

Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes in Northern Ireland from 2002/03 to 2018/19

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This publication presents a range of analysis regarding the numbers and characteristics of those enrolling and qualifying in Essential Skills since the start of the Strategy in 2002/03.

Key Points

- Since 2002/03, 223,959 individuals have participated in 559,494 Essential Skills enrolments and achieved 362,338 qualifications (Tables 1 and 12).
- For a variety of reasons, including a dip in the 16-19 year old population (the main age group taking Essential Skills) and improvements in GCSE grades, annual enrolments have been decreasing for eight years in a row, from a peak of 59,961 in 2010/11 to 30,051 in 2018/19 (Table 1).
- In part due to a refresh of curriculum standards, the number of Essential Skills qualifications issued has decreased for the fifth consecutive year, from 40,851 in 2013/14 to 17,514 in 2018/19 (Table 12).
- While those aged 16-19 have accounted for 59.8% of enrolments over the full history of the Essential Skills Strategy, they made up 66.8% of enrolments in 2018/19. The historical share of those aged 45 and over is 9.1%, although this was lower (5.7%) in 2018/19 (Table 3).
- Generally, the more deprived an area is, the higher the number of Essential Skills enrolments from those living in that area. Over the 17 years of the Strategy, over half of enrolments (51.5%) have been from the two most deprived 'quintiles' (Table 6).
- Almost half (48.5%) of Essential Skills qualifications issued since 2002/03 have been at Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE grades A*-C), a further 32.3% at Level 1 and 19.2% at Entry Level (Table 13).
- Literacy has accounted for 40.2% of qualifications issued since 2002/03, although its share fell to a low of 30.0% in 2018/19. In the same year, the share of ICT qualifications reached a high of 32.7%, while Numeracy accounted for the remaining 37.3% (Table 16).

Reader Information

Purpose Monitor and report on Essential Skills enrolment and qualification activity in Northern Ireland.

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Target Audience DfE, Directors of Further Education (FE) Colleges in Northern Ireland, Board members of FE Colleges, educational professionals, academics, media and members of the public interested in the FE sector.

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Feedback As we want to engage with users of our statistics, we invite you to feedback your comments on this publication to:
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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 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education (FE) colleges across Northern Ireland (NI) and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Statistical information is collected routinely from a variety of electronic individual level administrative systems.

The Head of Branch is the Principal Statistician, Brian French. The Branch aims to present information in a meaningful way and provide advice on its uses to customers in the Committee for the Economy, FE colleges, universities, Professional Advisory Groups, policy branches within 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 Higher Education (HE) and FE 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 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>

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 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>

Storyboard for Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes in Northern Ireland from 2002/03 to 2018/19

<p>While there have been well over half a million enrolments in the 17 years of the Strategy...</p>	<p>Since 2002/03, 223,959 individuals have participated in 559,494 Essential Skills enrolments and achieved 362,338 qualifications (Tables 1 and 12).</p>
<p>...there has been a decrease in the annual number of enrolments in each of the past 8 years.</p>	<p>For a variety of reasons, including a dip in the 16-19 year old population (the main age group taking Essential Skills) and improvements in GCSE grades, annual enrolments have been decreasing for eight years in a row, from a peak of 59,961 in 2010/11 to 30,051 in 2018/19 (Table 1).</p>
<p>The annual number of qualifications issued has decreased for the fifth consecutive year.</p>	<p>The number of Essential Skills qualifications issued has decreased for the fifth consecutive year, from 40,851 in 2013/14 to 17,514 in 2018/19. This 57.1% decrease in qualifications is greater than the 33.9% decrease in enrolments over the same period. A refresh of curriculum standards in 2016/17 is likely to have been an important factor (Tables 1 and 12).</p>
<p>Two-thirds of enrolments in 2018/19 were from those aged 16-19...</p>	<p>While those aged 16-19 have accounted for 59.8% of enrolments over the full history of the Essential Skills Strategy, they made up 66.8% of enrolments in 2018/19. The historical share of those aged 45 and over is 9.1%, although this was lower (5.7%) in 2018/19 (Table 3).</p>
<p>...while the proportion of enrolments of males has increased for a fourth year in succession.</p>	<p>Over the 17-year history of the Strategy, 53.6% of enrolments have been from male students. Since 2014/15, the proportion of male enrolments has been increasing slowly each year, reaching 56.9% in 2018/19 (Table 5).</p>
<p>A majority of enrolments have been from the unemployed or economically inactive...</p>	<p>Over half (55.5%) of enrolments in the past 17 years have been from individuals who reported as either 'unemployed' (22.0%) or 'economically inactive' (33.5%). In 2018/19, the total share of these two groups was similar at 54.4%; however, the split between 'unemployed' and 'economically inactive' had shifted to 8.0% and 46.4% respectively (Table 4).</p>
<p>...and a higher proportion of enrolments are from the most deprived areas.</p>	<p>Generally, the more deprived an area is, the higher the number of enrolments from those living in that area. Over the 17 years of the Strategy, over half of enrolments (51.5%) have been from the two most deprived 'quintiles'. In 2018/19, 7,839 (26.1%) enrolments were from the most deprived quintile, while 2,970 (9.9%) were from the least deprived quintile (Table 6).</p>
<p>The most popular subject choice has varied across age groups.</p>	<p>From 2002/03 to 2018/19, Numeracy has been the most popular subject choice among those aged 16-19 (39.8%), while Literacy has been most popular among 20-44 year olds (44.0%). For those aged 45+, the most common subject studied has been ICT (38.7%) (Table 9).</p>
<p>Almost two-thirds of enrolments result in a qualification being issued...</p>	<p>Almost two-thirds (65.3%) of Essential Skills enrolments result in a qualification being issued. While Literacy has accounted for 40.2% of qualifications issued over the past 17 years, its share fell to a low of 30.0% in 2018/19. In the same year, the share of ICT qualifications reached a high of 32.7%. Numeracy's share has been more stable in recent years, accounting for 37.3% of qualifications issued in 2018/19 (Tables 16 and 18).</p>
<p>...with almost half of these being at Level 2.</p>	<p>Almost half (48.5%) of Essential Skills qualifications issued since 2002/03 have been at Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE grades A*-C), a further 32.3% at Level 1 and 19.2% at Entry Level (Table 13).</p>

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, produced by DfE's Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education), analyses enrolments, qualifications and performance rates for Essential Skills over the 17 years of the Strategy.

