



Higher Education Students and Qualifiers at Scottish Institutions 2021-22

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Summary: This release contains information on HE provision and attainment in higher education institutions (HEIs) and colleges in Scotland from 2012-13 to 2021-22.

FAO: Principals and Chairs of Scotland’s colleges and universities, students, parents, guardians and the general public.

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The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

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HE Students & Qualifiers 2021-22



In 2021-22 there were **more students on HE courses in Scotland than at any point in the last decade** at 346,280.



More students qualified from HE courses in 2021-22 than at any point in the last decade with **117,195 students receiving an award**.



The number of postgraduate taught students **doubled over the last ten years**, from 41,530 in 2012-13 to 83,065 in 2021-22.

Introduction

1. This report contains information relating to higher education (HE) provision and attainment in higher education institutions (HEIs) and colleges in Scotland. Student data from Scottish HEIs and colleges have been combined to allow reporting on all HE provision delivered in Scotland. HE consists of courses delivered at SCQF level 7 and above. [See the SCQF Interactive Framework for a breakdown of qualifications at each level.](#)
2. This report includes information on different HE student populations, including the total number of students, the number of entrants and the number of qualifiers from HE courses.
3. This report follows on from HESA's Higher Education Student Data release for 2021-22, with focuses on Scottish institutions and Scottish-domiciled students. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) also publishes an annual report on College Statistics detailing further and higher education students at colleges in Scotland.
4. This report covers a ten-year period – 2012-13 to 2021-22 – and is accompanied by background tables which include additional tables and further breakdowns that are not included within the main body of the report.
5. The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic was declared in March 2020 by the World Health Organisation. Throughout the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years numerous issues impacted students' ability to complete their qualifications. This publication does not make direct comparisons between 2019-20 and 2020-21 qualifier figures and previous years due to the vastly different circumstances these students faced. Qualifier data for 2019-20 and 2020-21 is separated in tables by a grey row indicating a break in the time series and are plotted in charts using a dashed line.

