

Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes in Northern Ireland from 2002/03 up to 2016/17

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This publication provides detail into the characteristics of those enrolling and qualifying in, as well as performance statistics for the Essential Skills programme since the start of the Strategy in 2002/03.

Key Points

- Since the commencement of the Strategy, there have been over half a million (501,853) Essential Skills enrolments (Table 1).
- Between 2002/03 and 2010/11, annual enrolments in Essential Skills increased year on year. However, since 2011/12, enrolments have started to decrease. Over the past academic year, enrolments have decreased by 0.7% from 36,045 in 2015/16 to 35,779 in 2016/17, but still remain higher than totals in 2008/09 and earlier academic years (Table 1).
- Since the beginning of the Strategy, those aged '16-24' have formed the highest proportion of Essential Skills enrolments, ranging from 46.8% to 83.3% across individual academic years (Table 2).
- The proportion of enrolments where the status of employment was reported as 'economically inactive' has decreased from 35.1% in 2015/16 to 34.3% in 2016/17. (Table 3).
- Since the start of the Strategy, 'Level 1' has accounted for the highest proportion (45.4%) of enrolments (Table 6).
- Over the course of the Strategy, 39.8% of Essential Skills enrolments have been in Literacy, 39.4% in Numeracy and 20.8% in ICT (Table 8).
- Between 2015/16 and 2016/17, the number of qualifications gained decreased by 27.2%, from 30,259 to 22,026, possibly related to a recent refresh of Essential Skills standards (Table 12).
- Almost two thirds (65.5%) of Essential Skills enrolments result in a qualification. For Numeracy enrolments, the equivalent success rate is 68.1%, while it is 67.3% for Literacy and 57.0% for ICT enrolments (Table 17).

Reader Information

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About Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education)

Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education) is responsible for the collection, quality assurance, analysis and publication of timely and accurate information derived from a wide range of statistical information returns supplied by the Further Education colleges across Northern Ireland and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

The Head of the Branch is the Principal Statistician, Brian French. The Branch aims to present information in a meaningful way and provide advice on its uses to the Minister for the Economy, the NI Assembly and its Economy Committee, Further Education Colleges, Universities, Professional Advisory Groups, policy branches within the Department for the Economy (DfE), other educational organisations, academia, private sector organisations, charity/voluntary organisations, as well as the general public. The statistical information collected is used to contribute to major exercises such as reporting on the performance of the Further Education and Higher Education sectors, other comparative performance exercises, target setting and monitoring, departmental research projects, development of service frameworks as well as policy formulation and evaluation. In addition, the information is used in response to a high volume of Assembly questions and ad hoc queries each year.

Information is disseminated through several key statistical publications, including:

- [Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes](#);
- [Further Education Activity](#);
- [Higher Education Enrolments](#);
- [Higher Education Qualifications](#);
- [Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education](#).

A detailed list of these publications is available from:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/statistics-publication-schedule>

Explanatory Notes

This statistical release is the eighth in an annual series presenting information on Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes in Northern Ireland.

The 'Technical Notes' at the end of the report provide detailed information on the methodology used to produce the statistics and the definitions of the terms used within the report.

Where tables and figures are mentioned within the commentary, these are hyperlinked to their location within the document.

Data Collection

The information presented in this bulletin derives from a series of statistical returns listed below:

- Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for the years 2002/03 – 2012/13
- Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for the years 2013/14 – 2016/17
- Essential Skills enrolment extract from the Client Management System (CMS) for the years 2002/03 – 2016/17
- Essential Skills Qualifications Return for the years 2002/03 – 2016/17

Essential Skills enrolments that are part of an individual's programme of study through one of the Department's training or employment programmes, such as Training for Success or Steps to Work, are recorded on the CMS, which is installed in Job Centres/Jobs and Benefits offices throughout Northern Ireland. This IT system is used to facilitate the interface with the Department's customers. The relevant data are extracted from CMS at a scheduled date during the year. This data extract contains all Essential Skills enrolments funded through any of DfE's training or employment programmes. In this analysis, it covers the period from 2002/03 to 2016/17.

Both Essential Skills enrolment returns list the enrolment records assigned to a particular provider and returned to the Department. Both returns are merged and any duplicate enrolments are dealt with through a process, presented in the guidance '[Defining an Essential Skills enrolment](#)'. The resultant file is then analysed to present the total number of Essential Skills enrolments

The data returns are computerised data files consisting of individual records for each enrolment and qualification recorded in a time frame specified by the extract.

In recent years, extensive work has been carried out to develop a CDR, which brings together the five main individual Departmental returns from FE colleges (namely, Funded Learning Unit, Further Education Statistical Return, ESER, Entitlement Framework and Survey of Further Education College Leavers) into a single dataset.

There are significant benefits to be realised in collating all the data requirements of the Department into one single return. Streamlining the production process of data increases the efficiency of the process in generating the data. With extra information now available for each enrolment record, it also increases the potential in terms of analytical ability, while increasing the consistency of analysis across all FE college data. Data quality is also enhanced with data being generated at the same point in time and a significant number of validations employed on the data through the CDR process.

This report includes statistical outputs relating to the academic years 2002/03 to 2016/17. Previous statistical reports can be found at:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/essential-skills-enrolments>

Supplementary Tables

Detailed Supplementary Tables are available on the DfE web page:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/essential-skills-enrolments-publications-2017>

Rounding

Percentages have been rounded to one decimal place; as a consequence some percentages may not sum to 100. Determining the percentage point(s) difference may not equate to the difference between two percentages due to rounding.

Data Quality

All information presented in this bulletin in respect of the CDR has been validated and quality assured by FE Colleges prior to publication. FE Colleges are given a set period of time to submit the information to Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education). Following submission, this Branch performs a series of validation checks to ensure that information is consistent both within and across returns, as well as analyses to monitor annual variations and emerging trends. Validations are also run for training programme enrolment data, although the bulletin is published prior to receiving the amended data due to the time taken for the amendments to be administered within the training programme dataset; as such, any amendments are reflected in future publications.

The Essential Skills qualification data from the awarding organisations are validated at each quarterly return. Any errors are fed back to the appropriate awarding organisation for amendment. All data sent to DfE from the Open College Network NI are crosschecked against their learner registration and awards system (QUARTZ) to ensure the accuracy of their submissions. The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) cross checks whether all certified candidates in the period matches what is generated in the DfE report. City and Guilds conducts quality assurance checks on the data and processes. City and Guilds carries out both internal

and external audits, whereas the Open College Network NI and CCEA conduct internal audits.

Main Uses of Data

The main uses of these data are: to monitor Essential Skills activity; to help assess Essentials Skills performance; corporate monitoring; to inform and monitor related Essential Skills policy; and to respond to NI Assembly questions and ad hoc queries from the public.

Who will be interested?

The information presented in this statistical bulletin will be of interest to a wide variety of people. For example, the statistics are used by DfE policy officials in their role of assisting and advising the Minister for DfE to discharge his duties; by the NI Assembly and its Economy Committee to scrutinise the Essential Skills sector; by other government departments, such as the Department of Education; by local businesses to quantify the supply of those qualifying in their business area; by prospective students to inform their choices around Essential Skills courses; and by researchers and academics to try and understand the underlying trends in Essential Skills.

An Official Statistics Publication

The statistics within this bulletin have been compiled in accordance with Official Statistics guidelines. They aim to meet identified user needs; are accessible and explained; are produced in accordance with sound methods; and are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Further information on the Code of Practice for Official Statistics is available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/>.

Further information on the DfE Statement of Compliance in relation to the Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order (Northern Ireland) 2009 is available at:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/statement-compliance>

Essential Skills Activity Information Elsewhere in the United Kingdom

Due to differing counting rules, Essential Skills activity information in other UK administrations is not always measured in a comparable manner to those in Northern Ireland. Details of the Essential Skills activity information published elsewhere in the UK can be found as detailed below.

England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-skills-for-life>

Wales

<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/schools-wales-examination-performance>

<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/learner-outcome-measures-further-education-work-based-learning-community-learning>

Comparing levels of qualifications

Within Essential Skills for 'Literacy' and 'Numeracy', individuals can obtain qualifications at 5 levels:

- Entry level 1
- Entry level 2
- Entry level 3
- Level 1
- Level 2

Essential Skills Information Communication and Technology (ICT) courses are only available at 'Level 1' and 'Level 2'. Further information on the various levels is available within the [definitions](#) section of this document. Qualifications at the same level are of a similar level of demand or difficulty.

For further information on comparing qualifications across the UK, Ireland and overseas please refer to the link:

<http://ofqual.gov.uk/help-and-advice/comparing-qualifications>

Introduction

The then Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) launched the [Essential Skills for Living Strategy](#) and action plan in April 2002. The Strategy aims to improve adult literacy, numeracy and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in Northern Ireland. Essential Skills courses, which are funded by DfE, are free to participants and delivered by accredited tutors working in Further Education (FE) Colleges, private training providers and community organisations.

This statistical bulletin has been produced by DfE's Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education). Since the start of the Strategy in 2002, it details the number of Essential Skills enrolments and qualifications gained, the characteristics of those participating, and the performance rates for Essential Skills provision.

Structure

The bulletin is divided into three sections:

- Section A focuses on Essential Skills enrolments and has seven subsections:
 - How many are participating?
 - What are the characteristics of those participating?
 - Age
 - Employment status
 - Gender
 - Target Level Deprivation Analysis
 - What courses are being studied?
 - Subject and age
 - Subject and gender
 - Where are the courses being studied?
- Section B concentrates on Essential Skills qualifications and has three subsections:
 - Number of qualifications
 - Achievements by subject
 - Achievements by level
- Section C details the performance rates (retention, achievement and success) for Essential Skills provision:
 - Performance by subject
 - Performance by gender
 - Performance by age band
 - Performance by target level

Please note that all Essential Skills enrolments are regarded as 'Regulated' provision and offered on a part time basis. As such, no mode of attendance analysis is presented in this publication.

Policy and Operational Context

The Minister for the Economy has responsibility within the NI Executive for FE colleges. He is also accountable to the NI Assembly, which undertakes a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to DfE and plays a key role in the consideration and development of legislation.

It is within this context that the [Essential Skills for Living Strategy](#) has been designed to improve levels of Numeracy, Literacy and ICT among the adult population in Northern Ireland. The vision for the delivery of the Essential Skills Strategy is:

“to provide opportunities for adults to update their Essential Skills to assist them in improving their overall quality of life, their personal development and their employment opportunities and by so doing to promote greater economic development, social inclusion and cohesion”.