Structure

The bulletin is divided into three sections:

- Section A details Essential Skills enrolments;
- Section B focuses on Essential Skills qualifications;
- Section C details the performance rates (retention, achievement and success) for Essential Skills provision.

Policy and Operational Context

The Minister for the Economy has responsibility within the NI Executive for FE colleges. The minister is also accountable to the Committee for the Economy, which undertakes a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role, 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 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 curriculum standards for the Essential Skills of Application of Number (Numeracy) and Communication (Literacy) were refreshed 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 Literacy and Numeracy 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.

Explanatory Notes

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

Definitions of the terms used within the report, as well as more information on the methodology used to produce the statistics, can be found in the Annexes.

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 – 2018/19
- Essential Skills enrolment extract from the Client Management System (CMS) for the years 2002/03 – 2018/19
- Essential Skills Qualifications Return for the years 2002/03 – 2018/19

The enrolment data returns are merged and a process is in place to deal with any duplicate enrolments. The resultant file is then analysed to present the total number of enrolments.

Supplementary Tables

Detailed Supplementary Tables are available on the DfE web page:

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

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. Following submission, this Branch performs a series of validation checks, with any issues being presented to the FE Colleges for clarification or amendment as necessary. 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.

While awarding organisations conduct internal audits and quality assurance checks on the data, data are also checked and validated by this Branch at each

quarterly return. Any errors are fed back to the appropriate awarding organisation for amendment.

Main Uses of Data

The main uses of these data are: to monitor Essential Skills activity; to help assess Essential 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 their duties; by the NI Assembly's Committee for the Economy 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.

Essential Skills statistics published elsewhere

Essential Skills qualifications statistics are also published by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). These quarterly bulletins can be found at: http://ccea.org.uk/regulation/statistics/technical_professional. The statistics reported by CCEA may not be comparable with the figures in this publication, due to differences in the way qualifications are reported to and classified by Ofqual. Further details on this can be found within the latest CCEA publication at the above link.

Comparing levels of qualifications

Within Essential Skills for 'Literacy' and 'Numeracy', individuals can obtain qualifications at 5 different levels: Entry Level 1, Entry Level 2, Entry Level 3, Level 1 and Level 2. Essential Skills Information Communication and Technology (ICT) courses are only available at Level 1 and Level 2. For further information on comparing qualifications across the UK, Ireland and overseas please see: <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean>.

2019 Readership Survey – Acknowledgements, Analysis and Next Steps

Alongside this bulletin, we are publishing an analysis of the Essential Skills readership survey we conducted in September 2019. We wish to thank our readers for taking time to give constructive feedback and helpful suggestions. We will give careful consideration to each response as we seek to improve the coverage and quality of our ES statistics. We will discuss the feasibility of possible options with DfE policy colleagues, before drawing up an action plan for the 2019/20 edition of the bulletin. For the 2018/19 edition, we have adopted some 'quick wins', including enhancing the profile of the storyboard by incorporating it within the main volume.

Section A: Enrolments

Enrolments and participants

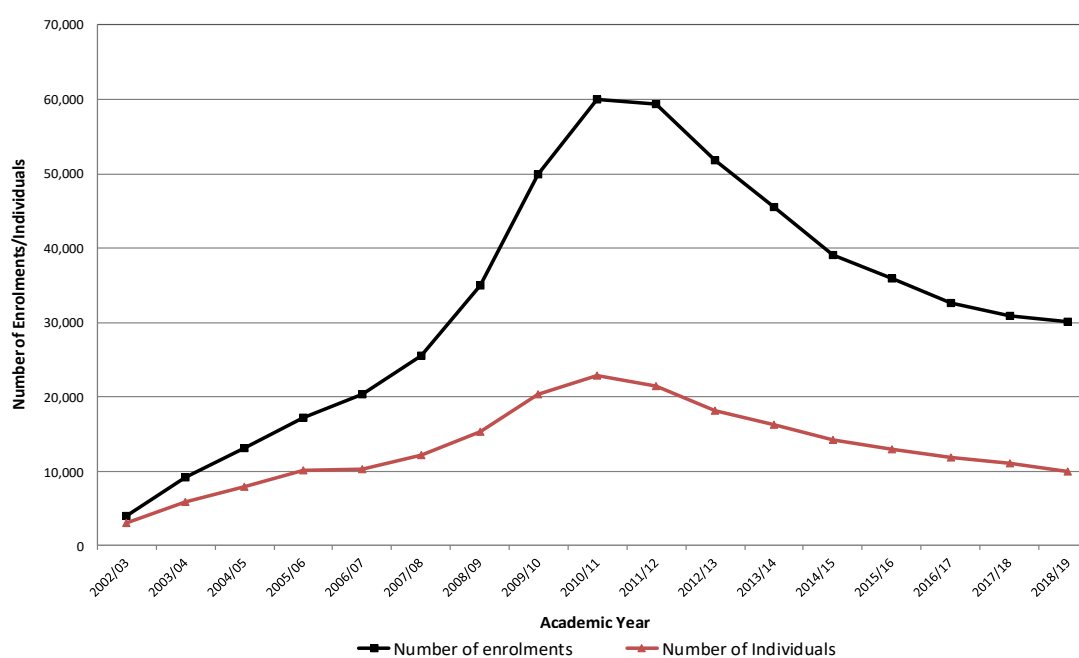
Since 2002/03, 223,959 individuals have participated in 559,494 Essential Skills enrolments. Between 2002/03 and 2010/11, the annual number of enrolments increased year on year, reaching a peak of 59,961. Since then, the annual number of enrolments has decreased each year to a total of 30,051 in 2018/19. The number of individuals enrolling has followed a similar pattern, peaking at 22,859 in 2010/11 and decreasing in each subsequent year to 10,030 in 2018/19.

