



# College Performance Indicators 2021-22: Executive Summary



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Summary:	Overview of college performance indicators from 2008-09 to 2021-22.
FAO:	Principals and Chairs of Scotland's colleges, students, parents, guardians and the general public.
Further Information:	<b>CONTACT:</b> Kenny Wilson <b>JOB TITLE:</b> Senior Analysis Officer <b>DIRECTORATE:</b> Policy, Insight and Analytics <b>TEL:</b> 0131 313 6509 <b>EMAIL:</b> <a href="mailto:kwilson@sfc.ac.uk">kwilson@sfc.ac.uk</a>

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.

## Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic

1. The ongoing COVID pandemic and the requirement for public health control measures continued into 2021-22. The measures put in place to protect staff and students in 2021-22 and the emergence of the Omicron variant were more disruptive and severely limited colleges' ability to deliver learning and teaching activities and student support services.
2. The academic year was characterised by repeated interruptions to normal delivery. Socially distanced blended learning in August /September was then followed by added disruption through staff and student absences due to the emergence of the Omicron variant in December and January where some colleges had to close and learning, teaching and support services were, for periods, moved completely online. For many students this high level of disruption to learning throughout the academic year limited their ability to complete their course and qualification as planned.
3. Furthermore, numerous pandemic issues impacted students' ability to complete their qualification:
  - Students may have experienced a disrupted school experience due to the pandemic and were less academically and socially prepared for college.
  - Students may have been medically and emotionally affected by the pandemic either directly or via their families and/or dependants.
  - Students with childcare or caring responsibilities may have found it more difficult to complete their course as originally intended.
  - Some students on courses containing a practical element or a work placement in subjects such as engineering, construction, social care, and childcare, were unable to complete their course as intended and therefore had to 'defer' completing their course and 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 continued to take steps to address digital poverty, supported by additional funding, not all students had readily available access to the necessary broadband and/or equipment to facilitate effective digital learning and assessment.
4. In 2021-22 the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher formal exams returned, the first since 2019, and these were supported by wide-ranging measures from SQA and the rest of the education system to mitigate the ongoing effects of the global pandemic.
5. Throughout 2021-22 colleges continued to be responsive to developing digital platforms for learning and innovative ways to engage with learners, together with a more hybrid approach to assessment arrangements across the sector.



## Executive Summary

6. This report is an overview of college performance indicators from 2008-09 to 2021-22 with the main purpose to provide an overview of the latest year (2021-22) with contextual trends. The report provides a broad coverage of college teaching activity and presents an analysis of student outcomes for those students enrolled on courses leading to recognised qualifications.
7. The 2021-22 academic year (AY) was impacted by both the emerging cost-of-living crisis and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the requirement for public health control measures that continued for much of 2021-22.
8. These unprecedented circumstances surrounding COVID continued to present colleges with challenges during 2021-22, notably the ability to deliver practical and work-based learning given ongoing, albeit less acute, restrictions; and the challenges of supporting a cohort of students who had experienced two years of disrupted schooling. The emergence of the Omicron variant in December and January led to a high volume of staff and student absences that in turn limited colleges' ability to deliver learning and teaching activities and student support services in-person.
9. Those challenges notwithstanding, colleges continued to work flexibly, creatively and with compassion to support students and staff as they navigated the gradual return to face-to-face teaching and in-person exams.
10. Although SFC has presented data for several years, full consideration should be given to these exceptional circumstances and direct comparisons between the years 2019-20 through 2021-22 and earlier years should not be made without due consideration of the context.
11. In 2020-21 12,552 students were unable to complete their studies due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, because of colleges' efforts to re-engage those students, 37.1% (4,656) had returned by 2021-22. In 2021-22, a further 2,392 students deferred their studies into 2022-23. Work continues to re-engage those students who deferred in 2020-21 but did not return as well as those who deferred in 2021-22, although many may have entered employment given the more buoyant labour market.
12. Those 2,392 students who deferred in 2021-22 and are yet still to complete their course are not included in these performance indicators. Their outcomes will be reported in next year's report.
13. The key points from this report for students who have a final result are:

The known results for 42,923 full-time further education (FE) students enrolled on recognised qualifications in 2021-22 are as follows:

- Withdrawals were around 4pp higher than normal and impacted by the increased availability of low skilled jobs particularly in the hospitality and tourism sector and continued COVID measures that limited physical attendance and impacted the

student experience, particularly for practical and technical subjects such as care, construction, and hairdressing.

- As a consequence of the higher dropout rate as a result of the cost-of-living crisis and ongoing pandemic, successful completion rates were lower in 2021-22 at 59.0%, a 1.9 percentage point (pp) difference from 2020-21 and a 6.2pp difference from 2018-19 (pre-pandemic).
- A further 11.7% completed their course but did not gain the qualification they were aiming for. Some of those students may gain their award later.
- For large colleges<sup>1</sup> success rates ranged from 51.9% to 67.6% in 2021-22 and for small colleges success rates ranged from 58.7% up to 71.7%.