The Strategy aims to provide a high quality education for all, with equal access for all, and to have a positive effect on all groups specified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Strategy contributes to the Executive's Programme for Government targets and the work it is taking forward on equality, by providing the opportunity for socially disadvantaged people and groups to improve their qualifications and Essential Skills, and help them to increase their employability.

The curriculum standards for the Essential Skills of Application of Number and Communication were refreshed by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in 2015/16 and published by the Department for the Economy (DfE) in 2016 for first teaching from September 2016. The purpose of the refresh was to update the standards and to make them more suitable for a wider cohort of learners.

The assessment methodology was also reviewed and developed to include an external end point assessment model for Application of Number and Communication at levels 1 and 2. The purpose of this change was to increase the rigour of the assessment methodology in the light of Northern Ireland's position in international studies of literacy and numeracy.

It was anticipated that the outcomes of this change could potentially result in lower achievement rates over the first two years. These results reflect the position at the end of the first year of delivery.

The Department will take into account these results as part of its ongoing evaluation of the new arrangements.

Section A: Enrolments

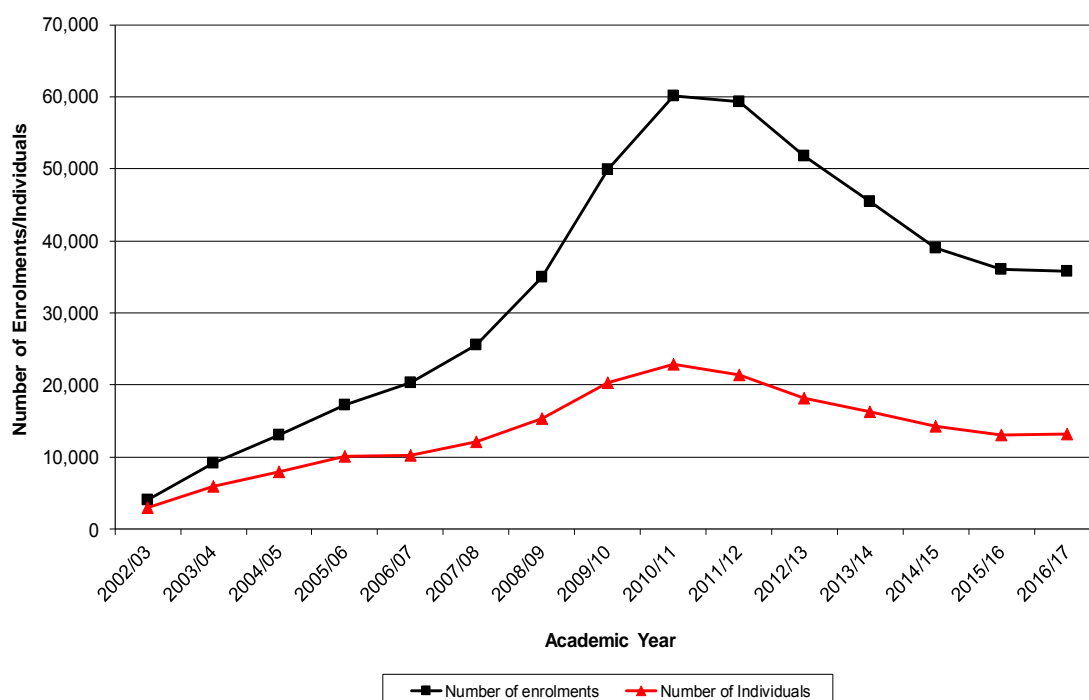
How many are participating?

Since the commencement of the Essential Skills Strategy in October 2002, there have been just under 502,000 enrolments in total (204,250 individuals). Between 2002/03 and 2010/11, the annual number of enrolments increased year on year reaching a peak of 60,084. Since then, the annual number of enrolments has decreased in each of the next six academic years to a total of 35,779 in 2016/17, including a 0.7% decrease. The number of individuals enrolling has followed a similar pattern, peaking at 22,921 in 2010/11 and decreasing, in each subsequent year, to 13,018 in 2015/16, before a slight rise (138) in individuals for 2016/17 to 13,156.

Over the last academic year, from 36,045 in 2015/16 to 35,779 in 2016/17 (Figure 1 and Table 1).

Possible explanations for the decline in the number of Essential Skills enrolments can be found in [NI School Leaver](#) data, which indicate that the number of school leavers not achieving grades A*-C in GCSE English and Maths has generally been decreasing over the past eight years. In addition, it is possible that the potential supply of participants among the adult population is decreasing.

Figure 1: Essential Skills enrolments and individuals by academic year



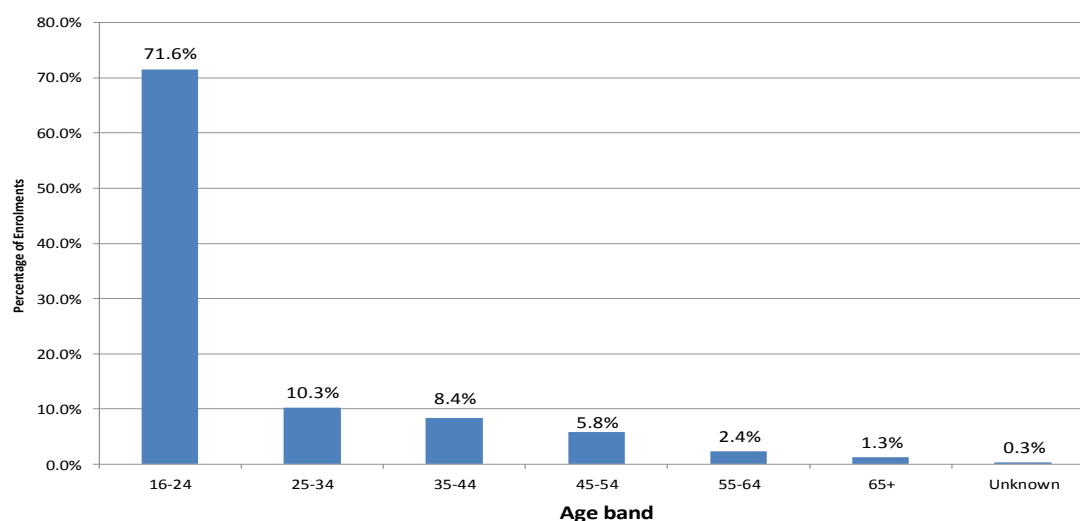
What are the characteristics of those participating?

Age

Over the 15 year period of the Strategy, almost three quarters (71.6%) of the participants in Essential Skills courses have been aged '16-24' years (Figure 2 and Table 2).

In 2016/17, over three-quarters of enrolments (27,422, 76.6%) were in the '16-24' age band. Those aged '25-34' were the second largest age group of enrolments to Essential Skills courses, accounting for 8.0% (2,874) in 2016/17 (Table 2).

Figure 2: Essential Skills enrolments by age band since 2002/03

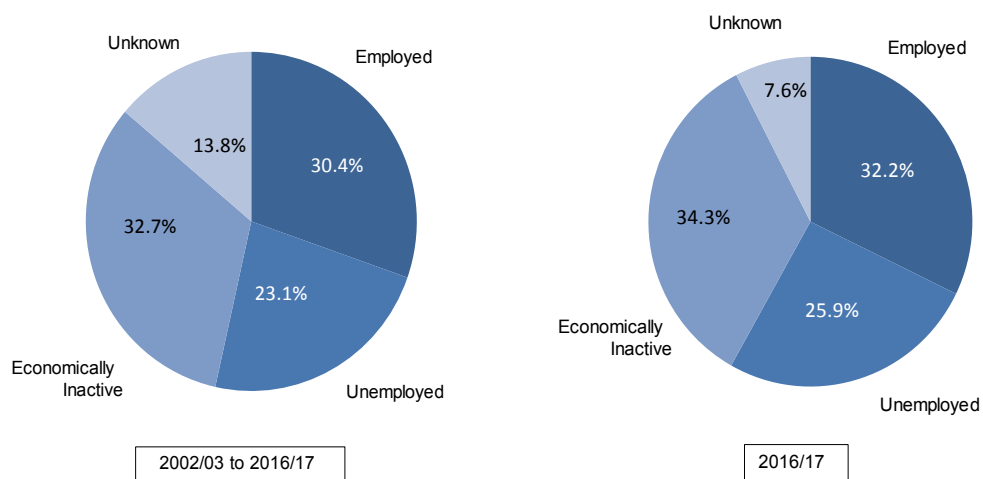


Employment Status

Over half (55.8%) of enrolments in Essential Skills courses across Northern Ireland have the employment status of the individual reported as either 'unemployed' (23.1%) or 'economically inactive' (32.7%). The proportion of 'economically inactive' enrolments rose gradually from 12.8% in the first year of the Strategy to a peak of 41.4% in 2014/15. In the past two academic years, the proportion has started to decrease, accounting for 34.3% of enrolments in 2016/17.

In 2016/17, 12,274 (34.3%) enrolments had an employment status of 'economically inactive', 9,276 (25.9%) 'unemployed' and 11,523 (32.2%) 'employed'. For 2,706 (7.6%) enrolments, the employment status was 'unknown' (Figure 3 and Table 3).

Figure 3: Essential Skills enrolments by employment status

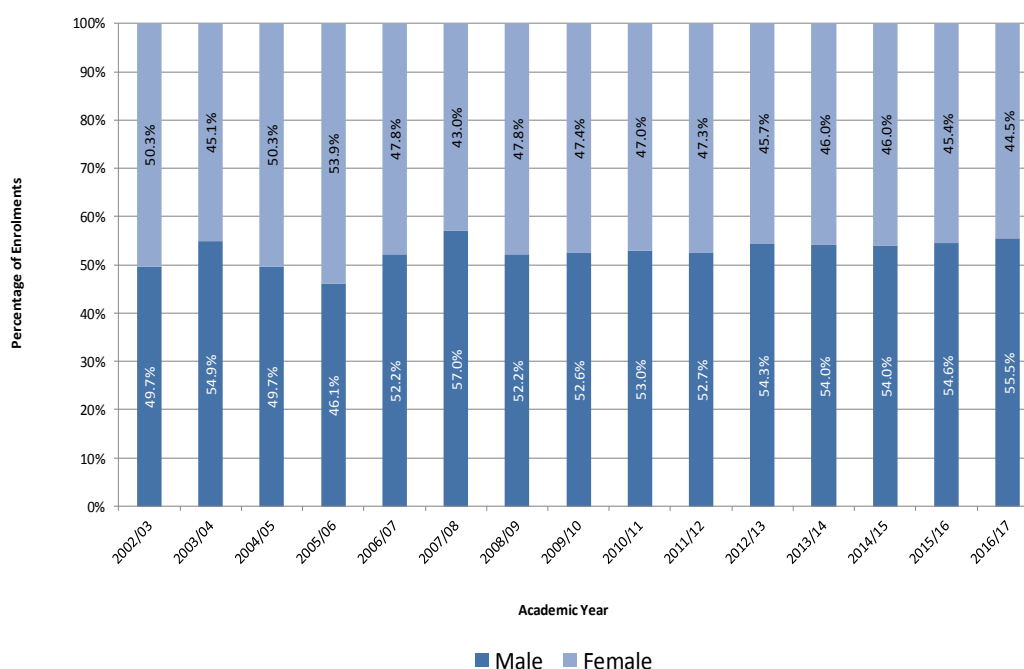


Gender

Over the 15 year period of the Strategy, 53.3% of the students on Essential Skills courses have been male. The general trend in the earlier part of the Strategy was that the majority of enrolments in Essential Skills courses were female. Since 2006/07, however, male enrolments have formed the majority (Table 4).

