



Scottish Funding Council  
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

# SFC STATISTICS

College Statistics 2018-19  
Issue Date: 28 January 2020  
Reference: SFC/01/2020

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## College Statistics 2018-19

Issue date: 28 January 2020

Reference: SFC/ST/01/2020

Summary: This publication provides an overview of college sector statistics from 2009-10 to 2018-19.

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

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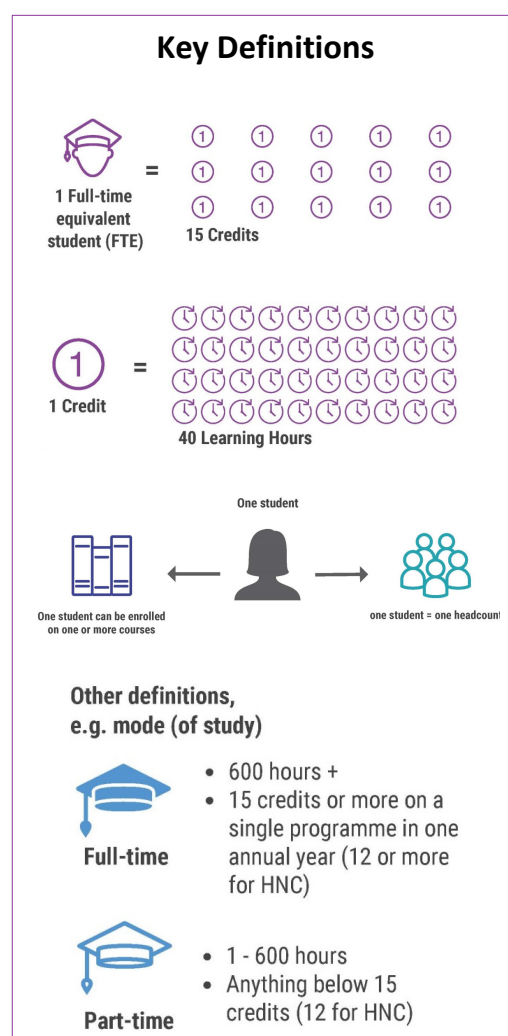


## Executive Summary

1. This report provides a statistical overview of the college sector in Scotland for the academic year 2018-19 and shows how these figures have changed over the last ten years, since 2009-10. In its analysis, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) uses student headcounts, course enrolments, credits and Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) as measures to track student numbers, college activity and the sector's performance towards Scottish Government targets (see Key Definitions box below). The data reported in this publication is collected and quality assured by SFC as part of the Further Education Statistical (FES) return. More information on the FES data collection process can be found on the [SFC website](#). Previous editions of this report, alongside other publications relating to the college sector, can also be found on the [SFC website](#).

2. The main findings from this year's report are:

- The college sector exceeded the Scottish Government's FTE target by 1,973 FTEs in 2018-19, delivering 118,242 FTEs towards the target. See Figure 1.
- At Further Education (FE) level, full-time FTEs (all funding sources) have declined by 4.1% since 2017-18 whilst part-time FTEs have continued to increase (up 1.6% since 2017-18). At Higher Education (HE) level, full-time FTEs decreased by 2.2% and part-time FTEs have increased by 1.6% since 2017-18. See Figure 2.
- In 2018-19 the total student headcount and number of enrolments increased by 9.2% and 8.5% on the previous year, the largest year-to-year increase in the last 10 years, altering the reduction from 2009-10 to 2012-13 which reflected a change in policy direction at that time. See Figure 3.
- The last three academic years have seen increasingly greater numbers of enrolments on non-recognised qualifications (NRQs). Enrolments on non-recognised qualifications have increased by 13.0% since 2017-18. Enrolments on courses under 10 hours in duration have



increased by 26.2% since 2017-18, following a trend of gradual decrease in the previous years. See Figure 5.

- The participation rate for 18-19 year olds in the Scottish population attending college full-time has continued to decline. In 2018-19, one fifth (20.6%) of 18-19 year olds in the Scottish population attended college full-time, the lowest since 2011-12. Nonetheless studying at college is just one of the options available to 18-19 year olds, with many choosing to go into work or university. The total number of 18-19 year olds in the Scottish population has decreased 9.7% over the last decade and decreased by 2.5% from 2017-18 to 2018-19 alone. See Figure 9.

## College Statistics 2018-19

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### College enrolments



**328,889** enrolments

**8.5%** increase since 2017-18



**118,242** FTEs\*

**1,973** above  
target in 2018-19



One in five (**20.6%**)  
18 to 19 year olds in the  
Scottish population  
attended college full-time  
in 2018-19

### Student headcount



**264,858** students

**9.2%** increase since 2017-18

\*Full-time equivalent (FTE), funded through the government purse.

## Section 1: Introduction

### Report Context

3. The College Statistics Report is published annually by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and provides an overview of student activity in the college sector over the last ten years, from 2009-10 to 2018-19.<sup>1</sup> Except where noted otherwise, all data reported in this publication has been sourced from the SFC's Further Education Statistical (FES) return as provided by all Scottish colleges and has been collated and quality assured by SFC.<sup>2</sup> This publication reports on student numbers in the form of headcounts, course enrolments, credits and Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) as measures of college student activity.<sup>3</sup>
4. Colleges offer a wide range of courses and study options across many levels of study to accommodate a diverse range of students. College students can study for Higher National Certificates (HNCs, which normally take one year to complete full-time) or Higher National Diplomas (HNDs, which normally take two),<sup>4</sup> to Access Courses, Degree courses, Modern Apprenticeship (MA) programmes, National Qualifications, Professional Qualifications and Scottish Vocational Qualifications, among others. Colleges also award qualifications from awarding bodies outside the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) such as the Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC), Vocational Training Charitable Trust (VTCT) and City and Guilds. Courses vary from full-time programmes lasting a year or more to part-time courses lasting one hour, with a breadth of provision including day release courses as part of employment arrangements; day release courses for school pupils and school leavers; block release courses for apprentices; assessments of work-based learning; and distance learning opportunities.
5. SFC funds colleges for the delivery of FE and HE based on the volume of activity

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<sup>1</sup> SFC produces a range of other statistical reports in areas such as widening access, college staffing, and attainment. The full suite of SFC statistical publications can be found at <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/statistical-publications/statistics-schedule/statistical-publication-schedule.aspx>.

<sup>2</sup> Notes and guidance on how colleges submit data to SFC via the FES return can be found in the FES Guidance 2018-19, available at <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/guidance/guidance-2018/SFCGD022018.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> The Credit-based system of funding college activity was introduced in 2015-16. The change to the Credit-based model was discussed in detail in [College Statistics 2016-17](#). More information can be found in Annex A of this report. This change should provide additional context and explanation around a possible break in trends.

<sup>4</sup> HNCs and HNDs are awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and are at level 7 and 8 respectively on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, which can be viewed here: <https://scqf.org.uk/interactive-framework/>.

delivered in credits, with one credit equivalent to 40 hours of learning. Definitions of the different measurements used throughout this report can be found in the Key Definitions box on page 5.

6. Background tables containing data for all the charts, tables and annexes found in this report can be downloaded from the [SFC website](#). Further college student data can also be obtained from the [Infact Database](#), which allows users to query college data and measure the number of enrolments, credits, headcounts and FTEs across a range of variables.<sup>5</sup>
7. This report explores the trends relating to selected student characteristics such as age and gender, whilst others, such as ethnicity and disability, have been omitted. These will be included in the Report on Widening Access 2018-19, which is due to be published in Spring 2020. Previous [Widening Access Reports](#) are available on the SFC website. Other college metrics are addressed in reports such as the [College Performance Indicators](#) and [College Leaver Destinations \(CLD\)](#). More information on SFC's statistics publication schedule can be found [online](#).

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<sup>5</sup> See the Further Information section towards the end of this report for noteworthy differences between data presented here and data in the Infact database.



## Section 2: Who the College Sector Serves



8. SFC funds colleges for the delivery of FE and HE. However, it is important to note that not all activity that colleges deliver is funded by SFC. The eligibility criteria to determine whether credits can be claimed for a student and/or course are set out in the [Credit Guidance: Student Activity Data Guidance for Colleges in AY 2018-19](#). A yearly breakdown of credits delivered across key priority areas for the Outcome Agreement National Performance Framework is detailed in Annex B.
9. For more detailed information on specific areas of the college sector (e.g. funding for colleges), please see [SFC's website](#). [Colleges Scotland](#), which provides the collective voice of the college sector in Scotland, is also a recommended resource for more information on the college sector.

## Section 3: Trends in Student Numbers and Activity

### Key Findings

- The sector exceeded the FTE target by 1,973 FTEs in 2018-19, delivering 118,242 FTEs towards the target.
- At FE level, full-time FTEs (all funding sources) have declined by 4.1% since 2017-18 whilst part-time FTEs have continued to increase (up 1.6% since 2017-18). At HE level, full-time FTEs decreased by 2.2% and part-time FTEs have increased by 1.6% since 2017-18.
- The total student headcount and total number of enrolments have increased steadily in recent years, by 9.2% and 8.5% respectively since 2017-18, altering the decline from 2009-10 to 2012-13.
- Most students in 2018-19 were enrolled on only one course (82%) and the vast majority (96%) were enrolled on either one or two courses.
- Enrolments on non-recognised qualifications have increased by 13.0% since 2017-18. Enrolments on courses under 10 hours in duration increased by 26.2% over the same period.
- In 2018-19 over a quarter (28.7%) of all learning activity (FTEs) took place in subject areas relating to health and care services.