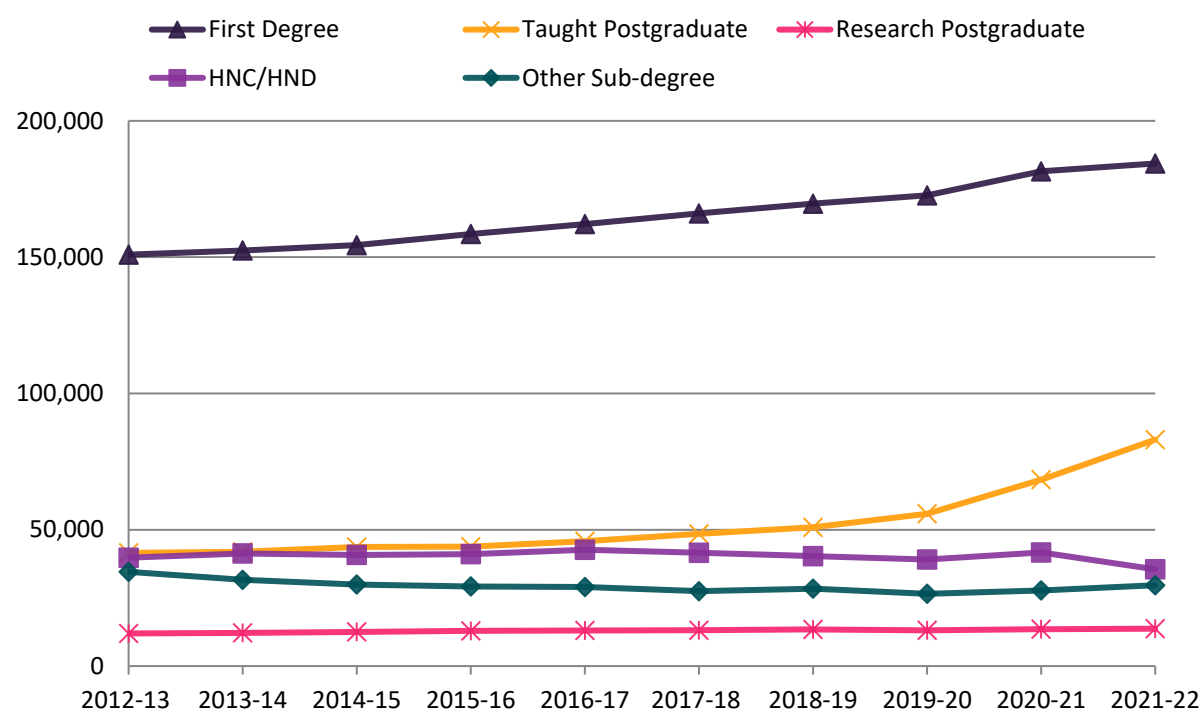
Sector Overview

Students

- In 2021-22 there were more students on HE courses in Scotland than at any point in the last decade at 346,280. This represents a year-on-year increase of 13,465 students compared to 2020-21 (+4.0%).
- The number of students on HNC/D courses dropped by 6,195 (-14.9%) year-on year, from 41,670 in 2020-21 to 35,475 in 2021-22. HNC/D is the only qualification level for which student numbers dropped overall in 2020-21 (figure 1) following a large increase in 2020-21.

Figure 1: Students on HE courses increased at all levels other than HNC/HND in 2021-22

HE students, Scottish institutions, 2012-13 to 2021-22

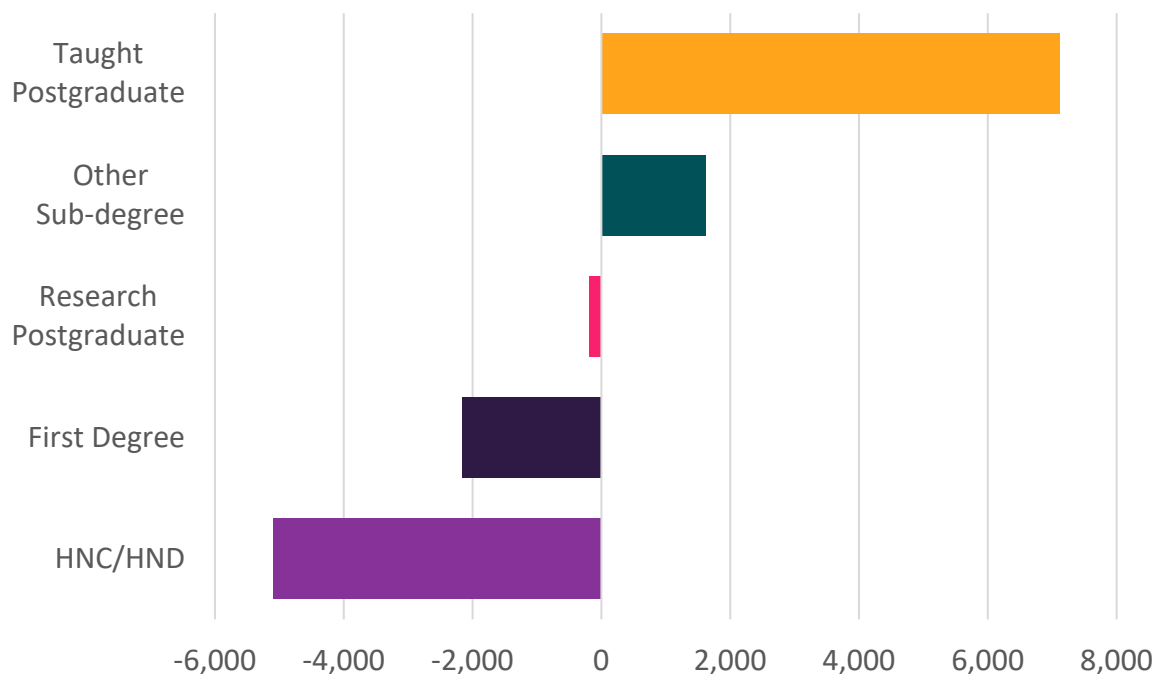


Entrants

- The growth in HE students at Scottish institutions showed signs of slowing in 2021-22, with a marginal increase in entrants of 0.8% (+1,310) compared to 2020-21.

