



Scottish Funding Council  
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

## College Statistics 2019-20

# SFC Statistics

Issue Date: 26 January 2021

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Summary: This publication provides an overview of college sector statistics from 2010-11 to 2019-20. Estimates of student numbers for the 2020-21 session are also provided on an experimental basis.

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

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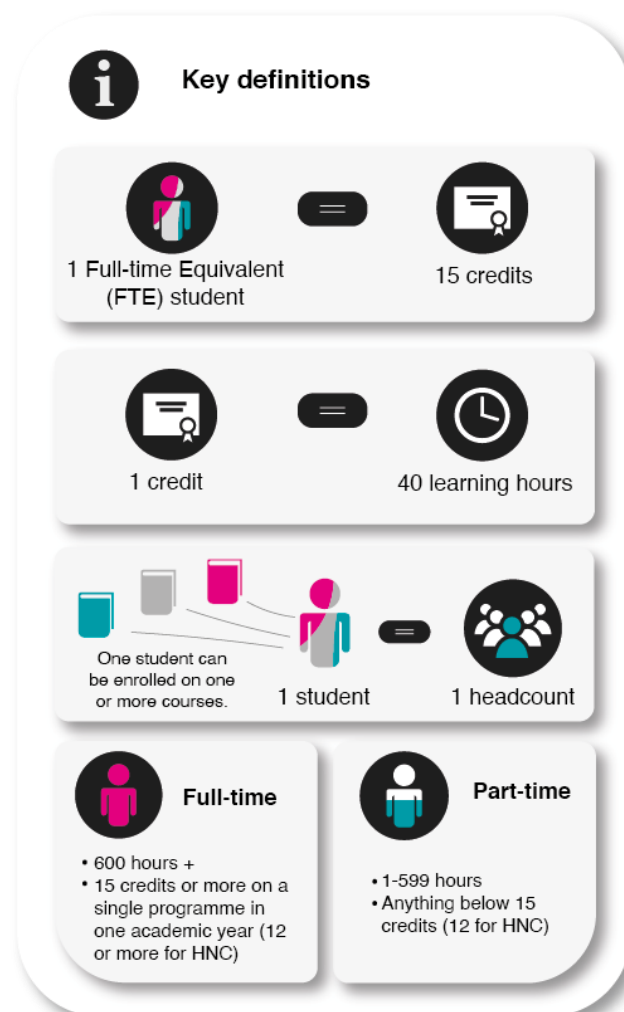
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## Executive Summary

1. This report provides a statistical overview of the college sector in Scotland for the academic year 2019-20 and shows how these figures have changed over the last ten years, since 2010-11. 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 reporting period covers the early months of the global COVID-19 crisis which presented a unique and significant external shock to the further and higher education system in Scotland. Colleges pivoted rapidly to move learning online but these unprecedented circumstances presented colleges with particular challenges, notably the ability to deliver practical and work-based learning. Those challenges notwithstanding, colleges adapted quickly, taking swift action to protect staff and students' wellbeing and contribute to the national effort to tackle the virus and support vulnerable communities. However, the ability to enrol new students during this period was more difficult than in previous years.
3. Overall, the number of FTEs in Scotland's colleges in 2019-20 has continued to remain stable exceeding the key FTE target despite the challenging circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic. Enrolments and headcount have decreased this year mainly occurring during the months of April and May due to the national lockdown. This ended the upward trend which began in 2015-16 and continued until 2018-19 for these measures. Most of these enrolments and students were students on courses with lower hours so large downturns did not have a significant impact on overall teaching activity.
4. Colleges will have a shrinking pool of 18-24 year olds until 2024. However from 2021-22 we will begin to see an increase in the number of 18 year olds. The last four academic years have 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.

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

- Despite the COVID-19 pandemic severely limiting enrolment in April and May, the college sector exceeded the Scottish Government's FTE target by 1,397 FTEs in 2019-20, delivering 117,666 FTEs.
- The total number of 18-19 year-olds in the Scottish population has decreased 13.6% over the last decade and decreased by 2.6% from 2018-19 to 2019-20 alone. However, the participation rate for 18-19 year-olds in the Scottish population attending college full-time has remained stable. In 2019-20, one fifth (20.9%) of 18-19 year olds in the Scottish population attended college full-time. 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. See Figure 10.
- At Further Education (FE) level, full-time FTEs (all funding sources) have remained the same since 2018-19 whilst part-time FTEs have decreased (down 2.7%). At Higher Education (HE) level, full-time FTEs decreased by 1.5% and part-time FTEs decreased by 11.3% since 2018-19. See Figure 2.
- These reductions largely took place during April and May when FTE's were down 79.1% (1,797 FTE) from 2018-19. Between August and March FTEs were up 0.3% (318 FTE) from 2018-19. See Figure 3.
- Whilst FTEs have remained more stable in recent years, in 2019-20 the total student headcount and number of enrolments decreased by 9.8% and 8.1% respectively from the previous year, returning to similar numbers as in 2017-18. These reductions largely occurred again between April and May. The period between 2017-18 and 2018-19 saw the largest year-to-year increases in the last 10 years. See Figure 4.
- Enrolments on non-recognised qualifications have decreased by 2.5% since 2018-19. Enrolments on courses under 10 hours in duration have decreased by 37.8% since 2018-19. See Figure 6.



# Key statistics




**302,092**

Enrolments to  
courses



**117,666**

FTEs\*

1397 above target in 2019-20 



**1 in 5 (20.9%)**

of 18- to 19-year-olds in the  
Scottish population attended  
college full-time in 2019-20



**239,004**

Student headcount

Students may enrol on  
multiple courses

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

## Section 1: Introduction

### Report Context

6. 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 2010-11 to 2019-20.<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>
7. 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 years),<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.

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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 2019-20, available at <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/guidance/guidance-2019/SFCGD022019.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/>.

8. SFC funds colleges for the delivery of Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) based on the volume of activity delivered in credits, with one credit equivalent to 40 hours of learning. One FTE then is equivalent to 600 hours of learning. Definitions of the different measurements used throughout this report can be found in the 'Key Definitions' box on page 6 and the 'Why we use Full-time Equivalents' box on page 13.
9. Background tables containing data for all the charts, tables and annexes found in this report can be downloaded from the [SFC website](#). The SFC also offers an Open Data Portal for querying and extracting further college student data via the [Infact Database](#). This provides an interface which allows users to query college data by the number of enrolments, credits, headcounts and FTEs across a range of variables and time frames with some data going back to 2000-01.<sup>5</sup>
10. 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 2019-20, which is due to be published in Spring 2021. 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

11. 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 2019-20](#). A yearly breakdown of credits delivered across key priority areas for the Outcome and Impact Framework is detailed in Annex B, giving an indication of who the college serves.
12. 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 1,397 FTEs in 2019-20, delivering 117,666 FTEs.
- At FE level, full-time FTEs (all funding sources) have remained identical to 2018-19 whilst part-time FTEs have decreased (down 2.9% since 2018-19). At HE level, full-time FTEs decreased by 1.5% and part-time FTEs have decreased by 11.3% since 2018-19.
- The total student headcount and total number of enrolments have decreased to similar levels to 2017-18 marking a shift from the large increase seen in 2018-19. Student headcounts and enrolments have fallen by 9.8% and 8.2% respectively since 2018-19. However this does not reflect a large change in FTE which indicates a change in focus of provision rather than lower amounts of teaching activity.
- Most students in 2019-20 were enrolled on only one course (81%) and the vast majority (94%) were enrolled on either one or two courses.
- Enrolments on non-recognised qualifications have decreased by 2.5% since 2018-19. Enrolments on courses under 10 hours in duration decreased by 37.8% over the same period.
- In 2019-20 28.9% of all learning activity (FTEs) took place in subject areas relating to health and care services.
- Early results for 2020-21 show that at FE level 2020-21 Quarter 1 Full Time enrolments are down 4.3% on 2019-20. Full Time HE enrolments are up on the previous year's quarterly submission by 6.1%.

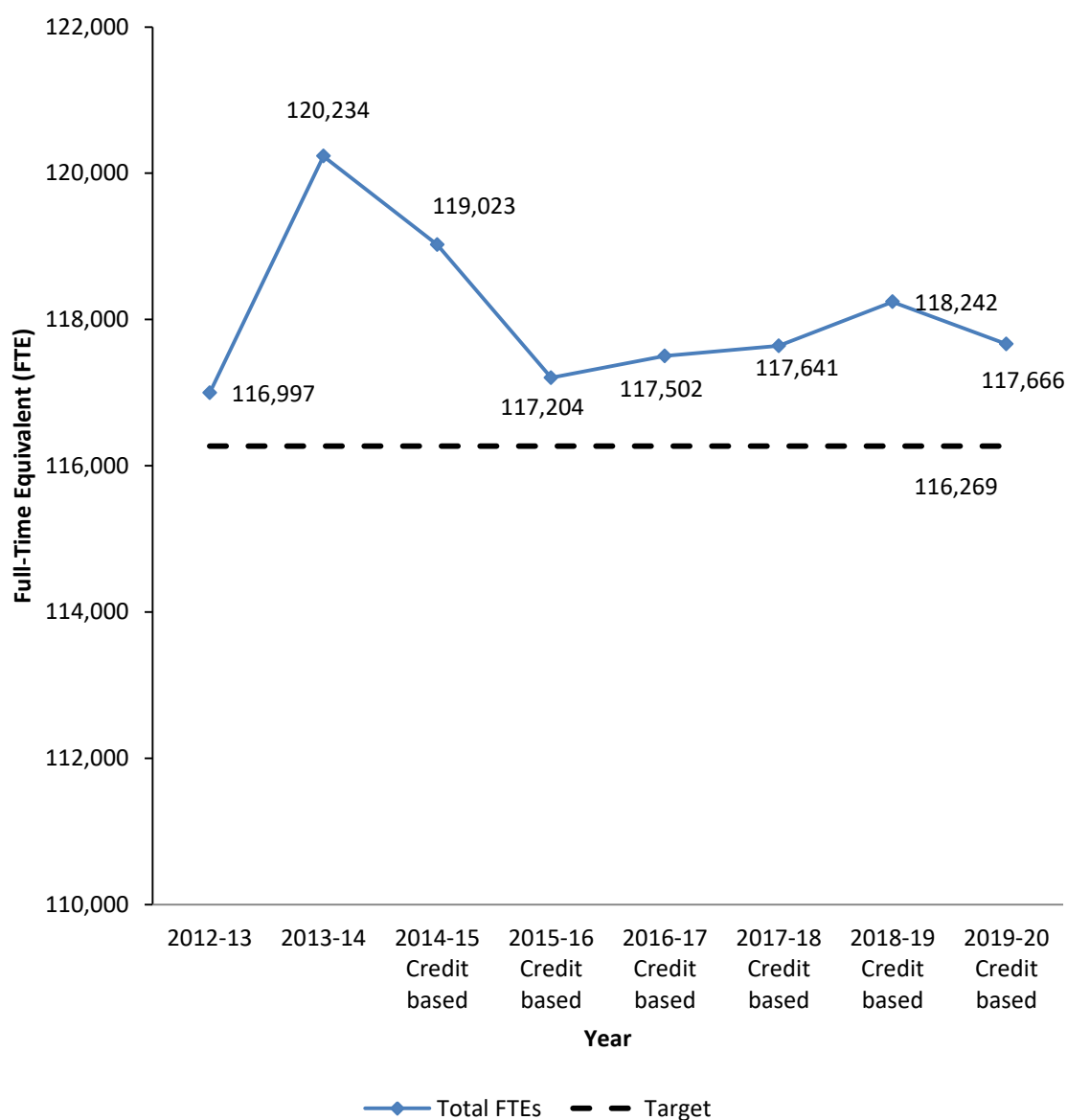
13. This section focuses on trends across college provision from 2010-11 to 2019-20, considering the activities delivered, such as FTEs, headcounts and enrolments. For the first time we have also included some projected FTEs for 2020-21 based on current in year data, on an experimental basis. We have chosen to do this given the fast moving environment in which we are operating and earlier release of in-year data will assist in driving decision making.