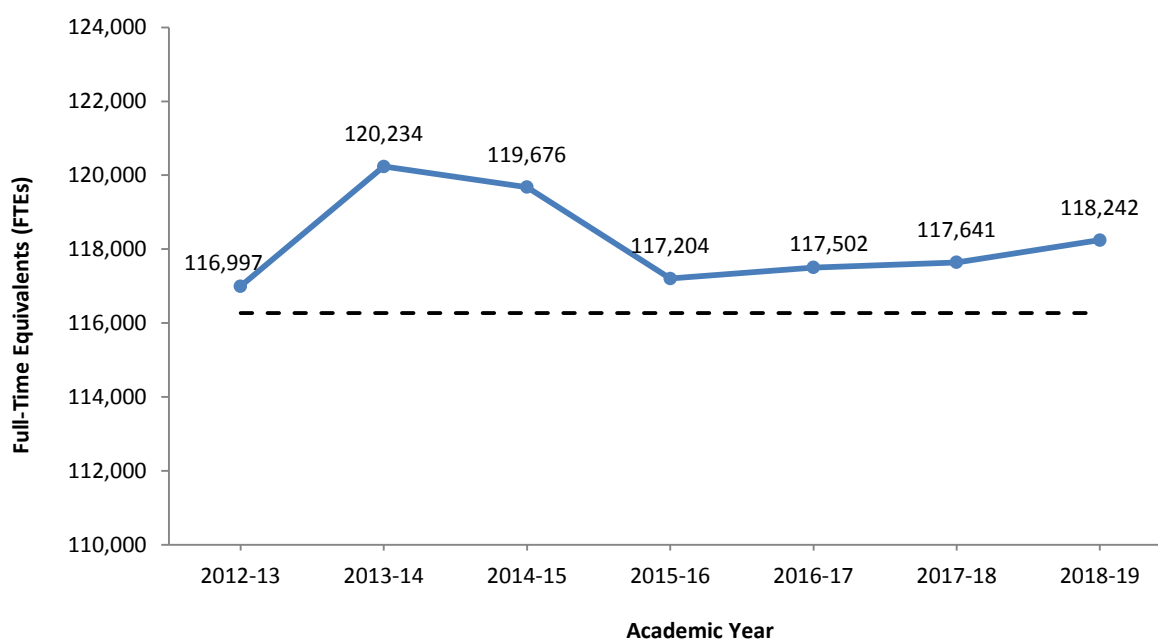
10. This section focuses on trends across college provision from 2009-10 to 2018-19, considering the activities delivered, such as FTEs, headcounts and enrolments.

### 3.1 Full-time equivalents (FTEs)

11. Since 2012-13, the Scottish Government has set a national target for the college sector to deliver 116,269 FTE student places each year. Figure 1 below provides an overview of the activity that has been counted against this target since it was introduced in 2012-13. Not all FTEs are counted towards the 116k target.

**Figure 1: How many FTEs have been delivered against the target?**

*Line chart showing the number of Scottish Government funded FTEs delivered against the target (introduced in 2012-13)*



12. The sector exceeded the 116k target by 1,973 FTEs in 2018-19, delivering 118,242 FTEs towards the target.

13. The college sector has exceeded the 116k FTE target for all years since it was introduced in 2012-13.

14. There have however been some changes to how FTEs have been counted over this period that are worth noting. The college sector has always provided a good deal of additional learning support to students enrolled on mainstream programmes who require additional learning to keep up with their peer group. In 2015-16 colleges received £50m to provide this additional support under what was then Extended Learning Support (now the Access and Inclusion Fund), and this contributed 3,000 FTEs towards the 116,269 target. At that time the claims for additional learning were subject to external audit and individuals

#### **Why we use Full-time Equivalents (FTEs)**

FTEs are used as an indicator of the amount of learning *activity* taking place.

Each student is expressed as a decimal of a full-time student (1.0 FTE). For example, a student may be enrolled on one course at 1.0 FTE, or may enrol on two courses each 0.5 FTE, or a part-time student may enrol on only one course at 0.25 FTE.

Headcounts are often a poor indication of the actual volume of activity in the college sector, therefore FTEs allow for more accurate comparisons.

who received that support were identified in the student record. From 2017-18 these students are no longer flagged and the audit does not require the same level of testing for this group. The £50m premium now stands at £51m and students continue to receive the required support but are monitored through the college outcome agreement process via an access and inclusion strategy. However as the audit arrangements have changed and the students in receipt of the support are no longer flagged, SFC took the decision to stop counting FTEs for this additional learning for new students. In 2017-18 this meant the FTEs claimed under the Access and Inclusion Fund (previously Extended Learning Support) were reduced from 3,000 to 1,500. In 2018-19 the claim has been reduced again to 750 for those students continuing their studies from previous years. From 2019-20 no FTEs will be claimed for this group.

15. SFC announced in its 2018-19 [funding letter](#) to our Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that we would continue with the associate student scheme for 2018-19 and 2019-20. The Associate Student Scheme is designed to provide additional articulation pathways from college to a HEI. Colleges are delivering around 1,500 places each year as part of this scheme but they were not counted towards the 116k target during the pilot phase. Now that the pilot has ended and this successful scheme is continuing, the decision has been taken to count these associate students places towards the 116k target. In 2018-19 there were 1,503 FTEs enrolled on these associate student programmes being taught at college.
16. Overall this does mean that around 750 fewer places are being counted towards the 116k target as a result of these administrative decisions regarding the Access and Inclusion Fund and the Associate Student Scheme detailed above.
17. In 2017-18 the Scottish Government introduced the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) which provided an additional £10m to deliver additional training opportunities for apprenticeship levy payers. In 2017-18 colleges enrolled 9,065 students on programmes funded by this scheme at a cost of £7m. In 2018-19 the numbers enrolled on these programmes increased to 23,695 with the full £10m being spent. SFC has improved the information we hold on the learning hours for these programmes over the two years, and as a result, although the number of enrolments has more than doubled, the number of FTEs claimed in 2018-19 is now 1,080. In 2017-18 SFC claimed 1,743 FTEs for the FWDF based on claims for similar courses where we did hold information on learning hours delivered. We now believe that this was an overestimate and a more realistic claim for 2017-18 would have been around 1,000 FTEs lower, at 688 FTEs. As a result of these recalculations which are based on the more

robust data now available to us, the total number of FTEs delivered against the target in 2017-18 has been adjusted to 117,641 for 2017-18.<sup>6</sup>

18. SFC continues to count 598 FTEs towards the 116k target for HE places delivered by Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) that were transferred from the college to university sector after the target was set.
19. Figure 2 below shows the the distribution of *all* FTEs delivered across college provisions by mode and level of study. This includes FTEs not funded from the government purse. In total 129,821 FTEs were delivered in 2018-19, a 1.6% decline from 2017-18 (131,953). This figure includes Associate Students. It should also be noted that, as indicated above, in 2015-16 the way FTEs were calculated was changed, having the effect of deflating the number of FTEs slightly.<sup>7</sup>

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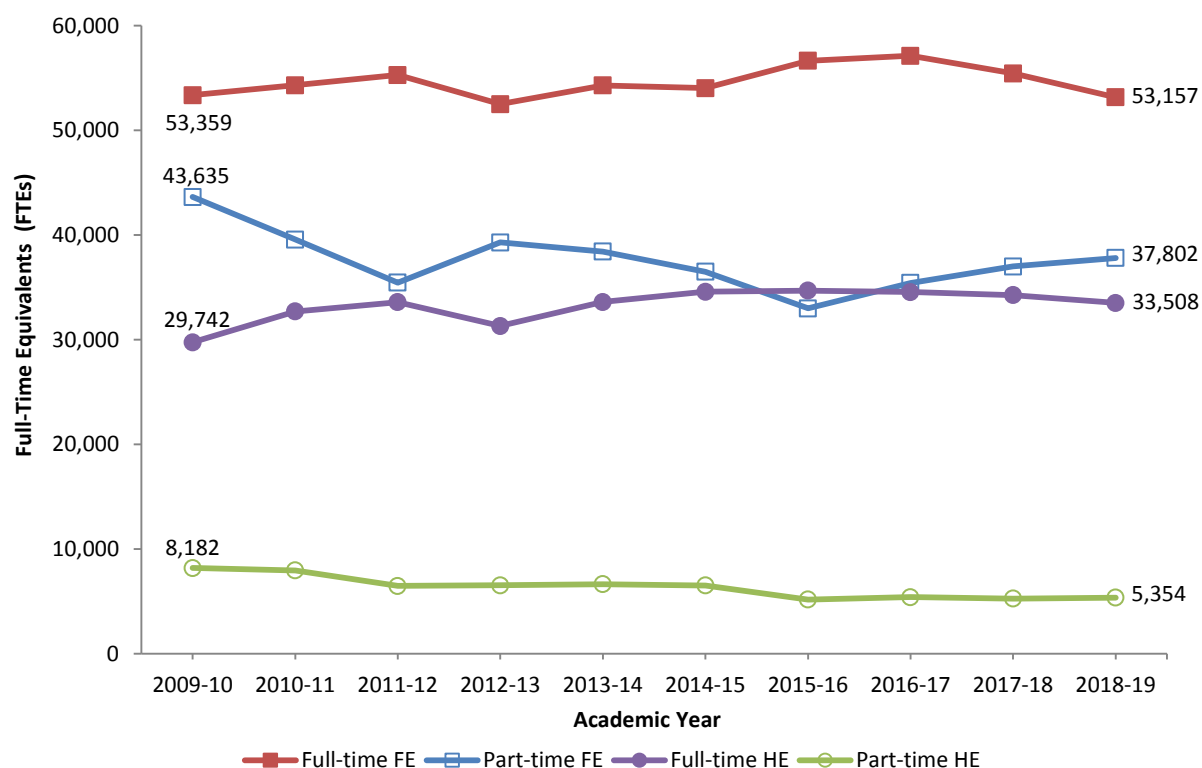
<sup>6</sup> The figure was previously 118,684 in the College Statistics 2017-18 publication.