Figure 2: Entrants to other sub-degree and postgraduate taught courses have increased year-on-year, offsetting decreases at other levels

Change in entrants, Scottish institutions, 2020-21 to 2021-22



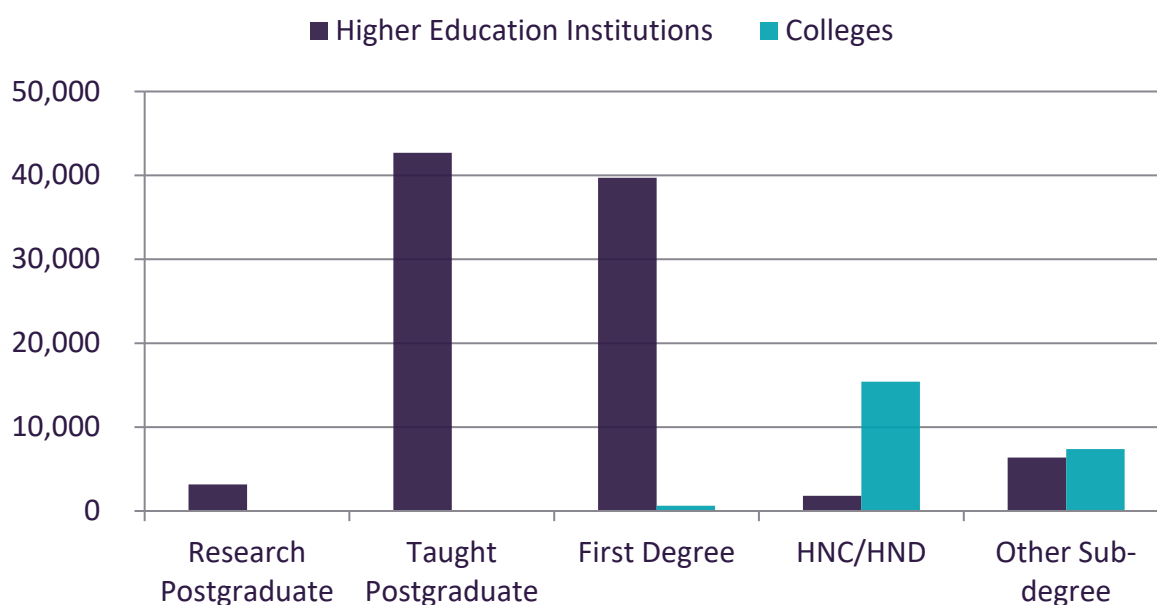
9. While entrants to HE increased overall at sector level, entrants to most qualification levels fell. This includes postgraduate research (-4.1%), first degree (-3.8%) and HNC/HND qualifications (-17.2%).
10. The only qualification levels with increasing entrant numbers were other sub-degree qualifications (+7.0%) and postgraduate taught qualifications (+14.5%).
11. While entrants rose overall, there was a distinct difference between colleges and HEIs. Entrants to HE at universities increased year on year (+5,260, 4.2%), driven mainly by increased intake to postgraduate taught courses. In contrast, entrants to HE at college dropped by 10.4% (-3,945). The drop in entrants to HE at colleges was mainly driven by decreased uptake of HNC/HND qualifications, -16.7% (-4,420) year-on-year.
12. The Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR) is an estimate of the probability that a 16-year-old will participate in higher education at college or university from HNC to Degree level by the age of 30. The Scottish HEIPR was 56.9% in 2021-22, a fall of 3.3 percentage points from 2020-21. This represents a return to pre-pandemic levels.

Qualifiers

13. More students qualified from HE courses in 2021-22 than at any point in the last decade with 117,195 students receiving an award. Many of these qualifications were achieved despite the direct impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the higher education sector in Scotland and the ability for students to successfully complete their courses.
14. Figure 3 details the number of qualifiers by type and sector. In 2021-22 the largest group of qualifiers was from postgraduate taught courses at 36.4% of all qualifiers, followed by first degree (34.4%), HNC/HND (14.7%), other sub-degree (11.7%) and research postgraduate (2.7%).

Figure 3: Taught postgraduate qualifiers were the largest group in 2021-22, followed by first degree qualifiers

Qualifiers, Scottish institutions, 2021-22



15. HNC/D was the only qualification level to see a reduction in qualifiers over the last decade, dropping from 20,570 in 2012-13 to 17,230 in 2021-22 (-16.2%).