### 3.1 Full-time equivalents (FTEs)

14. 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.

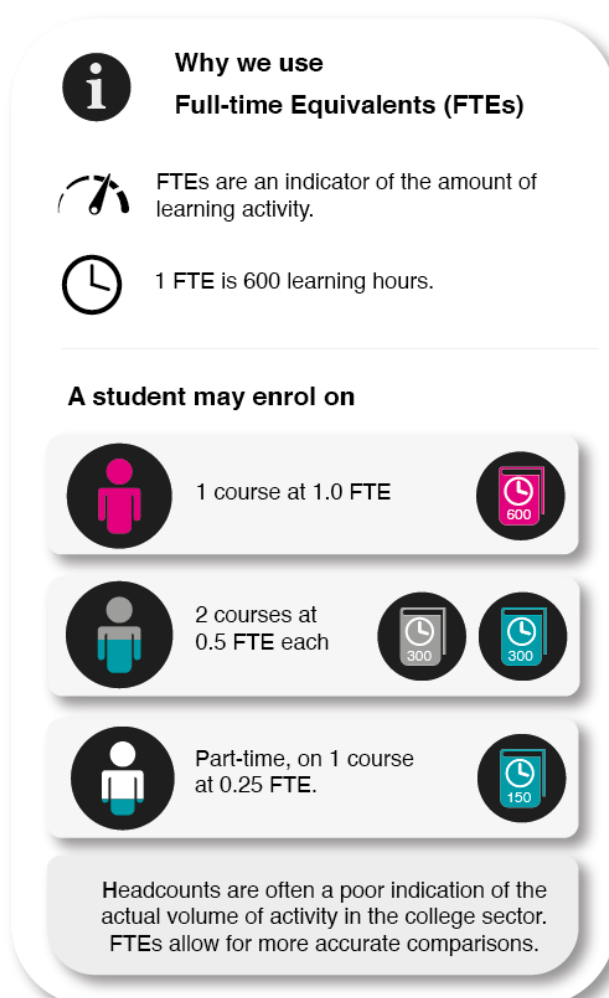
Figure 1: How many FTEs have been delivered against the target?

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



15. The sector exceeded the 116k target by 1,397 FTEs in 2019-20, delivering 117,666 FTEs.
16. The college sector has exceeded the 116k FTE target every year since it was introduced in 2012-13.

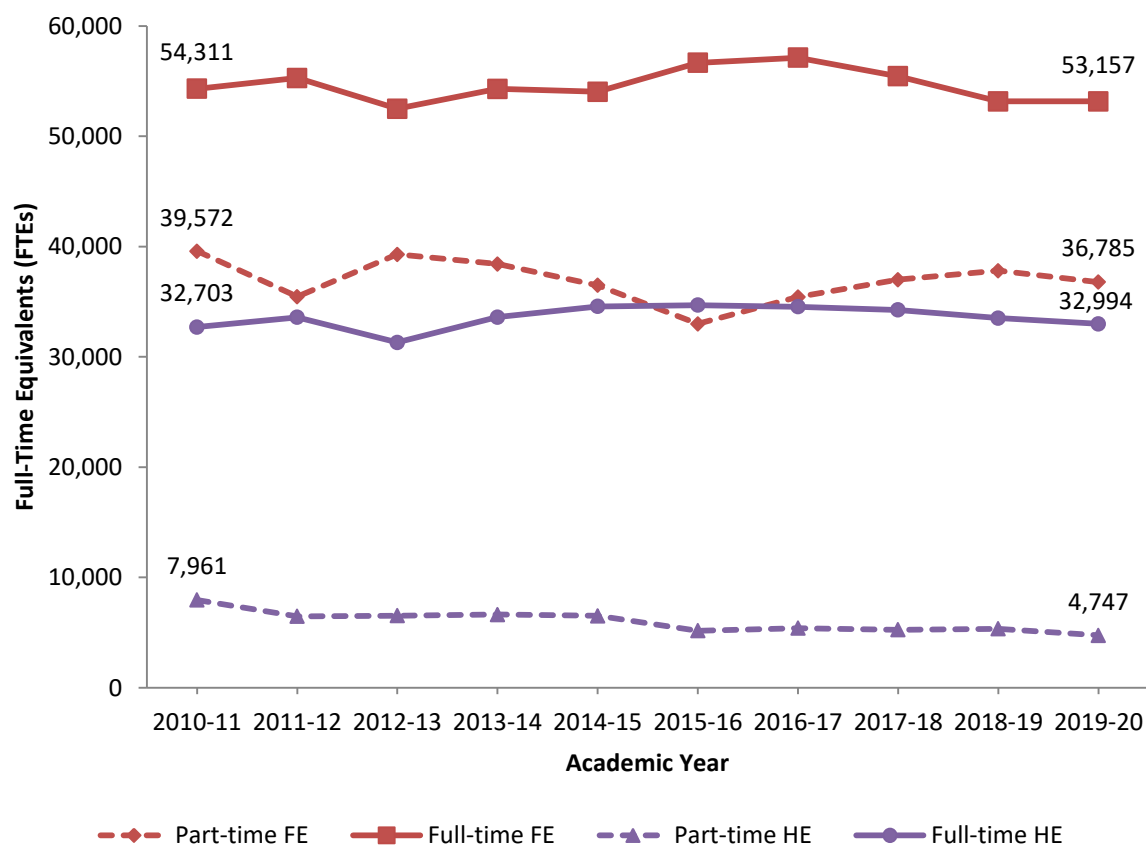
17. There have however been some technical changes to how FTEs have been counted over this period and these are described in Annex E. The Employability Fund ended in 2016-17 and was replaced by the 'Flexible Workforce Development Fund' from 2017-18.



18. 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 127,683 FTEs were delivered in 2019-20, a 1.6% decline from 2018-19 (129,821).

**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 2010-11*



19. As can be seen from Figure 2, full-time FE has consistently accounted for the largest share 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 2019-20. The amount of learning activity (FTEs) occurring in part-time HE is much lower than that of all others modes and levels of study and has been steadily declining over the past ten years (down 11.3% on 2018-19 and down 40.0% on 2010-11).
20. In 2019-20 the amount of learning activity taking place on full-time FE programmes has decreased slightly from a decade ago, down 2.1%, from 54,311 FTEs to 53,157 FTEs. The amount of learning activity taking place on part-time FE programmes was down 7% over the same period (from 39,572 to 36,785). Looking now at HE provision, the figure for full-time HE FTEs is up 0.9% since 2010-11 (32,703 to 32,994), whereas the count for part-time HE FTEs is down 40.3% from 2010-2011 (7,961 to 4,747). In recent years the college sector

has met its activity targets but by a lesser margin than in 2010-11 and some earlier years. This helps explain the managed reductions in activity described above.

21. While FE remains the prominent level of study, the college sector plays an important role in delivering HE activity in Scotland. In 2019-20, 29.6% of all FTEs delivered were for HE programmes, down 0.7% percentage points from 2010-11. Throughout the last ten years the college sector in Scotland has tended to deliver around 30% of its activity towards HE programmes.<sup>6</sup>
22. At FE level, full-time FTEs have remained the same as 2018-19 whilst part-time FTEs have decreased (down 2.9% since 2018-19). At HE level, full-time FTEs decreased by 1.5% and part-time FTEs have fallen by 11.3% since 2018-19. This can be partly explained by the impact of lockdown. For example our colleges had additional funding available to deliver short courses to industry as part of the FWDF but were unable to deliver these courses in these difficult times. This reduced the number of places delivered by colleges in 2019-20 but the funding for these places has been carried forward to 2020-21.
23. 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 decrease of 18-24 year olds will continue until 2025 however from 2021-22 onwards the number of 18 year olds will begin to increase<sup>7</sup>. 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). However 2019-20 saw an end to this trend which we believe is largely due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic which reduced the capacity of colleges to provide part time courses from March 2020 onwards. This will be explored in Figure 5.

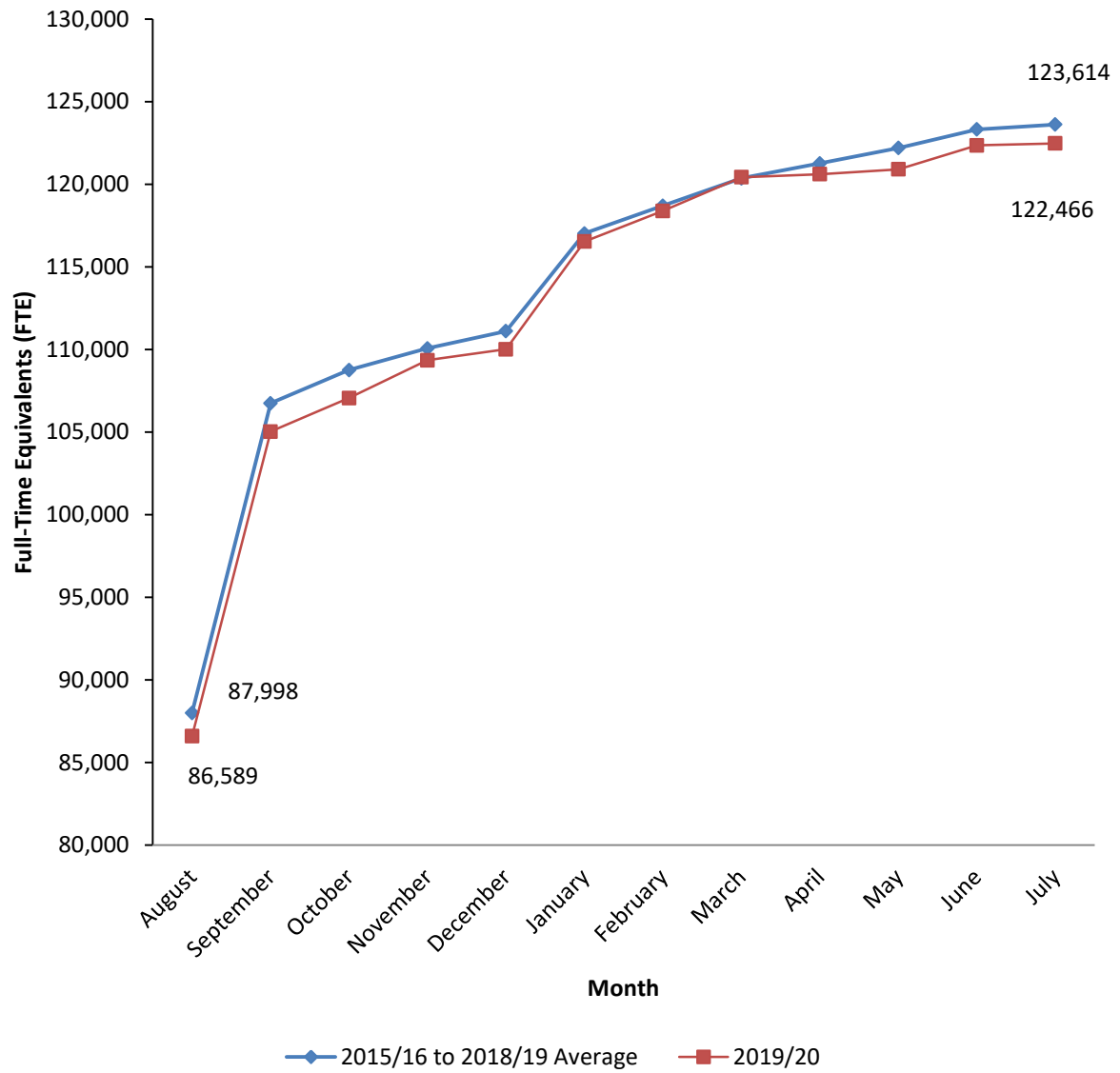
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<sup>6</sup> See Background Tables to see the percentage of FTEs for HE programmes each year since 2010-2011.