<sup>7</sup> For details on how the FTE calculation methodology was changed in 2015,16, see Annex A of the College Statistics 2015-16 publication, available here: <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/statistical-publications/statistical-publications-2017/SFCST032017.aspx>



**Figure 2: How has the number of FTEs by mode and level of study changed in the last 10 years?**

*Line chart showing the number of FTEs (all funding sources) delivered by colleges at FE and HE level, by mode of study, since 2009-10*



21. As can be seen from Figure 2, full-time FE has consistently accounted for the majority of FTEs, indicating the prominence of full-time FE above other modes and levels of study. Likewise part-time FE has consistently accounted for the second highest number of FTEs, apart from in 2015-16 where it briefly dipped below full-time HE and then recovered. At HE level on the other hand, full-time FTEs have risen slightly over the last ten years but remain below part-time FE in 2018-19. The amount of learning activity (FTEs) occurring in part-time HE is much lower than that of all others modes and levels of study.
22. In 2018-19 the amount of learning activity taking place on full-time FE programmes was relatively unchanged from a decade ago (down 0.4%, from 53,359 to 53,157), whereas the amount of learning activity taking place on part-time FE programmes was down 13.4% over the same period (from 43,635 to 37,802). Looking now at HE provision, the figure for full-time HE FTEs is up 12.7% since 2009-10 (29,742 to 33,508 in 2018-19), whereas the count for part-time HE FTE's is down 34.5% from 2009-10 (8,182 to 5,354). This is unsurprising considering the greater number of part-time students from 2009-10 and earlier.
23. Nonetheless, the importance of the college sector in delivering HE activity in Scotland should be noted. In 2018-19, 29.9% of all FTEs delivered were for HE

programmes, up 1.8 percentage points from 2009-10. Throughout the last ten years the college sector in Scotland has tended to deliver around 30% of college activity towards HE programmes.<sup>8</sup>

24. At FE level, total full-time FTEs have declined by 4.1% since 2017-18 whilst part-time FTEs have continued to increase (up 1.6% since 2017-18). At HE level, full-time FTEs decreased by 2.2% and part-time FTEs have increased by 1.6% since 2017-18.
25. Full-time HE FTEs peaked in 2015-16, as did full-time FE FTEs in 2016-17, indicating an overall trend towards full-time provision in this part of the decade for both FE and HE levels of study. The College Statistics 2017-18 publication predicted an increase in part-time FTE provision in future years as the number of young people in the population continues to decline and colleges deliver more places for upskilling older age groups. This prediction was correct for 2017-18 to 2018-19, with slight increases in part-time activity for both HE and FE (up 1.6% and 2.2% respectively).

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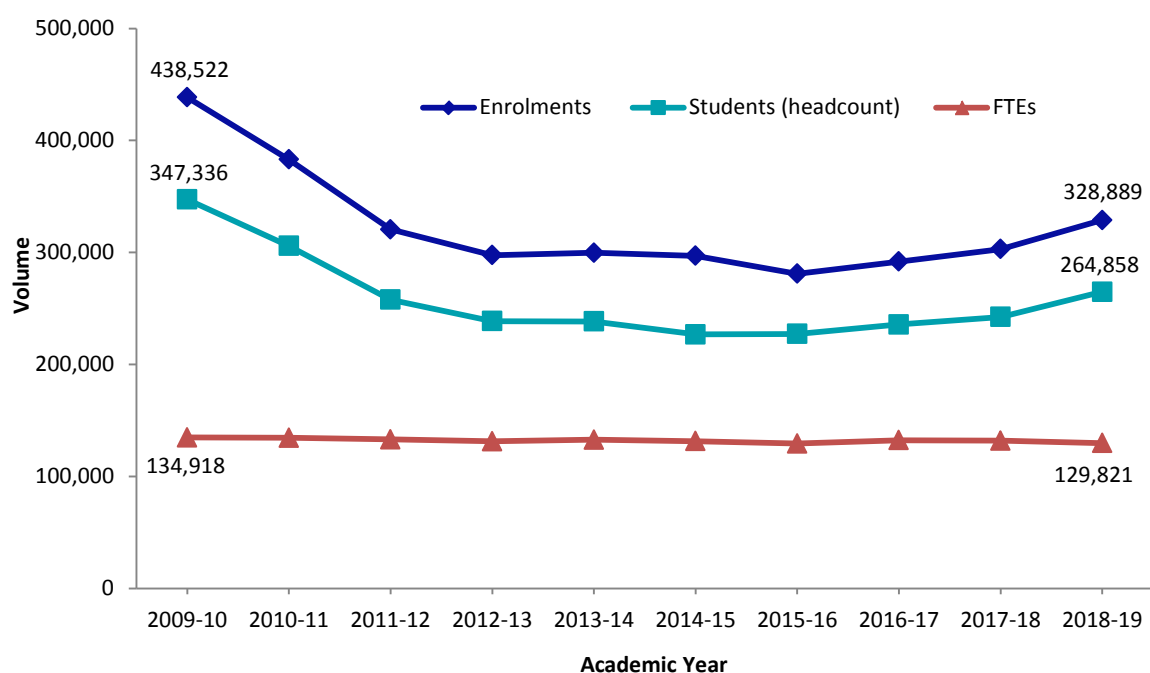
<sup>8</sup> See Background Tables to see the percentage of FTEs for HE programmes each year since 2009-10.

### 3.2 Student numbers (headcounts and enrolments)

27. Student numbers are presented as enrolments, headcounts and FTEs in Figure 3 below. One headcount is equal to one student, however a student can be enrolled on multiple courses within one academic year, therefore we expect the number of enrolments to be higher than the number of students.

Figure 3: How has the number of students, enrolments, and FTEs changed in the last 10 years?

Line chart showing the count of enrolments, students (headcount) and FTEs (all funding sources) since 2009-10



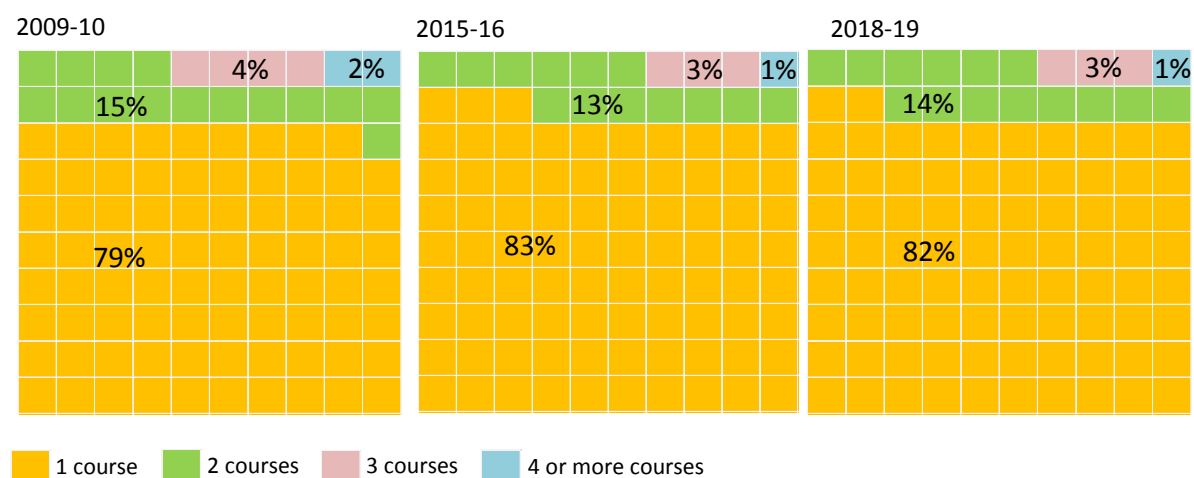
28. Figure 3 shows a ten-year time series for the number of college students, enrolments, and FTEs between 2009-10 and 2018-19. Over the last ten years the number of FTEs has remained relatively stable while student headcounts and enrolments saw a steady decline up to 2012-13 before concurrently increasing from 2015-16 onwards. In 2018-19 the total student headcount and number of enrolments increased by 9.2% and 8.5% on the previous year, the largest year-to-year increase in the last 10 years.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless as of 2018-19, enrolments are 25.0% lower than what they were in 2009-10, while headcounts are 23.7% lower. By comparison FTEs are 3.8% lower than they were a decade ago.

<sup>9</sup> Improvements were made to the student data collection effective from 2018-19 to collect full-student details for more students. This enables us to identify individual students more robustly now. [A more detailed explanation](#) can be found on p. 6 of our FES data collection 2018-19 guidance

29. Figure 3 also indicates that the relationship between enrolments and the number of students (headcount) is much closer than that between FTEs and enrolments or headcount, echoing the data in Figure 4 showing that the typical number of enrolments per student has seen only slight change from a decade ago.
30. SFC was aware of a large increase in very short courses in 2007-08. Two colleges alone enrolled over 20,000 primary school pupils in that year. As a result there were discussions with the sector and a change of guidance that led to a move away from focusing on very short courses and leisure programmes that were not seen to provide the same educational benefit as other courses. This change in policy direction resulted in a decline in student numbers from 2009-10, which, as can be seen in Figure 3 above, the sector was still adjusting from up until 2012-13. This period also coincided with the economic downturn which led to a refocusing of college places towards full-time courses for 16-24 year olds. This refocusing towards full-time provision for young people and away from very short courses and leisure programmes led to a reduction in student numbers. Nonetheless as indicated by the stable number of FTEs throughout the period, the overall *amount* of learning activity within the sector has been consistent and was largely unaffected by the higher number of enrolments and students in 2009-10 to 2011-12.
31. Figure 3 shows both student headcounts and enrolments have increased in the last three academic years with a pronounced change from 2017-18 to 2018-19. The increase in student numbers and enrolments since 2015-16 coincides with the increase in non-recognised qualifications (NRQs) since 2014-15, seen in Figure 5 below.
32. There are a number of reasons why a student might enrol on multiple courses within the same academic year. One is that a particular industry may require engagement across more than one discipline; another is that a student's employment prospects might benefit from undertaking additional courses. If there are a substantial number of students undertaking more than one course in the same academic year, more resources would be invested in those students, which could result in a reduction of overall places available for other students.

**Figure 4: What proportions of students are enrolled on one or more courses?**

*Waffle chart showing the percentage of students (headcount) enrolled on 1 course, 2 courses, 3 courses and 4 or more courses in 2018-19, 2015-16 and 2009-10*



33. Figure 4 shows the percentage of students enrolled on one, two, three, or four or more courses in 2018-19, 2015-16 and 2009-10, allowing for comparison between the three. In 2018-19, most students were enrolled on only one course (82%) and the vast majority (96%) were enrolled on either one or two courses. Almost a fifth (18%) of students were enrolled on more than one course but very few were enrolled on four or more courses (1%). These figures are very similar to those for 2015-16 where 96% were also enrolled on either one or two courses (83% were enrolled on a single course and 13% were enrolled on two courses). A decade ago, a smaller proportion of students studied on a single course (79% in 2009-10), and 21% were enrolled on more than once course (compared to 18% for 2018-19). The above indicates that while the opportunity to simultaneously study on multiple courses is a key characteristic of the college sector in Scotland, the sector has continued to deliver the majority of its provision to students enrolled on a single course.

