable with those of prior academic years due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 9: Qualifiers from Higher Education Courses at Scottish Institutions by Domicile, 2011-12 to 2020-21



Please note that Qualifier figures in 2019-20 and 2020-21 are not directly comparable with those of prior academic years due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

25. Table J shows HE qualifiers at Scottish institutions by gender and mode of study. The table shows that females made up a higher proportion of qualifiers from HE in 2020-21 (58.7%). This is more pronounced for full-time courses where females constituted 60.0% of qualifiers in 2020-21 and less so for part-time courses where females accounted for 55.8% in the same year.

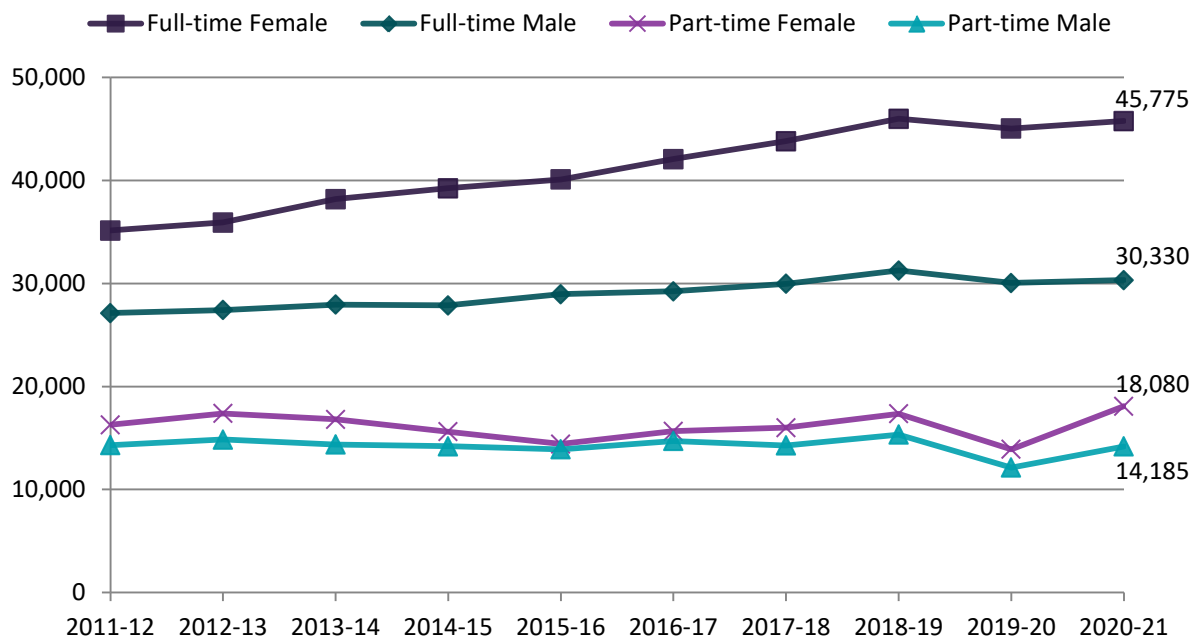
Table J: Qualifiers from Higher Education Courses at Scottish Institutions by Mode of Study and Gender, 2011-12 to 2020-21

Academic Session	Total			Full-time			Part-time (18)		
	Total (7)	Male	Female	Total (7)	Male	Female	Total (7)	Male	Female
2011-12	92,870	41,440	51,430	62,275	27,130	35,145	30,595	14,310	16,285
2019-20	101,365	42,055	58,935	75,275	30,050	45,040	26,090	12,135	13,900
2020-21	108,715	44,515	63,855	76,330	30,330	45,775	32,385	14,185	18,080

Sources: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Refer to notes to tables.