Domicile

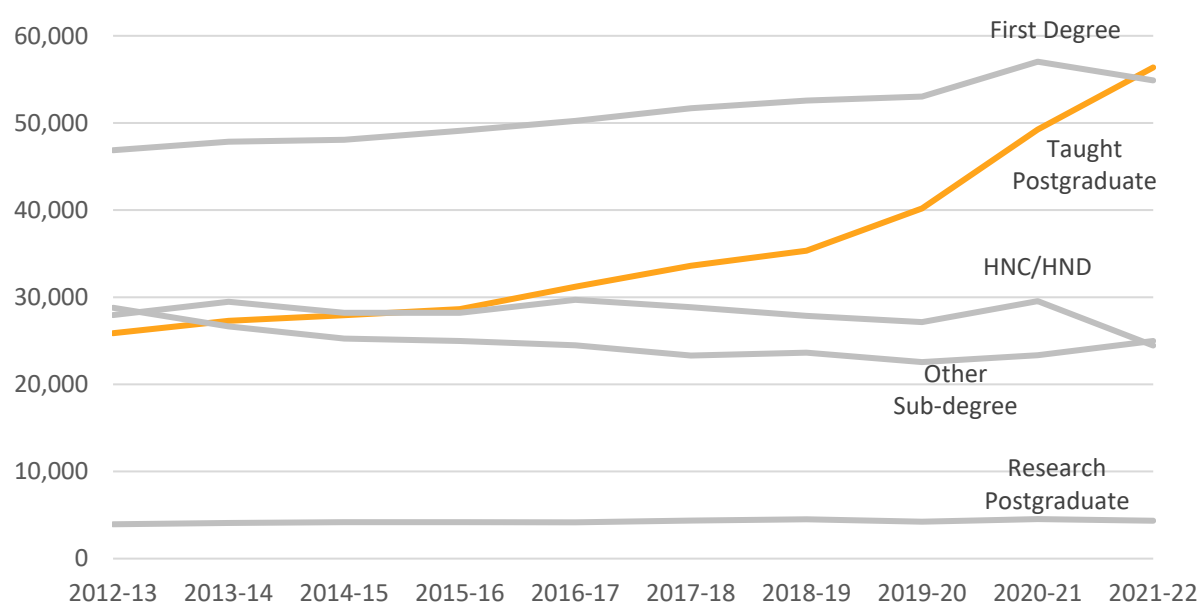
16. The total number of Scottish domiciled students in higher education dropped by 0.97% to 226,565 in 2021-22. This follows record growth in 2020-21 and remains 6.57% higher than in 2019-20.
17. The change in the total population of Scottish domiciled students is unevenly distributed amongst degree levels. First degree students continued their long-term growth trend with an increase of 2.34% year on year to 131,355. However, the total number of sub-degree students decreased by 7.26% to 60,660 in line with historic levels of 2019-20.
18. The number of Scottish domiciled students in postgraduate courses marginally decreased year on year by 1.38% to 34,545 but remain 17.58% above 2019-20 figures.
19. Scotland continues to attract record numbers of students from the rest of the UK, with over 13,685 new RUK entrants, constant year on year and a 19.83% increase from 2019-20.
20. Similarly, Scottish institutions attracted a record number of students from the rest of the world. Over 40,510 international (non-EU) students started HE in Scotland in 2021-22, an increase of 39.76% year on year from 2020-21.

Postgraduate Study

21. The number of postgraduate taught students doubled over the last ten years, from 41,530 in 2012-13 to 83,065 in 2021-22. Most of this increase has taken place over the last three years, with an additional 32,165 enrolments in 2021-22 compared to 2018-19.
22. In 2021-22 postgraduate taught students were the largest group of entrants to HE in Scotland, surpassing first degree for the first time (figure 5).

Figure 5: For the first time postgraduate taught courses have the most entrants of any level