In the last academic year, males accounted for over half (55.5%, 19,868) of enrolments (Figure 4 and Table 4).

Figure 4: Essential Skills enrolments by gender and academic year

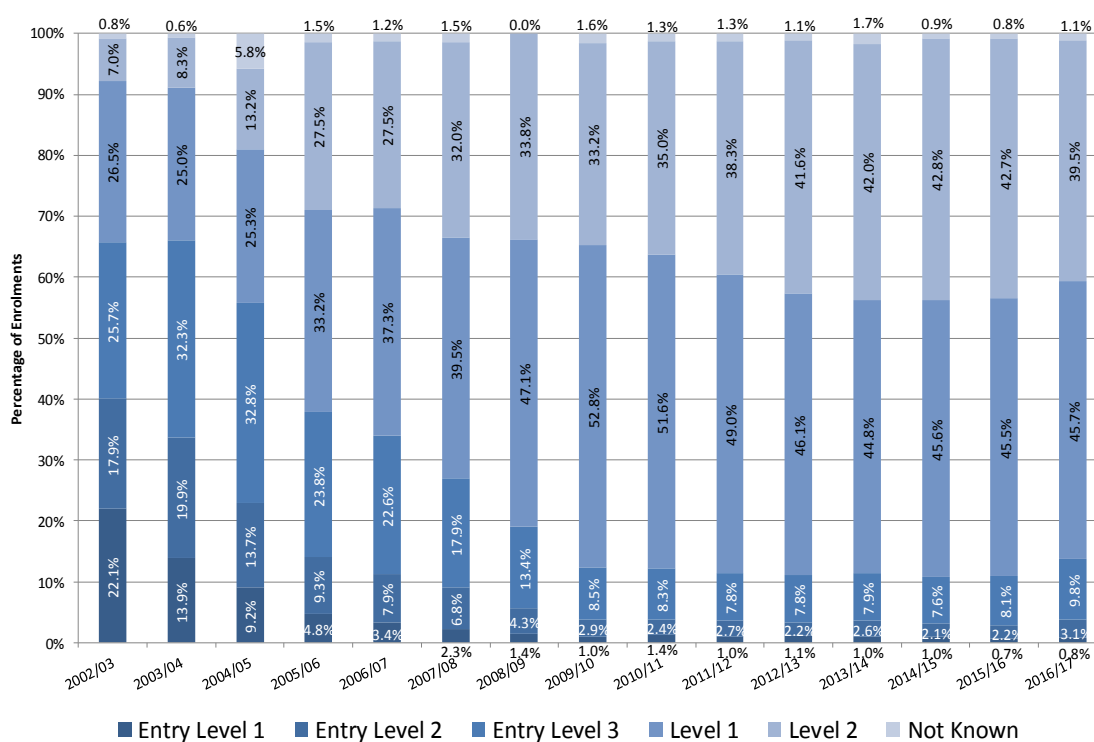


Target Level of study

From the start of the Strategy, the highest proportion (45.4%) of Essential Skills enrolments have been at 'Level 1'. However, over this period, the proportion of enrolments at 'Level 2' has been increasing steadily from 7.0% in 2002/03 to 42.8% in 2014/15, with 2015/16 and 2016/17 seeing a slight drop in proportion to 42.7% and 39.5% respectively. Conversely, the proportions of enrolments is Entry Level and Level 1 have been declining over time. This higher proportion at Level 2 means that an increasing share of enrolments are equivalent to GCSE grade A*-C.

In 2016/17, Entry level 1, 2 and 3 accounted for 0.8%, 3.1% and 9.8% of enrolments respectively with 'Level 1'(45.7%) and 'Level 2'(39.5%) having a higher proportion of enrolments (Figure 5 and Table 6).

Figure 5: Essential Skills Enrolments by subject, target level of study and academic year

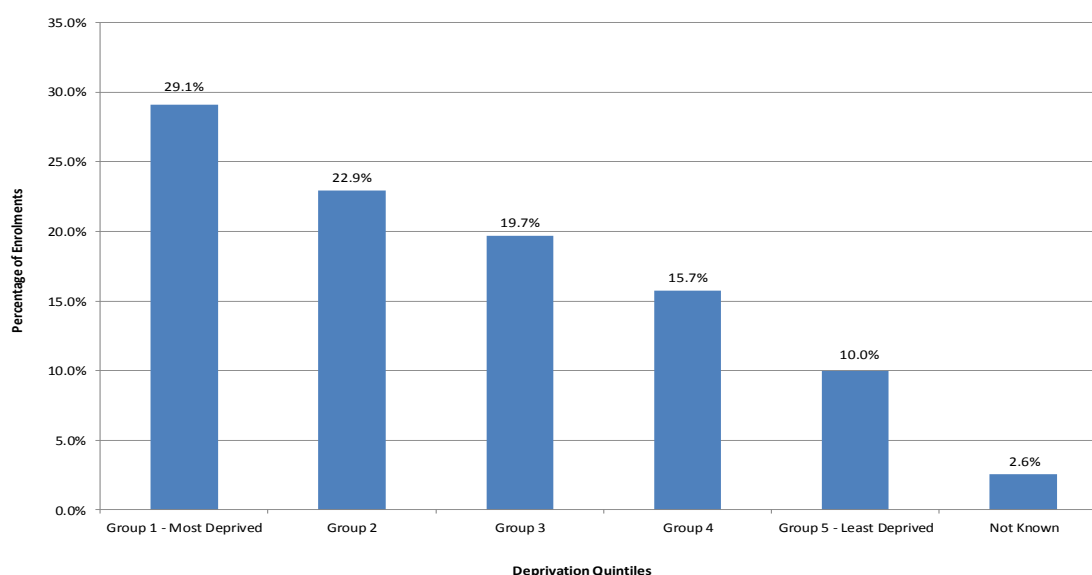


Deprivation¹ Analysis

Deprivation is measured by the official Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM), which categorises geographical areas across Northern Ireland into five groups, termed 'quintiles', each accounting for 20% of the 890 Super Output Areas (SOAs). Quintile 1 is the most deprived group of areas and Quintile 5 is the least deprived or most affluent group of areas.

Of the 501,853 Essential Skills enrolments since the beginning of the Strategy, the largest share (29.1%) have been from Quintile 1 SOA's. This aligns with [2001 Census data](#), which indicate that the highest proportion (24.8%) of those aged 16+ that have no qualification, or their highest level of qualification is at level one and live in Quintile 1 SOA's (Figure 6).

Figure 6: Essential Skills enrolments by deprivation quintiles since 2002/03



The general trend is, the more deprived the Quintile, the higher the number of enrolments. In the most recent academic year, 9,832 (27.5%) enrolments were from the most deprived quintile, 8,353 (23.3%) from the second most deprived quintile, 7,321 (20.5%) from the middle quintile, 5,872 (16.4%) from the second least deprived quintile and 3,679 (10.3%) from the least deprived quintile (Table 7).

¹ Information about the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure can be found at

http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/nimdm_2010.htm

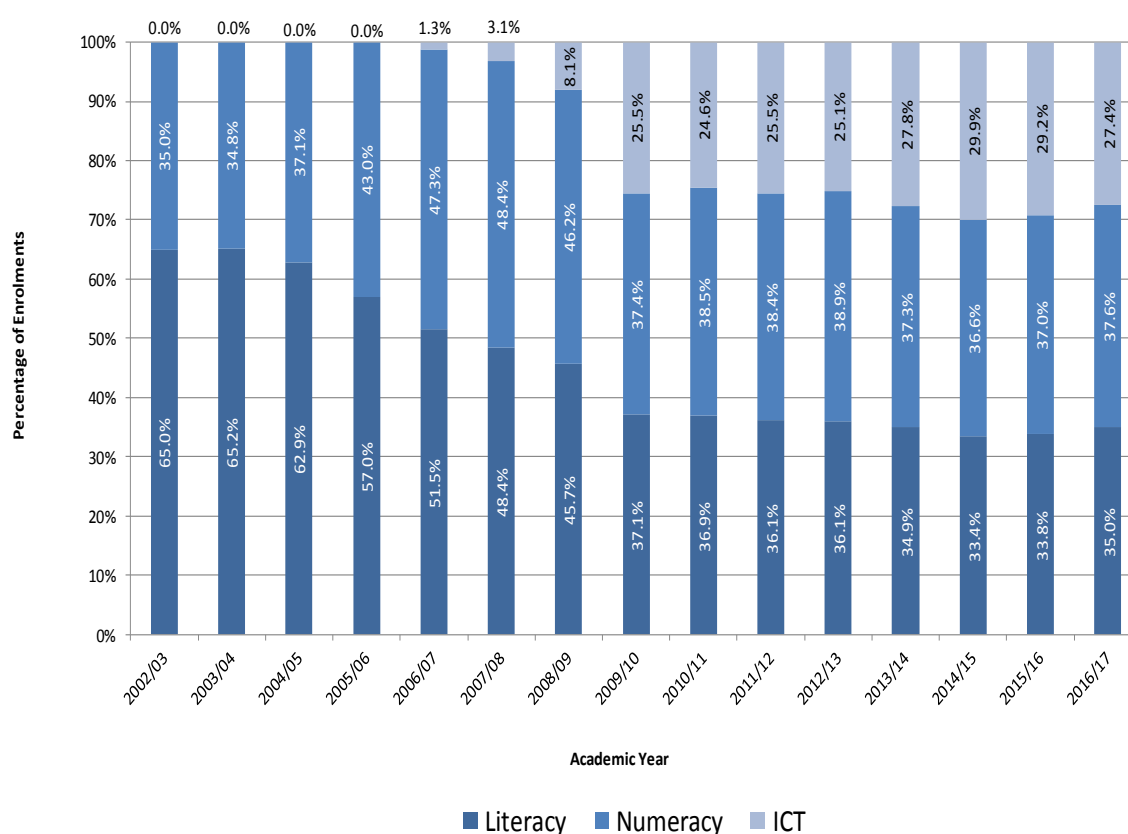
What subjects are being studied?

