



# Higher Education Students & Qualifiers

## Annex 2024-25



Scottish Funding Council  
Comhairle Maoinachaidh na h-Alba

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## Higher Education Students & Qualifiers Annex 2024-25

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Summary:	This document provides context and methodological information pertaining to the Higher Education Students and Qualifiers 2024-25 publication and background tables.
FAO:	Principals and Chairs of Scotland’s colleges and universities 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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## Table of Contents

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<b>ANNEX A – NOTES TO THE TABLES .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ANNEX B: METHODOLOGY, DATA DEFINITIONS AND QUALITY INFORMATION.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Data Sources.....	7
Coverage.....	7
Student Instances.....	7
Full-time Equivalents.....	7
Open University.....	8
Domicile.....	8
Level of Study .....	8
Subject Tables .....	8
Data Presentation .....	9
Data Quality Information .....	9
Relevance .....	9
Accuracy .....	9
Accessibility and Clarity.....	10
Comparability .....	10
Associate Students .....	10
Metadata table.....	12

## Annex A – Notes to the 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.

- note 1            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.
- note 2            Totals include students whose genders were not reported or reported as Other.
- note 3            The totals include Scottish-domiciled students whose local authority was not recorded.
- note 4            This table does not include Scottish-domiciled students at UK institutions outside of Scotland and does not represent rates of participation or qualification for Scottish local authorities.
- note 5            Students with unknown domiciles are included in the non-EU international category in this table. In AY 2022-23 the number of students with unknown domiciles increased, linked to difficulties in implementing the new JISC data model. While the number of students with unknown domiciles has decreased in subsequent years, they remain higher than years prior to AY 2022-23. This may exaggerate the number of non-EU international students reported.
- note 6            Totals include students whose ages were not reported.
- note 7            The 'Combined' subject grouping is used in recognition of programmes of study which cut across different subject areas.

- note 8 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.
- note 9 This table includes students at UK HEIs only and does not include students studying at colleges.
- note 10 Total includes students from overseas whose specific country of domicile was not recorded.
- note 11 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.
- note 12 The total includes a small number of students at the Open University who are domiciled outside the UK.
- note 13 Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are all included under China.
- note 14 Total all domiciles includes UK unknown and overseas students whose specific country of domicile was not reported.
- note 15 Total UK includes UK unknown where the specific country of domicile was not reported.
- note 16 Prior to 2022-23 students obtaining qualifications from writing up or dormant status are reported with regards to their mode of study prior to writing-up or dormancy. How students are identified as being writing up or dormant was changed for the HESA Student returns from 2022-23 onwards and this is now separate to the reporting of their mode of study.
- note 17 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.

- note 18 Totals include degree qualifications where the classifications are not known or not available.
- note 19 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 2024-25 relates to SIMD 2020.
- note 21 Please note: Qualifier figures in 2019-20 and 2020-21 were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and are not directly comparable with past academic years.
- note 22 COVID-19 Impact: Many providers issued public statements that a 'no detriment' approach to assessment would be adopted in response to the pandemic. This typically ensured that students would be awarded a final grade no lower than the most recent provider assessment of their attainment. The impact can be seen in the increase in the proportion of first class degrees awarded in 2019/20.
- note 23 College provision at institutions outside of Scotland is not reported in this publication.
- note 24 A revision to the National Records of Scotland mid-year population estimates has been reflected in the 2023-24 HEIPR. This change has led to an increased estimate of 59.3% participation for individuals within the 16-30 year, up from 58.2%.
- note 25 The University of Glasgow reported around 6,500 more postgraduate qualifications in 2021-22 than in 2020-21. This was due to the completion of around 4,000 awards from the 2020-21 academic year being delayed until the following year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- note 26 The University of Glasgow, in consultation with SFC, updated their internal reporting practices for their Student return for 2022-23, causing large numbers of qualifications for taught postgraduate students to be deferred until 2023-24. This change led to a notable decrease in the number of qualifiers the University reported for 2022-23, with the impact estimated to be in the thousands. This also had a notable impact on the number of qualifications for Scotland as a whole and therefore care should be taken when comparing the number of qualifications for Scotland for 2022-23 with other years.

note 27

A Marking and Assessment Boycott by some university staff led to delays in the awarding of some qualifications to students who completed their studies in 2022-23. Some qualifications were not awarded in time to be reported in the Student returns for 2022-23 and were reported in the returns for 2023-24 instead. There is therefore an undercounting of the qualifications achieved in 2022-23 and an overcounting of those for 2023-24.