### 3.3 Non-recognised qualifications and courses lasting under 10 Hours

34. Figure 5 shows that, since, 2009-10, there has been an overall decrease in the number of enrolments on non-recognised qualifications and courses under 10 hours from 177,016 to 113,743 (a 35.7% decrease). Enrolments on NRQs are down 15.6% since 2009-10, although they have seen a

#### What is a Non-Recognised Qualification?

A non-recognised qualification can usually be described as either:

- Non-vocational leisure courses which are often self-funded and typically delivered as weekend or evening courses, or
- Introductory and pre-access courses that do not lead to qualifications recognised by assessors. These are designed to give a grounding in a vocational subject or act as a route back in to vocational learning for people with no or very few qualifications.

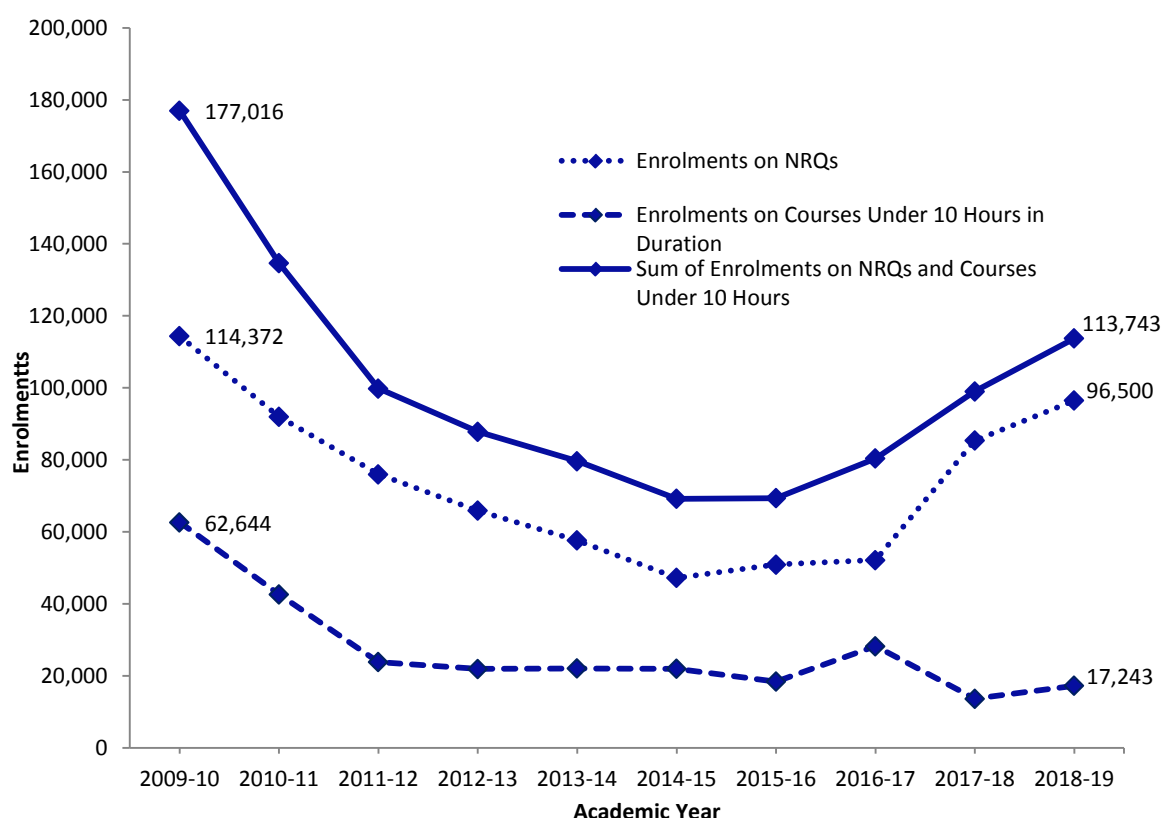


pronounced increase in the last two academic years, whereas enrolments on courses under 10 hours are down 72.5% since 2009-10, having shown a more continuous decline throughout the decade. Between 2017-18 and 2018-19, we did see a 26.2% increase following the previous decline.

**Figure 5: How have enrolments on courses under 10 Hours and on a Non-Recognised Qualification changed in the last 10 years?**

*Line chart showing the count of enrolments on courses under 10 hours in length, enrolments on a non-recognised qualification (NRQ) and the sum of both. Since 2009-10*

*Note: where an enrolment is both to a non-recognised qualification and under 10 hours in duration it is counted only as an enrolment to 'Courses Under 10 Hours in Duration'*



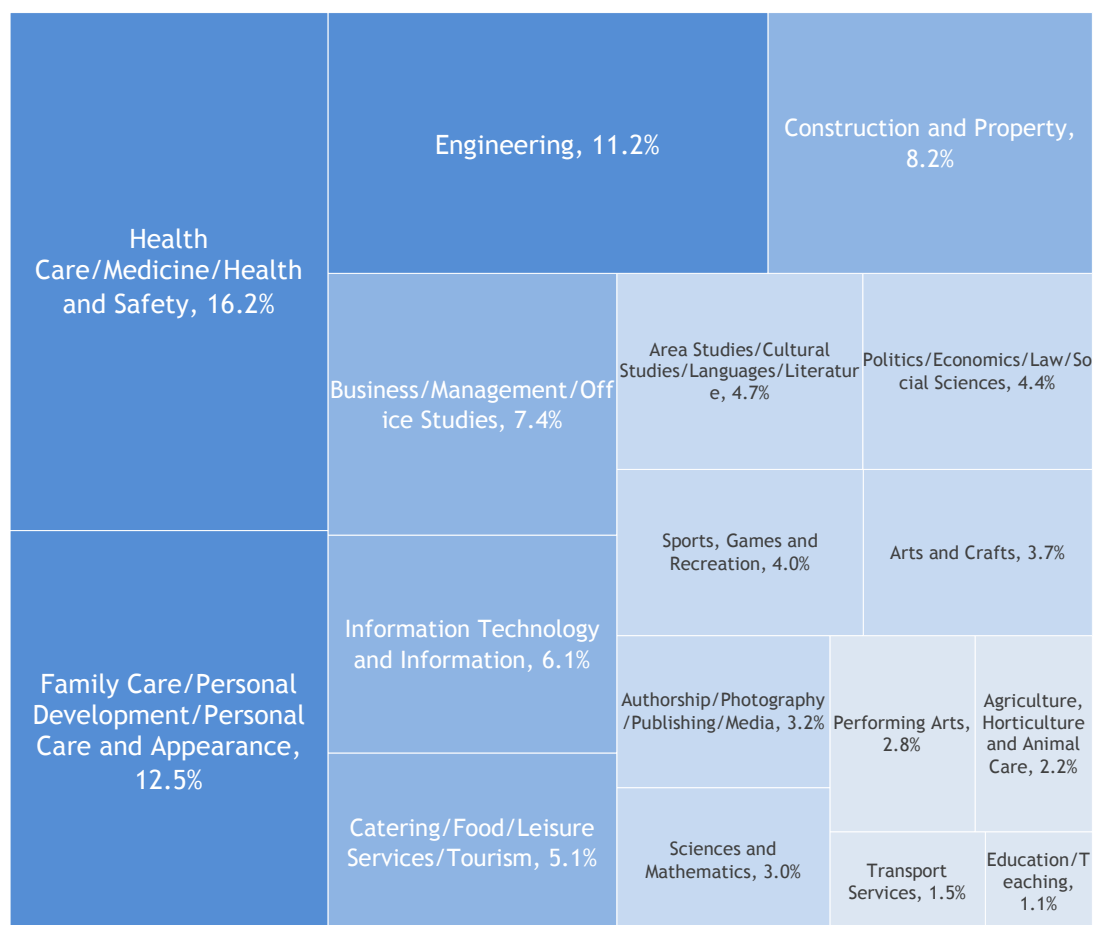
35. In contrast to 2009-10 to 2011-12 where there were higher numbers of enrolments on both NRQs and on courses under 10 hours, the last three academic years have been characterised by increasingly greater numbers of enrolments on NRQs and a decreased number of enrolments on courses under 10 hours, despite an increase of 26.2% between 2017-18 and 2018-19. Enrolments on non-recognised qualifications increased by 13.0% over the same period.
36. The recent increase in NRQs has been driven in part by college delivery to school pupils, particularly primary school pupils, with the aim to introduce people to college study from a younger age as a way to encourage progression

to further education and/or roles in industry. The increase in NRQ has also been driven by allowing children to access STEM programmes and facilities through the college sector as a way to address the gender imbalance in STEM subjects. In 2018-19, primary school pupils accounted for 15.1% of all enrolments on NRQs and 11.6% on courses under 10 hours in duration.

37. The introduction of the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (piloted in 2017-18 and continued in 2018-19) has led to colleges delivering courses to meet the needs of apprenticeship levy payers that, whilst vocational, may not lead to recognised qualifications.

**Figure 6: What do college students study (by % of all FTEs)?**

*Treemap showing the % of all FTEs (all funding sources) by subject area, delivered in 2018-19. Percentages <1.0% have been suppressed*



**Percentages <1.0% have been suppressed:**

Sales, Marketing and Retailing, 0.9%

Humanities, 0.7%

Manufacturing/Production, 0.6%

Services to Industry and Commerce, 0.4%

Oil/Mining/Plastics/Chemicals, 0.1%

Environment Protection/Energy/Cleansing/Security, 0.1%

38. Figure 6 above shows the percentage of all FTEs by subject area, providing a

snapshot of where the greatest proportion of learning activity takes place. Health Care/Medicine/Health and Safety has the greatest share of all FTEs in 2018-19 at 16.2%. This subject area has seen the greatest increase in the share of FTEs since 2009-10, increasing by 2.6 percentage points.<sup>10</sup> This increase is likely due to the growth in demand for early learning and childcare (ELC) providers in order to achieve the Scottish Government priority to make funded ELC available to all three and four year olds and eligible two year olds, with the number of free hours offered to each child per year increasing to 1,140 hours from August 2020 (previously 600 free hours).

39. Engineering saw the second greatest increase from a decade ago, at 2.1 percentage points. Family Care/Personal Development/Personal Care and Appearance saw the greatest decrease from 2009-10, from 15.5% of all FTEs in 2009-10 and having the greatest share, to 12.5% in 2018-19 and having the second greatest share of FTEs in 2018-19. Information Technology and Communication saw the second greatest decrease at 2.8 percentage points. All the subject areas that had less than 1.0% of the FTE share in 2018-19 also had less than 1.0% of the share in 2009-10. We can also see from Figure 6 that over a quarter (28.7%) of all learning activity takes place in subject areas relating to health and care services. While colleges continue to offer a diverse range of subject areas for students to study, the sector delivers a sizeable proportion of its overall provision to support the health and care sectors.