Over the last academic year, enrolments have decreased from a total of 30,904 in 2017/18 to 30,051 in 2018/19 (Figure 1 and Table 1).

A combination of factors may have influenced the decline in the number of Essential Skills enrolments in recent years. The [Mid-Year Population](#) data show a dip in the number of 16-19 year olds (the main age group undertaking Essential Skills) in Northern Ireland in recent years. This effect is being compounded by [incremental increases in the proportion of school leavers achieving at least five GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Maths](#), from 62.2% in 2012/13 to 70.6% in 2017/18.

[The refresh of Essential Skills curriculum standards for literacy and numeracy](#), referred to in the introduction, may have been a factor in the three most recent academic years. In addition, the potential supply of participants among the adult population may have been decreasing over time as many have already achieved Essential Skills qualifications or equivalent. Relatively low unemployment levels may also have been a factor.

Figure 1: Essential Skills enrolments and individuals by academic year



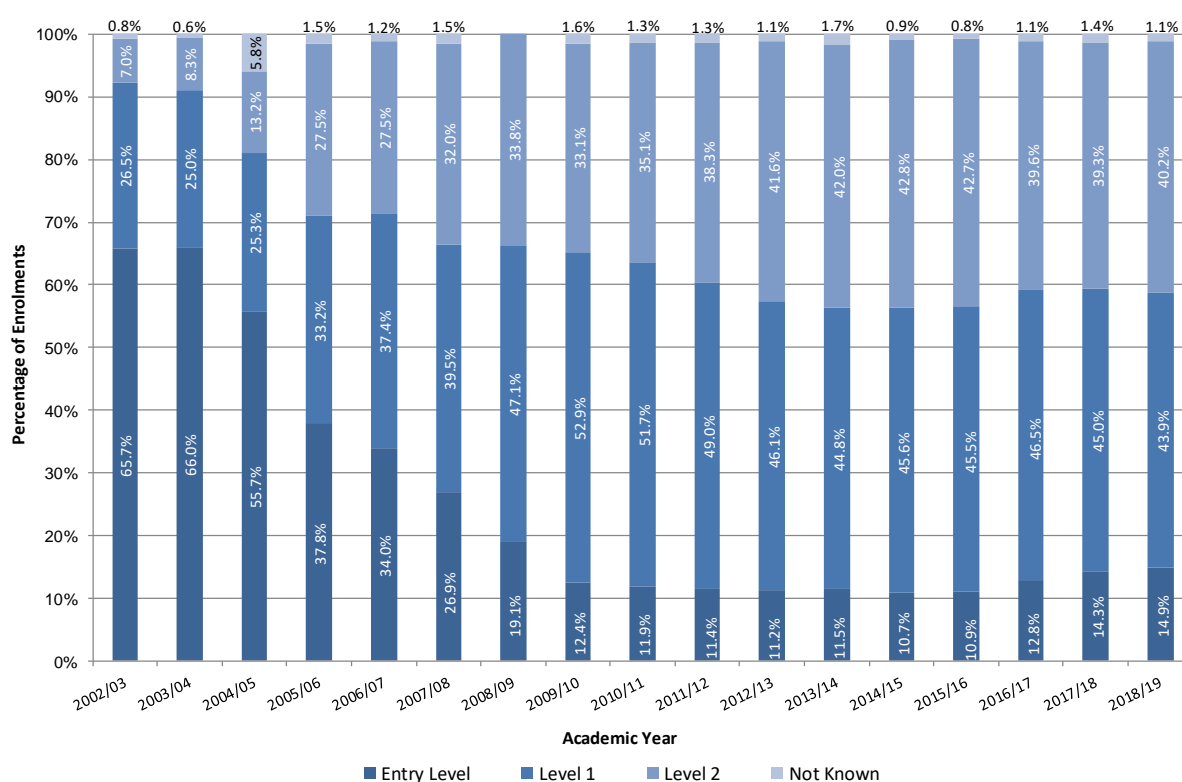
Target level of study

Over the course of the Essential Skills Strategy, the highest proportion of enrolments has been at target Level 1 (45.3%); including 43.9% in 2018/19.

The most recent academic year saw the proportion of enrolments at target Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE grade A*-C) increasing for the first time in four years, from 39.3% in 2017/18 to 40.2% in 2018/19.

The proportion of Entry Level enrolments saw an incremental increase for the fourth year running, increasing by 0.6 percentage points to 14.9% in 2018/19 (Figure 2 and Table 2).