<sup>7</sup> See worksheet titled *Misc; Population Projections* in the Background Tables workbook.

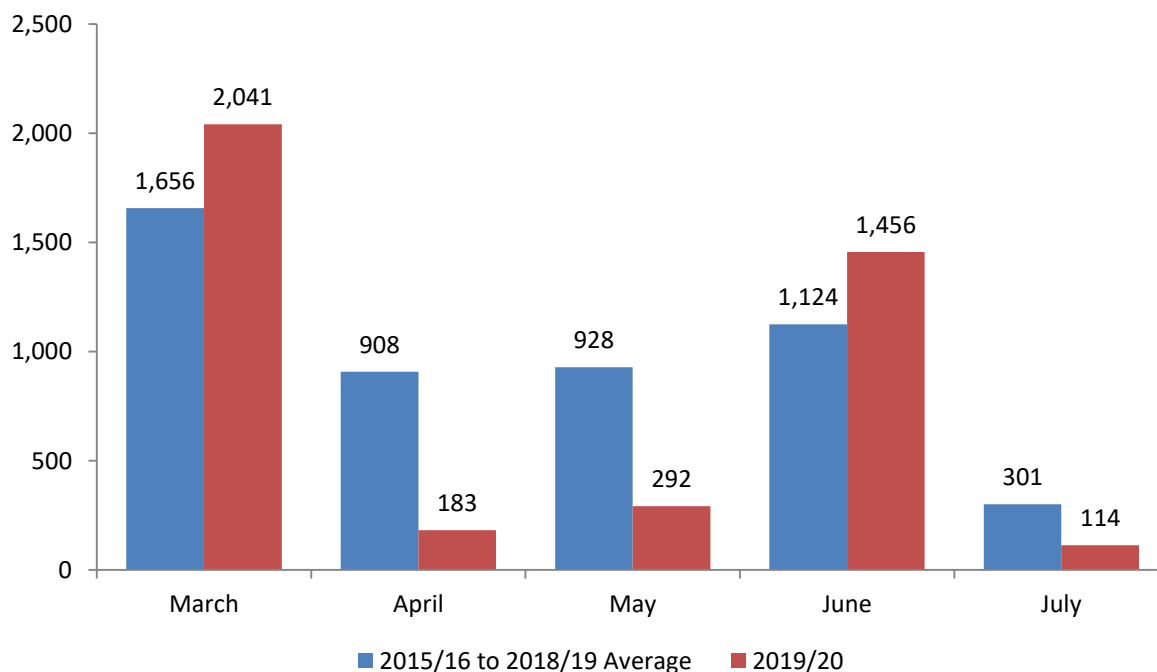
**Figure 3A: How many Students were enrolled at Colleges by Month for the Past 5 Years (FTE)?**

*Line chart showing the count of FTE's by month from August to July for 2019-20 and an average for the preceding four years. Excludes courses starting before August 2019.*



**Figure 3B: How many Students were enrolled at Colleges by Month for the Past 5 Years from March to July (FTE)?**

*Bar chart showing the count of FTE's by month from March to July for 2019-20 and an average for the preceding four years.*



24. Figure 3A shows the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic on FTE on the year 2019-20. This shows that the vast majority of FTE enrolment occurs in August, September, and January with full-time programmes commencing in these months generating the most learning activity (91.0% of all FTE activity begins in September, October, or January). This pattern is very static across the five years and meant that the COVID-19 pandemic was too late into the year to have a huge influence on the amount of learning activity colleges were delivering. As of March 2019-20 had 69 more FTEs than the previous four year average.
25. However, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on FTEs can be seen in Figures 3A and 3B, with around 1,400 fewer FTEs during April and May 2019-20 compared with the previous four year average, representing a reduction of 74%. Comparing 2019-20 to 2018-19 in particular shows an even starker difference, with 1,800 fewer FTEs during April and May, representing a reduction of 79.1%.
26. Figure 3A shows that the college sector was on course to achieve a similar level of FTEs in 2019-20 as the previous four years until the COVID-19 pandemic meant fewer students enrolled in April and May. This appears to be responsible for the reduction in overall FTEs and enrolments between this year and last.

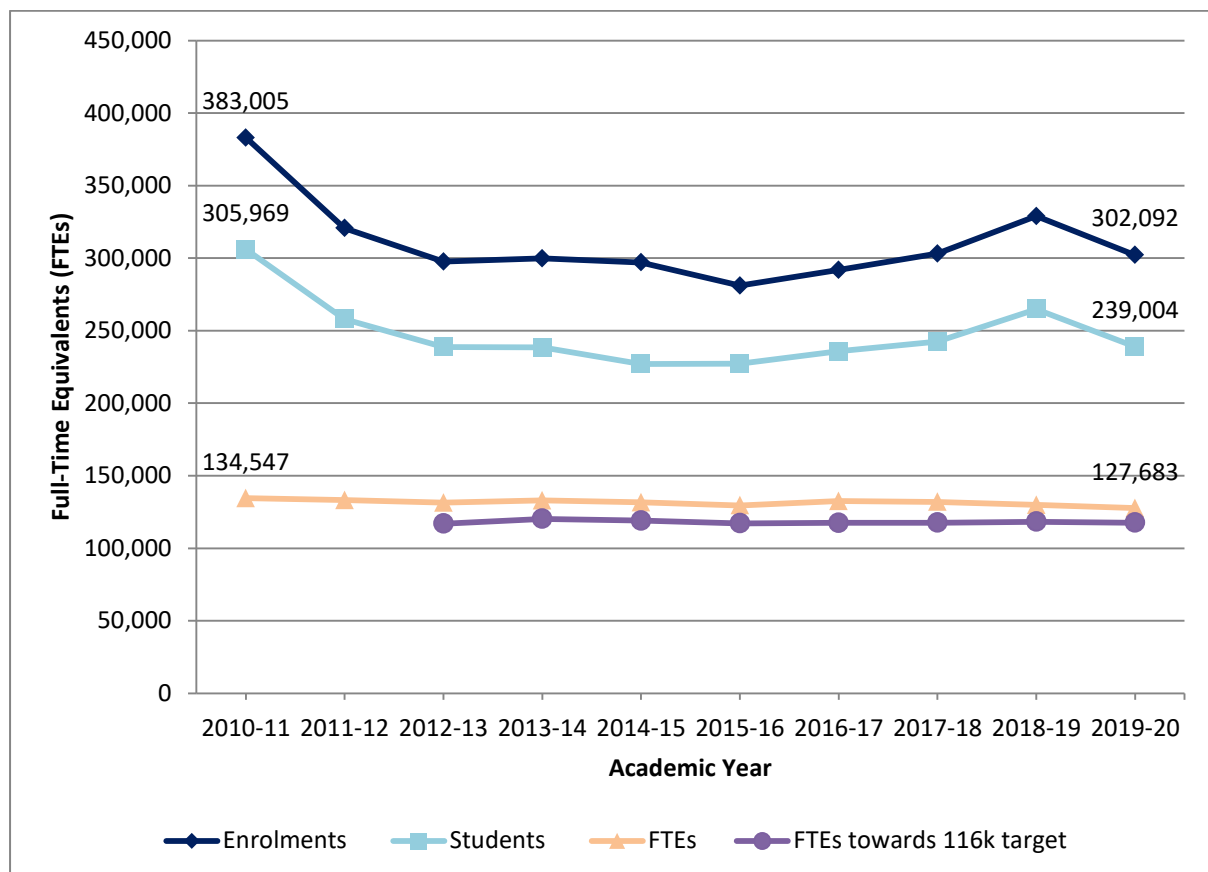
27. 2019-20 marked a small increase in FTE's from August – March 2018-19 with a 0.3% increase. In April and May there was an 85.1% decrease between 2018-19 and 2019-20.

### 3.2 Student numbers (headcounts and enrolments)

28. Student numbers are presented as enrolments, headcounts and FTEs in Figure 4 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 4: How has the number of students, enrolments, and FTEs changed in the last 10 years?**

*Line chart showing the count of enrolments, students (headcount), FTEs (all funding sources, FTEs (SFC funded) since 2010-11*



29. Figure 4 shows a ten-year time series for the number of college students, enrolments, and FTEs between 2010-11 and 2019-20. 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 ten years.<sup>8</sup> This has been followed by a very similar decrease in 2019-20 of 9.8% in student headcounts and 8.1% in enrolments. Thus headcount and enrolments in 2019-20 were very similar to 2017-18. In 2019-20, enrolments were 21.1% lower than they were in 2010-11, while headcounts were 21.8% lower. FTEs were 5.1% lower than a decade ago but SFC funded FTEs are up 0.6% from 2012-13 when the 116,269 target was introduced. The declines from 2010-11 onwards are partially due to a change in SFC governance that is discussed in Annex F. For example funded places were reduced for young school pupils in 2011-12 but these pupils still had a full-time place in education. This accounts for the 5% change above.

