



## College Statistics 2021-22



Scottish Funding Council  
Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba

SFC STATISTICS

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Issue Date:	28 February 2023
Reference:	SFC/ST/01/2023
Summary:	This publication provides an overview of college sector statistics from 2012-13 to 2021-22.
FAO:	Principals and Directors of Scotland's colleges, students, parents, guardians and the general public.
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This is an official statistics publication.

All official statistics should comply with the UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice to Official Statistics, which promotes the production and dissemination of official statistics that inform decision-making. Find out more about the Code of Practice for Official Statistics at the [UK Statistics Authority's website](#).

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## Table of Contents

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Executive Summary .....	5
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## KEY STATISTICS



322,332

enrolments to courses



129,175

FTE places delivered



around **1 IN 5 (19.9%)**  
of 18 and 19 year olds in the  
population attended college on a  
full time basis in 2021-22



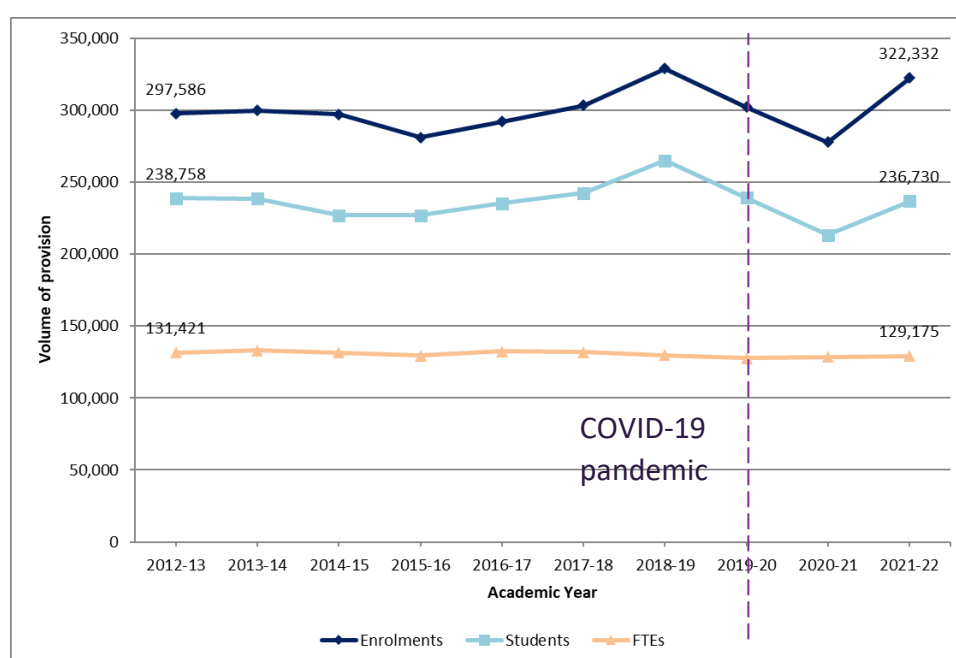
236,730

student headcount. Students  
may enrol on multiple courses

## Executive Summary

1. The reporting period was impacted by the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic which presented a unique and significant external shock to the further and higher education system in Scotland. Colleges pivoted rapidly to move learning online from March 2020, but these unprecedented circumstances continued to present colleges with challenges during 2021-22, notably the ability to deliver practical and work-based learning given ongoing, albeit less acute, restrictions; and the challenges of supporting a cohort of students who had experienced two years of disrupted schooling. Those challenges notwithstanding, colleges continued to work flexibly, creatively and with compassion to support students and staff as they navigated the gradual return to face-to-face teaching and in-person exams.