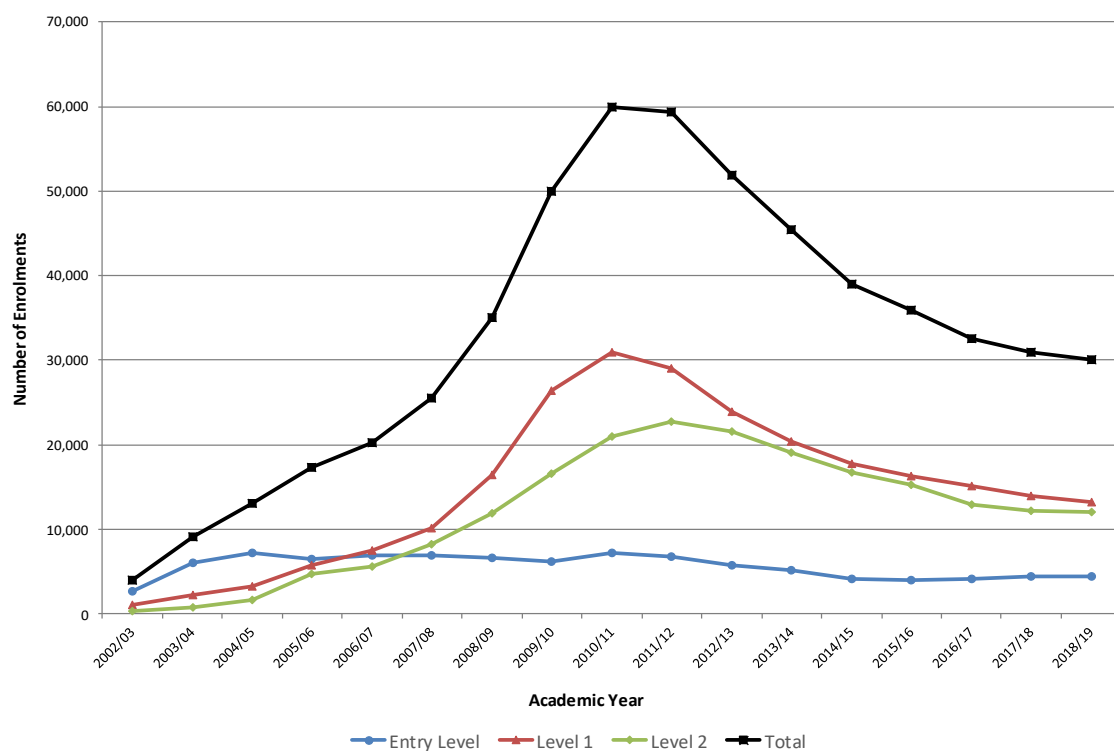
Figure 2: Percentage of Essential Skills enrolments by target level and academic year



Enrolments at Level 1 have decreased in number from a peak of 30,990 in 2010/11 to 13,195 in 2018/19. Similarly, Level 2 enrolments have decreased from a peak of 22,757 in 2011/12 to 12,068 in the most recent academic year.

While Entry Level enrolments decreased from 7,161 in 2010/11 to 3,928 in 2015/16, there has been an increase in each of the past three years, possibly in part due to more students entering at a lower target level as a result of the recent refresh of the curriculum standards. In 2018/19, there were 4,466 Entry Level enrolments, the highest total since 2013/14 (Figure 3 and Table 2).

Figure 3: Number of Essential Skills enrolments by target level and academic year



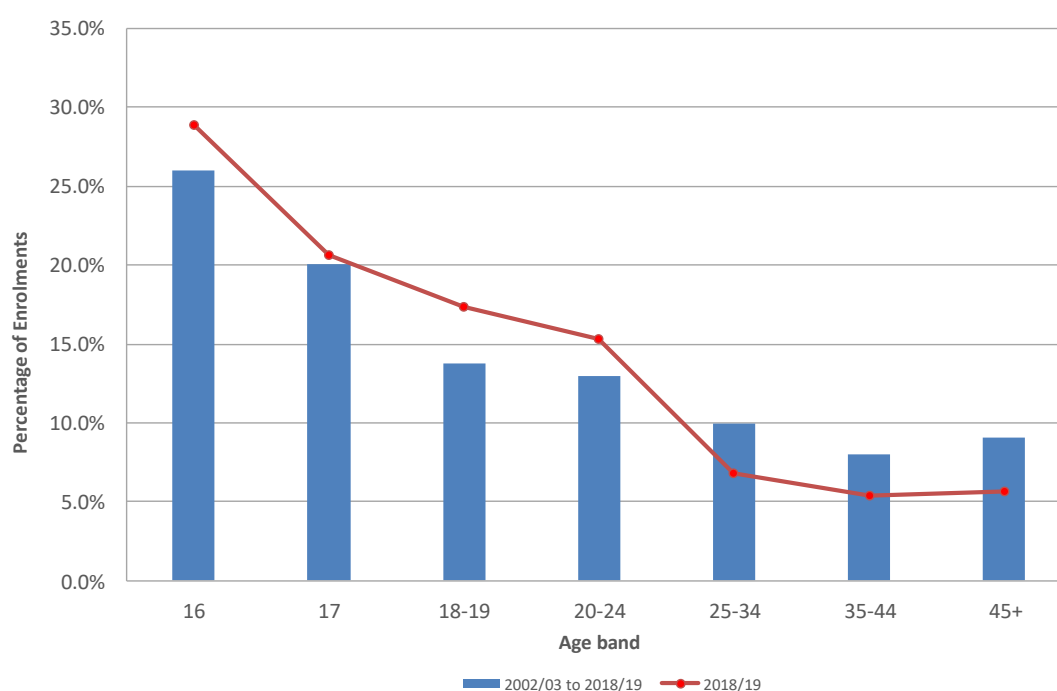
What are the characteristics of those participating?

Age

Since the start of the Essential Skills Strategy, over a quarter (26.0%) of enrolments have been from 16-year-olds.

While those aged 16-19 have accounted for 59.8% of enrolments over the full history of the Strategy, they made up 66.8% of enrolments in 2018/19. Those aged 45 and over have accounted for 9.1% of enrolments throughout the 17 years of the Strategy, although their share of enrolments was lower (5.7%) in 2018/19 (Figure 4 and Table 3).