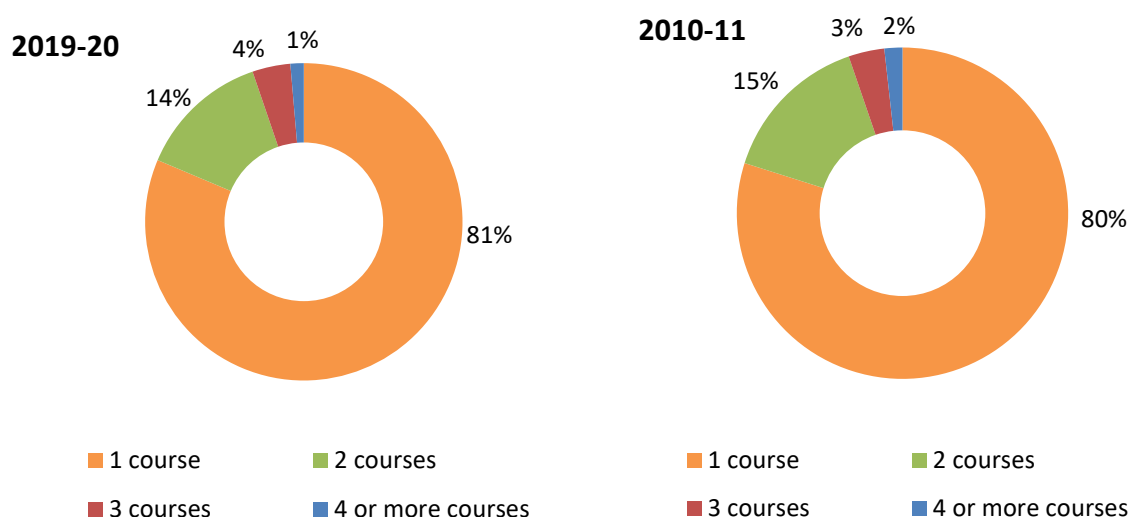
30. Figure 4 also indicates that the relationship between enrolments and the number of students (headcount) is much closer than that between FTEs and enrolments or headcount, echoing the data in Figure 5 showing that the typical number of enrolments per student has seen only slight change from a decade ago.
31. 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.

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<sup>8</sup> Improvements were made to the student data collection effective from 2019-20 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 2019-20 guidance

**Figure 5: What proportions of students are enrolled on one or more courses?**

*Donut charts showing the percentage of students (headcount) enrolled on 1 course, 2 courses, 3 courses and 4 or more courses in 2010-11, 2016-17, 2019-20*



32. Figure 5 shows the percentage of students enrolled on one, two, three, or four or more courses in 2019-20 and 2010-11. In 2019-20, most students were enrolled on only one course (81%) and the vast majority (95%) were enrolled on either one or two courses. Almost a fifth (19%) 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 2010-11 where the vast majority of provision was going to students enrolled on a single course (80%). The above indicates that while the opportunity to study simultaneously 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**

33. Figure 6 (below) shows that, since 2010-11, there has been an overall decrease in the number of enrolments on non-recognised qualifications and courses under 10 hours from 134,662 to 104,829 (22.2%). Enrolments on NRQs are up 2.3% since 2010-11. Enrolments on courses under 10 hours are down 74.8% since 2010-2011, having shown a more continuous decline throughout the decade.

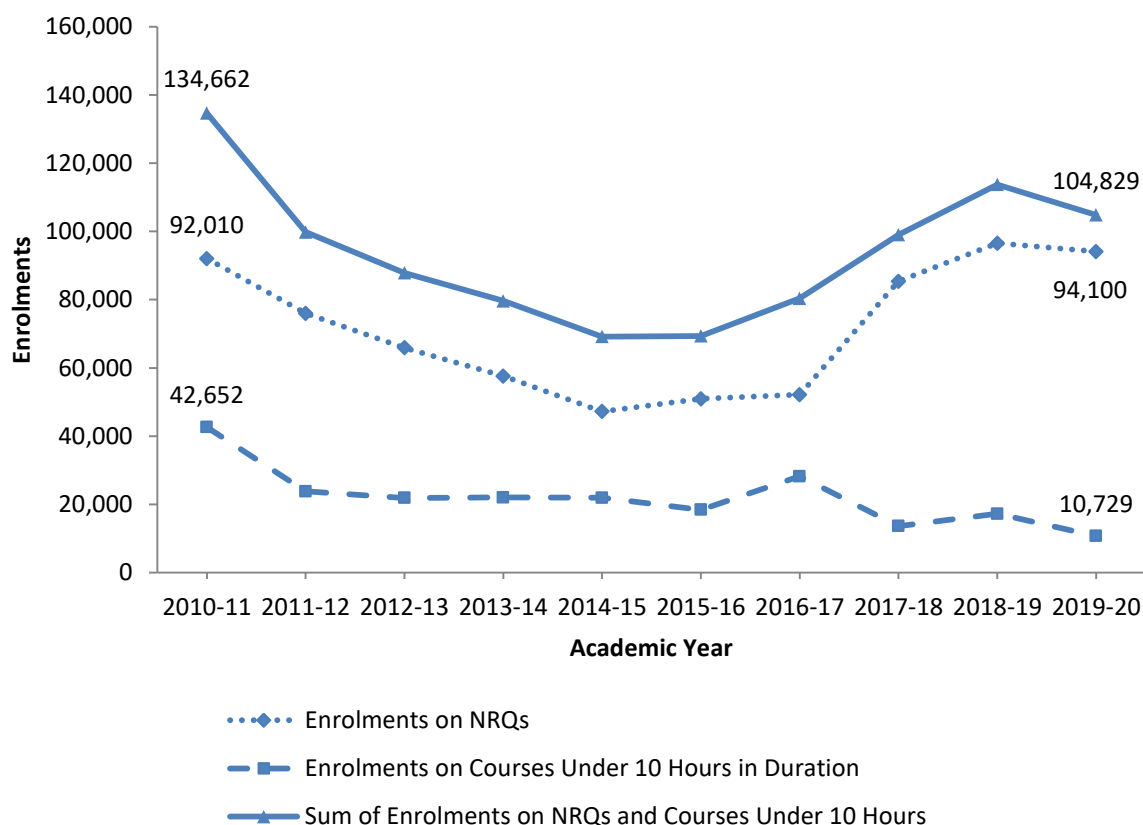
#### ***What is a Non-Recognised Qualification?***

34. A non-recognised qualification can usually be described as:
- 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.
  - Many Flexible Workforce Development Fund courses also fall under this category. This initiative allows employers to access funding to address priority skills gaps and invest in their workforce through training and personal development. These programmes can be delivered in partnership with the local college, the Open University in Scotland or an independent training provider.

**Figure 6: 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 2010-11*

*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'*



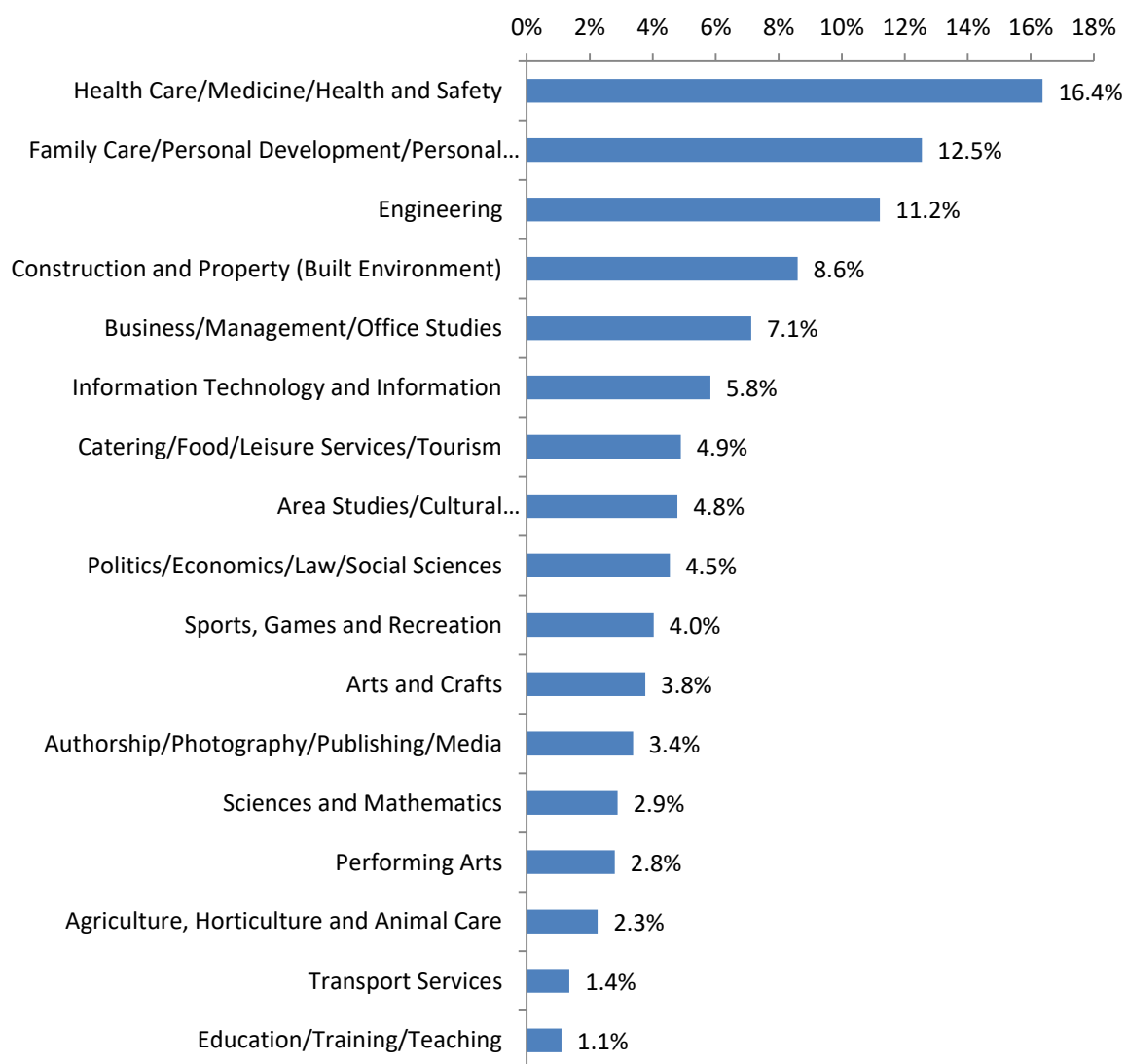
35. 2019-20 saw a levelling off of the year on year increase in enrolments on NRQs that had been ongoing since their lowest point in 2014-15. This may be an impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Enrolments on NRQs reduced by 2.5% from 2018-19 to 2019-20. The year 2019-20 saw a continuation of the reduction of enrolments on Courses under 10 hours in duration, with a 37% decrease between 2018-19 and 2019-20.
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 school children to access STEM programmes and facilities through the college sector as a way to address the gender imbalance in STEM subjects. In 2019-20, primary school pupils accounted for 14.2% of all enrolments on NRQs and 6.2% on courses under 10 hours in duration.

37. The introduction of the Flexible Workforce Development Fund (piloted in 2017-18 and continued through to 2019-20) has led to colleges delivering courses to meet the needs of apprenticeship levy payers that, whilst vocational, may not lead to recognised qualifications.