Please note that Qualifier figures in 2019-20 and 2020-21 are not directly comparable with those of prior academic years due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 10: Higher Education Qualifiers at Scottish Institutions by Gender and Mode of Study, 2020-21



Please note that Qualifier figures in 2019-20 and 2020-21 are not directly comparable with those of prior academic years due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Section 4 – Participation Rates for Entrants to Higher Education in Scotland

26. The Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) is an estimate of the probability that a 16 year old will participate in higher education at college or university from HNC to Degree level by the age of 30.
27. The Scottish HEIPR for 2020-21 was 60.2%, 2.8pp higher than in 2019-20. This increase in the HEIPR rate comes from a decrease in the population of young people in Scotland aged 16-30, coupled with an increase in initial participants.
28. Table K shows that the initial participation rate increased or stayed the same for all individual years of age from 17 to 30 (inclusive) year-on-year, while the participation rate of 16 year olds dropped only slightly (by 0.1pp) to 2.4%.

Table K: Scottish Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR), 2019-20 to 2020-21

Age	2019-20			2020-21			Year-on-Year Change in HEIPR
	Initial Entrants	Population	Initial Participation Rate	Initial Entrants	Population	Initial Participation Rate	
16	1,375	54,325	2.5%	1,360	56,075	2.4%	↓
17	8,845	53,770	16.5%	9,295	54,525	17.0%	↑
18	12,380	56,315	22.0%	12,730	54,510	23.3%	↑
19	3,285	60,860	5.4%	3,225	59,450	5.4%	↔
20	1,430	65,145	2.2%	1,575	63,110	2.5%	↑
21	1,005	67,420	1.5%	1,030	65,980	1.6%	↑
22	840	70,350	1.2%	885	68,215	1.3%	↑
23	740	71,335	1.0%	765	71,180	1.1%	↑
24	680	71,560	1.0%	720	71,445	1.0%	↔
25	555	72,915	0.8%	665	71,155	0.9%	↑
26	595	74,580	0.8%	610	72,705	0.8%	↔
27	570	78,415	0.7%	570	74,550	0.8%	↑
28	510	79,105	0.6%	540	78,355	0.7%	↑
29	465	76,510	0.6%	550	79,145	0.7%	↑
30	445	75,705	0.6%	460	76,750	0.6%	↔
16-30	33,720	1,028,305	57.4%	34,985	1,017,140	60.2%	↑

Sources: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), National Records of Scotland (NRS) and Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

Refer to notes to tables.

Annex A: Notes to Tables

The numbering of the notes refers to additional tables published on the SFC website and not to any of the tables in this publication. For full details please see the associated Excel Workbook.

(1) The figures include Scottish-domiciled postgraduate research students at the Open University (OU) up to 2011-12. The OU had 20 Scottish-domiciled postgraduate research students in 2011-12.

(2) Students at the former land-based colleges of Barony, Elmwood and Oatridge, which merged with the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) to form SRUC in October 2012, were still recorded through the college reporting until 2012-13. They are included in the figures for colleges for 2012-13 but are included with the SRUC and HEI related figures from 2013-14.

(3)

In 2010-11, Glasgow Metropolitan College, Glasgow College of Nautical Studies and Central College Glasgow merged to form City of Glasgow College.

In 2012-13 Telford College, Stevenson College and Jewel and Esk Valley College merged to form Edinburgh College.

In 2012-13 Barony College, Elmwood College and Oatridge College merged with the Scottish Agricultural College to form SRUC.

On 1 November 2013, Aberdeen College and Banff and Buchan College merged to form North East Scotland College.

On 1 August 2013, Ayr College, James Watt College (Kilwinning campus) and Kilmarnock College merged to form Ayrshire College.

On 1 August 2013, Adam Smith College, Carnegie College and SRUC (non-land base element) merged to form Fife College.

On 1 November 2013, North Glasgow College, John Wheatley College and Stow College merged to form Glasgow Kelvin College.

On 31 July 2013, Anniesland College, Cardonald College and Langside College merged to form Glasgow Clyde College.