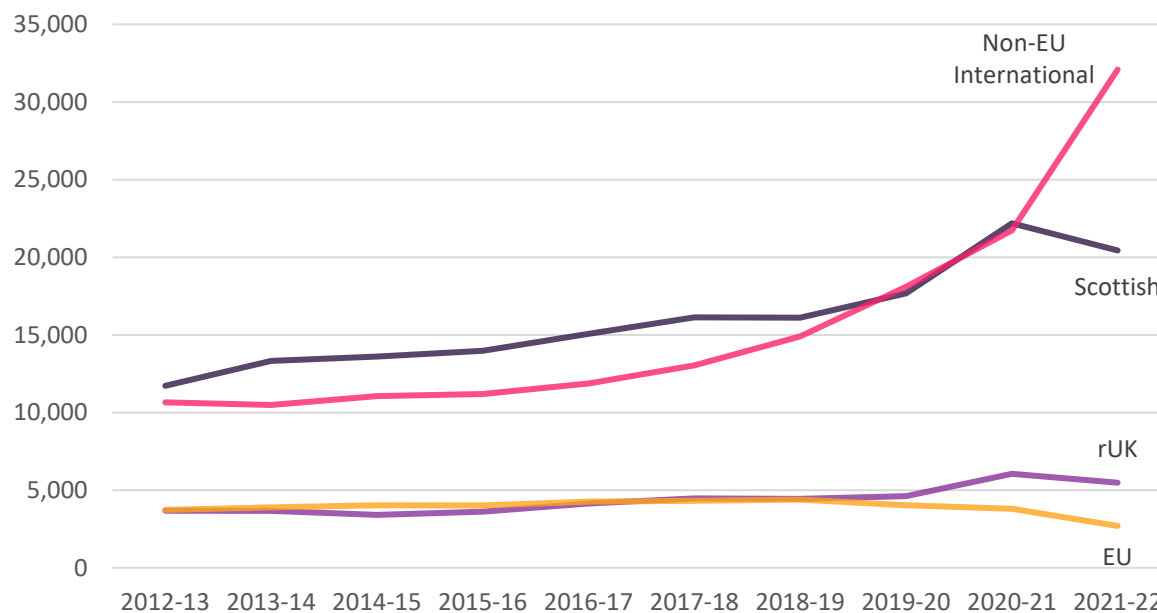
Entrants, Scottish providers, 2012-13 to 2021-22



23. The additional demand for postgraduate courses at Scottish providers has come from non-EU international students and Scottish domiciled entrants. These cohorts have grown by 201.0% and 74.4% respectively over the last decade. In 2021-22 there were 33,090 non-EU international students on postgraduate courses, making it the largest domicile group at that level (figure 6).

Figure 6: Non-EU international and Scottish domiciled students have driven demand for postgraduate courses in Scotland

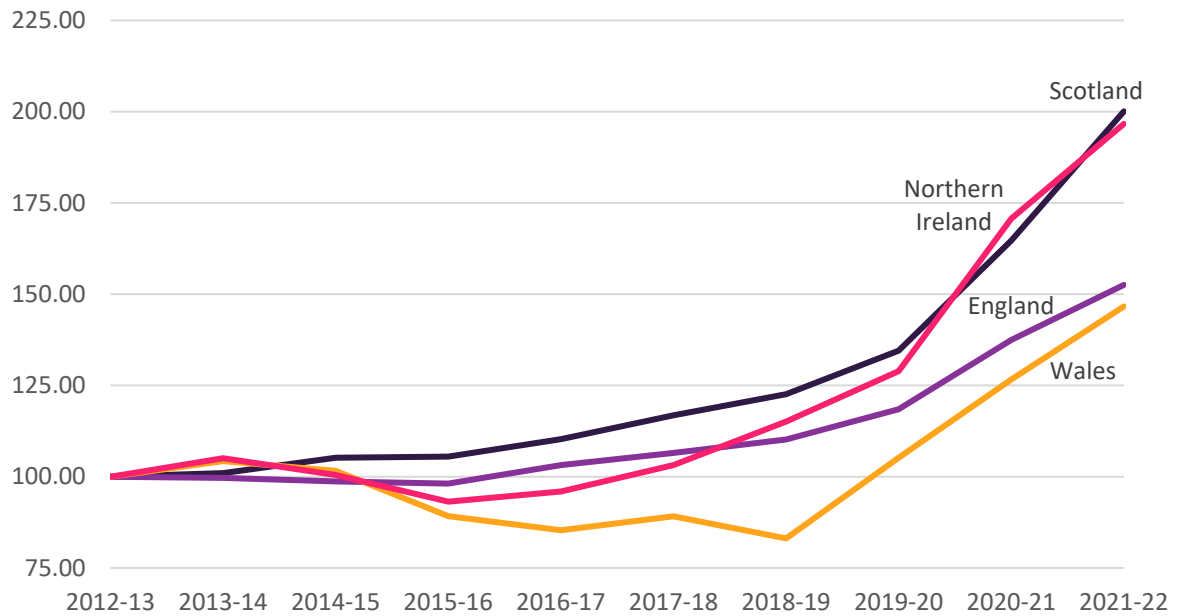
Entrants, all postgraduate courses, Scottish institutions, 2012-13 to 2021-22



24. Student numbers on postgraduate courses have increased for providers in each country within the UK during the last decade. The largest proportional increase in postgraduate students was at Scottish institutions (+100.1%) followed by institutions in Northern Ireland at +96.7% (figure 7). There were also large proportional increases in postgraduate students at providers in England (+52.5%) and Wales (+46.6%).