The most recent academic year indicates that, as a proportion of Essential Skills enrolments, Numeracy accounted for 37.6%, Literacy for 35.0% and ICT for 27.4% (Figure 7 and Table 8).

Initially, Literacy was the most common Essentials Skills course. However, along with the introduction of ICT as a pilot programme, in 2006/07, the balance between Literacy and Numeracy began to change in 2007/08. From 2007/08 onwards, Numeracy has accounted for the largest proportion of Essential Skills enrolments. This has been coupled with a decline in the share of Literacy enrolments between 2010/11 (36.9%) until 2015/16 (33.8%) although this has seen an increase to 35.0% in 2016/17 (Figure 7).

ICT was rolled out as a full programme in August 2009 and has generally accounted for just over a quarter of enrolments in each year since.

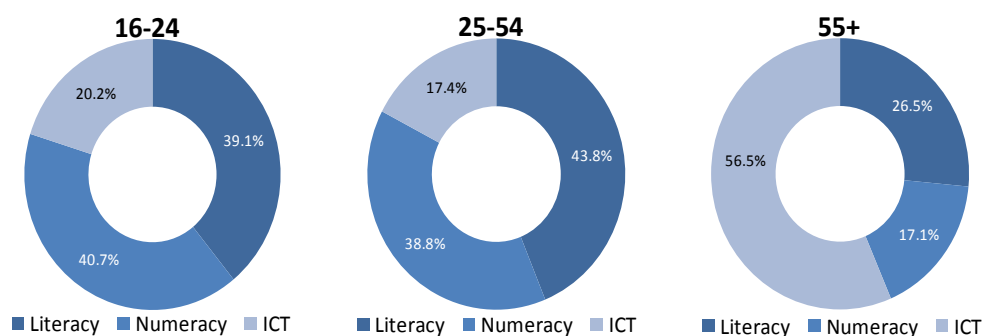
Figure 7: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and academic year



Subject and Age

Over the 15 year period of the Strategy, the most popular subject studied has varied across age bands. For those aged '16-24', Numeracy has had the highest proportion of essential skills enrolments (40.7%). For those aged '26-54', the most common subject studied has been Literacy (43.8%), while the majority (56.5%) of those aged '55+' have studied ICT (Figure 8 and Table 9).

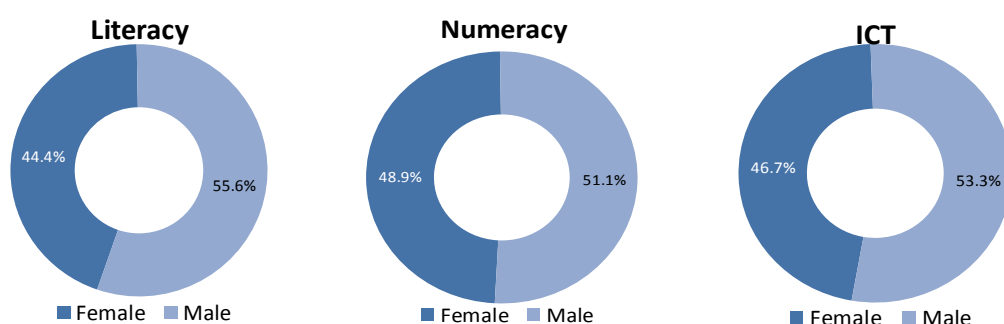
Figure 8: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and age since 2002/03



Subject and Gender

As previously detailed, higher proportions of males are enrolled in Essential Skills across all three Essential Skills subjects; ranging from 51.1% in Numeracy to 55.6% in Literacy (Figure 9 and Table 5).

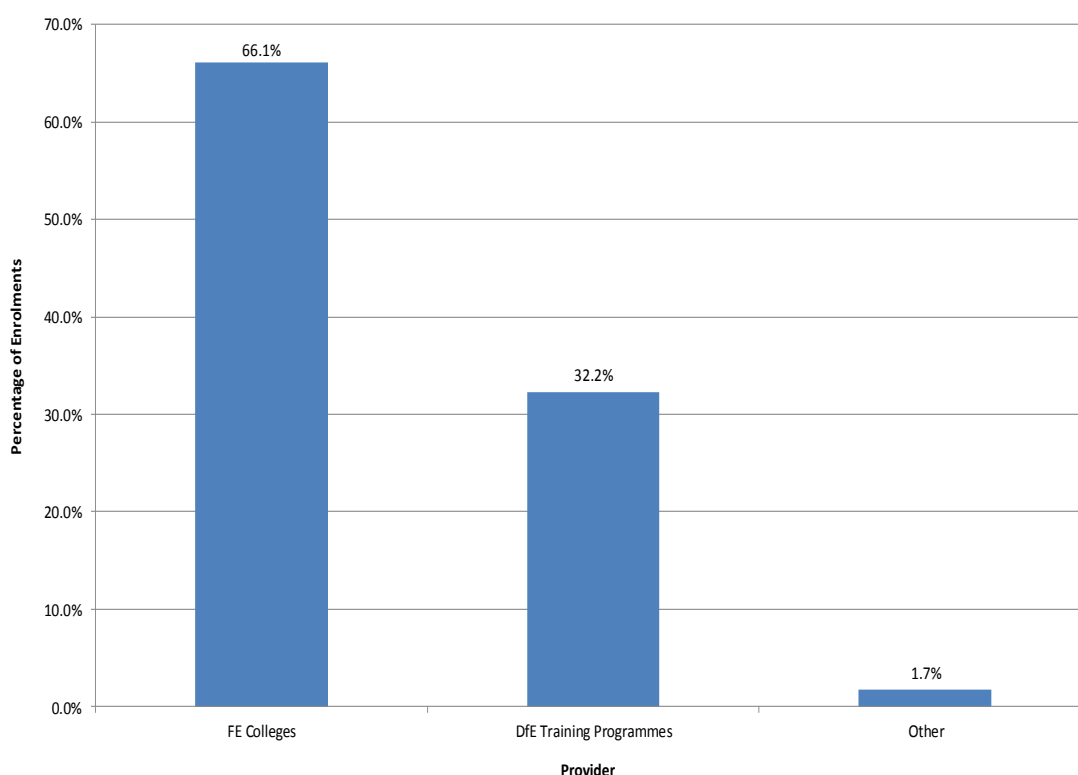
Figure 9: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and gender since 2002/03



Where are the courses being studied?

The main delivery of Essential Skills courses occurs within FE colleges, accounting for 66.1% of all enrolments since 2002. Enrolments at FE colleges increased year on year, from 3,701 in 2002/03 to a peak of 39,111 in 2011/12, before decreasing year on year to 21,842 in 2016/17. Enrolments through DfE training programme providers have accounted for 32.2% over the 15 year period, while 1.7% have been with other providers. Please note no enrolments have been undertaken by other providers since 2007/08 (Figure 10 and Table 10).

Figure 10: Essential Skills enrolments by provider since 2002/03



The category 'Other' includes enrolments registered against Proteus, Workers Education Association, EGSA and the Ulster People's College.

In 2016/17, the highest proportion of Essential Skills enrolments was in Belfast Metropolitan College (11.4%, 4,070). The college with the lowest proportion of Essential Skills enrolments was Northern Regional College (7.6%, 2,721). DfE Training Programmes accounted for 39.0% (13,937) of enrolments in 2016/17 (Table 10 and Table 11).

Section B: Qualifications issued

The following section focuses on Essential Skills qualifications issued by Awarding Organisations from the start of Strategy in April 2002.

The curriculum standards for the Essential Skills of Application of Number and Communication were refreshed by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) in 2015/16 and published by the Department for the Economy (DfE) in 2016 for first teaching from September 2016. The purpose of the refresh was to update the standards and to make them more suitable for a wider cohort of learners.

The assessment methodology was also reviewed and developed to include an external end point assessment model for Application of Number and Communication at levels 1 and 2. The purpose of this change was to increase the rigour of the assessment methodology in the light of Northern Ireland's position in international studies of literacy and numeracy.

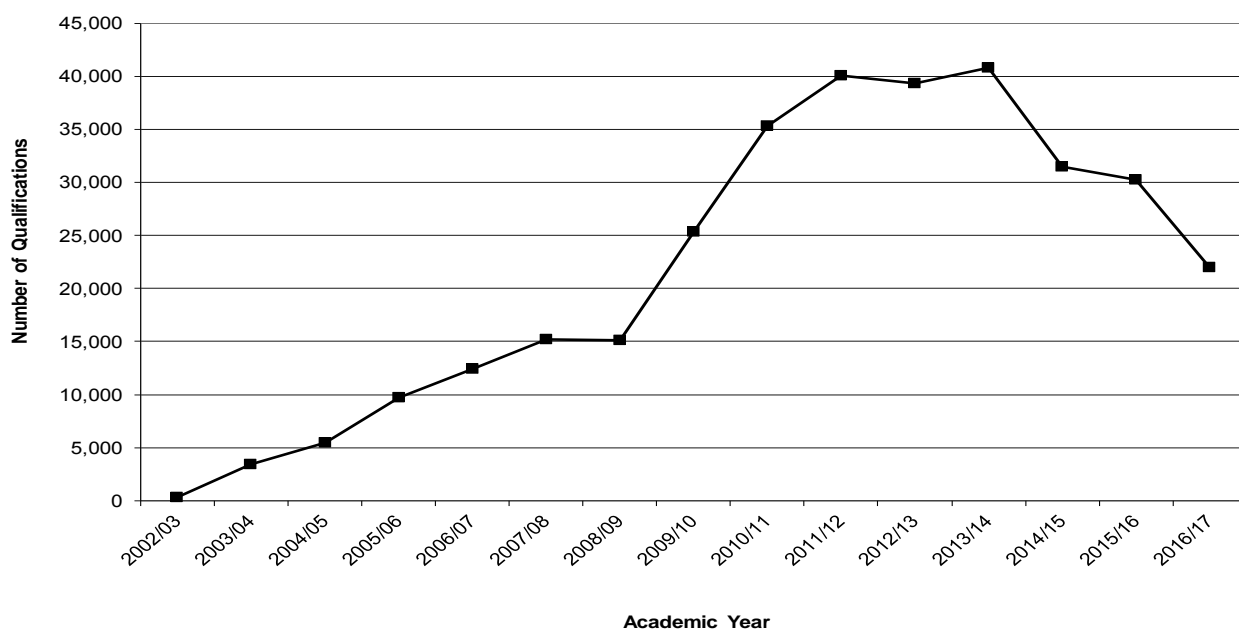
It was anticipated that the outcomes of this change could potentially result in lower achievement rates over the first two years. These results reflect the position at the end of the first year of delivery.