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<sup>10</sup> See Background Tables to compare the number of proportion of FTEs by subject area for 2009-10 and 2018-19.

## Section 4: Student Characteristics: Age and Gender

### Key Findings

- There are far fewer full-time enrolments for ages 15, 16 and 17 compared to a decade ago, with 52.9%, 41.7% and 29.2% decreases in enrolments respectively.
- There are more full-time enrolments of people in ages from 25-40 than there were a decade ago.
- In 2018-19 every year of age from 15 to 24 has a greater number of enrolments of men than women. However for ages 25 and over, we tend to see more female enrolments than male. This is apparent for enrolments in both 2009-10 and 2018-19.
- The participation rate for 18-19 year olds attending college full-time has declined slightly in recent years. In 2018-19, one fifth (20.6%) of 18-19 year olds in the Scottish population attended college full-time, the lowest since 2011-12.
- The total number of 18-19 year olds in the Scottish population has decreased 9.7% over the last decade, and decreased by 2.5% from 2017-18 to 2018-19 alone.
- The gap between male and female enrolments steadily closed from 2009-10 to 2016-17. In 2018-19 the male/female enrolment ratio was 49.4%/50.6%.

41. The section includes a high-level summary of student characteristics in relation to age and gender. These measurements for student activity are used for comparability over time. SFC publishes more detailed information on a broader range of student characteristics in the Report on Widening Access, which is next due to be published in Spring 2020. Last year's publication can be found on the [SFC website](#).

### 4.1 By age

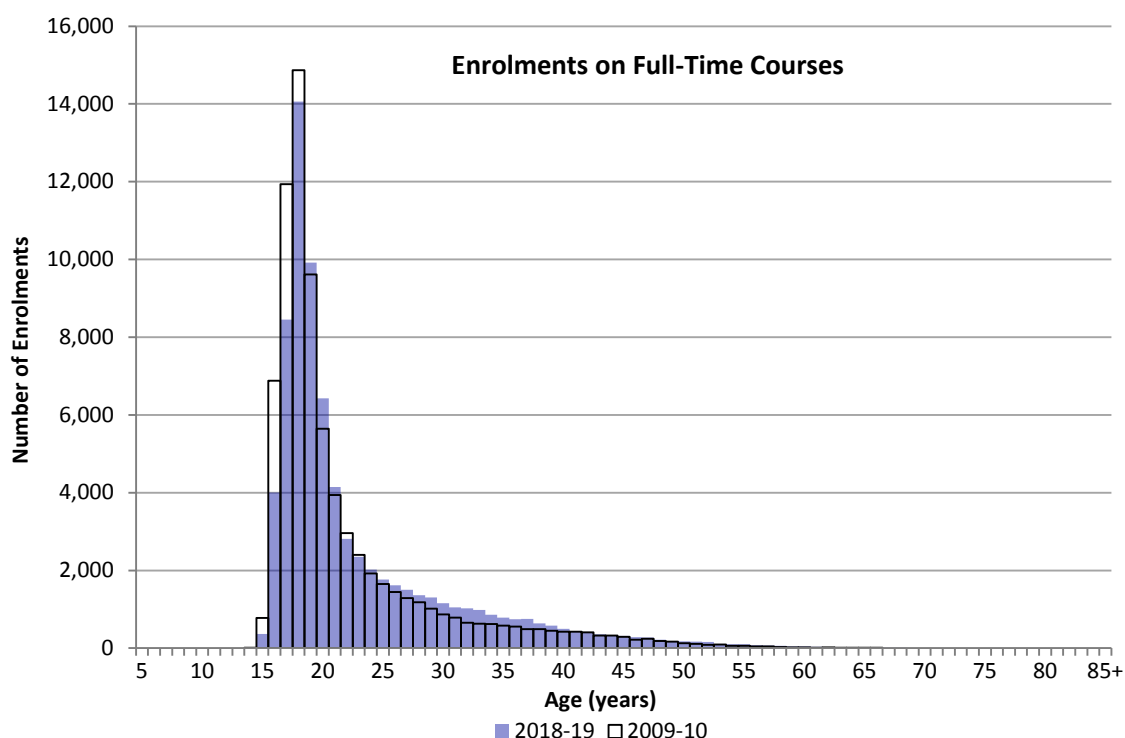
42. College delivery to students aged under 16, 16-19, 20-24 and 25 and over are key metrics included in SFC's national priority measures.<sup>11</sup> The [Opportunities for All](#) publication outlines the Scottish Government's commitment to supporting all young people aged 16-19 to participate in post-16 learning, training or work. The age profiles of college students vary by mode of study as discussed below. Figure 7 shows enrolments by single year of age for full-time and part-time study separately, for 2009-10 and 2018-19.

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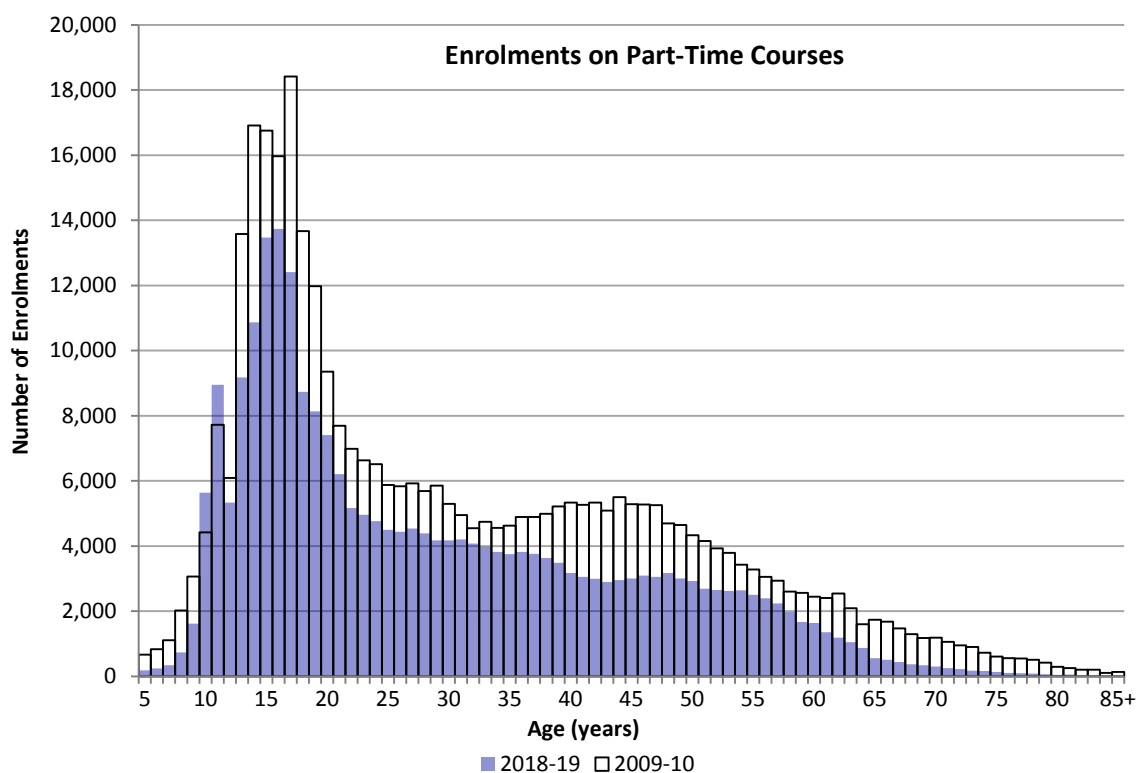
<sup>11</sup> This is discussed in [Guidance for the development of College Outcome Agreements: 2019-20 to 2021-22](#).

**Figure 7: Enrolments by age of student and mode of study, 2009-10 and 2018-19**

*Histogram showing the count of enrolments on full-time courses, by single year of age, in 2009-10 and 2018-19. Counts less than 5 have been suppressed to prevent against identification of individual students*



*Histogram showing the count of enrolments on part-time courses, by single year of age, in 2009-10 and 2018-19*