The known results for 29,631 full-time Higher Education (HE) students enrolled on recognised qualifications in 2021-22 are as follows:

- As a consequence of the higher dropout rate as a result of the cost-of-living crisis and ongoing pandemic, successful completion rates were lower in 2021-22 at 62.5%, a 9.1pp difference from 2020-21 and a 7.3pp difference from 2018-19 (pre-pandemic).
- A further 13.9% completed their course but did not achieve the qualification they were aiming for. Some of those students may gain their award later.
- Student withdrawals in 2021-22 increased from 2020-21 from 17.6% to 23.6% (6.0pp increase). The withdrawal rate for HE full-time students in 2021-22 is the highest seen across the reporting period and will have been adversely impacted by the emerging cost-of-living crisis and the ongoing pandemic.
- Full-time HE success rates ranged from 55.5% to 69.9% in 2021-22.

Course over 160 hours duration:

- Success rates for FE subject areas range from 51.6% for social subjects to 76.8% for construction courses.
- For HE subject areas the success rates range from 51.7% for hospitality and tourism to 90.3% for nautical courses.
- Male students are 6.6pp more likely to successfully complete their FE programmes than female students, while the situation is reversed for HE programmes with a 3.9pp difference.

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this publication the college categorisation of 'large' and 'small' is determined by the volume of credits delivered in the academic year. Colleges delivering above 25,000 credits are designated as 'large' and those below 'small'. For individual college categorisation refer to the separate Technical Annex.

## Deferrals from academic year 2020-21

14. The COVID pandemic has been an unprecedented situation for everyone, but especially for those in education. Learning benefits from momentum which is something which has been very difficult to maintain over the last three years for the reasons outlined above. In addition, many COVID measures prevented the undertaking of the practical elements which form part of many college courses.
15. The 2020-21 session was disrupted almost entirely by the COVID pandemic. As in the previous year, deferral was the only option for some students and by the end of the academic session 12,522 individuals had deferred from at least one of their enrolments. As we did with deferrals from 2019-20, we tracked the progress of these students, and we know 4,656 of these students have so far returned to college for further study. We do not show the deferred cohort separately in our main charts, but our analysis shows that just over 80% completed successfully which is a higher success rate than for other students.
16. This leaves 7,866 students (43% full-time and 57% part-time) who have not yet returned who we will monitor through to the end of this year and work with the colleges to re-engage as necessary. Every endeavour will be made to track student destinations, and where necessary, ensure learners are supported back into and through the college sector to meet their educational potential.
17. A reporting issue identified at Dundee and Angus College in 2022 led to the inclusion of an additional 522 student outcomes that had previously been omitted from the 2020-21 report. In addition, adjustments to the 2020-21 outcomes were made to reflect deferral updates to student outcomes. As a result of both these adjustments, the sector level success rates for full-time FE previously reported for 2020-21 have been lowered by 0.4pp to 60.9% and for full-time HE results by 0.5pp to 71.6%. For part-time qualifications sector level success rates were lowered by 0.1pp to 76.2% for FE and by 0.4pp to 80.9% for HE.



The known results for  
**42,923 FULL-TIME  
FURTHER EDUCATION (FE)  
STUDENTS** enrolled on  
recognised qualifications in  
2021-22 are as follows:

59.0%

Successfully completed their course

11.7%

Completed their course but did not gain the qualification they were aiming for. Some of those students may gain their award at a later time.

29.3%

Withdrew from their course and are accounted for by:  
**10.1%** of students withdrawing before the funding qualifying date\*  
**19.2%** between this point and the end of the course.



The known results for  
**29,631 FULL-TIME  
HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)  
STUDENTS** enrolled on  
recognised qualifications in  
2021-22 are as follows:

62.5%

Successfully completed their course

13.9%

Completed their course but did not gain the qualification they were aiming for. Some of those students may gain their award at a later time.

23.6%

Withdrew from their course and are accounted for by:  
**6.8%** of students withdrawing before the funding qualifying date\*  
**16.8%** between this point and the end of the course.



**MALE STUDENTS** are **6.6pp\*\*** more likely to successfully complete their **FE PROGRAMMES** than female students while the situation is **REVERSED FOR HE PROGRAMMES** with a **3.9pp\*\*** difference.



In 2021-22, out of 3,677 full-time permanent teaching staff, **3,175 HELD A RECOGNISED TEACHING QUALIFICATION** (86.3%).

This shows a **2.5pp\*\*** decrease in the proportion of teaching staff with a recognised qualification over the reported three academic years.



\*Colleges are not funded for these students  
\*\* Percentage Point