**Figure 7: What do college students study (by % of all FTEs)?**

*Bar chart showing the % of all FTEs (all funding sources) by subject area, delivered in 2019-20.*

*Percentages <1.0% have been suppressed*



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

Sales, Marketing and Retailing, 0.8%

Humanities, 0.6%

Manufacturing/Production, 0.4%

Services to Industry and Commerce, 0.4%

Oil/Mining/Plastics/Chemicals, 0.1%

Environment Protection/Energy/Cleansing/Security, 0.1%

38. Figure 7 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 2019-20 at 16.4%. This subject area has seen the greatest increase in the share of FTEs since 2010-11, increasing by 2.8 percentage points.<sup>9</sup>
39. Engineering saw the second greatest increase from a decade ago, at 2.1 percentage points. Information Technology and Communication saw the joint greatest decrease at 2.8 percentage points. Family Care/Personal Development/Personal Care and Appearance also saw a similar decrease from 2010-11, from 15.3% of all FTEs in 2010-11 and having the greatest share, to 12.5% in 2019-20 and having the second greatest share of FTEs. All the subject areas that had less than 1.0% of the FTE share in 2019-20 also had less than 1.0% of the share in 2010-2011. We can also see from Figure 7 that over a quarter (28.9%) 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, the sector delivers a sizeable proportion of its overall provision to support the health and care sectors.

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<sup>9</sup> See Background Tables to compare the number of proportion of FTEs by subject area for 2010-11 and 2019-20.

## 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 31.3%, 23.8% and 11.2% decreases in enrolments respectively. There are also fewer 15, 16, and 17 year-olds in the population than ten years ago.
- The total number of 18-19 year-olds in the Scottish population has decreased by 13.6% over the last decade, and decreased by 2.6% from 2018-19 to 2019-20 alone.
- There are more full-time enrolments of people in ages 25-40 than there were a decade ago.
- In 2019-20 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 2010-11 and 2019-20.
- The participation rate for 18-19 year-olds attending college full-time has increased slightly but remained relatively similar from 2018-19 (20.6%) to 2019-20 (20.9%).
- The gap between male and females has increased in 2019-20 with the male/female enrolment ratio now standing at 47.8%/51.7%. This figure does not add up to 100% due to students with 'other' or 'unknown' gender.

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 2021. Last year's publication can be found on the [SFC website](#).

## 4.1 By Age

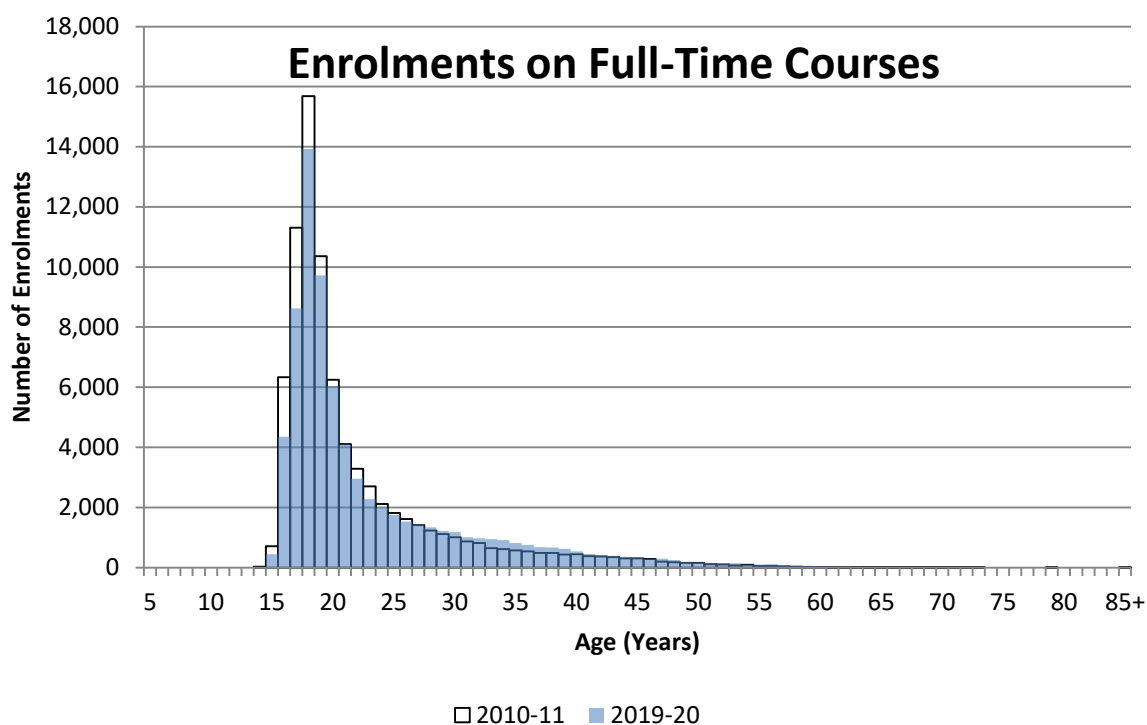
42. College delivery to students aged under 16, 16-19, 20-24 and 25 and over are key metrics included in SFC's national priority measures.<sup>10</sup> The [Opportunities for All](#) publication outlines the Scottish Government's commitment to supporting all young people aged 16-19 to participate in post-16 learning, training or work. The age profiles of college students vary by mode of study as discussed below. Figure 8 shows enrolments by single year of age for full-time and part-time study separately, for 2010-11 and 2019-20.

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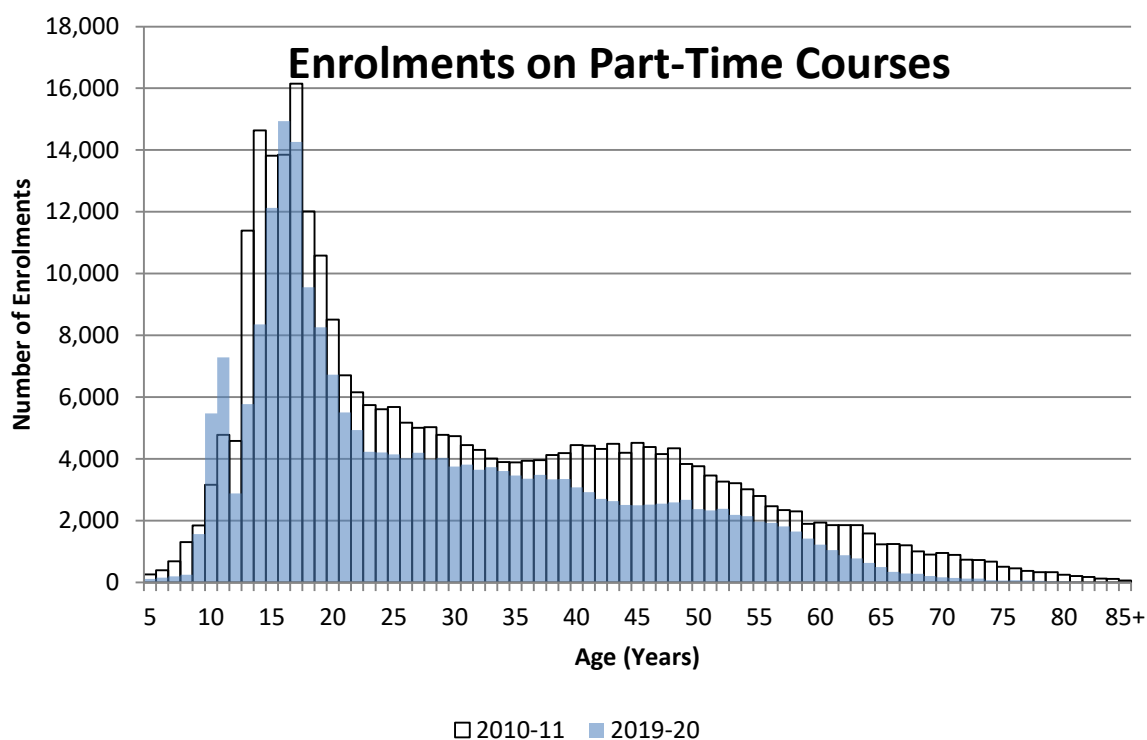
<sup>10</sup> This is discussed in [Guidance for the development of College Outcome Agreements: 2019-20 to 2021-22.](#)

**Figure 8: Enrolments by age of student and mode of study, 2010-2011 and 2019-20**

*Histogram showing the count of enrolments on full-time courses, by single year of age, in 2010-2011 and 2019-20. Counts less than 5 have been suppressed to prevent against identification of individual students*



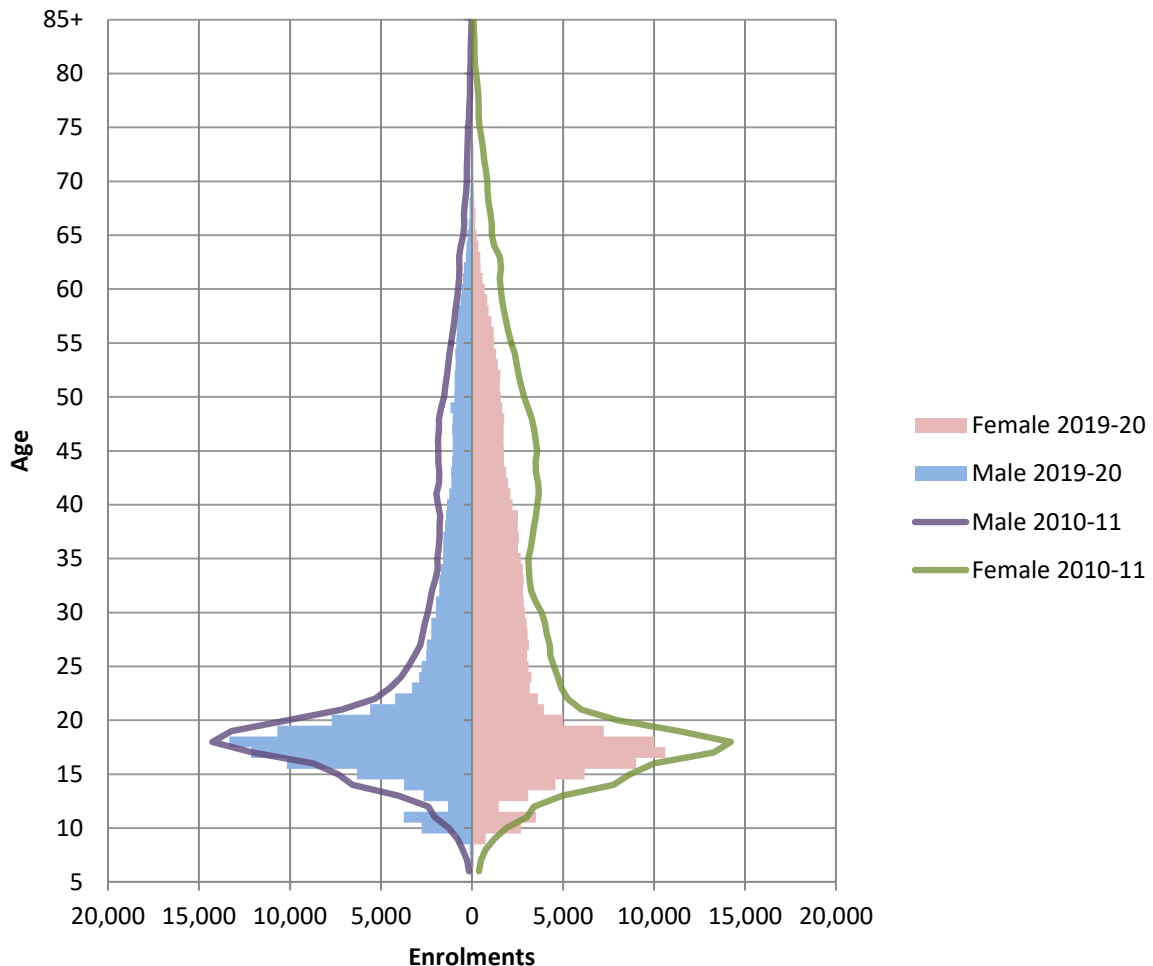
*Histogram showing the count of enrolments on part-time courses, by single year of age, in 2010-11 and 2019-20*



43. From the above we can see that the age profile of full-time enrolments has seen some change between 2010-11 and 2019-20. Full-time 18-year-olds had the highest number of enrolments for the two academic years shown. In 2010-11, 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 2010-2011. 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 for ages 15, 16 and 17 in 2019-20 than in 2010-11.
45. Full-time enrolments have seen little change between 2010-2011 and 2019-20 compared to part-time enrolments. Figure 8 shows that part-time enrolments are lower in 2019-20 than in 2010-11 for almost all ages.
46. Figure 9 (below) includes a male/female gender split in the age breakdown in 2019-20 compared to 2010-11.