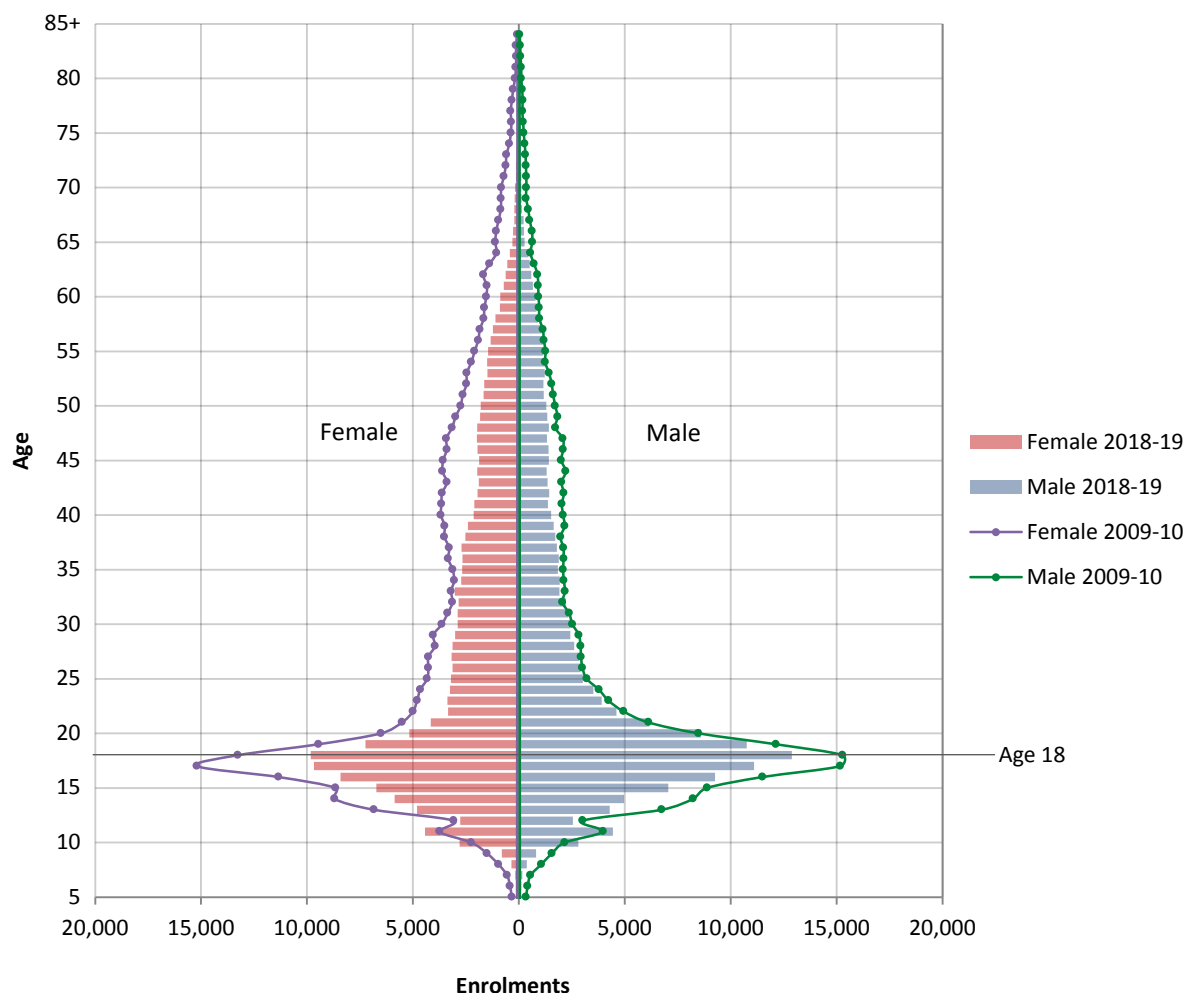




43. From the above we can see that the age profile of full-time enrolments has seen little change between 2009-10 and 2018-19. Full-time 18 year olds had the highest number of enrolments for the two academic years shown. In 2009-10, age 17 had the second highest number of enrolments. A decade later, 17 year olds now have the third highest enrolments and 19 year olds the second highest.
44. One of the largest demographic changes from a decade ago is for full-time enrolments for students aged 25 and over. There are more full-time enrolments now for all ages between 25-40 than there were in 2009-10. Colleges therefore offer more full-time enrolments for older students who are within this age range than they did a decade ago. On the other hand there are far fewer full-time enrolments in 2018-19 than in 2009-10 for ages 15, 16 and 17
45. Full-time enrolments have seen little change between 2009-10 and 2018-19 compared to part-time enrolments. Figure 7 shows that part-time enrolments are lower in 2018-19 than in 2009-10 for almost all ages.
46. Figure 8 (below) includes a male/female gender split in the age breakdown in 2018-19 compared to 2009-10.

**Figure 8: How has the age and gender demographic of enrolments changed since a decade ago?**

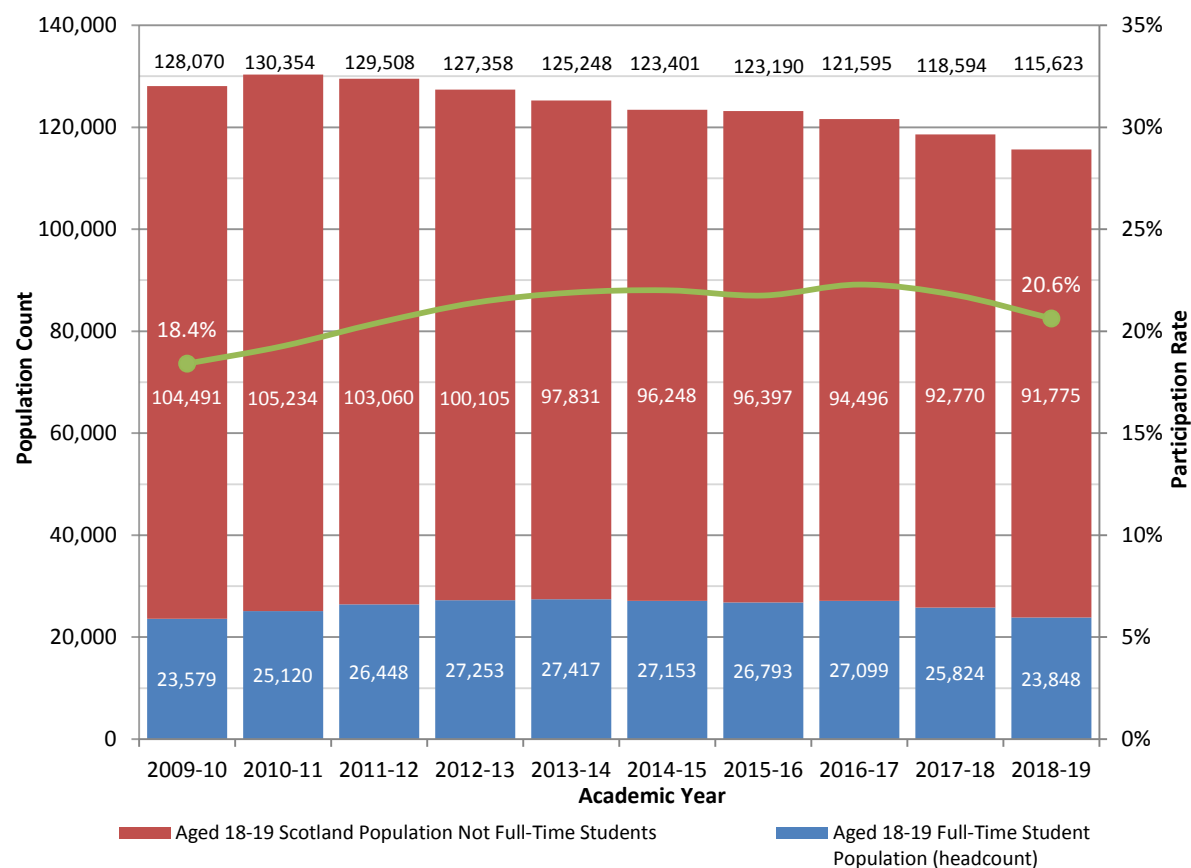
*Population pyramid showing the count of enrolments by single year of age and gender split. 2018-19 vs. 2009-10*



47. Figure 8 above shows that in 2018-19 every single year of age from 15 to 24 has a greater number of enrolments for men than for women. However for ages 25 and over, we tend to see more female enrolments than male. This is apparent for enrolments in both 2009-10 and 2018-19. For males aged between 20 and 38, the numbers of enrolments are largely unchanged since 2009-10. However for women of the same age there tends to be far fewer enrolments in 2018-19 than there was in 2009-10. The female demographic as a whole has broadly seen a greater reduction in enrolments from a decade ago in comparison to males.

**Figure 9: What proportion of Scotland's 18- and 19-year-old population attends college full-time?**

*Figure 9A: Bar chart showing the headcount of 18 and 19 year olds at college full-time and the count of 18 and 19 year olds in Scotland not at college, from 2009-10 to 2018-19. The participation rate is plotted to the secondary y axis. The participation rate is the headcount of 18 and 19 year olds in college full-time divided by the count of 18 and 19 year olds in Scotland*



*Figure 9B: Table showing the breakdown of the proportion of Scotland's 18- and 19-year-old population that attends college full-time*

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Aged 18-19 Full-Time Student Population (headcount)</b>	<b>Aged 18-19 in Scottish Population Not Full-Time Students</b>	<b>Aged 18-19 in the Scottish Population</b>	<b>Aged 18-19 Participation Rate</b>	<b>% change year-on-year</b>
2009-10	23,579	104,491	128,070	18.4%	
2010-11	25,120	105,234	130,354	19.3%	0.9%
2011-12	26,448	103,060	129,508	20.4%	1.2%
2012-13	27,253	100,105	127,358	21.4%	1.0%
2013-14	27,417	97,831	125,248	21.9%	0.5%
2014-15	27,153	96,248	123,401	22.0%	0.1%
2015-16	26,793	96,397	123,190	21.7%	-0.3%
2016-17	27,099	94,496	121,595	22.3%	0.5%
2017-18	25,824	92,770	118,594	21.8%	-0.5%
2018-19	23,848	91,775	115,623	20.6%	-1.1%

Source: National Records of Scotland, Mid-year population estimates

48. Figure 9 above shows the full-time college student population aged 18 to 19 and Scotland's population aged 18-19 who do not attend college full-time. The participation rate is the aged 18-19 full-time student population divided by the total number of 18-19 year olds in the Scottish population. The aged 18-19 Scotland population not full-time college students is calculated by taking the number of 18-19 year olds in the population and subtracting the headcount of 18-19 year old full-time college students. The total height of the stacked bars for each year and the number above the bars shows the total number of 18-19 year olds in the Scottish population. The number of 18-19 year olds in the Scottish population was calculated by ageing forward the population values for younger ages in previous years. This is because the Scottish population of young adults is inflated due to the influx of non-Scottish domiciled students undertaking college and university education in Scotland. This methodology is demonstrated and explained further in Annex C at the end of this report and in the Background Tables.
49. Figure 9 shows that there has been a continuation in the decline in the participation rate for 18-19 year olds since 2017-18, from 21.8% to 20.6% in 2018-19, the lowest it has been since 2011-12. Nonetheless, the participation rate is 2.2 percentage points higher in 2018-19 than it was in 2009-10. For a more complete picture of participation (both full-time and part-time) including by employment, equalities measures and local authority areas, see the Skills

Development Scotland publication [\*Annual Participation Measure for 16-19 year olds in Scotland 2019\*](#).

50. The decreasing number of 18-19 year olds attending college full-time coincides with a steady decrease in the total number of Scottish 18-19 year olds in the Scottish population since 2010-11. The total number of 18-19 year olds in the Scottish population has decreased 9.7% over the last decade, and decreased by 2.5% from 2017-18 to 2018-19 alone (see Annex D). This presents a challenge to the college sector to maintain student numbers in light of a decreasing population in this age group.
51. Over the next few years the young Scottish population (aged 18 to 24) is projected to reduce further, which will likely result in fewer young students attending college. The number of 18-24 year olds in Scotland is projected to be 9.1% lower in 2025 and 1.7% lower in 2030 compared to in 2018.<sup>12 13</sup> This means there will be more places available for school aged and older students to enrol at college and, therefore, there may be further change in the college age profile.