**Figure 1: Enrolments, FTE and Headcount 2012-13 to 2021-22 at Scotland's Colleges**

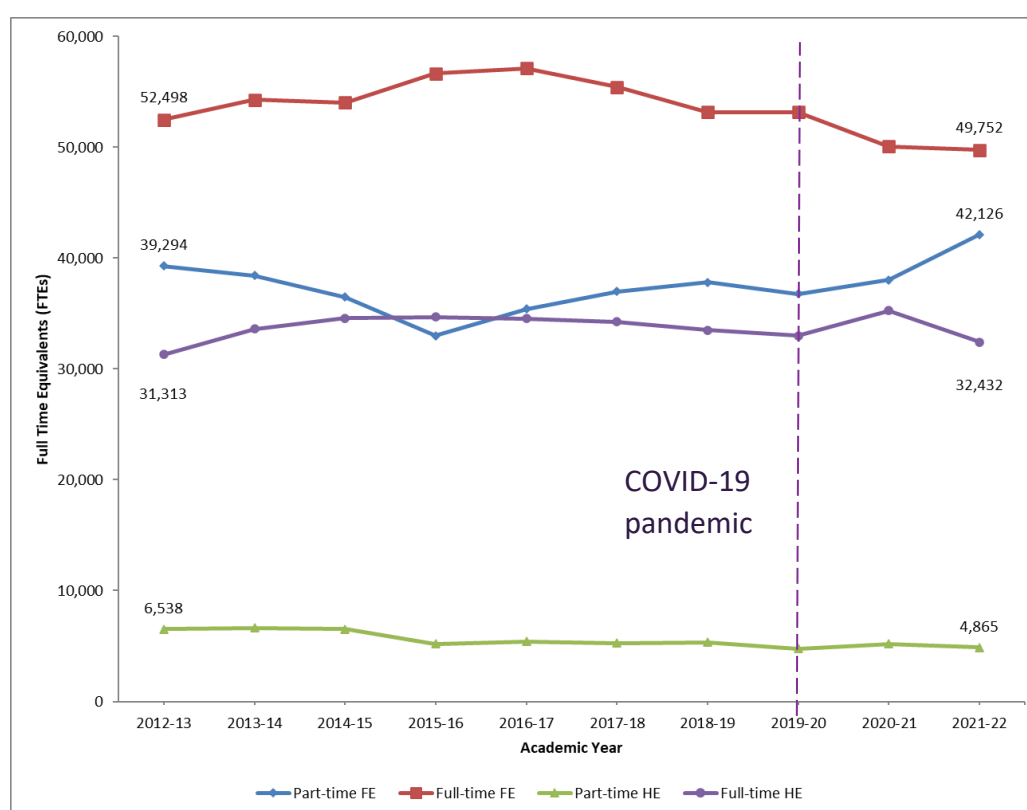


2. Scotland's colleges enroll publicly funded students and students who self-fund or are funded via other sources (such as the European Social Fund or Skills Development Scotland), and overall have delivered 129,175 Full-time Equivalent (FTE) places in 2021-22. The number of FTEs (all funding sources) increased for the second consecutive year from the 2020-21 total of 128,559 (an increase of 0.5%).
3. The total student headcount and number of enrolments also increased by 11.1% and 16.1% respectively from the previous year. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic many courses with a practical element could not take place, however in 2021-22 the return to on-campus study enabled those students deferring their studies in 2020-21 to commence their courses. These rises are largely driven by increased enrolments on non-recognised qualifications (such as introductory/pre-access courses, self-funded non-vocational courses, or bespoke training courses) and on courses under 10 hours in

duration, up 42.7% and 228.8% respectively since 2020-21. These notable increases can be linked to the return to on-campus study enabling students to commence studies deferred from prior years, as well as students taking advantage of the upskilling opportunities the college sector offers. More data on headcount, enrolments and definitions are available in supplementary tables and our annexes.

4. College participation rates were down in 2021-22. Almost one in five (19.9%) of 18 to 19-year-olds participated in a full-time college course, a 1.6 percentage point decrease on the 2020-21 figure. Statistics published by UCAS<sup>1</sup> indicate that more school leavers accepted places at universities in 2021-22. The Scottish Funding Council funded 2,500 additional places for school leavers in that session<sup>2</sup>. The labour market also recovered at that time, as the country emerged from COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. This demonstrates the variety of positive options available to the school leaver cohort. There are also demographic and other conditions which may account for this decrease, with colleges having a shrinking pool of 16- to 24-year-olds to recruit from until 2025 - these are explained in greater depth in our annexes document.

**Figure 2: Full-time Equivalent activity at Scotland's Colleges by mode and level of study, 2012-13 to 2021-22**



<sup>1</sup> UCAS End of Cycle data resources 2022: [UCAS Undergraduate sector-level end of cycle data resources 2022 | Undergraduate | UCAS](#)

<sup>2</sup> SFC Funding Announcement 2021-22: [Final university funding allocations AY 2021-22 \(sfc.ac.uk\)](#)

5. At Further Education (FE) level, full-time FTEs (all funding sources) decreased 0.7% in 2021-22 but part-time FTEs have increased (up 10.8%) over the same timeframe.
6. At Higher Education (HE) level both full-time FTEs (-8.0%) and part-time (-6.3%) FTEs (all funding sources) decreased in 2021-22 compared with the previous year.
7. As indicated above, more school leavers accepting places at university and a buoyant labour market following the COVID-19 vaccination rollout impacted on full-time provision at both HE and FE level, however we have seen higher uptake of part-time FE courses, indicating that upskilling/reskilling is an increasingly popular option.
8. In 2021-22, 29.4% of all learning activity (FTEs) took place in subject areas relating to health and care services – the largest share of any subject group, indicating the sector continues to support labour market requirements in these areas.
9. Construction and Property (Built Environment) saw the largest rise in learning activity delivered between 2020-21 and 2021-22, with FTEs increasing by 2.3pp. This rise could be explained by the return to on-campus study: many courses in this subject area are practical in nature and could only be delivered on campus, which was not possible during 2020-21 due to COVID-19 restrictions, resulting in some students choosing to defer their studies.
10. The gap between male and female enrolments increased in 2021-22 with the male/female enrolment ratio now standing at 48.4%/51.6%. Females outnumber males in both FE and HE college courses, with the gap being widest in HE courses (47.7%/52.3%).
11. Due to the flexible nature of the college sector in Scotland, students frequently enroll on multiple courses in a given academic year. In 2021-22, 25.5% of students enrolled on more than one course. This is a change from 2016-17 where 18.3% of students enrolled on more than one course.