**Figure 9: 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. 2019-20 vs. 2010-11*



47. Figure 9 (above) shows that in 2019-20 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 2010-11 and 2019-20. For males aged between 20 and 38, the numbers of enrolments have decreased slightly since 2010-11. However for women of the same age there tends to be far fewer enrolments in 2019-20 than there were in 2010-11. The female demographic as a whole has broadly seen a greater reduction in enrolments from a decade ago in comparison to males. This has brought greater gender parity (see Figure 11).

**Figure 10: What proportion of Scotland's 18- and 19-year-old population attends college full-time?**

*Figure 10A: 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 2010-11 to 2019-20. 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*

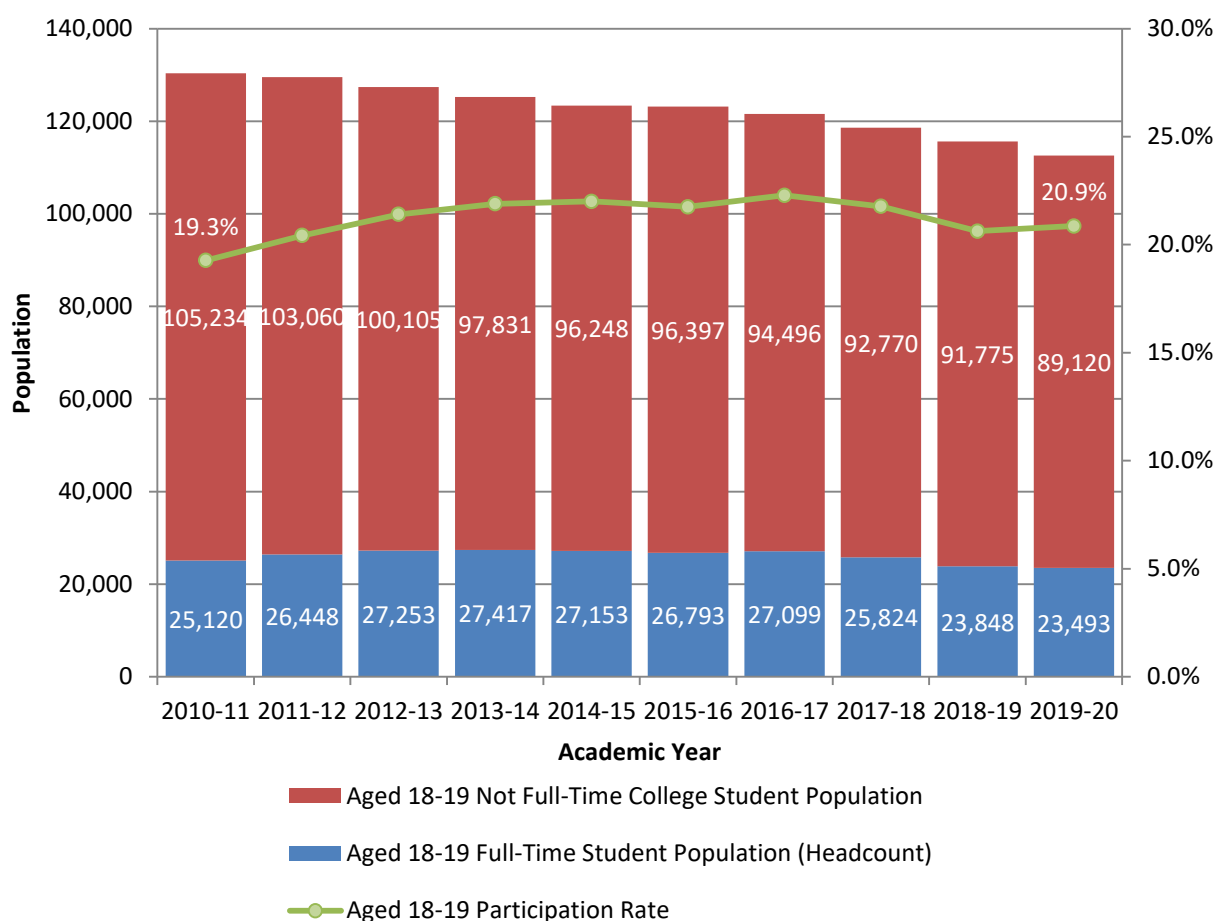


Figure 10B: The proportion of Scotland's 18- and 19-year-old population that attends college full-time

Academic Year	Aged 18-19 Full-Time Student Population (Headcount)	Aged 18-19 Not Full-Time College Student Population	Aged 18-19 in the Scottish Population	Aged 18-19 Participation Rate	% change year-on-year
2010-11	25,120	105,234	130,354	19.3%	
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%
2019-20	23,493	89,120	112,613	20.9%	0.3%

48. Figure 10 above shows the full-time college student population aged 18 to 19 and Scotland's population aged 18 to 19 who do not attend college full-time. The participation rate is the aged 18 to 19 full-time student population divided by the total number of 18 to 19 year-olds in the Scottish population. The aged 18-19 Scotland population who are not full-time college students is calculated by taking the number of 18 to 19 year-olds in the population and subtracting the headcount of 18 to 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 to 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 10 shows that the participation rate has been relatively stable over the ten year period with the participation rate percentage increasing slightly from 2018-19 to 2019-20 by 0.3 percentage points. The participation rate is 1.6 percentage points higher in 2019-20 than it was in 2010-11. For a more complete picture of participation (both full-time and part-time) including 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 13.6% over the last decade, and decreased by 2.6% from 2018-19 to 2019-20 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 until 2025, which will likely result in fewer young students attending college. The number of 18-24-year-olds in Scotland is projected to be 7.3% lower in 2025, however this will turn around thereafter and in 2030 it will be 0.2% higher in 2030 compared to in 2019. From 2021-22 we will begin to see an increase in a number of 18 year olds so college will be able to recruit more heavily from this increased population<sup>11 12</sup>.

## 4.2 By Gender

52. Figure 11 below shows the number of enrolments by male/female gender split from 2010-11 to 2019-20.

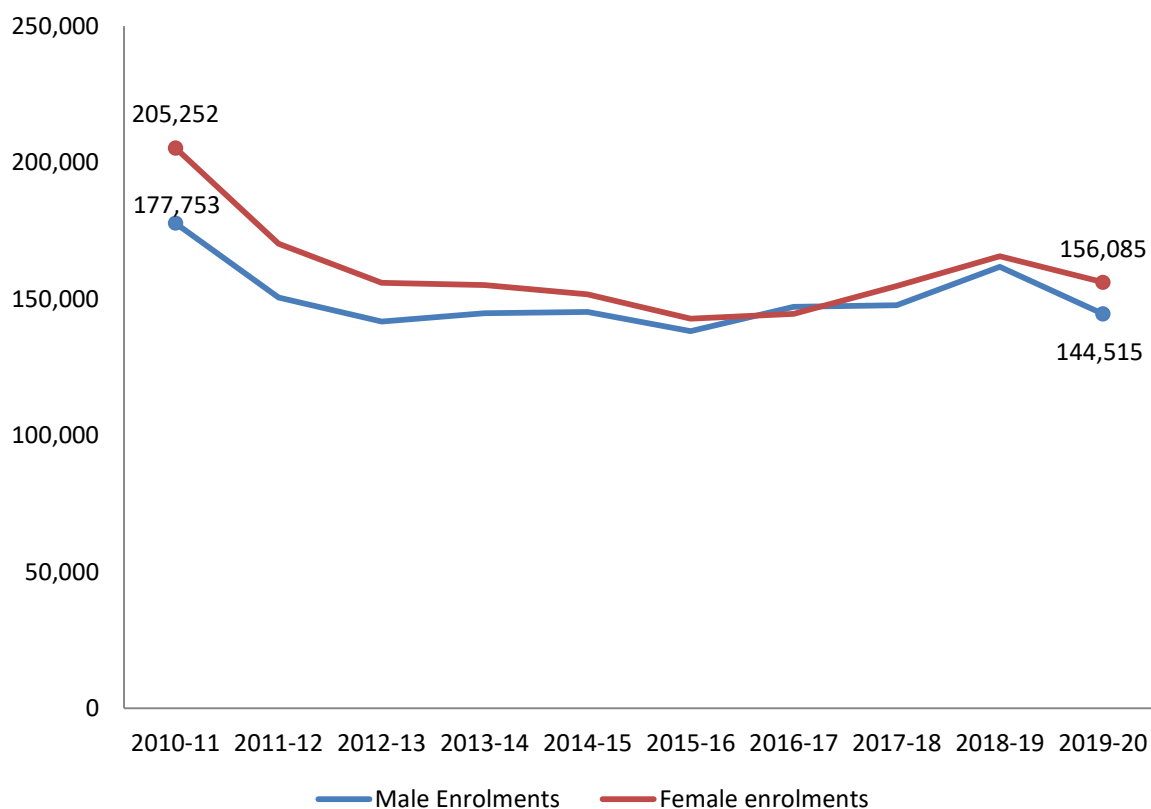
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<sup>11</sup> Source: National Records of Scotland Projected Population of Scotland (2018-based), available here: <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-projections/population-projections-scotland/2018-based>

<sup>12</sup> See worksheet titled *Misc; Population Projections* in the Background Tables workbook.