On 1 November 2013, Angus College and Dundee College merged to form Dundee and Angus College.

On 1 November 2013, Cumbernauld College and Motherwell College merged to form New College Lanarkshire, and on 1 April 2014, they were joined by Coatbridge College.

On 1 August 2013, Clydebank College, Reid Kerr College and James Watt College (Greenock campus) merged to form West College Scotland.

(5) The college full-time equivalents (FTEs) for HE students exclude the additional volume associated with students receiving extended learning support as this is not reported in the same way for HEIs. When looking at college FTEs on their own, FTEs accounting for extended learning support should be used. These can be accessed on the SFC [Infact database](#).

(7) Totals include students whose genders were not reported or reported as Other.

(8) The totals include Scottish-domiciled students whose local authority was not recorded.

(9) This table does not include Scottish-domiciled students at UK institutions outside of Scotland and does not represent rates of participation in Scottish local authorities.

(10) Totals include students whose ages were not reported.

(11) The 'Combined' subject grouping is used in recognition of programmes of study which cut across different subject areas.

(12) Total includes students from overseas whose specific country of domicile was not recorded.

(13) This table includes students at UK HEIs only and does not include students studying at colleges.

(14) The above table does not include Scottish-domiciled entrants at UK institutions outside of Scotland and does not represent rates of participation in Scottish local authorities.

(15) The total includes a small number of students at the Open University who are domiciled outside the UK.

(16) Total all domiciles includes UK unknown and overseas students whose specific country of domicile was not reported.

(18) Deprived areas are defined as the 20% and 40% lowest ranked areas in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) for the relevant year. In this table, Academic Year 2020-21 relates to SIMD 2016.

(24) Aegrotat degrees; this is an honours degree without classification, awarded on the understanding that had the candidate not been unwell, he or she would have passed.

(25) Totals include other qualification classifications.

(26) This is the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH) of subject groups at Level 1

(version 1.3.4). The CAH provides a standardised hierarchical aggregation of Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) codes. The 2019-20 edition of this publication used CAH version 1.2.

(27) Students attending the Open University, whose location (domicile) prior to study was in Scotland.

(28) Total UK includes UK unknown where the specific country of domicile was not reported

(29) Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are all included under China.

Annex B: Methodology, Data Definitions, and Quality Information

Data Sources

1. This publication contains information on students from both colleges and higher education institutions (HEIs) who are attending higher education courses in Scotland. These statistics are collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) from HEIs and by SFC from further education colleges (colleges).

Coverage

2. Following a consultation in 2007, the method of counting students at HEIs was changed in 2009 in order to provide a greater level of consistency with HESA. The figures in this publication that relate to higher education institutions are defined by HESA's standard registration population. Time-series have been revised according to this definition.
3. The standard registration population includes all higher education student instances active at a reporting institution at point in the reporting period 1 August to 21 July except; dormant students, incoming visiting exchange students, student who study wholly outside the UK, students on sabbatical and writing up students.
4. 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).

Student Instances

5. HESA's Student Records use the term 'instance' to describe a student's engagement within an institution. A student may enrol on more than one course and, therefore, have more than one instance. It is instances that are reported in this publication, consistent with HESA's methodology. The same approach is taken when reporting on student activity at Scottish colleges. Where references are made in this release to 'students' this should be interpreted as instances.

Full-time Equivalents

6. Full-time Equivalents (FTE) represent the expected hours of learning undertaken by a student during their course, as a proportion of the expected learning of full-time study. For example; a student with an FTE of 0.8 is expected to undertake 20% fewer hours of learning relative to a full-time student on the same course, a student with an FTE of 1.2 is expected to undertake 20% more hours of learning relative to a full-time student on the same course.

7. At UK HEIs, full-time students are those normally required to attend an institution for periods amounting to more than 24 weeks within the year of study, on thick or thin sandwich courses, and those on a study-related year out of their institution. During that time students are normally expected to undertake periods of study, tuition or work experience which amounts to an average of at least 21 hours per week.