Figure 7: Scottish providers have seen the greatest proportional increase in postgraduate education in the UK in the last decade

Postgraduate taught students, UK institutions, AY 2012-13 to 2021-22, AY 2012-13 = 100



Annex A

The numbering of the notes refers to additional tables published on the SFC website and not to any of the tables in this publication. For full details please see the associated Excel Workbook.

(1) The figures include Scottish-domiciled postgraduate research students at the Open University (OU) up to 2011-12. The OU had 20 Scottish-domiciled postgraduate research students in 2011-12.

(2) Students at the former land-based colleges of Barony, Elmwood and Oatridge, which merged with the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) to form SRUC in October 2012, were still recorded through the college reporting until 2012-13. They are included in the figures for colleges for 2012-13 but are included with the SRUC and HEI related figures from 2013-14.

(3) In 2010-11, Glasgow Metropolitan College, Glasgow College of Nautical Studies and Central College Glasgow merged to form City of Glasgow College.

In 2012-13 Telford College, Stevenson College and Jewel and Esk Valley College merged to form Edinburgh College.

In 2012-13 Barony College, Elmwood College and Oatridge College merged with the Scottish Agricultural College to form SRUC.

On 1 November 2013, Aberdeen College and Banff and Buchan College merged to form North East Scotland College.

On 1 August 2013, Ayr College, James Watt College (Kilwinning campus) and Kilmarnock College merged to form Ayrshire College.

On 1 August 2013, Adam Smith College, Carnegie College and SRUC (non-land base element) merged to form Fife College.

On 1 November 2013, North Glasgow College, John Wheatley College and Stow College merged to form Glasgow Kelvin College.

On 31 July 2013, Anniesland College, Cardonald College and Langside College merged to form Glasgow Clyde College.

On 1 November 2013, Angus College and Dundee College merged to form Dundee and Angus College.

On 1 November 2013, Cumbernauld College and Motherwell College merged to form New College Lanarkshire, and on 1 April 2014, they were joined by Coatbridge College.

On 1 August 2013, Clydebank College, Reid Kerr College and James Watt College (Greenock campus) merged to form West College Scotland.

- (5) The college full-time equivalents (FTEs) for HE students exclude the additional volume associated with students receiving extended learning support as this is not reported in the same way for HEIs. When looking at college FTEs on their own, FTEs accounting for extended learning support should be used.
- (7) Totals include students whose genders were not reported or reported as Other.
- (8) The totals include Scottish-domiciled students whose local authority was not recorded.
- (9) This table does not include Scottish-domiciled students at UK institutions outside of Scotland and does not represent rates of participation in Scottish local authorities.
- (10) Totals include students whose ages were not reported.
- (11) The 'Combined' subject grouping is used in recognition of programmes of study which cut across different subject areas.
- (12) Total includes students from overseas whose specific country of domicile was not recorded.
- (13) This table includes students at UK HEIs only and does not include students studying at colleges.
- (14) The above table does not include Scottish-domiciled entrants at UK institutions outside of Scotland and does not represent rates of participation in Scottish local authorities.
- (15) The total includes a small number of students at the Open University who are domiciled outside the UK.
- (16) Total all domiciles includes UK unknown and overseas students whose specific country of domicile was not reported.
- (18) Deprived areas are defined as the 20% and 40% lowest ranked areas in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) for the relevant year. In this table, Academic Year 2020-21 relates to SIMD 2016.
- (24) Aegrotat degrees; this is an honours degree without classification, awarded on the understanding that had the candidate not been unwell, he or she would have passed.
- (25) Totals include other qualification classifications.
- (26) This is the Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH) of subject groups at Level 1 (version 1.3.4). The CAH provides a standardised hierarchical aggregation of Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS) codes. The 2019-20 edition of this publication used CAH version 1.2.
- (27) Students attending the Open University, whose location (domicile) prior to study was in Scotland.
- (28) Total UK includes UK unknown where the specific country of domicile was not reported

(29) Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan are all included under China.

Annex B: methodology, Data Definitions and Quality Information

Data Sources

1. This publication contains information on students from both colleges and higher education institutions (HEIs) who are attending higher education courses in Scotland. These statistics are collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) from HEIs and by SFC from further education colleges (colleges).

