



Scottish Funding Council
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

SFC Announcement

Reference: SFC/ST/04/2026

Issue date: 29/04/2026

College Leaver Destinations 2023-24 Annex



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Issue Date:	29 April 2026
Reference:	SFC/ST/04/2026
Summary:	This document provides context and methodological information pertaining to the College Leaver Destinations publication and background tables.
FAO:	Principals and Directors of Scotland's colleges, students, parents, guardians and the general public.
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Report Context

1. The College Leaver Destinations (CLD) Report is published annually by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and provides information on the destinations of successful full-time college leavers in Scotland. It supports SFC's work with colleges on outcome-based planning through Outcome Agreements and the Scottish Government's skills strategy, Scotland's Future Skills Action Plan and Developing the Young Workforce – Scotland's Youth Employment Strategy, by providing key measurements for progression to further study and employment for all age groups.
2. This is the eleventh publication of CLD for Scotland's colleges and covers leavers from the academic year 2023-24. This publication reports on the destinations of leavers from full time courses 3-6 months after qualifying. Data collation for this report began in February 2024 and continued to October 2025 with linkage and matching of leavers' destinations to two additional datasets: Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Students Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS); however, this is restricted to 16- to 24-year-olds only due to current legislative limitations.
3. The overall CLD collection examines all successful qualifiers from full-time college courses, including those who have left the sector and those who have completed a full-time course but are remaining at college to complete a subsequent qualification. These courses are commonly confined to a single academic year and are designed to allow students to progress from lower-level courses to more advanced courses via learning pathways, i.e. course literature commonly signposts that 'course A' will enable progression to 'course B', with the student directed towards HE study or employment in a particular area after completion of a number of progressing courses. The journey varies depending on the point of entry and qualifications achieved prior to enrolment for students. The sector leavers are extracted from the CLD collection and are the focus of this publication, although there may be comparisons to the remainder of the CLD population for context.
4. For the 2023-24 version of the CLD report SFC's rounding and suppression policy has now been implemented and will continue to be implemented in future editions. Figures greater than 0 but less than 5 are rounded to 5. All other figures are rounded to the nearest multiple of 5. Totals are calculated based on unrounded figures and as such tables may not sum to totals. Percentages are rounded to 1 decimal places and are based on unrounded numbers. Percentages are redacted for small numbers in which the denominator is less than 22.5.

College Leaver Destinations Rationale

5. The CLD collection forms a central element in understanding the learner journey through and beyond college education. The dataset has evolved from the need to develop a robust sector-wide method of collecting information to enable the National

Performance Measure on Destinations and Employment to be established and to monitor Developing the Young Workforce – Scotland’s Youth Employment Strategy.

6. Prior to the first survey in 2013-14 there was a general lack of valid and reliable college leaver destination data for FE (non-advanced) qualifiers, while poor response rates were associated with the data collected by SFC for a number of years on full-time HE (advanced) qualifiers through the First Destinations Graduate Survey (FDG). These things demonstrated the need to establish a coherent, systematic and comprehensive way of collecting and reporting on the destinations of college students who successfully completed courses. The benefits of such a collection are manifold and include: Facilitating reporting on full-time college leavers going into positive destinations year-on-year at national, regional and college level, demonstrating the impact of the college sector to the individual, the economy and to society, helping colleges to ensure relevance and effectiveness of provision, guiding colleges to equip learners to make informed choices, and providing evidence to inform regional curriculum planning and to aid in the design of learning programmes.
7. Since the 2013-14 CLD publication (December 2015), the endeavour has been to improve the quality of the data to provide accurate information and conclusions. A great deal of work has been undertaken by the colleges to ensure the most robust picture of College Leaver Destinations from the dataset, while refinement of data matching has also been central to the high proportion of confirmed destinations.
8. Changes in the Further Education Statistics (FES) collection of college data were implemented in the 2016-17 session to provide a robust and accurate measure of progression of SCQF level or broadly comparable level for those continuing study.
9. Numerous additions have been made to help to enrich the detail and validity of analysis from the CLD, including enhancements for equalities data introduced in 2015-16, the rurality student indicators from 2018-19 and the addition of Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) labels to those who went into employment from 2019-20.
10. It is important to recognise what the college sector is to fully appreciate the value of the destinations information in this publication and why the distribution of destinations for college qualifiers fall as they do. There is an unfortunate tendency to see college and university as the same thing - since students can progress from one to the other - but this is an oversimplification and does not capture the differences within the tertiary sector.
11. The university sector is most easily understood: a significant proportion enrol on a degree course and four years later graduate from the programme with their degree and, most frequently, move into the world of employment. A cursory examination of the Higher Education Statistical Agency’s (HESA) destinations¹ demonstrates this trend with

¹ [HE Student Data | HESA](#)

university destinations almost the exact inverse of what is happening in the college sector. The focus on Sector Leavers in this publication perhaps adds a more comparable analysis of the college leavers, but the difference in the sectors should always be kept in mind.