Number of Qualifications

Just over 326,400 qualifications have been issued in Essential Skills since the Strategy began fifteen years ago.

The number of qualifications issued generally increased each academic year until 2011/12, when it reached 40,094, and then plateaued until 2013/14. However, it has since dropped to 30,259 in 2015/16 and has had a further fall to 22,026 in 2016/17. This drop could possibly be related to the refresh of the Essential Skills standards as outlined above (Figure 11 and Table 12).

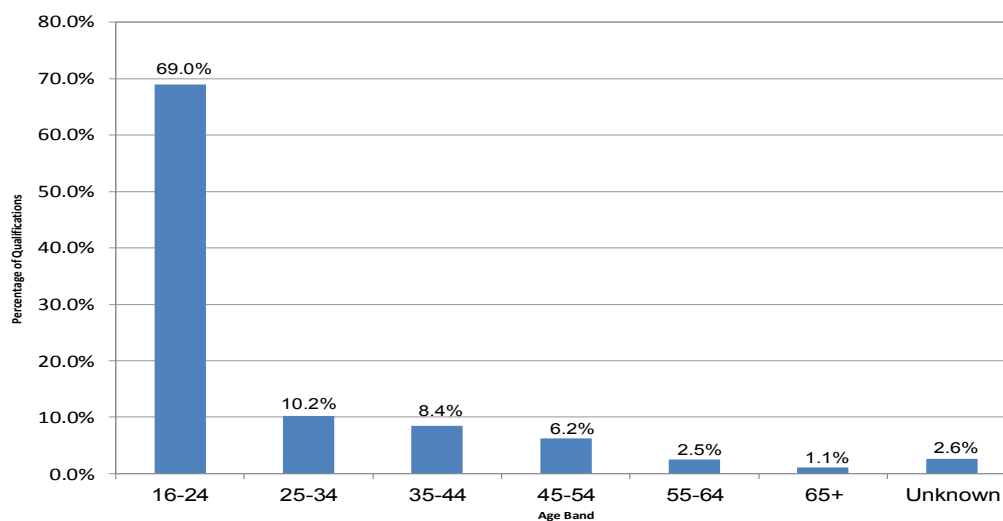
Figure 11: Essential Skills qualifications issued by academic year



Qualifications by age band

Since the start of the Strategy, similar to the pattern of Essential Skills enrolments, the majority of Essential Skills qualifications have been issued to those in the '16-24' age band (69.0%, 225,107). The second highest proportion of Essential Skills qualifications have been issued to those aged '25-34' (10.2%) (Figure 12 and Table 13).

Figure 12: Essential Skills qualifications issued by age band since 2002/03



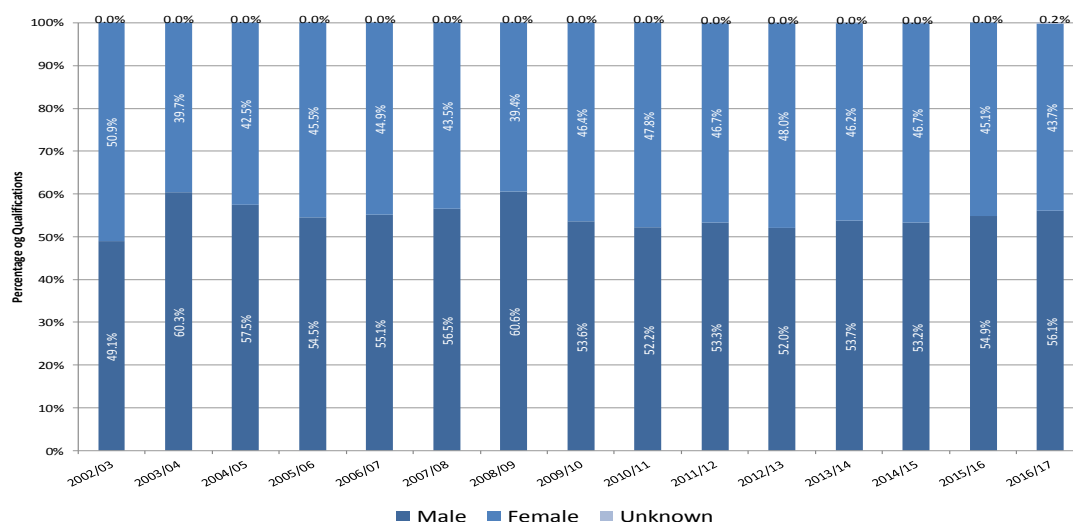
Similar to the enrolment pattern in the most recent academic year (2016/17), the majority (72.6%, 16,001) of Essential Skills qualifications were issued to those aged '16-24'. Those aged '25-34' had the second highest proportion (8.5%, 1,862) of Essential Skills (Table 13).

Qualifications by gender

With the exception of 2002/03, in each academic year, males have accounted for the majority of those gaining an Essential Skills qualification, ranging from 52.0% in 2012/13 to 60.6% in 2008/09.

In 2016/17, males gained 12,346 Essential Skills qualifications (56.1%), representing 1.1 percentage point increase over 2015/16. Over the same period, females accounted for 9,630 qualifications (43.7%). For 0.2% of the qualifications, the gender is unknown (Figure 13 and Table 14).

Figure 13: Essential Skills qualifications issued by gender and academic year

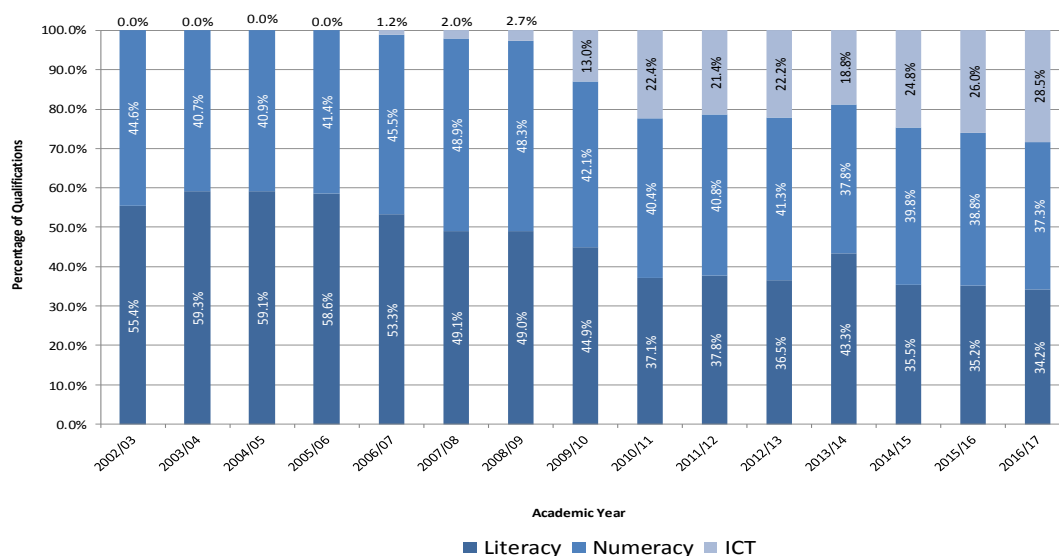


Qualifications by subject

Up to 2009/10, Literacy accounted for the largest proportion of Essential Skills qualifications. However, with the exception of 2013/14, Numeracy has had the highest proportion of qualifications in each year since 2010/11.

In 2016/17, 'Numeracy' had the highest proportion of qualifications (37.3%); this was followed by 'Literacy' with 34.2% and ICT with 28.5% (Figure 14 and Table 15).

Figure 14: Essential Skills qualifications issued by subject and academic year

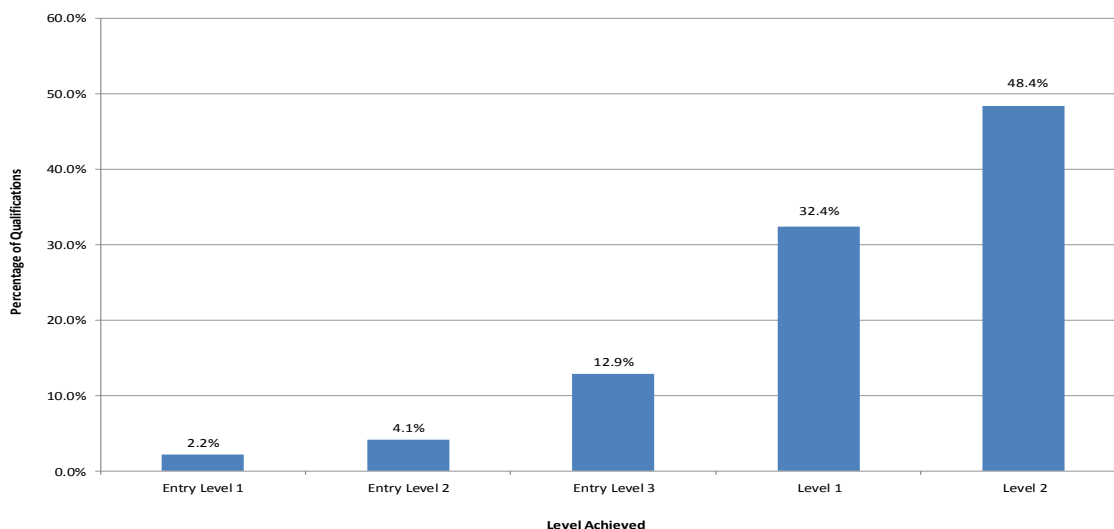


Qualifications by level

Over the 15 year period of the Strategy, although ‘Level 1’ has seen the highest number of enrolments (227,753), the highest number of qualifications (158,022) issued have been at ‘Level 2’, accounting for 48.4% of all qualifications.