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## Annex B: Methodology, Data Definitions and Quality Information

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### 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. The standard registration population includes all higher education student instances active at a reporting institution at some point in the reporting period 1 August to 21 July that is at least two weeks after the anniversary of their start date with the exception of; dormant students, incoming visiting exchange students, students who study wholly outside the UK and students on sabbatical.
3. Prior to 2022-23 all students who had reached the writing up stage of their studies by the end of the reporting period were excluded from the standard registration population. From 2022-23 changes to the way that writing up students are reported means that those students who were active on their course at least two weeks after the anniversary of their start date and then entered the writing up stage can now be counted the same as other students and included in the standard registration population.
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. 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 against JACS classified subjects used for previous years.

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## Data Presentation

12. In all tables in this release, figures have been rounded to the nearest 5 and figures less than 7.5 have been rounded to 5. 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.
13. 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.
14. Percentages calculated from a denominator of less than 22.5 have been masked with an asterisk (\*) to avoid deriving percentages from small numbers.
15. 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

16. 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

17. 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

18. 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.
19. 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.

Institution Type	Colleges	HEIs
2015-16	0.8%	1.4%
2016-17	1.5%	1.8%
2017-18	0.3%	1.4%
2018-19	0.1%	2.0%
2019-20	0.0%	1.4%
2020-21	0.3%	0.8%
2021-22	0.4%	0.5%
2022-23	0.3%	0.7%
2023-24	0.2%	0.2%
2024-25	0.2%	0.1%

### Accessibility and Clarity

20. 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

21. JISC collects student enrolment data from all publicly funded UK HEIs, so comparison with other countries within the UK is possible.
22. The Statistical First Release 'Higher Education Student Enrolments and Qualifications Obtained at Higher Education Institutions' provides information on this topic.

### Associate Students

23. 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.
24. 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 1,275 students who have been identified as Associate Students in colleges in 2024-25.

Characteristic	Value	Number of Associate Students	Percentage of Associate Students
Sex [note 3]	Female	470	36.9%
	Male	780	61.2%
	Total	1,275	100.0%
Age [note 6]	16-18	400	31.3%
	19-20	380	29.9%
	21-24	185	14.5%
	25-29	110	8.7%
	30-39	120	9.3%
	40-49	65	5.2%
	50-59	15	1.0%
	Total	1,275	100.0%
	Deprivation [note 19]	0-20	355
20-40		255	20.0%

## Metadata table

Metadata Indicator	Description
Publication Title	Higher Education Students and Qualifiers at Scottish Institutions 2024-25
Description	Includes data on Higher Education students, entrants and qualifiers in Scottish Higher Education Institutions and Colleges over a ten year time series (2015-16 to 2024-25)
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 JISC 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 2024 College qualifiers: May 2025 HEI data: January 2026
Release date	31/03/2026
Frequency	Annual
Timeframe of data and timeliness	Trend data over ten academic years, 2015-16 to 2024-25
Continuity of data	The standard registration population includes all higher education student instances active at a reporting institution at some point in the reporting period 1 August to 21 July that is at least two weeks after the anniversary of their start date with the exception of; dormant students, incoming visiting exchange students, students who study wholly outside the UK and students on sabbatical. Prior to 2022-23 all students who had reached the writing up stage of

their studies by the end of the reporting period were excluded from the standard registration population. From 2022-23 changes to the way that writing up students are reported means that those students who were active on their course at least two weeks after the anniversary of their start date and then entered the writing up stage can now be counted the same as other students and included in the standard registration population.

Data from Scottish colleges continues to exclude those students who do not complete the first 25% of their course (the point at which they become eligible for funding).

Revisions statement	No revisions have been made.
Revisions relevant to this publication	No revisions have been made.
Relevance and Key uses of this statistics	JISC 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 JISC 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	JISC 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' provides information on this topic.
Accessibility	SFC has a style guideline which sets out options to make all publications as accessible to potential readers as possible. Details of accessibility measure implemented on the SFC website can be found in the accessibility statement.
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	<p>In all tables in this release, figures have been rounded to the nearest 5 and figures less than 7.5 have been rounded to 5. 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.</p> <p>Figures and percentages in the text and charts are calculated from rounded values. This is to mitigate the risk of identification of individuals. Percentages based on groups of fewer than 22.5 persons are suppressed.</p>
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