Full-time HE students at Scottish colleges are those which meet the criteria of at least 480 planned notional hours.

Open University

8. Students attending the Open University, whose location (domicile) prior to study was in Scotland, are classified in this publication as studying at a Scottish HEI. Where comparisons are made with other UK countries, the Open University is regarded as a separate institution in each country. Students studying at the Open University whose location (domicile) prior to study was outside the UK or recorded as an unknown UK domicile are excluded prior to 2012-13. This methodology differs from that used by HESA where the Open University is counted as a whole English institution; as a result student figures reported in this release will differ from those reported by HESA.

Domicile

9. The full list of countries included in each domicile grouping is published in [Annex B: HE Students and Qualifiers 2014-15](#).

Level of Study

10. The full list of qualifications included in each level of study category is published in [Annex B: HE Students and Qualifiers 2014-15](#).

Subject Tables

11. Subject data from higher education institutions is apportioned to broadly reflect the weight of a particular subject within the study programmes of individual enrolments. This process is consistent with the treatment of subject breakdowns by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). For the 2019-20 academic year onwards, HESA implemented a new subject coding system – the [Higher Education Classification of Subjects \(HECoS\)](#). This replaces the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) that was used to classify subjects in previous editions of this publication. Because the HECoS coding system is being used in this publication for the first time, we do not compare HECoS classified subjects in 2019-20 and 2020-21 against JACS classified subjects used for previous years.

Data Presentation

12. Our rounding strategy is in line with [HESA's](#). In all tables in this release, figures have been rounded to the nearest 5 whilst values of 0, 1 and 2 have been rounded to 0 and presented as '-'. Percentages are based on rounded figures. Unknown values are not displayed individually in tables but are included in totals. Totals are calculated from unrounded figures, therefore figures may not sum to totals due to rounding as well as the inclusion of unknown values. Figures and percentage in the text and charts are calculated from rounded values.
13. Percentages calculated from a denominator of less than 22.5 have been masked with an asterisk (*) to avoid deriving percentages from small numbers.
14. Percentage changes in actual numbers, for example between one year and the next, are referred to as x%. However, when discussing the difference between percentages, such as the difference between two proportions, percentage points (pp) are used.

Data Quality Information

15. This section provides a summary of information in the following dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability. For further information please see [Annex B: HE Students and Qualifiers 2014-15](#).

Relevance

16. HESA is the official UK agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative information about higher education at higher education institutions. SFC collects data on provision at colleges through the Further Education Statistics (FES) data collections.

Accuracy

17. The procedures followed by HESA to ensure quality of the data are provided on the HESA website. The guidance issued by SFC for the submission of the Scottish college records is on the SFC website.
18. The following table gives the proportions of the overall student populations at Scottish HEIs and colleges for whom their unitary authority of residence was not recorded.

Proportion of Scottish domiciled students where the local authority is unknown, 2013-14 to 2020-21

Institution Type	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
HEIs	0.5%	1.0%	1.4%	1.8%	1.4%	2.0%	1.4%	0.8%
Colleges	2.0%	0.0%	0.8%	1.5%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%

Accessibility and Clarity

19. This statistical publication is pre-announced and then published on the SFC website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables available on the website only which is a freely available resource.

Comparability

20. HESA collects student enrolment data from all publicly funded UK HEIs, so comparison with other countries within the UK is possible. The release [Higher Education Student Data](#) provides information on this topic.

Associate Students

21. When a college and HEI share responsibility for students, for example, when a HEI acts as the awarding body for a course that is partly delivered at college, these students appear in both the HEI and college data and are known as Associate Students.
22. Following consultation, it was decided to continue counting Associate Students in both sectors in this publication and to produce a separate table quantifying the number of identifiable Associate Students. The table shows a split by gender, age, and percentages from the most deprived areas for the 1,485 students who have been identified as Associate Students in colleges in 2020-21.