Figure 4: Essential Skills enrolments by age band since 2002/03

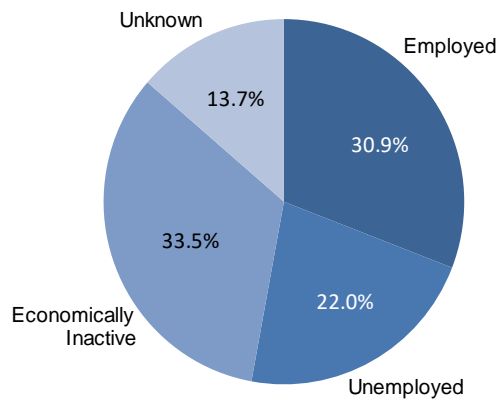


Employment Status

Over half (55.5%) of enrolments in the past 17 years have been from individuals who reported as either 'unemployed' (22.0%) or 'economically inactive' (33.5%). In 2018/19, the total share of these two groups was similar at 54.4%; however, the split between 'unemployed' and 'economically inactive' had shifted to 8.0% and 46.4% respectively.

Over the history of the Strategy, 30.9% of enrolments have been from employed individuals (28.8% in 2018/19). For the rest of the enrolments (13.7%), the employment status of the student was unknown (Figure 5 and Table 4).

Figure 5: Essential Skills enrolments by employment status since 2002/03

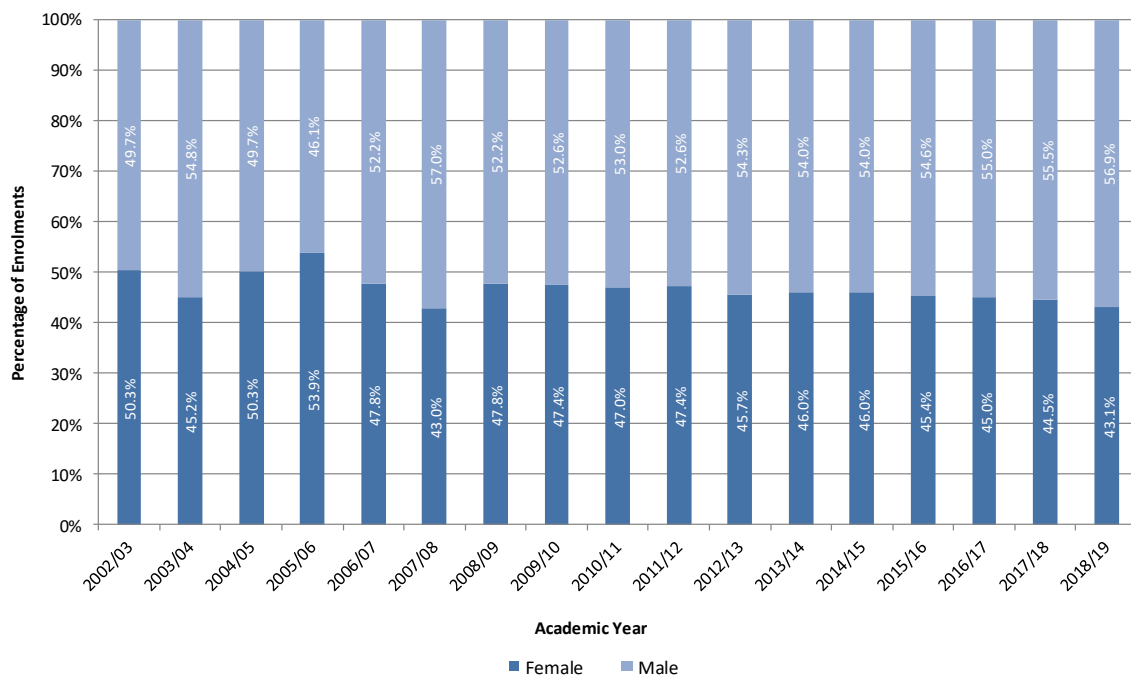


Sex

Over the 17-year history of the Strategy, 53.6% of enrolments on Essential Skills courses have been from male students. In each year since 2006/07, enrolments of males have formed the majority.

In the most recent academic year, males accounted for 56.9% (17,093) of enrolments (Figure 6 and Table 5).

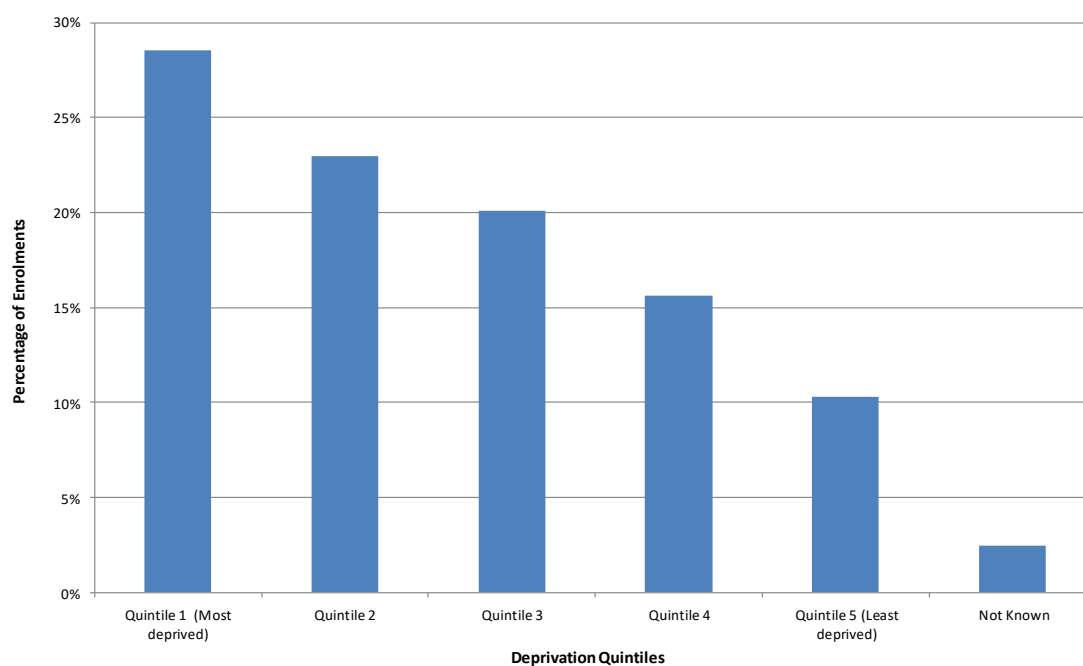
Figure 6: Essential Skills enrolments by sex and academic year



Deprivation Analysis

Deprivation is measured by the official Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM), which categorises 890 geographical areas across Northern Ireland into five groups, termed 'quintiles'. Each quintile accounts 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 group of areas.