## 4.2 By gender

52. Figure 10 below shows the number of enrolments by male/female gender split from 2009-10 to 2018-19.

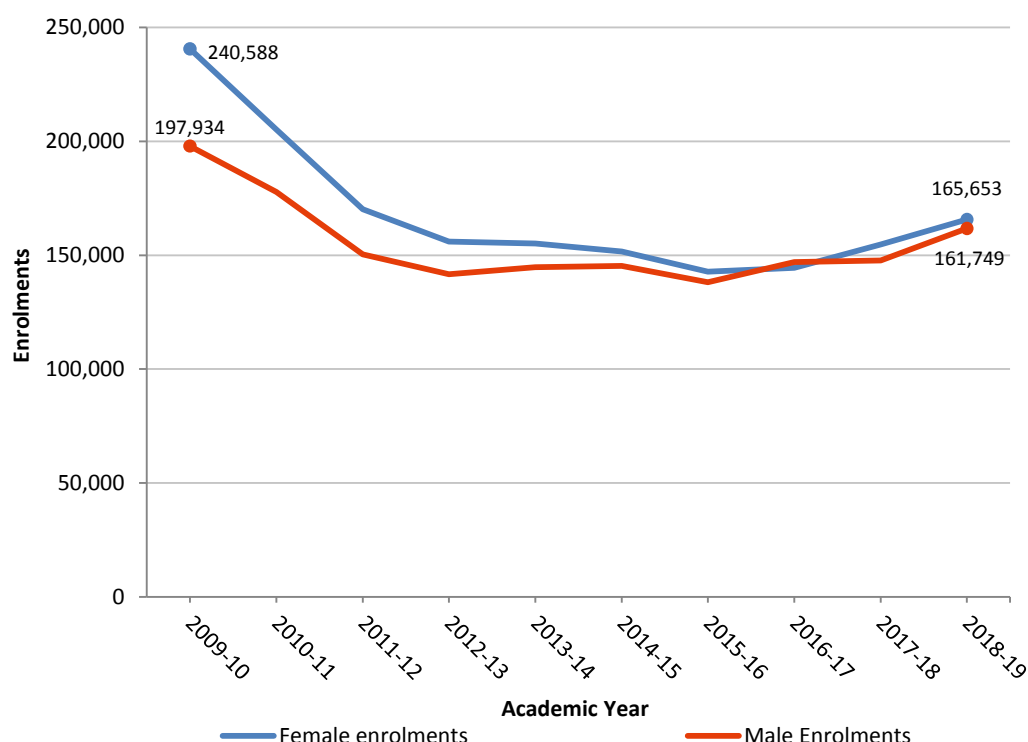
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<sup>12</sup> Source: National Records of Scotland Projected Population of Scotland (2018-based), available here: <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-projections/population-projections-scotland/2018-based>

<sup>13</sup> See worksheet titled *Misc; Population Projections* in the Background Tables workbook.

**Figure 10: How has the gender split of male and female enrolments changed in the last 10 years?**

*Line chart showing the count of enrolments for males and females in the last 10 years*



53. From Figure 10 above we can see that the gap between male and female enrolments steadily closed from 2009-10 to 2016-17, where males had the majority of enrolments over females (50.4% and 49.6% respectively) for the first and only time in the decade shown.<sup>14</sup> The count of enrolments for both males and females grew from 2016-17 to 2018-19, from 147,055 male enrolments and 144,503 female enrolments, to 161,749 and 165,653 in 2018-19 respectively. In the early part of the decade, the number of female enrolments declined more sharply than for male enrolments. From 2012-13 to 2014-15, the number of female enrolments declined while the number of male enrolments grew. Since then, enrolments for males and females have continued to grow, but at different rates each year, with male enrolments increasing more rapidly in 2015-16 to 2016-17 and female enrolments increasing more rapidly in 2016-17 to 2017-18. As of 2018-19, 49.4% of all enrolments were males and 50.6% were females.
54. Figure 11 below shows the male/female gender split of enrolments by level of study. From Figure 11 we can see that enrolments for males and females on HE courses have much greater parity than for FE. As of 2018-19, the numbers of

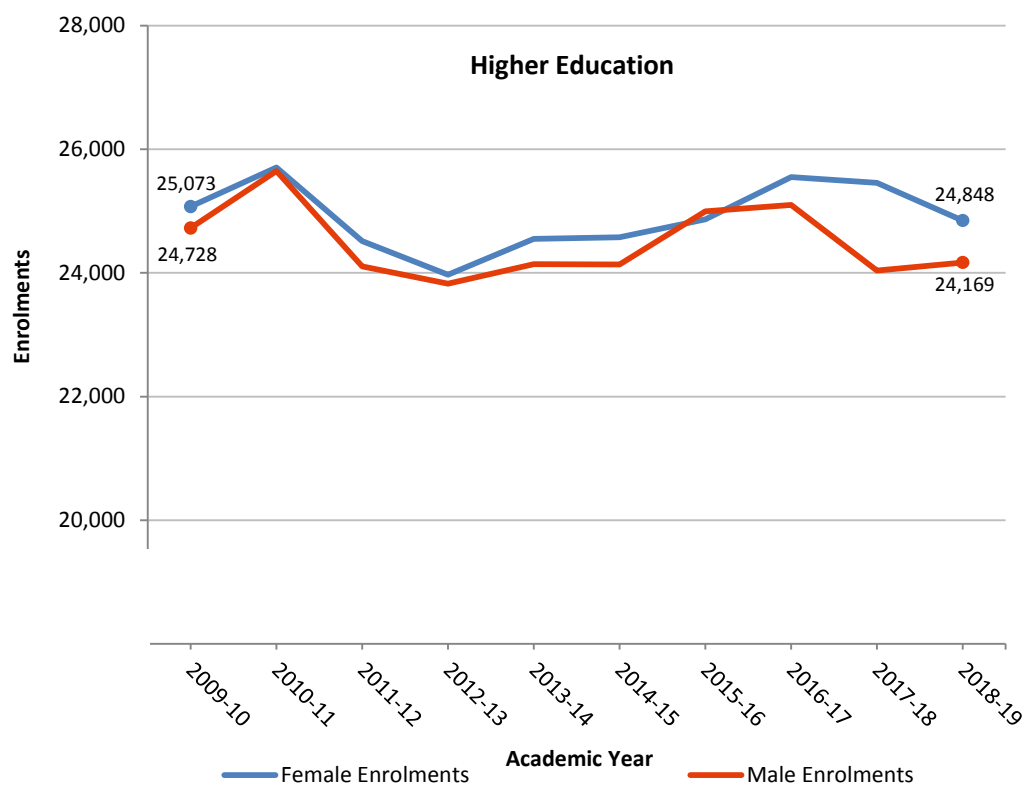
<sup>14</sup> See Background Tables for the male/female percentage ratio for each year.

male and female HE enrolments are largely unchanged from a decade ago.

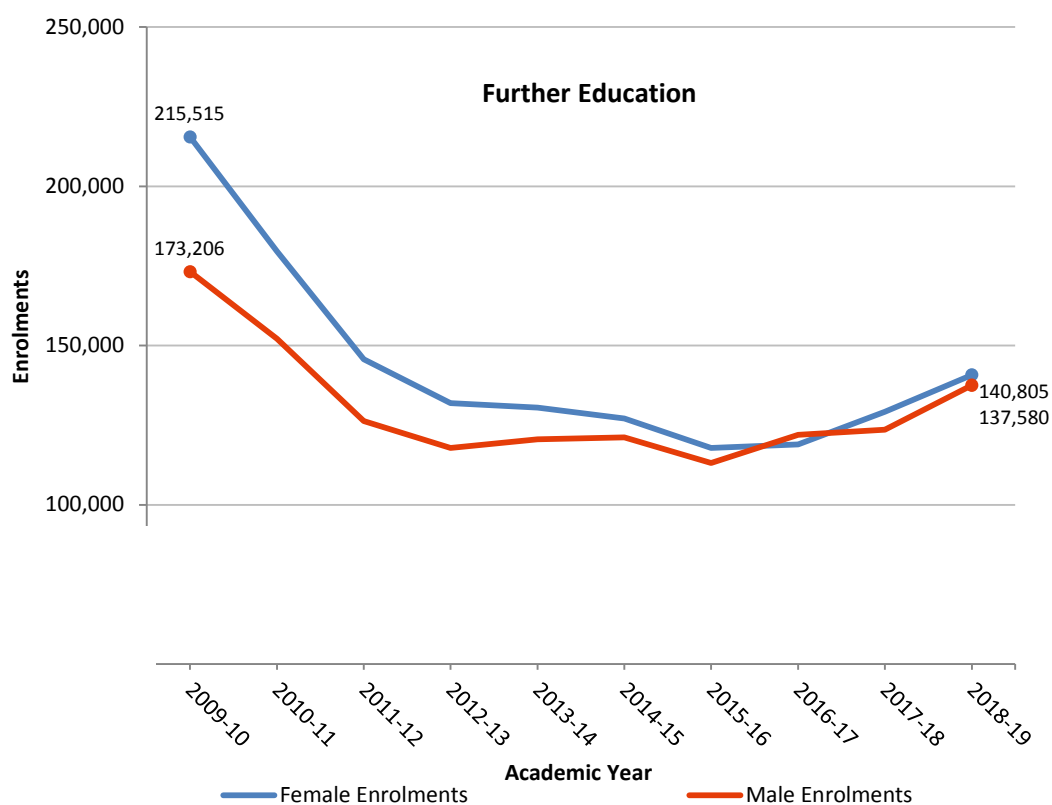
55. FE (also under Figure 11 below) follows the same overall trend as the total enrolments for male and females for all levels of study (Figure 10) and appears to be the driver behind the trend affecting the gender split of the college sector as a whole (shown above in Figure 10).