Associate Students in 2020-21: Gender, Age and Percentages from the 20% and 40% Most Deprived Areas

	Number of Associate Students	Percentage of Associate Students
Gender		
Male	895	60.2%
Female	575	38.8%
Total (1)	1,485	
Age group		
16-18	425	28.7%
19-20	385	26.1%
21-24	265	18.0%
25-29	180	12.3%
30-39	150	10.0%
40-49	50	3.4%
50-59	20	1.3%
Total	1,485	
Deprivation Quintile (2) (18)		
20% most deprived areas	355	24.1%
40% most deprived areas	310	20.9%

Refer to notes to tables.

Metadata Table

Metadata Indicator	Description
Publication Title	Higher Education Students and Qualifiers at Scottish Institutions 2020-21
Description	Includes data on higher education students, entrants and qualifiers in Scottish Higher Education Institutions and colleges over a ten year time series (2011-12 to 2020-21)
Theme	Higher Education
Topic	Student Information
Format	PDF and Excel Tables
Data Source(s)	This publication contains information on students from both colleges and higher education institutions (HEIs) who are attending higher education courses in Scotland. These statistics are collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) from HEIs and by SFC from further education colleges (colleges). Population data used to calculate the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate is sourced from National Records of Scotland Mid-year Population Estimates.
Date that data are acquired	College students: October 2021 College qualifiers: March 2022 HEI data: January 2022
Release date	04/05/2022
Frequency	Annual
Timeframe of data and timeliness	Trend data over ten academic years, 2011-12 to 2020-21
Continuity of data	<p>Following a consultation in 2007, the method of counting students at HEIs was changed in 2009 in order to provide a greater level of consistency with HESA. The figures in this publication that relate to higher education institutions are defined by HESA's standard registration population. Time-series have been revised according to this definition.</p> <p>The standard registration population includes all higher education student instances active at a reporting institution at point in the reporting period 1 August to 21 July except; dormant students, incoming visiting exchange students, student who study wholly outside the UK, students on sabbatical and writing up students.</p> <p>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).</p>
Revisions statement	Revisions have been made to college qualifier totals for the 2019-20 academic year only, to incorporate additional qualifier numbers reported to SFC by the college sector since the previous edition of this report was published.

Revisions relevant to this publication	College qualifier figures for the 2019-20 academic year only have been revised in Background Tables 24, 25, 26, 28, 32, 33B and 35B.
Relevance and Key uses of this statistics	HESA is the official UK agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative information about higher education at higher education institutions. SFC collects data on provision at colleges in Scotland through the Further Education Statistics (FES) data collection.
Accuracy	The procedures followed by HESA to ensure quality of the data are provided on the HESA website. The guidance issued by SFC for the submission of the Scottish college records is on the SFC website.
Comparability	HESA collects student enrolment data from all publicly funded UK HEIs , so comparison with other countries within the UK is possible. The Statistical First Release 'Higher Education Student Enrolments and Qualifications Obtained at Higher Education Institutions'
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 accessibility of the website can be found here.
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 point
Disclosure	In all tables in this release, figures have been rounded to the nearest 5, and 0, 1 and 2 have been rounded to 0. Unknown values are not displayed individually in tables but are included in totals. Figures may not sum to totals due to rounding and the inclusion of unknown values. Figures and percentages in the text and charts are calculated from rounded values. This is to mitigate the risk of identification of individuals.
Official Statistics designation	National Statistics
UK Statistics Authority Assessment	Assessment undertaken in 2013 by UK Statistics Authority, as part of Assessment Report 255
Last published	30/03/2021
Next published	March 2023 (exact date to be confirmed)
Date of first publication	Scottish Funding Council first published this report in March 2013. This was previously published by the Scottish Government.
Help email	datarequests@sfc.ac.uk
Date form completed	07/04/2022