**Figure 11: 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. This chart excludes enrolments by students with 'other' or 'unknown' gender.*



53. From Figure 11 above we can see that the gap between male and female enrolments steadily closed from 2010-11 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>13</sup> Enrolment numbers for males has returned to similar levels to 2016-17 in 2019-20 with 147,055 and 144,515 respectively. However the amount of female enrolments in this time frame has increased from 144,503 to 156,085. 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. This trend has ended as of 2019-20 due to an overall decrease in enrolments but with male

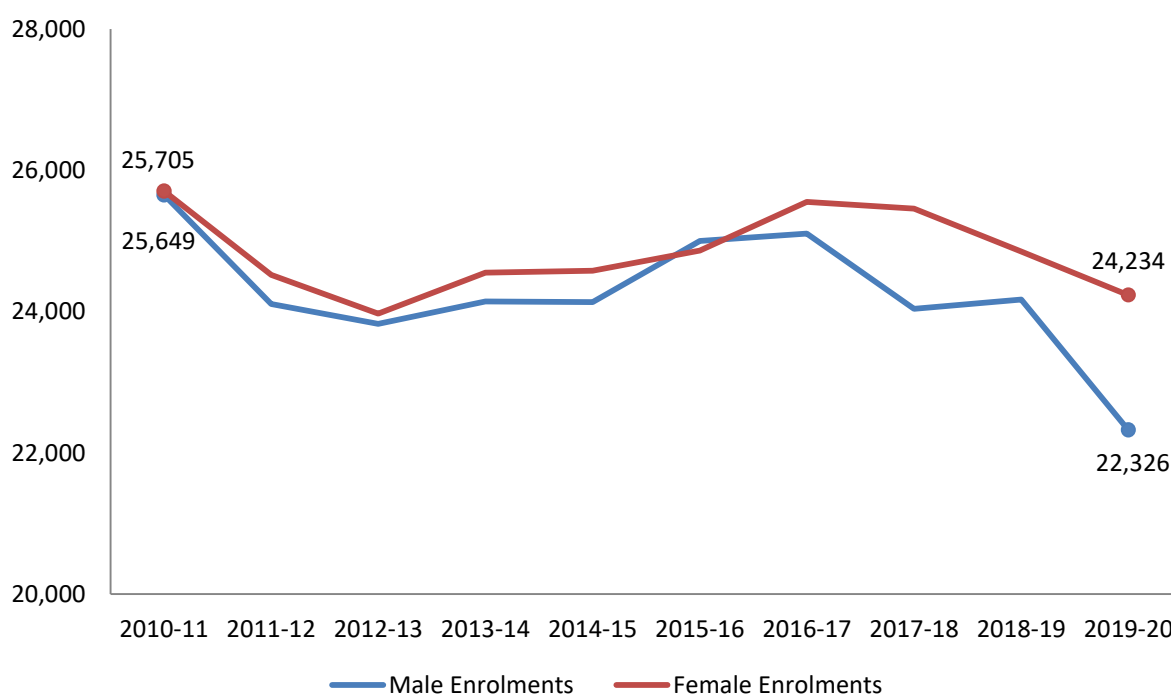
<sup>13</sup> See Background Tables for the male/female percentage ratio for each year.

enrolments having dropped at a greater volume than female, 10.6% reduction for males compared to 5.8% reduction for females. As of 2019-20, 47.8% of all enrolments were males and 51.7% were females.

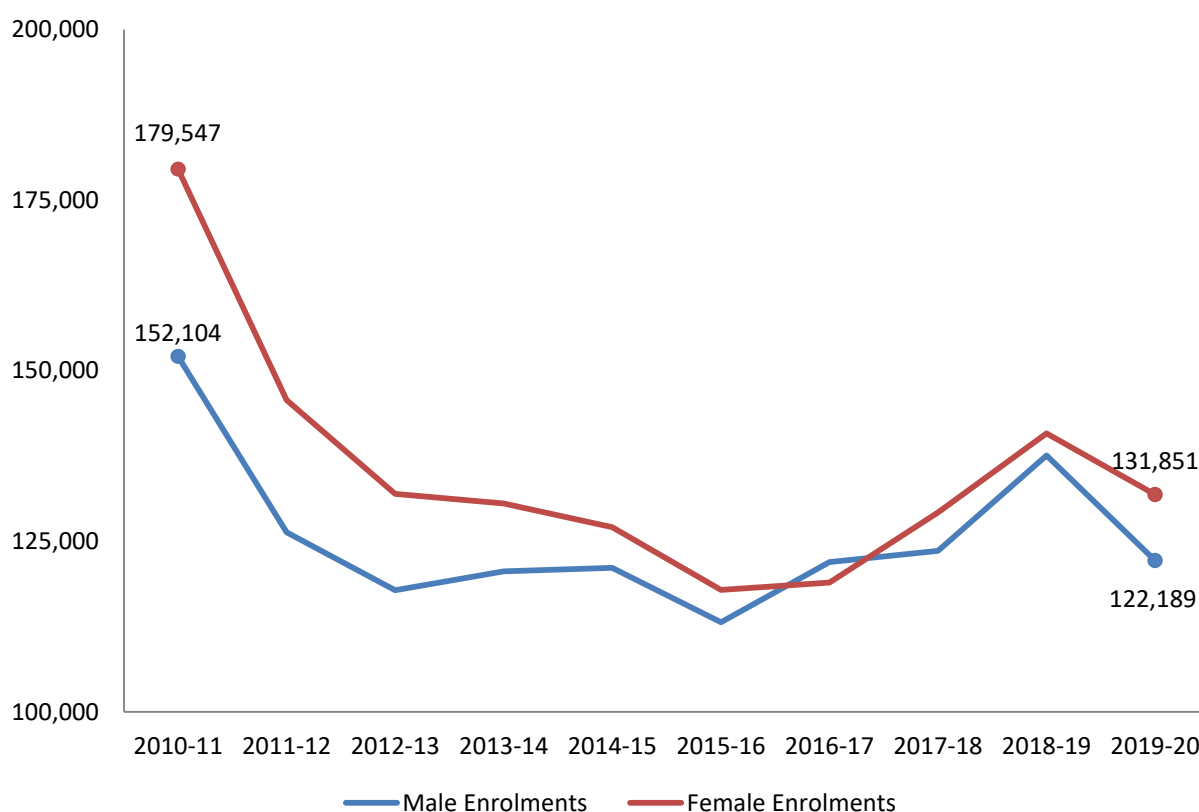
54. Figure 12 below shows the male/female gender split of enrolments by level of study. The year 2019-20 has seen a movement away from the relative stability of the previous nine years with a 7.6% reduction for males and a 2.5% reduction for females from 2018-19 to 2019-20.
55. FE (also under Figure 12 below) follows the same overall trend as the total enrolments for male and females for all levels of study (Figure 11) and appears to be the driver behind the trend affecting the gender split of the college sector as a whole (shown above in Figure 11).

**Figure 12: 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

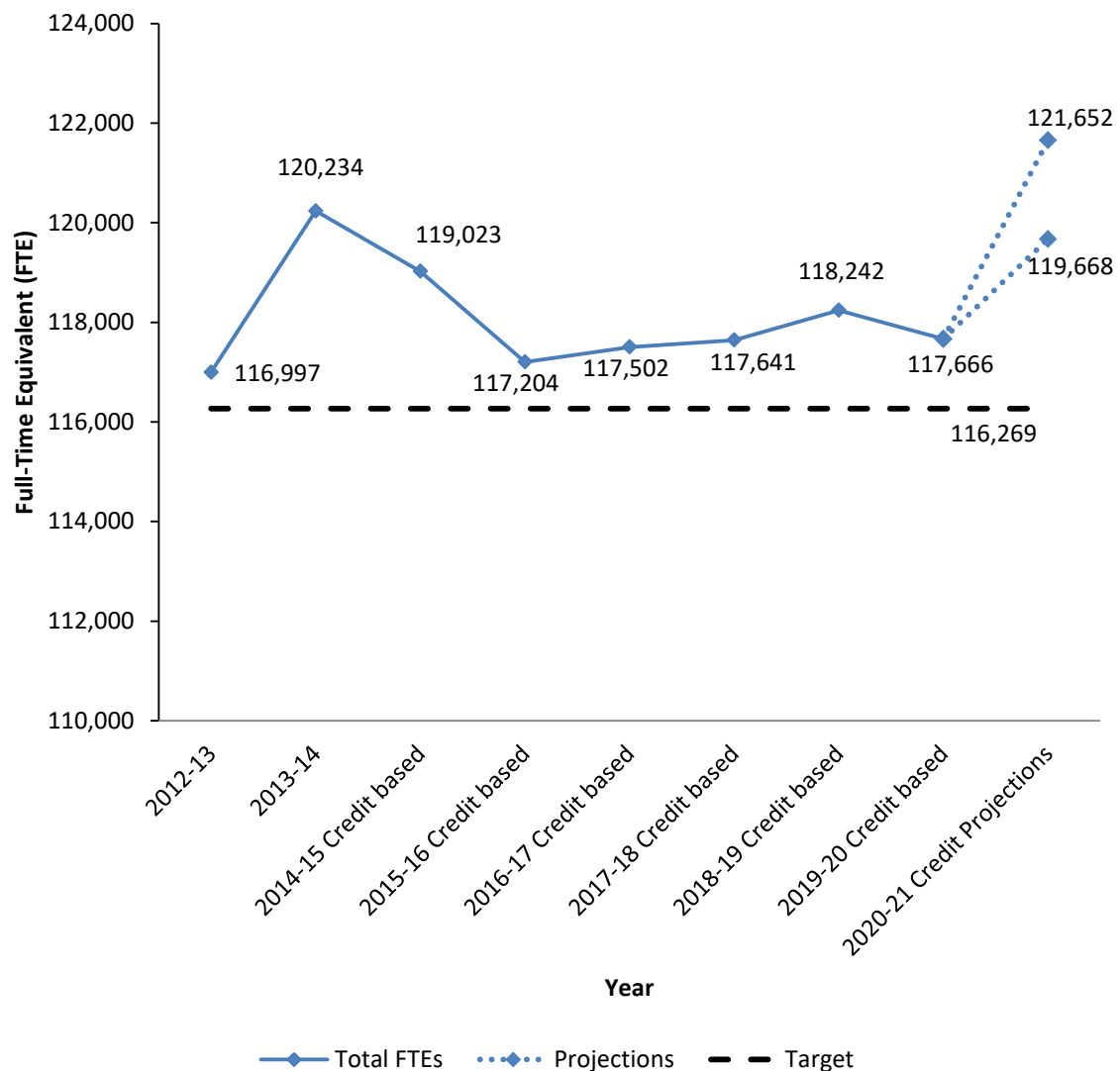


56. Gender is another important metric discussed in the [Guidance for the development of College Outcome Agreements: 2019-20 to 2021-22](#). SFC expects institutions to develop and publish Gender Action Plans and to set more ambitious targets. As discussed in this guidance, colleges are directed to set 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: Trends in Student Numbers and Activity in 2020-21

Figure 13: How many FTEs have been delivered and what do we project will be delivered in 2020-21?