**Figure 11: How has the gender split of male and female enrolments changed in the last 10 years, by level of study?**

*Line chart showing the count of HE level college enrolments for males and females in the last 10 years*



*Line chart showing the count of FE level college enrolments for males and females in the last 10 years*





56. Gender is another important metric discussed in the [Guidance for the development of College Outcome Agreements: 2019-20 to 2021-22](#). SFC expects institutions to develop and publish Gender Action Plans and to set more ambitious targets. As discussed in this Guidance, colleges are directed to set targets to overcome gender imbalances in the most gendered subject areas to ensure that no subject area has more than a 25/75 gender split. Additional information on gender by subject is provided in the Background Tables and a more detailed analysis can be found in the [SFC Gender Action Plan](#) and corresponding [Technical Report](#) for 2016-17. Previous versions of this Guidance also included gender as one of SFC's national priorities.

## Section 5: Conclusion

57. Overall, the number of FTEs in Scotland's colleges has continued to remain stable whilst enrolments and headcount have increased this year, continuing the upward trend which begun in 2015-16 for these measures.
58. There may be further challenges ahead. The recent downturn in age 18-19 college participation rate (full-time) coinciding with the continuous decrease in the number of 18-19 year olds in Scotland presents a challenge for the sector. Colleges may have to adjust for a shrinking pool of young people and projected continuation in the decrease in the number of 18-24 year olds in the future. Data for the last four academic years has shown that there is a resurgence in part-time FE enrolments and a downward trend in full-time FE enrolments, which points to a returning trend of FE students electing to study part-time rather than on full-time courses. Therefore the declining number of 18-19 year olds in Scotland taking part in full-time college study must be taken in context of the growing prominence of part-time FE study.
59. The Commission on Widening Access (CoWA), established in 2015 to advise ministers on how to meet the Scottish Government's commitment to widening university access for students from the most deprived areas, will continue to have important implications for the college sector. The Commissioner's [second annual report](#) from June 2019 reiterates the need for the university sector to increase recruitment from the most deprived areas through a whole-sector approach. This could impact the college sector's ability to recruit for HE courses from the most deprived areas, as Scotland's universities have been asked to increase their own recruitment from that cohort.
60. Some aspects of the college sector have not been covered in this report, such as various student characteristics and trends surrounding learning hours. Student characteristics will be addressed, with more relevance and detail, in other reports such as the Report on Widening Access which is [scheduled](#) to be published in Spring 2020 Previous years can be found on SFC's [Statistics Publication Schedule](#).
61. In the meantime, trends for protected characteristics in the college sector can be explored using the [Infact Database](#).

## Further Information

62. The [Infact Database](#) allows for more detailed analysis of provision within Scotland's colleges. Please note that figures may differ from those presented here. FTE figures may differ as Infact also includes FTE figures for students not funded by SFC. Please also note that headcount figures may differ, as this report will count a student once irrespective of how many colleges they attended, whereas Infact will count them at each college.
63. All charts and data shown in this report are available in background tables provided on the [SFC website](#).
64. A publication detailing College Performance Indicators for 2018-19 is due to be published on the [SFC website](#) in January 2020. Student numbers presented in this report may differ from those contained in other publications as the reports are prepared for different purposes. For example, the College Performance Indicators publication excludes students who begin courses in January and finish in December of the same year as results will not be available for these students until the course ends. However in this report, activity relating to these students is counted.
65. The [SFC Report on Widening Access](#) presents further statistics on widening access in the College and University sectors whilst [SFC Higher Education Student and Qualifiers](#) covers HE activity delivered in Scotland by universities and colleges.

## Annexes

### Annex A: Notable changes in external factors affecting the college sector

Date	Change	Impact on the trends presented in this report
2008-09	Colleges directed to prioritise more substantial courses designed to improve employment prospects.	Reduction in number of students enrolled on very short programmes of study unlikely to lead to employment or higher level of study.
2011-12	Decision to focus school / college courses towards the senior phase of high school.	Reduction in college activity targets of 5%, but students affected continue to have a full-time place at school.
2012-13	Introduction of College Outcome Agreement.  Transfer of funded learning hours from SFC to SDS.	Reduction in SFC funded learning hours delivered to those aged 16 to 24, with this activity being commissioned by the SDS Employability Fund (equivalent to 586 FTEs in 2016-17).
2015-16	WSUMs replaced with Credits and removal of full-time tariffs.	Hours of learning reduce under the Credit system as a result of improvements that removed funding considerations and created a purer measure of activity.
2015-16	Commission on Widening Access (CoWA) established.	This could impact the college sector's ability to recruit for HE courses from the most deprived areas as Scotland's Universities have been asked to increase their own recruitment from that cohort.

## Annex B: College outcome agreements

67. As part of the Outcome Agreement process, SFC introduced a range of measures to be used to help measure and assess the impact of the Outcome Agreements across a range of key priority areas.
68. The table below shows the 2014-15 to 2018-19 figures for some of the measures in line with the current Outcome Agreements.

Selected national performance measures, 2014-15 to 2018-19

Measure	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Credits delivered	1,755,601	1,752,536	1,762,032	1,778,466	1,753,330
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners Under 16	2.6%	2.7%	2.7%	3.3%	4.0%
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 16-19	47.7%	46.9%	46.6%	45.2%	43.4%
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 20-24	22.2%	21.8%	21.5%	21.1%	21.1%
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 25 and over	27.6%	28.7%	29.2%	30.4%	31.5%
Proportion of Credits to Female learners	51.4%	51.7%	51.3%	51.5%	51.5%
Proportion of Credits to Male learners	48.6%	48.3%	48.6%	48.5%	48.0%
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners from the 10% most deprived areas	16.7%	16.9%	17.2%	16.5%	16.6%
Proportion of Credits to learners from a care experienced background	0.3%	1.0%	1.6%	2.0%	3.7%
Proportion of Credits to BME learners	5.7%	6.0%	6.4%	7.0%	7.3%
Proportion of Credits to Disabled learners	16.0%	16.8%	17.1%	18.8%	21.8%

69. Further information on Outcome Agreements can be found on the [SFC website](#).

## Annex C: Methodology for calculating the count of and participation rate of 18-19 year olds in Scotland

70. The Scottish population of young adults (particularly of 18 and 19 year olds) is inflated due to the influx of non-Scottish domiciled students undertaking college and university education in Scotland. Therefore, in order to calculate a more representative participation rate of the proportion of 18 and 19 year olds undertaking college courses, who would be residing in Scotland regardless of their education path, population values for younger people have to be aged forward. This is demonstrated in the table below. For example, to calculate the population of 18 and 19 year olds in Scotland in 2018-19, the population of 16 and 17 year olds in 2016-17 has been aged forward by two years so that they are calculated as 17 and 18 year olds in 2017-18 and 18 and 19 year olds in 2018-19 (highlighted in yellow and underlined).

Calculated count			
Age	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
16	<u>56,863</u>	55,594	53,470
17	<u>58,760</u>	<u>56,863</u>	55,594
18	59,834	<u>58,760</u>	<u>56,863</u>
19	61,761	59,834	<u>58,760</u>

Source: National Records of Scotland, Mid-year population estimates

# **Annex D: The proportion of 18-19 year olds in the Scottish population who attended college full-time, from 2009-10 to 2018-19**

The number Aged 18-19 in the Scottish Population is calculated by ageing forward the population values for younger people in previous years. This is explained and demonstrated in Annex C. The participation rate is the Aged 18-19 Full-Time Student Population divided by the number Aged 18-19 in the Scottish Population.

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Aged 18-19 Full-Time Student Population (headcount)</b>	<b>Aged 18-19 in Scottish Population Not Full-Time Students</b>	<b>Aged 18-19 in the Scottish Population</b>	<b>Aged 18-19 Participation Rate</b>	<b>% change year-on-year</b>
2009-10	23,579	104,491	128,070	18.4%	
2010-11	25,120	105,234	130,354	19.3%	0.9%
2011-12	26,448	103,060	129,508	20.4%	1.2%
2012-13	27,253	100,105	127,358	21.4%	1.0%
2013-14	27,417	97,831	125,248	21.9%	0.5%
2014-15	27,153	96,248	123,401	22.0%	0.1%
2015-16	26,793	96,397	123,190	21.7%	-0.3%
2016-17	27,099	94,496	121,595	22.3%	0.5%
2017-18	25,824	92,770	118,594	21.8%	-0.5%
2018-19	23,848	91,775	115,623	20.6%	-1.1%

Source: National Records of Scotland, Mid-year population estimates

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## Metadata

Metadata Indicator	Description
Publication Title	College Statistics 2018-19
Description	Reports on up to ten academic years of data on college student numbers in the form of headcounts, course enrolments, credits and Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) as measures of college student activity in Scotland.
Theme	Further and Higher Education provision at Scotland's colleges.
Topic	Student information
Format	PDF and Excel Tables
Data Source(s)	The majority of data reported in this publication is collected and quality assured by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) as part of the Further Education Statistical (FES) return. More information on the FES data collection process can be found on the <a href="#">SFC website</a> . Population data used to calculate the age 18-19 full-time college participation rate is sourced from National Records Scotland <a href="#">Mid-Year Population Estimates</a> . The population projections for people in Scotland aged 18-24 are taken from National Records of Scotland <a href="#">Projected Population of Scotland (2018-based)</a> .
Date that data are acquired	College statistics FES return: October 2019
Release date	28/01/2020
Frequency	Annual
Timeframe of data and timeliness	Trend data are presented as a time series continuation from the 2009-10 academic year (AY) to the 2018-19 AY. Data is also presented for the 2009-10 AY vs. the 2018-19 AY to allow for comparison between the two years. Data is also presented for the 2009-10 AY vs. the 2015-16 AY vs. the 2018-19 AY to allow for comparison across the three years.
Continuity of data	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 to the 2018-19 edition of this report.
Revisions relevant to this publication	The total number of government funded FTEs for 2017-18, shown in <i>Figure 1: How many FTEs have been delivered against the target?</i> has been adjusted from 118,684 as reported in last year's publication to 117,641



	in this latest publication. This is because as we now have a better estimation of the number of Flexible Workforce Development Fund (FWDF) FTEs that were delivered in 2017-18. This is explained in more detail in section 3.1 of the report.
Relevance and key uses of these statistics	SFC collects data on provision at colleges in Scotland through the Further Education Statistics (FES) data collection.
Accuracy	The guidance issued by SFC for the submission of the Scottish college records is on the <a href="#">SFC website</a> .
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 <a href="#">accessibility of the website</a> .
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 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 <a href="#">Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics</a> undertaken in 2013 by UK Statistics Authority, as part of Assessment Report 255.
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