Annex A: Definitions

Term	Definition
Sector Leavers	Qualifiers we have confirmed destinations who do not stay in the college sector after qualifying and instead have moved into post-college destinations: work, study at university and negative destinations such as unemployment.
Unconfirmed qualifiers	Qualifiers where contact could not be made.
Positive Destinations	The number and proportion of college qualifiers in work, training and/or further study 3-6 months after qualifying. Separate figures are reported for FE (non-advanced) and HE (advanced) levels course qualifiers.
All qualifiers	Refers to qualifiers for whom we have confirmed destinations and those qualifiers who remain unconfirmed.
Confirmed qualifiers	Refers to only those qualifiers for whom we have confirmed destinations.
Further study or training	Qualifiers who are continuing with full-time or part-time study, training or research at college or university.
Entering employment	For those in full-time and part-time work only (including self-employed/freelance, voluntary/unpaid, developing a professional portfolio/creative practice or on an internship). Also includes qualifiers who were not currently in employment but who secured employment that was set to commence by 31 March 2025.
Unemployed	This applies to qualifiers Unemployed and looking for work.

Unavailable to work

Qualifiers who are: *taking time out in order to travel; Permanently unable to work/retired; Temporarily sick/unable to work/looking after home/family; and those not employed but not looking for employment, further study or training.*

SCQF

[SCQF](#) refers to a programme's SCQF level or a 'broadly comparable' level for non-SCQF credit rated provision

Annex B: Sources of CLD Data

12. The CLD continues to build on ‘best practice’ as well as to improve data linkage for 16-24-year-olds with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Students Award Agency for Scotland (SAAS) to reduce the collection burden and to improve data integrity. The target confirmed destination rate again was set at 80%, with this target met in this session at 84.3% (34,070 confirmed out of the total CLD population of 40,430). Table A1 shows the numbers and percentages from data linkage and other sources used in compiling this dataset.

Table A1: Sources of CLD 2023-24 Data

Source	Count	Percentage (%)
FES	20,060	49.6
SDS	7,560	18.8
MISSING	7,130	17.6
INDIVIDUAL	3,385	8.4
COLLEGE	1,525	3.8
OTHER	425	1.1
FAMILY	175	0.4
UCAS	175	0.4
Total	40,430	

Metadata

Metadata Indicator	Description
Publication Title	College Leaver Destinations 2023-24
Description	Reports on up to nine years of all successful qualifiers from full-time college courses, including those who have left the sector and those who have completed a full-time course but are remaining at college to complete a subsequent qualification.
Theme	Further and Higher Education destinations from Scotland's colleges.
Topic	Student Information
Format	Website-based reports, PDFs and excel tables
Data source(s)	The CLD continues to build on 'best practice' as well as to improve data linkage for 16-24-year-olds with Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Students Award Agency for Scotland (SAAS) to reduce the collection burden and to improve data integrity. Table A1 shows the numbers and percentages from data linkage and other sources used in compiling this dataset.
Release date	29/04/2025
Timeframe of data and timeliness	Trend data are presented as a time series continuation from the 2015-16 academic year (AY) to the 2023-24 (AY).
Continuity of data	Data from Scottish colleges continues to exclude those students who were not eligible for funding.
Revision statement	An error was identified in data published in previous reports for the table on source of destination information (Table A1).

This error has been resolved and revised figures have been published in the accompanying background tables.

Accuracy	The guidance issued by SFC for the submission of the Scottish college records is on the SFC website.
Comparability	n/a
Accessibility	SFC has a style guideline which sets out options to make all publications as accessible to potential readers as possible. More information relating to accessibility of the website .
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 unit of measurement	Number, percentage, percentage points.
Disclosure	Values less than 5 have been suppressed to prevent against the identification of individual students. Totals are summed from unrounded figures. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Figures and percentages in the charts are calculated using suppressed figures where the count is less than 5.
Official Statistics designation	Official Statistics
UK Statistics Authority Assessment	This publication has not been assessed by the UK Statistics Authority. However other Scottish Funding Council publications were assessed as part of the Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics undertaken in 2013 by UK Statistics Authority, as part of Assessment Report 255.
Last published	16/04/2025
Next published	2027

Date of first publication

The Scottish Funding Council first published the College Leaver Destinations publication in December 2015

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Date form completed.

21/04/2025