Between 2004/05 and 2013/14, there was a year on year increase in the number of ‘Level 2’ qualifications, reaching a peak of 24,923 (61.0% of all qualifications) in 2013/14. In 2014/15 and 2015/16, however, the number of ‘Level 2’ qualifications decreased to 18,909 and 18,285 respectively (Figure 15 and Table 16).

Figure 15: Essential Skills qualifications issued by level since 2002/03



Section C: Performance

Essential Skills courses are typically not longer than a year, so when calculating performance rates, all enrolments are treated as in their final year. All enrolments and qualifications since the start of the Strategy are included in the performance rate analysis. Please refer to technical note 9 for further information on why no individual academic year figures are presented within performance analysis.

Performance can be measured across three indicators:

- **Retention rate** is defined as the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete to the number of enrolments.
- **Achievement rate** relates to the percentage of the number of enrolments who complete their study and achieve their qualification to the number of enrolments who complete their study.
- **Success rate** is the overall measure of performance, which is the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their study and achieve their qualification to the number of enrolments.

Performance of Essential Skills

Over the course of the Strategy, the retention rate within Essential Skills courses has been 89.3%, the achievement rate has been 73.3%, while the success rate has been 65.5%. This indicates that almost two thirds of those enrolling in Essential Skills courses achieve a qualification (Table A and Table 17).

Performance by subject

The retention rate has ranged from 87.4% in ICT to 90.1% in Numeracy. There has been a larger range in the achievement rate, with the lowest in ICT (65.2%) and the highest in Numeracy (75.6%). The success rates for Literacy (67.3%) and Numeracy (68.1%) have been similar, while ICT has had a lower success rate of 57.0% (Table A and Table 17).

Table A: Essential Skills performance indicators by subject since 2002/03

Subject	Performance Indicator		
	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
Literacy	89.6%	75.1%	67.3%
Numeracy	90.1%	75.6%	68.1%
ICT	87.4%	65.2%	57.0%
Total	89.3%	73.3%	65.5%

Further details on how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated are available in Definitions.

Performance by gender

While males have a higher retention rate (91.0%) and success rate (66.5%) than females (87.4% and 64.3%), females have a higher achievement rate (73.5%, compared with 73.0%). This means that males are more likely to stay on the course and to gain a qualification (Table B and Table 18).

Table B: Essential Skills performance indicators by Gender since 2002/03

Gender	Performance Indicator		
	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
Male	91.0%	73.0%	66.5%
Female	87.4%	73.5%	64.3%
Total	89.3%	73.3%	65.5%

Performance by age band

The retention rate decreases inversely with age band of participant, with those aged '16-24' having the highest retention rate (90.7%) and those aged '65+' having the lowest (76.8%). The achievement rate ranges from 69.6% for those aged '16-24' to 82.4% for those aged '55-64'. Similar to the retention and achievement rates, those aged '65+' had the lowest success rate (57.2%). Those aged '45-54' had the highest success rate of 70.0%, meaning those enrolments aged '45-54' have the highest proportion of any age band to obtain a qualification.

These variations in retention and achievement rates across the age bands impact on their corresponding success rates. Interestingly, although the 16-24 age band has the highest retention rate, it has the lowest achievement rate, resulting in the second lowest success rate out of the six age bands (Table C and Table 19).

Table C: Essential Skills performance indicators by age band since 2002/03

Age Band	Performance Indicator		
	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
16-24	90.7%	69.6%	63.1%
25-34	86.9%	74.5%	64.7%
35-44	86.6%	76.3%	66.1%
45-54	86.4%	81.0%	70.0%
55-64	83.1%	82.4%	68.5%
65+	76.8%	74.4%	57.2%
Total	89.3%	73.3%	65.5%

Performance by target level of study

Across the five levels of the study, the retention rate has ranged from 87.5% in 'Entry Level 1' to 90.6% in 'Level 1' over the 15 years of the Strategy. Although those studying at 'Level 1' are more likely to stay on and complete the course, they seem to find it harder to achieve the qualification, given they have the lowest achievement (51.5%) and success rates (46.7%). In contrast, those studying a 'Level 2' course have the highest achievement (98.4%) and success rates (88.1%) across the levels (Table D and Table 20).

Table D: Essential Skills performance indicators by target level of study since 2002/03

Target level	Performance Indicator		
	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
Entry Level 1	87.5%	82.9%	72.5%
Entry Level 2	89.6%	74.9%	67.1%
Entry Level 3	89.4%	82.8%	74.0%
Level 1	90.6%	51.5%	46.7%
Level 2	89.5%	98.4%	88.1%
Total	89.3%	73.3%	65.5%

ANNEXES

Annex 1: Tables

Table 1: Essential Skills enrolments and individuals by academic year

Academic Year	Number of enrolments	Number of individuals
Up to 31 July 2003	4,010	3,024
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	9,108	5,886
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	13,067	7,922
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	17,262	10,162
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	20,270	10,297
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	25,573	12,090
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	34,993	15,305
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	49,961	20,394
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	60,084	22,921
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	59,378	21,438
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	51,852	18,166
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	45,473	16,232
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	38,998	14,239
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	36,045	13,018
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	35,779	13,156
Total	501,853	204,250

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

Individuals have been determined using name and date of birth and allocated to a particular academic year based on the start date of their first registration.

Individuals can enrol in more than one course.

Table 2: Essential Skills enrolments by age band and academic year

Academic Year	Age band							Number of enrolments
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Unknown	
Up to 31 July 2003	1,274	982	826	420	156	291	61	4,010
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	4,533	1,717	1,431	764	371	156	136	9,108
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	6,119	2,345	2,397	1,311	590	158	147	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	10,800	2,138	2,309	1,275	564	146	30	17,262
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	15,564	1,641	1,664	903	372	83	43	20,270
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	21,292	1,581	1,469	814	315	66	36	25,573
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	25,135	3,706	3,293	2,050	642	158	9	34,993
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	34,678	5,022	4,489	3,346	1,450	905	71	49,961
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	40,310	7,244	5,480	4,152	1,706	1,134	58	60,084
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	40,274	7,021	5,386	4,089	1,500	1,061	47	59,378
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	37,884	5,346	3,775	2,984	1,149	641	73	51,852
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	35,056	3,941	2,884	2,226	863	479	24	45,473
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	30,452	3,247	2,378	1,741	781	374	25	38,998
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	28,423	2,851	2,066	1,630	737	284	54	36,045
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	27,422	2,874	2,115	1,602	731	383	652	35,779
Total	359,216	51,656	41,962	29,307	11,927	6,319	1,466	501,853

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

Age is calculated based on date of birth and start date of the enrolment.

Table 3: Essential Skills enrolments by employment status and academic year

Academic Year	Employment Status				Number of enrolments
	Employed	Unemployed	Economically inactive	Unknown	
Up to 31 July 2003	1,349	972	514	1,175	4,010
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	2,055	2,281	967	3,805	9,108
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	2,936	3,081	1,469	5,581	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	3,977	4,073	3,198	6,014	17,262
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	3,401	5,342	3,056	8,471	20,270
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	5,990	6,390	5,102	8,091	25,573
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	11,434	7,807	9,691	6,061	34,993
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	15,732	10,237	18,084	5,908	49,961
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	21,622	11,636	21,181	5,645	60,084
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	20,036	12,726	22,353	4,263	59,378
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	16,686	11,583	19,155	4,428	51,852
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	12,818	11,244	18,215	3,196	45,473
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	11,596	9,930	16,158	1,314	38,998
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	11,256	9,470	12,664	2,655	36,045
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	11,523	9,276	12,274	2,706	35,779
Total	152,411	116,048	164,081	69,313	501,853

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

Table 4: Essential Skills enrolments by gender and academic year

Academic Year	Gender		Number of enrolments
	Male	Female	
Up to 31 July 2003	1,992	2,018	4,010
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	4,996	4,112	9,108
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	6,495	6,572	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	7,959	9,303	17,262
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	10,578	9,692	20,270
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	14,586	10,987	25,573
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	18,269	16,724	34,993
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	26,271	23,690	49,961
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	31,859	28,225	60,084
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	31,265	28,113	59,378
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	28,166	23,686	51,852
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	24,565	20,908	45,473
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	21,058	17,940	38,998
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	19,677	16,368	36,045
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	19,868	15,911	35,779
Total	267,604	234,249	501,853

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

Table 5: Essential Skills enrolments by gender, subject and academic year

Academic Year	Literacy			Numeracy			ICT		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Up to 31 July 2003	1,282	1,325	2,607	710	693	1,403	-	-	-
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	3,262	2,676	5,938	1,734	1,436	3,170	-	-	-
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	4,060	4,157	8,217	2,435	2,415	4,850	-	-	-
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	4,639	5,196	9,835	3,320	4,107	7,427	-	-	-
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	5,607	4,824	10,431	4,812	4,766	9,578	159	102	261
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	7,310	5,071	12,381	6,761	5,626	12,387	515	290	805
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	8,739	7,262	16,001	7,946	8,229	16,175	1,584	1,233	2,817
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	10,260	8,259	18,519	9,436	9,248	18,684	6,575	6,183	12,758
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	12,349	9,824	22,173	11,823	11,329	23,152	7,687	7,072	14,759
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	11,906	9,558	21,464	11,410	11,367	22,777	7,949	7,188	15,137
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	10,678	8,021	18,699	10,414	9,748	20,162	7,074	5,917	12,991
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	9,136	6,756	15,892	8,759	8,198	16,957	6,670	5,954	12,624
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	7,532	5,510	13,042	7,397	6,881	14,278	6,129	5,549	11,678
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	6,979	5,210	12,189	6,906	6,440	13,346	5,792	4,718	10,510
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	7,327	5,180	12,507	7,126	6,336	13,462	5,415	4,395	9,810
Total	111,066	88,829	199,895	100,989	96,819	197,808	55,549	48,601	104,150