Figure 7: Essential Skills enrolments by deprivation quintile since 2002/03



Generally, the more deprived an area is, the higher the number of Essential Skills enrolments from those living in that area. Over the 17 years of the Strategy, over half of enrolments (51.5%) have been from the two most deprived 'quintiles', with the largest share (28.6%) being from Quintile 1 (Figure 7).

In the most recent academic year, 7,839 (26.1%) enrolments were from the most deprived quintile, while 2,970 (9.9%) were from the least deprived quintile (Table 6).

Over the 17-year history of the Strategy, those living in the most deprived quintile have accounted for 36.7% of Entry Level, 28.5% of Level 1 and 24.8% of Level 2 enrolments. With regards to subject, 29.8% of Literacy and 29.6% of Numeracy enrolments have been from the most deprived quintile, while the proportion of ICT enrolments has been lower, at 24.4% (Table 7).

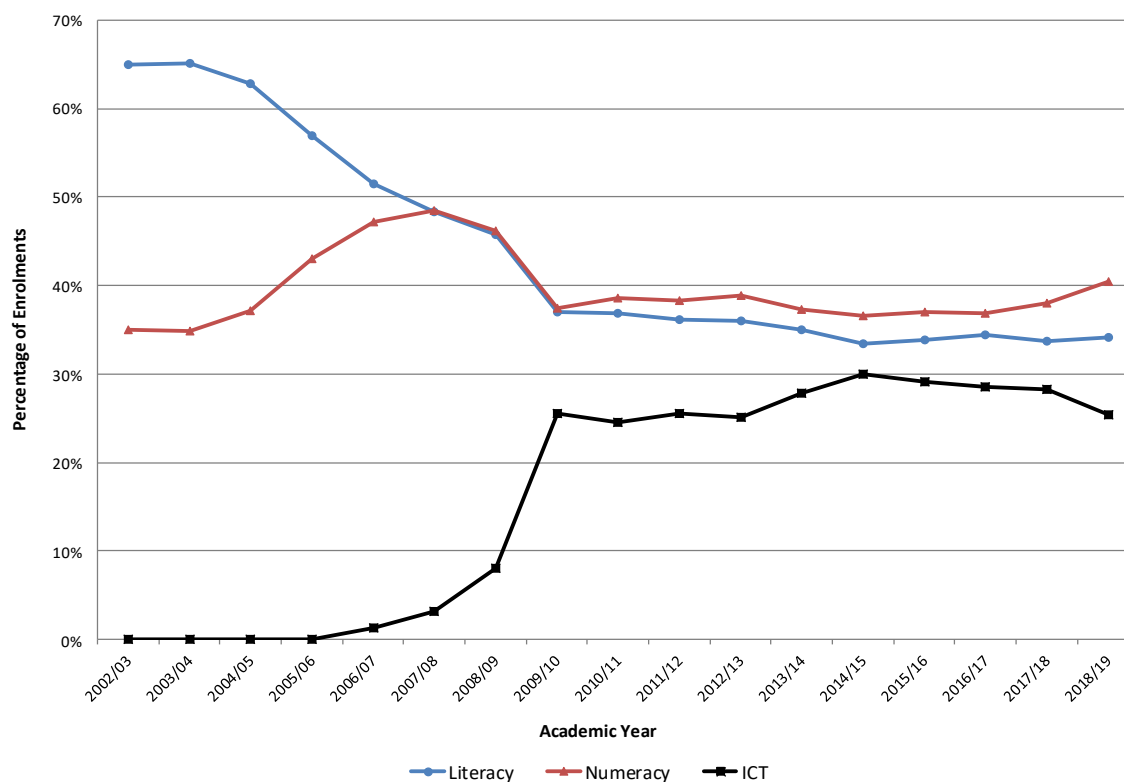
What subjects are being studied?

As a proportion of Essential Skills enrolments, Numeracy accounted for 40.5%, Literacy for 34.1% and ICT for 25.4% in the most recent academic year (2018/19).

Initially, Literacy was the most popular Essential Skills course. However, from 2007/08 onwards, Numeracy has accounted for the largest proportion of enrolments each year. ICT was rolled out as a full programme in August 2009 and has accounted for over a quarter of enrolments in each year since 2011/12.

In 2018/19, the ICT proportion (25.4%) was at its lowest since 2012/13 (25.1%), while the Numeracy proportion (40.5%) was at its highest since 2008/09 (45.7%) (Figure 8 and Table 8).