Coverage

2. Following a consultation in 2007, the method of counting students at HEIs was changed in 2009 in order to provide a greater level of consistency with HESA. The figures in this publication that relate to higher education institutions are defined by HESA's standard registration population. Time-series have been revised according to this definition.
3. The standard registration population includes all higher education student instances active at a reporting institution at point in the reporting period 1 August to 21 July except; dormant students, incoming visiting exchange students, student who study wholly outside the UK, students on sabbatical and writing up students.
4. Data from Scottish colleges continues to exclude those students who do not complete the first 25% of their course (the point at which they become eligible for funding).

Student Instances

5. HESA's Student Records use the term 'instance' to describe a student's engagement within an institution. A student may enrol on more than one course and, therefore, have more than one instance. It is instances that are reported in this publication, consistent with HESA's methodology. The same approach is taken when reporting on student activity at Scottish colleges. Where references are made in this release to 'students' this should be interpreted as instances.

Full-time Equivalents

6. Full-time Equivalents (FTE) represent the expected hours of learning undertaken by a student during their course, as a proportion of the expected learning of full-time study. For example; a student with an FTE of 0.8 is expected to undertake 20% fewer hours of learning relative to a full-time student on the same course, a student with an FTE of 1.2 is expected to undertake 20% more hours of learning relative to a full-time student on the same course.

7. At UK HEIs, full-time students are those normally required to attend an institution for periods amounting to more than 24 weeks within the year of study, on thick or thin sandwich courses, and those on a study-related year out of their institution. During that time students are normally expected to undertake periods of study, tuition or work experience which amounts to an average of at least 21 hours per week. Full-time HE students at Scottish colleges are those which meet the criteria of at least 480 planned notional hours.

Open University

8. Students attending the Open University, whose location (domicile) prior to study was in Scotland, are classified in this publication as studying at a Scottish HEI. Where comparisons are made with other UK countries, the Open University is regarded as a separate institution in each country. Students studying at the Open University whose location (domicile) prior to study was outside the UK or recorded as an unknown UK domicile are excluded prior to 2012-13. This methodology differs from that used by HESA where the Open University is counted as a whole English institution; as a result student figures reported in this release will differ from those reported by HESA.

Domicile

9. The full list of countries included in each domicile grouping is published in [Annex B: HE Students and Qualifiers 2014-15](#).

Level of Study

10. The full list of qualifications included in each level of study category is published in [Annex B: HE Students and Qualifiers 2014-15](#).

Subject Tables

11. Subject data from higher education institutions is apportioned to broadly reflect the weight of a particular subject within the study programmes of individual enrolments. This process is consistent with the treatment of subject breakdowns by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). For the 2019-20 academic year onwards, HESA implemented a new subject coding system – the [Higher Education Classification of Subjects \(HECoS\)](#). This replaces the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) that was used to classify subjects in previous editions of this publication. Because the HECoS coding system is being used in this publication for the first time, we do not compare HECoS classified subjects against JACS classified subjects used for previous years.

Data Presentation

12. Our rounding strategy is in line with [HESA's](#). In all tables in this release, figures have been rounded to the nearest 5 whilst values of 0, 1 and 2 have been rounded to 0 and presented as '-'. Percentages are based on rounded figures. Unknown values are not displayed individually in tables but are included in totals. Totals are calculated from unrounded figures, therefore figures may not sum to totals due to rounding as well as the inclusion of unknown values. Figures and percentage in the text and charts are calculated from rounded values.
13. Percentages calculated from a denominator of less than 22.5 have been masked with an asterisk (*) to avoid deriving percentages from small numbers.
14. Percentage changes in actual numbers, for example between one year and the next, are referred to as x%. However, when discussing the difference between percentages, such as the difference between two proportions, percentage points (pp) are used.

Data Quality Information

15. This section provides a summary of information in the following dimensions of quality: Relevance, Accuracy, Accessibility and Clarity, and Comparability. For further information please see [Annex B: HE Students and Qualifiers 2014-15](#).

Relevance

16. HESA is the official UK agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative information about higher education at higher education institutions. SFC collects data on provision at colleges through the Further Education Statistics (FES) data collections.

Accuracy

17. The procedures followed by HESA to ensure quality of the data are provided on the HESA website. The guidance issued by SFC for the submission of the Scottish college records is on the SFC website.
18. The following table gives the proportions of the overall student populations at Scottish HEIs and colleges for whom their unitary authority of residence was not recorded.