Line chart showing the number of Scottish Government funded FTEs delivered against the target with a high and low projection for 2020-21(introduced in 2012-13)



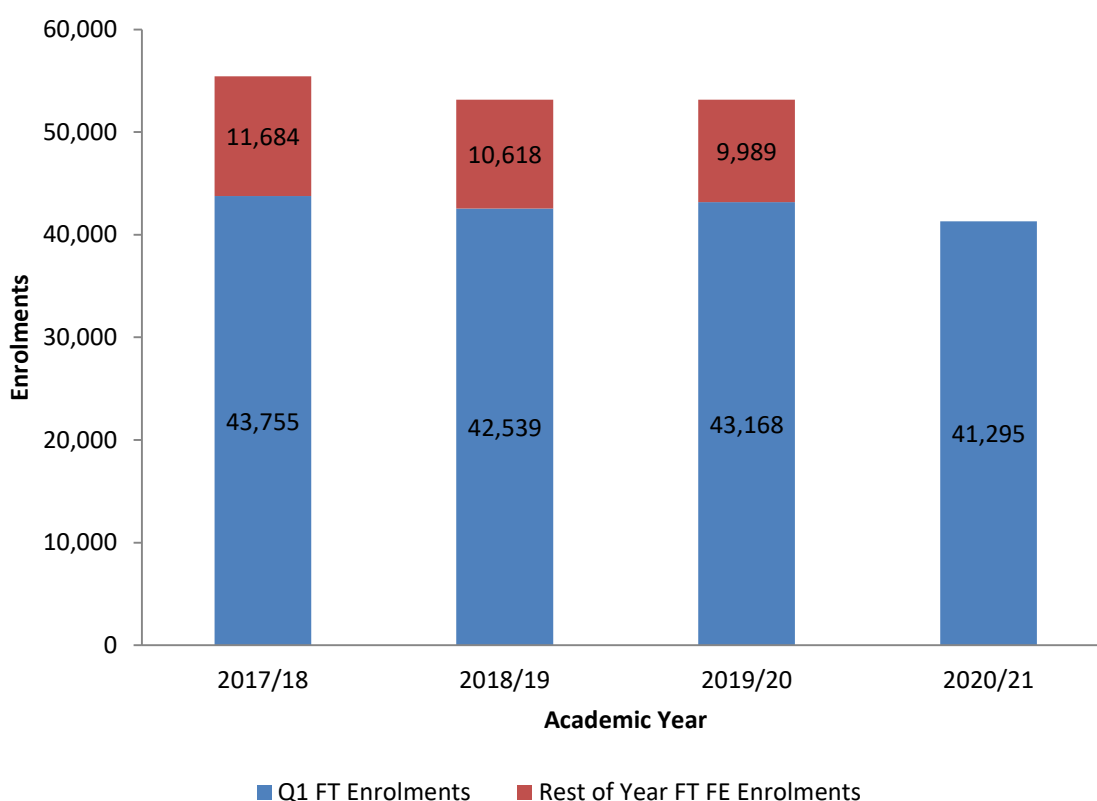
57. The SFC wants to provide a more timely analysis to drive data based decision making. Quarterly data is collected from colleges and quality assurances processes are in now place to use the data more widely in a timely manner.
58. Using College Quarter 1 Data and SFC funding data a projection for 2020-21 credit attainment has been modelled in Figure 13. Two figures have been

produced: one showing a projection where colleges are able to maximise additional funding provided; and a lower projection which assumes similar uptake of additional funding as in 2019-20<sup>14</sup>. The more optimistic projection would represent an increase of 3.4% and the lower projection would represent an increase of 1.7% on 2019-20.

59. SFC has consulted with sector colleagues about the possibility of delivering extra places funded by the Scottish Government beyond the announced targets for 2020-21. SFC have been informed that colleges can deliver some additional places from January onwards. However, the sector is facing further disruption from the additional restrictions imposed by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and this could impact estimated delivery beyond assumptions already underpinning the projections.

**Figure 14A: How has the number of Full Time Enrolments changed in the First Quarter for FE?**

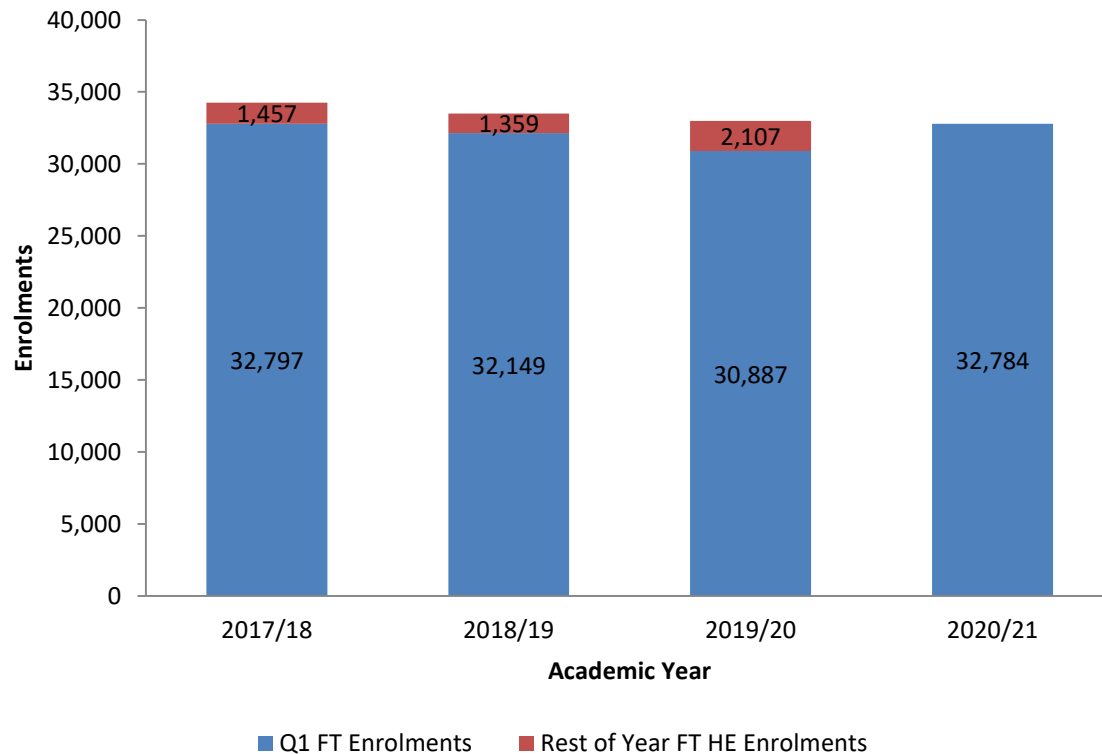
*Bar chart showing the number of FTEs (all funding sources) delivered by colleges in the first quarter (early November), since 2017-18 for FE*



<sup>14</sup> The table for these projections can be found in Annex D with more information on how they were created in Background Tables in Figure 13.

**Figure 14B: How has the number of Full Time Enrolments changed in the First Quarter for HE?**

*Bar chart showing the number of FTEs (all funding sources) delivered by colleges in the first quarter (early November), since 2017-18 for HE*



60. Figures 14A and 14B show the breakdown of the number of Full-Time Enrolments for HE and FE in the first quarter compared to the total number for the whole year. Only full-time data has been shown here because full-time enrolment information is largely captured by the first quarterly submission whereas changes in part time enrolment information can change year to year due to changing entry dates and modular courses.
61. Figure 14A shows that FT FE is down on the previous year by 4.3%, with 2020-21 being the lowest year of the four. However FT HE is up 6.1% on the previous year, with it being the second highest year of the four.
62. Total FT Enrolment as of Q1 is therefore up by 24 Enrolments - an increase of 0.03% compared to the previous 2019-20 Q1 return.

## Further Information

63. The [Infact Database](#), SFC Open Data Portal, 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 because 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.
64. All charts and data shown in this report are available in background tables provided on the [SFC website](#).
65. A publication detailing College Performance Indicators for 2019-20 is due to be published on the [SFC website](#) in March 2021. 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.
66. 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

68. As part of the Outcome Agreement process, SFC introduced a basket of measures to be used to help measure and assess the impact of the Outcome Agreements across a range of key priority areas.

69. The table below shows the 2015-16 to 2019-20 figures for some measures.

Selected National Performance Measures, 2015-16 to 2019-20

Measure	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Credits delivered	1,752,536	1,762,032	1,778,466	1,753,330	1,749,069
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners Under 16	2.7%	2.7%	3.3%	4.0%	3.9%
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 16-19	46.9%	46.6%	45.2%	43.4%	44.4%
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 20-24	21.8%	21.5%	21.1%	21.1%	20.5%
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 25 and over	28.7%	29.2%	30.4%	31.5%	31.1%
Proportion of Credits to Female learners	51.7%	51.3%	51.5%	51.5%	51.4%
Proportion of Credits to Male learners	48.3%	48.6%	48.5%	48.0%	48.1%
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners from the 10% most deprived areas	16.9%	17.2%	16.5%	16.6%	16.5%
Proportion of Credits to learners from a care experienced background	1.0%	1.6%	2.0%	3.7%	5.9%
Proportion of Credits to BME learners	6.0%	6.4%	7.0%	7.3%	8.1%
Proportion of Credits to Disabled learners	16.8%	17.1%	18.8%	21.8%	22.1%

70. 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

71. 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 2019-20, 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 2019-20 (highlighted in italics).

Calculated count			
Age	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
16	<i>55,594</i>	53,470	54,052
17	<i>57,019</i>	<i>55,594</i>	53,713
18	59,765	<i>57,019</i>	<i>55,594</i>
19	64,374	63,584	<i>57,019</i>

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 2010-2011 to 2019-20**

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.

## **Annex E: Changes to Full-Time Equivalents over the past seven years**

<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Core FTEs (inc FAs) Delivered</b>	<b>Employability Fund, FWDF</b>	<b>SRUC FTEs</b>	<b>Associate Students^</b>	<b>Total FTEs</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Delivery Over Target</b>
2012-13	112,916	3,483	598		116,997	116,269	728
2013-14	119,022	614	598		120,234	116,269	3,965
2014-15	118,407	671	598		119,676	116,269	3,407
2014-15 Credit based	117,754	671	598		119,023	116,269	2,754
2015-16 Credit based	115,856	750	598	1,576	117,204	116,269	935
2016-17 Credit based	116,318	586	598	1,485	117,502	116,269	1,233
2017-18 Credit based	116,355	688	598	1,507	117,641	116,269	1,372
2018-19 Credit based	115,061	1080	598	1,503	118,242	116,269	1,973
2019-20 Credit based	114,497	1046	598	1,525	117,666	116,269	1,397
2020-21 Credit based low projection	116,570	1000	598	1,500	119,668	116,269	3,399
2020-21 Credit based high projection	117,554	2000	598	1,500	121,652	116,269	5,383

72. 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 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. Since 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.

73. 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. Foundation Apprenticeships are also counted towards this target.
74. 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 2019-20 there were 1,525 FTEs enrolled on these associate student programmes being taught at college.
75. The Employability Fund ended in 2016-17 and was replaced by the 'Flexible Workforce Development Fund' from 2017-18

## **Annex F: Further Information on College Students**

76. 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 2021. Previous years' reports can be found on SFC's [Statistics Publication Schedule](#).
77. In the meantime, trends for protected characteristics in the college sector can be explored using the [Infact Database](#).

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## Metadata

Metadata Indicator	Description
Publication Title	College Statistics 2019-20
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	26/01/2021
Frequency	Annual
Timeframe of data and timeliness	Trend data are presented as a time series continuation from the 2010-2011 academic year (AY) to the 2019-20 AY. Data is also presented for the 2010-2011 AY vs. the 2019-20 AY to allow for comparison between the two years. Data is also presented for the 2010-2011 AY vs. the 2015-16 AY vs. the 2019-20 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.
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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