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

Table 6: Essential Skills enrolments by target level of study and academic year

Academic Year	Target Level						Number of enrolments
	Entry Level 1	Entry Level 2	Entry Level 3	Level 1	Level 2	Not Known	
Up to 31 July 2003	885	719	1,031	1,062	282	31	4,010
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	1,262	1,808	2,943	2,280	759	56	9,108
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	1,196	1,792	4,291	3,300	1,724	764	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	829	1,597	4,102	5,725	4,755	254	17,262
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	690	1,610	4,587	7,570	5,567	246	20,270
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	577	1,732	4,581	10,101	8,195	387	25,573
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	499	1,488	4,701	16,466	11,839	-	34,993
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	506	1,424	4,263	26,402	16,564	802	49,961
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	824	1,470	5,005	30,986	21,032	767	60,084
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	598	1,583	4,632	29,074	22,742	749	59,378
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	566	1,162	4,065	23,902	21,568	589	51,852
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	468	1,172	3,578	20,372	19,105	778	45,473
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	408	812	2,972	17,771	16,696	339	38,998
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	262	794	2,906	16,407	15,399	277	36,045
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	280	1,106	3,512	16,335	14,147	399	35,779
Total	9,850	20,269	57,169	227,753	180,374	6,438	501,853

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

Table 7: Essential Skills enrolments by deprivation quintiles and academic year

Academic Year	SOA MDM Quintile						Number of enrolments
	Group 1 - Most Deprived	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5 - Least Deprived	Not Known	
Up to 31 July 2003	1,186	803	626	585	301	509	4,010
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	2,680	1,996	1,804	1,315	834	479	9,108
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	4,197	2,865	2,574	1,720	1,174	537	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	5,225	3,960	3,315	2,543	1,602	617	17,262
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	6,895	4,586	3,698	2,865	1,892	334	20,270
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	8,299	5,534	5,075	3,905	2,356	404	25,573
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	10,797	7,938	6,824	5,419	3,517	498	34,993
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	14,651	11,155	9,780	7,972	5,278	1,125	49,961
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	17,037	13,894	11,393	10,110	6,162	1,488	60,084
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	16,746	14,060	11,795	9,220	6,107	1,450	59,378
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	14,859	12,085	10,326	8,317	5,087	1,178	51,852
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	13,096	10,652	8,951	7,095	4,356	1,323	45,473
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	10,742	8,836	8,009	6,114	3,972	1,325	38,998
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	9,916	8,369	7,315	5,874	3,629	942	36,045
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	9,832	8,353	7,321	5,872	3,679	722	35,779
Total	146,158	115,086	98,806	78,926	49,946	12,931	501,853

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

The group 1 quintile is the most deprived, while the group 5 quintile is the least deprived group of areas across NI.

Table 8: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and academic year

Academic Year	Subject			Number of enrolments
	Literacy	Numeracy	ICT	
Up to 31 July 2003	2,607	1,403	-	4,010
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	5,938	3,170	-	9,108
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	8,217	4,850	-	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	9,835	7,427	-	17,262
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	10,431	9,578	261	20,270
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	12,381	12,387	805	25,573
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	16,001	16,175	2,817	34,993
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	18,519	18,684	12,758	49,961
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	22,173	23,152	14,759	60,084
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	21,464	22,777	15,137	59,378
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	18,699	20,162	12,991	51,852
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	15,892	16,957	12,624	45,473
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	13,042	14,278	11,678	38,998
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	12,189	13,346	10,510	36,045
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	12,507	13,462	9,810	35,779
Total	199,895	197,808	104,150	501,853

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

Table 9: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and age

Subject	Age band				Number of enrolments
	16-24	25-54	55+	Unknown	
Literacy	140,430	53,848	4,835	782	199,895
Numeracy	146,354	47,747	3,111	596	197,808
ICT	72,432	21,330	10,300	88	104,150
Total	359,216	122,925	18,246	1,466	501,853

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

Table 10: Essential Skills enrolments by provider and academic year

Academic Year	Provider			Number of enrolments
	FE Colleges	DfE Training Programmes	Other	
Up to 31 July 2003	3,701	53	256	4,010
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	6,207	1,784	1,117	9,108
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	8,479	2,099	2,489	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	11,855	2,941	2,466	17,262
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	13,426	5,676	1,168	20,270
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	17,157	7,405	1,011	25,573
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	22,195	12,798	-	34,993
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	33,792	16,169	-	49,961
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	38,243	21,841	-	60,084
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	39,111	20,267	-	59,378
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	34,042	17,810	-	51,852
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	30,627	14,846	-	45,473
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	27,319	11,679	-	38,998
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	23,635	12,410	-	36,045
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	21,842	13,937	-	35,779
Total	331,631	161,715	8,507	501,853

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

The category 'Other' includes enrolments registered against Proteus, Workers Education Association, Educational Guidance Service for Adults and the Ulster People's College.

Table 11: Essential Skills enrolments by college and academic year

Academic Year	College							Number of enrolments
	Belfast Metropolitan	Northern	North West	South Eastern	Southern	South West	Non-Regional College	
Up to 31 July 2003	965	533	986	195	529	493	309	4,010
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	1,382	1,237	991	747	998	852	2,901	9,108
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	1,875	1,789	1,094	1,072	1,408	1,241	4,588	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	2,049	2,257	1,547	2,270	2,394	1,338	5,407	17,262
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	2,525	2,245	1,741	2,920	2,302	1,693	6,844	20,270
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	3,208	3,028	2,693	3,199	2,787	2,242	8,416	25,573
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	4,143	3,812	3,536	4,227	3,510	2,967	12,798	34,993
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	5,240	5,335	4,878	6,787	7,049	4,503	16,169	49,961
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	5,415	5,254	4,913	7,914	9,008	5,739	21,841	60,084
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	5,734	5,128	5,167	7,254	9,318	6,510	20,267	59,378
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	5,138	4,717	4,312	6,810	7,040	6,025	17,810	51,852
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	5,323	4,082	4,298	5,637	5,515	5,772	14,846	45,473
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	4,760	4,710	4,247	4,121	4,373	5,108	11,679	38,998
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	4,331	3,495	3,914	4,029	3,312	4,554	12,410	36,045
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	4,070	3,875	2,721	3,320	3,882	3,974	13,937	35,779
Total	56,158	51,497	47,038	60,502	63,425	53,011	170,222	501,853

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

Non-regional college includes enrolment registered against DfE training providers Proteus, Workers Education Association, Educational Guidance Service for Adults and the Ulster People's College.

(C) Table 11, as published on 30th November 2017, displayed some college headings in the wrong order. We have corrected the table and reviewed our processes to mitigate the risk of such an error recurring. The key points, text and commentary sections have been unaffected by this correction.

Table 12: Essential Skills qualifications issued by academic year

Academic Year	Number of qualifications
Up to 31 July 2003	316
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	3,443
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	5,465
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	9,691
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	12,427
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	15,197
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	15,153
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	25,333
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	35,337
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	40,094
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	39,381
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	40,851
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	31,453
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	30,259
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	22,026
Total	326,426

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2017.

Table 13: Essential Skills qualifications issued by age band and academic year

Academic Year	Age Band							Number of Qualifications
	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Unknown	
Up to 31 July 2003	140	72	56	38	6	2	2	316
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	1,737	718	513	258	119	32	66	3,443
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	3,115	715	733	429	212	78	183	5,465
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	5,708	1,251	1,415	798	356	83	80	9,691
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	8,824	1,243	1,246	692	259	75	88	12,427
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	11,406	1,250	1,251	708	292	76	214	15,197
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	11,827	1,095	913	592	200	34	492	15,153
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	17,294	2,457	2,283	1,700	697	353	549	25,333
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	23,528	3,467	3,215	2,729	1,125	692	581	35,337
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	26,088	4,485	3,732	2,983	1,128	614	1,064	40,094
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	26,148	4,408	3,412	2,864	1,019	527	1,003	39,381
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	28,296	4,618	3,281	2,492	840	344	980	40,851
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	22,628	3,096	2,310	1,586	716	246	871	31,453
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	22,367	2,529	1,891	1,452	612	245	1,163	30,259
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	16,001	1,862	1,300	1,063	500	174	1,126	22,026
Total	225,107	33,266	27,551	20,384	8,081	3,575	8,462	326,426

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2017.

Table 14: Essential Skills qualifications issued by gender and academic year

Academic Year	Gender			Number of Qualifications
	Male	Female	Unknown	
Up to 31 July 2003	155	161	-	316
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	2,077	1,366	-	3,443
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	3,140	2,325	-	5,465
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	5,284	4,407	-	9,691
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	6,850	5,577	-	12,427
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	8,582	6,615	-	15,197
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	9,187	5,966	-	15,153
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	13,570	11,763	-	25,333
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	18,430	16,907	-	35,337
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	21,364	18,720	10	40,094
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	20,484	18,887	10	39,381
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	21,956	18,884	11	40,851
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	16,747	14,697	9	31,453
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	16,614	13,645	-	30,259
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	12,346	9,630	50	22,026
Total	176,786	149,550	90	326,426

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2017.

Table 15: Essential Skills qualifications issued by subject and academic year

Academic Year	Subject			Number of qualifications
	Literacy	Numeracy	ICT	
Up to 31 July 2003	175	141	-	316
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	2,040	1,403	-	3,443
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	3,231	2,234	-	5,465
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	5,680	4,011	-	9,691
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	6,626	5,656	145	12,427
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	7,464	7,428	305	15,197
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	7,429	7,319	405	15,153
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	11,376	10,661	3,296	25,333
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	13,125	14,293	7,919	35,337
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	15,143	16,357	8,594	40,094
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	14,375	16,267	8,739	39,381
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	17,694	15,461	7,696	40,851
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	11,155	12,511	7,787	31,453
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	10,646	11,748	7,865	30,259
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	7,540	8,217	6,269	22,026
Total	133,699	133,707	59,020	326,426

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2017.

Table 16: Essential Skills qualifications issued by level achieved and academic year

Academic Year	Level Achieved					Number of qualifications
	Entry Level 1	Entry Level 2	Entry Level 3	Level 1	Level 2	
Up to 31 July 2003	-	-	-	238	78	316
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	380	455	833	1,484	291	3,443
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	740	987	2,850	689	199	5,465
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	773	1,336	3,623	2,633	1,326	9,691
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	655	1,164	3,433	4,231	2,944	12,427
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	598	1,244	3,658	5,012	4,685	15,197
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	306	928	3,116	5,374	5,429	15,153
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	394	906	3,138	10,534	10,361	25,333
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	472	1,025	3,444	14,089	16,307	35,337
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	517	1,088	3,634	14,273	20,582	40,094
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	579	1,103	3,353	12,861	21,485	39,381
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	460	1,016	3,922	10,530	24,923	40,851
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	487	822	2,495	8,740	18,909	31,453
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	426	755	2,389	8,404	18,285	30,259
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	318	699	2,127	6,664	12,218	22,026
Total	7,105	13,528	42,015	105,756	158,022	326,426

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2017.