Proportion of Scottish domiciled students where the local authority is unknown,
2013-14 to 2020-21

Institution Type	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
HEIs	0.5%	1.0%	1.4%	1.8%	1.4%	2.0%	1.4%	0.8%	0.5%
Colleges	2.0%	0.0%	0.8%	1.5%	0.3%	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%	0.4%

Accessibility and Clarity

19. This statistical publication is pre-announced and then published on the SFC website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables available on the website only which is a freely available resource.

Comparability

20. HESA collects student enrolment data from all publicly funded UK HEIs, so comparison with other countries within the UK is possible. The release [Higher Education Student Data](#) provides information on this topic.

Associate Students

21. When a college and HEI share responsibility for students, for example, when a HEI acts as the awarding body for a course that is partly delivered at college, these students appear in both the HEI and college data and are known as Associate Students.
22. Following consultation, it was decided to continue counting Associate Students in both sectors in this publication and to produce a separate table quantifying the number of identifiable Associate Students. The table shows a split by gender, age, and percentages from the most deprived areas for the 1,485 students who have been identified as Associate Students in colleges in 2020-21.

Associate Students in 2021-22: Gender, Age and Percentages from the 20% and 40% Most Deprived Areas

	Number of Associate Students	Percentage of Associate Students
Gender		
Male	895	60.2%
Female	575	38.8%
Total	1,485	
Age group		
16-18	425	28.7%
19-20	385	26.1%
21-24	265	18.0%
25-29	180	12.3%
30-39	150	10.0%
40-49	50	3.4%
50-59	20	1.3%
Total	1,485	
Deprivation Quintile (2) (18)		
20% most deprived areas	355	23.9%
20-40% most deprived areas	310	20.8%

Metadata Table

Metadata Indicator	Description
Publication Title	Higher Education Students and Qualifiers at Scottish Institutions 2021-22
Description	Includes data on Higher Education students, entrants and qualifiers in Scottish Higher Education Institutions and Colleges over a ten year time series (2012-13 to 2021-22)
Theme	Higher Education
Topic	Student Information
Format	PDF and Excel Tables
Data Source(s)	This publication contains information on students from both colleges and higher education institutions (HEIs) who are attending Higher Education courses in Scotland. These statistics are collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) from HEIs and by SFC from further education colleges (colleges). Population data used to calculate the Higher Education Initial Participation Rate is sourced from National Records of Scotland Mid-year Population Estimates.
Date that data are acquired	College students: October 2022 College qualifiers: May 2023 HEI data: January 2023
Release date	08/08/2023
Frequency	Annual
Timeframe of data and timeliness	Trend data over ten academic years, 2012-13 to 2021-22
Continuity of data	Following a consultation in 2007, the method of counting students at HEIs was changed in 2009 in order to provide a greater level of consistency with HESA. The figures in this publication that relate to higher education institutions are defined by HESA's standard registration population. Time-series have been revised according to this definition.

The standard registration population includes all higher education student instances active at a reporting institution at point in the reporting period 1 August to 21 July except; dormant students, incoming visiting exchange students, student who study wholly outside the UK, students on sabbatical and writing up students.

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

Revisions statement No revisions have been made.

Revisions relevant to this publication No revisions have been made.

Relevance and Key uses of this statistics HESA is the official UK agency for the collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative information about higher education at higher education institutions. SFC collects data on provision at colleges in Scotland through the Further Education Statistics (FES) data collection.

Accuracy The procedures followed by HESA to ensure quality of the data are provided on the HESA website. The guidance issued by SFC for the submission of the Scottish college records is on the SFC website.

Comparability HESA collects [student enrolment data from all publicly funded UK HEIs](#), so comparison with other countries within the UK is possible. The Statistical First Release 'Higher Education Student Enrolments and Qualifications Obtained at Higher Education Institutions'

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 accessibility of the website](#) can be found here.

Coherence and clarity	This statistical publication is pre-announced and then published on the SFC website. It is accompanied by more detailed tables available in Excel format on the website only which is a freely available resource.
Value type and unity of measurement	Number, percentage, percentage point
Disclosure	In all tables in this release, figures have been rounded to the nearest 5, and 0, 1 and 2 have been rounded to 0. Unknown values are not displayed individually in tables but are included in totals. Figures may not sum to totals due to rounding and the inclusion of unknown values. Figures and percentages in the text and charts are calculated from rounded values. This is to mitigate the risk of identification of individuals.
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