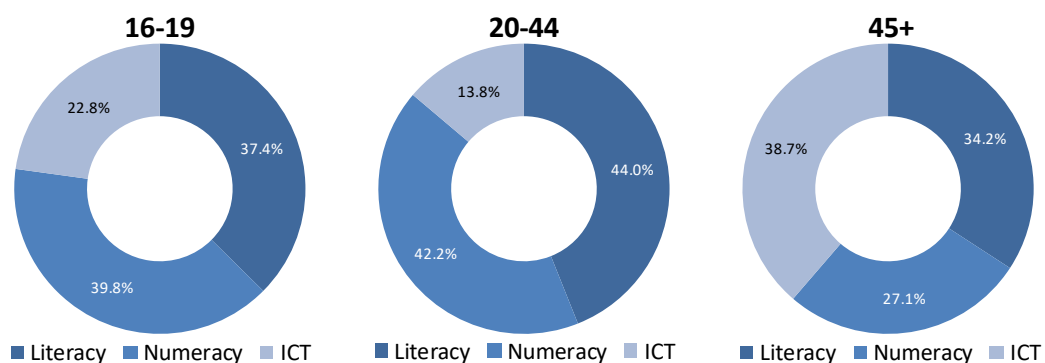
Figure 8: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and academic year



Subject and Age

Over the 17 years of the Essential Skills Strategy, Numeracy has been the most popular subject choice among those aged 16-19 (39.8%), while Literacy has been most popular among 20-44 year olds (44.0%). For those aged '45+', the most common subject studied has been ICT (38.7%), despite it having only been rolled out as a full programme since August 2009 (Figure 9 and Table 9).

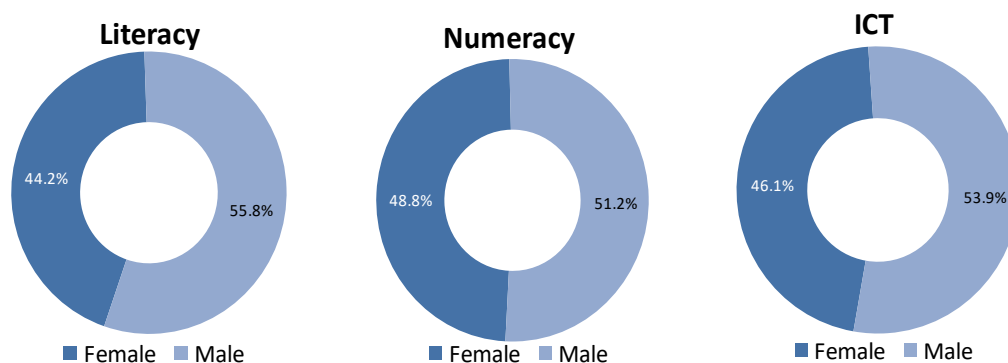
Figure 9: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and age since 2002/03



Subject and Sex

Higher proportions of males are enrolled in Essential Skills across all three subjects, ranging from 51.2% in Numeracy to 55.8% in Literacy (Figure 10 and Table 10).

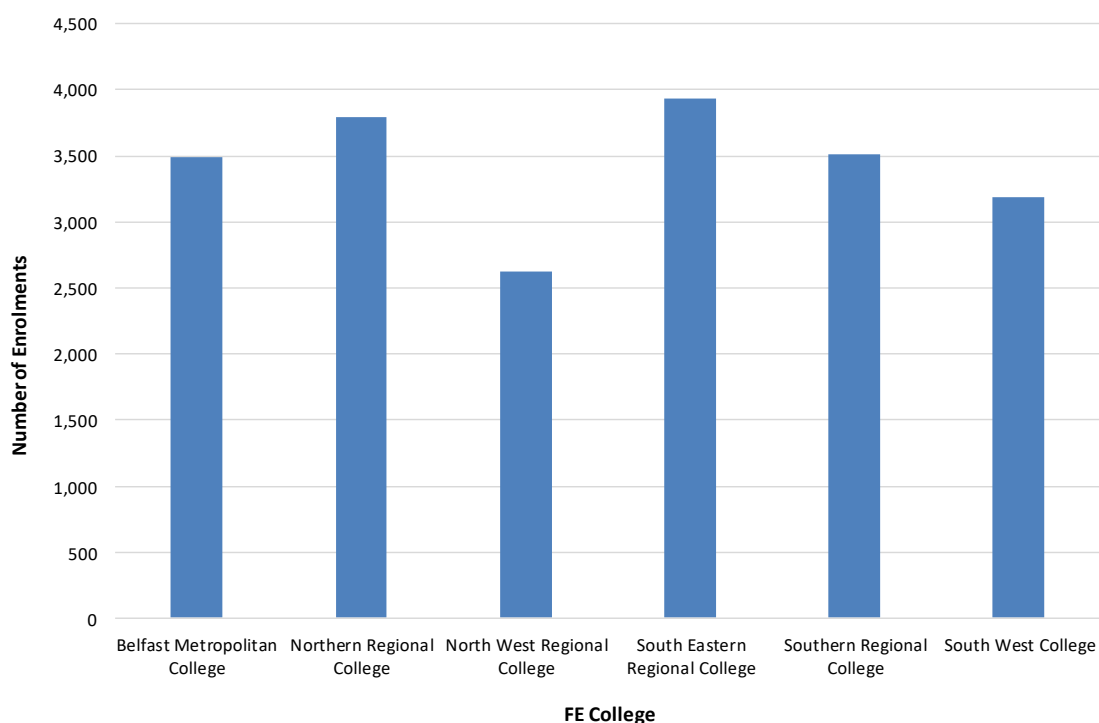
Figure 10: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and sex since 2002/03



Where are the courses being studied?

The main delivery of Essential Skills courses occurs within FE colleges, with 68.4% of enrolments (20,542) being delivered at the colleges in 2018/19. The number of enrolments delivered at each college in 2018/19 ranged from 2,629 at North West Regional College to 3,931 at South Eastern Regional College (Figure 11 and Table 11).

Figure 11: Essential Skills enrolments by FE College, 2018/19



In 2018/19, 14,484 Essential Skills enrolments were taken as part of DfE's Training Programmes, such as 'Training for Success'. It should be noted that as typically around a third of these enrolments are delivered at FE Colleges, the sum of FE College enrolments and DfE Training Programme enrolments will always be greater than the actual number of Essential Skills enrolments.