Table 17: Essential Skills performance analysis by subject since 2002/03

Subject	Enrolments (enrolments dataset)	Completers (enrolments dataset)	Retention Rate	Qualifications (awarding organisation dataset)	Achievement Rate	Success Rate
Literacy	198,700	178,007	89.6%	133,699	75.1%	67.3%
Numeracy	196,472	176,969	90.1%	133,707	75.6%	68.1%
ICT	103,518	90,479	87.4%	59,020	65.2%	57.0%
All Subjects	498,690	445,455	89.3%	326,426	73.3%	65.5%

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17; Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

Qualifications figures are correct as at 30th September 2017.

Further details into how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated are available in Annex 2.

Table 18: Essential Skills performance analysis by gender since 2002/03

Gender	Enrolments (enrolments dataset)	Completers (enrolments dataset)	Retention rate	Qualifications (awarding organisation dataset)	Achievement rate	Success rate
Male	265,993	242,051	91.0%	176,786	73.0%	66.5%
Female	232,697	203,404	87.4%	149,550	73.5%	64.3%
Unknown	-	-	N/A	90	N/A	N/A
Total	498,690	445,455	89.3%	326,426	73.3%	65.5%

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17; Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

Qualifications figures are correct as at 30th September 2017.

Further details into how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated are available in Annex 2.

Table 19: Essential Skills performance analysis by age band since 2002/03

Age Band	Enrolments (enrolments dataset)	Completers (enrolments dataset)	Retention rate	Qualifications (awarding organisation dataset)	Achievement rate	Success rate
16-24	356,949	323,647	90.7%	225,107	69.6%	63.1%
25-34	51,392	44,674	86.9%	33,266	74.5%	64.7%
35-44	41,705	36,121	86.6%	27,551	76.3%	66.1%
45-54	29,129	25,153	86.4%	20,384	81.0%	70.0%
55-64	11,798	9,809	83.1%	8,081	82.4%	68.5%
65+	6,252	4,804	76.8%	3,575	74.4%	57.2%
Unknown	1,465	1,247	N/A	8,462	N/A	N/A
Total	498,690	445,455	89.3%	326,426	73.3%	65.5%

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17; Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

Qualifications figures are correct as at 30th September 2017.

Further details into how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated are available in Annex 2.

Table 20: Essential Skills performance analysis by target level since 2002/03

Target level	Enrolments (enrolments dataset)	Completers (enrolments dataset)	Retention rate	Qualifications (awarding organisation dataset)	Achievement rate	Success rate
Entry Level 1	9,799	8,574	87.5%	7,105	82.9%	72.5%
Entry Level 2	20,164	18,057	89.6%	13,528	74.9%	67.1%
Entry Level 3	56,790	50,745	89.4%	42,015	82.8%	74.0%
Level 1	226,684	205,399	90.6%	105,756	51.5%	46.7%
Level 2	179,425	160,575	89.5%	158,022	98.4%	88.1%
Not Known	5,828	2,105	N/A	0	N/A	N/A
Total	498,690	445,455	89.3%	326,426	73.3%	65.5%

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2015/17; Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 13th October 2017.

Qualifications figures are correct as at 30th September 2017.

Further details into how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated are available in Annex 2.

Annex 2: Definitions

Academic year

An academic year is defined as 1st August to 31st July.

Achieved level

This is the level the awarding organisation has indicated the individual has achieved within the Essential Skills framework.

Achievement rate

Achievement rate relates to the percentage of the number of enrolments who complete their study and achieve their qualification to the number of enrolments who complete their study.

Achievement rate =
$$\frac{\text{Number of achievements}}{\text{Number of non-withdrawals plus Number of withdrawals who achieve (both full and partial)}}$$

Age

For enrolments, age is calculated at 1st July of the previous academic year, based on the start date of the course. For qualifications, age is calculated at the certification date.

Deprivation

The analysis presented in the publication utilises 5 groups or quintiles of Super Output Areas (SOAs) across Northern Ireland (SOA is determined using the postcode provided on the enrolment record). These quintiles are determined based on level of deprivation using the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM).

SOA's ranked 1 to 178 form the most deprived quintile of SOAs relative to all other SOAs. Those ranked 713 to 890 form the least deprived quintile.

The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010 is a weighted combination of the seven domains of deprivation. The Income and Employment Deprivation domains account for 50% of the multiple deprivation measure. The Health Deprivation and Disability Domain, and Education, Skills and Training Deprivation Domain account for a further 30% and the remainder is made up of the Proximity to Services, Living Environment and Crime and Disorder Domains.

For further details on deprivation measurement in Northern Ireland please follow this link:

http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/nimdm_2010.htm

The NIMDM2010 was used for the deprivation analysis in this publication. On the 23rd November 2017 (the week before this bulletin was published) an updated NIMDM became available – NIMDM2017. As this was too close to the publication date of this bulletin, the older NIMDM2010 has been used.

NIMDM2017 will be used in future publications. Further information on the updated NIMDM is available at the below link:

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/deprivation/northern-ireland-multiple-deprivation-measure-2017-nimdm2017>.

Enrolments

The enrolment returns are merged and any duplicate enrolments are dealt with through a process, presented in the guidance '[Defining an Essential Skills enrolment](#)'. The resultant file is then analysed to present the total number of Essential Skills enrolments.

Individual

The number of individuals for each academic year has been determined (using Forename, Surname and Date of Birth) within the specific academic year period. As an individual may be enrolled in more than one Essential Skills course, the total number of individuals calculated over the entire time period does not equal the number of enrolments.

Qualifications

Total qualifications are taken to be the sum of all records within the Essential Skills Qualifications Return.

Retention rate

Retention rate is defined as the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their study to the number of enrolments.

Number of non-withdrawals – includes any enrolments that have not been classified as a withdrawal, namely Course Status options 'Continuing', 'Completed' or the status is 'unknown'.

Retention rate =
$$\frac{\text{Number of non-withdrawals plus Number of withdrawals who achieve (both full and partial)}}{\text{Number of Enrolments}}$$

Success rate

Success rate is the overall measure of performance, which is the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their study and achieve their qualification to the number of enrolments.

Success rate =
$$\frac{\text{Number of achievements}}{\text{Number of Enrolments}}$$

OR

Retention rate x Achievement rate

Target Level

When an individual enrolls on an Essential Skills course they are assessed over a 6-8 week period to establish what level they are currently functioning at. They are then normally targeted at a level higher than their assessed level.

'Literacy and 'Numeracy' courses are available for all five levels, whereas ICT is only available for 'Level 1' and 'Level 2'. The ability typically demonstrated at each level is detailed below:

- **Entry Level 1** is the national school curriculum equivalent for attainment at age 5-7. Adults below Entry Level 1 may not be able to write short messages to family or select floor numbers in lifts. Adults with ICT Entry Level 1 skills are able to find and select information from an ICT-based source and follow recommended safe practices.
- **Entry Level 2** is the national school curriculum equivalent for attainment at age 7-9. Adults with below Entry Level 2 may not be able to describe a child's symptoms to a doctor or use a cash point to withdraw cash. Adults with ICT Entry Level 2 skills are able to use ICT to communicate, as well as enter and edit small amounts of information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience.
- **Entry Level 3** is the national school curriculum equivalent for attainment at age 9-11. Adults with skills below Entry Level 3 may not be able to understand price labels on pre-packaged food or pay household bills. Adults with ICT Entry Level 3 skills are able to interact with and use an ICT system to meet needs, as well as present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience.
- **Level 1** is equivalent to GCSE grades D-G. Adults with skills below Level 1 may not be able to read bus or train timetables or check the pay and deductions on a wage slip. Adults with ICT Level 1 skills are able to select and use a variety of appropriate sources of information, as well as enter, organise, develop format and bring together information to suit content and purpose.
- **Level 2** is equivalent to GCSE grades A*-C. Adults with skills below Level 2 may not be able to compare products and services for the best buy, or work out a household budget. Adults with ICT Level 2 skills are able to use a variety of appropriate sources of information and evaluate its fitness for purpose, as well as evaluate and use different methods of organising and presenting information, taking into account fitness for purpose and audience.

Annex 3: Technical Notes

1. Enrolment information for FE colleges is sourced from the Essential Skills enrolment return for the academic years 2002/03 to 2012/13 and from the Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2016/17. For DfE's training and employment programmes, the source is the Essential Skills extract from the Client Management System (CMS).
2. Both Essential Skills enrolment returns list the enrolment records, which are assigned to a particular provider and returned to the Department. Both returns are merged and any duplicate enrolments are dealt with through a process, presented in the guidance 'Defining an Essential Skills enrolment'. The resultant file is then analysed to present the total number of Essential Skills enrolments.
3. FE colleges have indicated that some 2002/03 Essential Skills enrolments were collated on a paper basis and registered with Awarding Organisations without being recorded on a computerised enrolment management system. Consequently, these enrolments are not available and are not included in this analysis.
4. The enrolment information is correct as at 13th October 2017. However, as some erroneous records are excluded from the Essential Skills enrolment database, figures are provisional and are subject to change.
5. The source of the qualification information is the quarterly data provided by the awarding organisations.
6. Qualification figures are correct as at 30th September 2017. However, figures may be subject to change due to any amendments in the qualification data supplied later by the awarding organisations.
7. Any enrolment records that have been recorded as transfers should have an accompanying second enrolment record (the one they have transferred onto). Using the guidance 'Defining an Essential Skills enrolment', these will be accounted for and only one record will remain for analysis.
8. In terms of outcome, the original enrolment recorded as a transfer will not have any outcome recorded against it and therefore the transferred enrolment cannot be measured in terms of performance. Consequently, any enrolments recorded as transfers are excluded from performance analysis and are not included in final year enrolment counts.
9. Performance analysis is determined over the life of Strategy from 2002/03 to 2016/17. No individual academic year retention, achievement or success rates are calculated as two separate datasets are utilised to produce the performance rates. One dataset is used to determine enrolments and one for qualifications. An individual can enrol in one academic year, whereas the qualification may not be

issued until the next academic year. Consequently, individual year performance analysis may be skewed due to this scenario and, therefore, is not calculated within this publication.

Further Enquiries

Further details about any of the statistics in this statistical bulletin can be obtained from:

Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education)
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Adelaide House,
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Telephone (028) 9025 7686
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Media enquiries should be made to the Department's Press Office in Netherleigh.

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<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/higher-and-further-education-and-training-statistics>