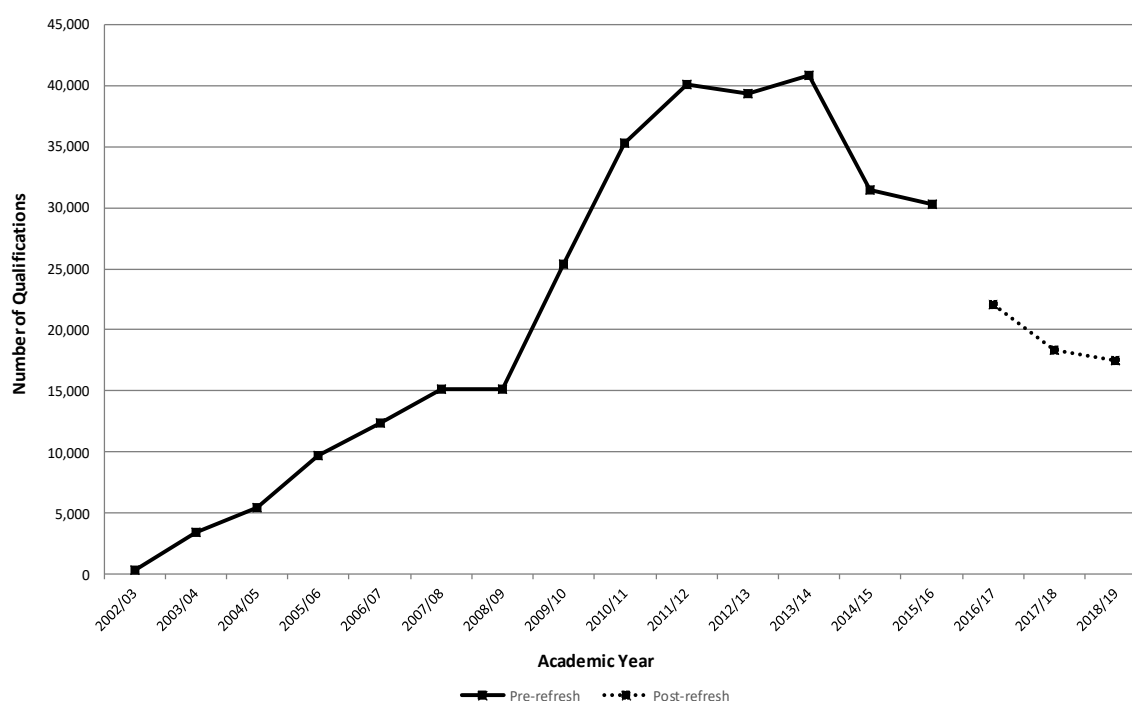
Section B: Qualifications issued

Number of qualifications issued

While over 362,000 qualifications have been issued in Essential Skills since the Strategy began 17 years ago, the annual number of qualifications issued has decreased for the fifth year in a row. After reaching a peak of 40,851 in 2013/14, the number of qualifications issued decreased to 30,259 in 2015/16.

A refresh of the Essential Skills curriculum standards is likely to have been an important factor in the marked fall between 2015/16 (30,259) and 2017/18 (18,394), when the number of qualifications issued fell at a much faster rate than enrolments. A further decrease of 880 occurred in 2018/19 (17,514) (Figure 12 and Table 12).

Figure 12: Essential Skills qualifications issued by academic year



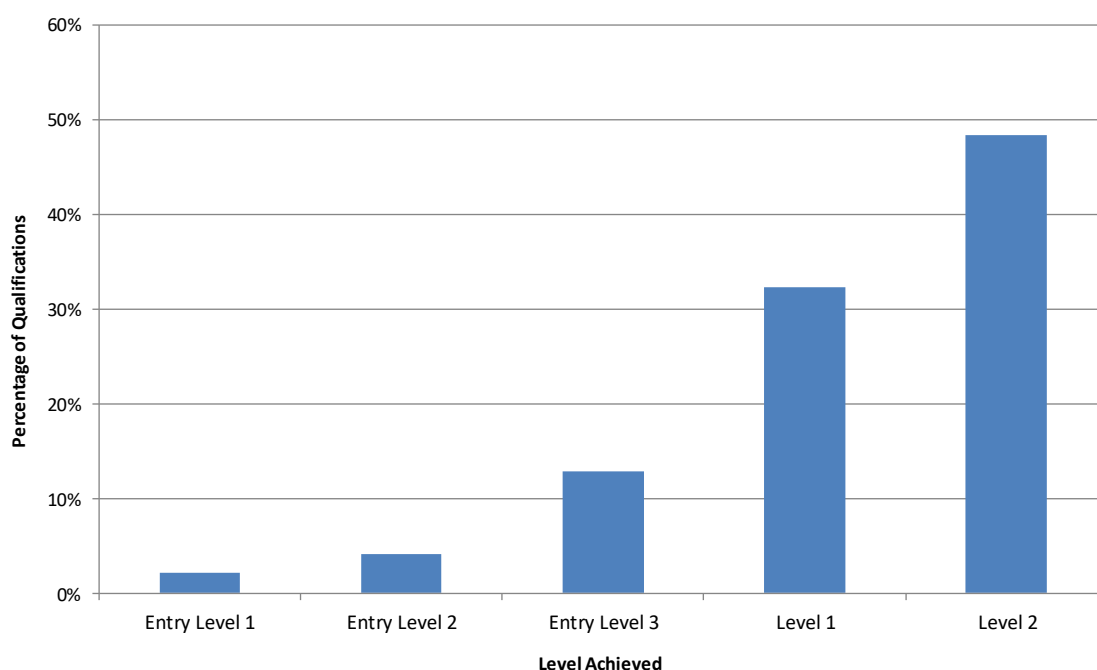
Note: The dotted line illustrates the impact of a refresh of the Essential Skills curriculum standards on qualifications issued from 2016/17.

Qualifications issued by level achieved

Over the 17-year period of the Strategy, although target Level 1 has seen the highest number of enrolments (253,725), most qualifications issued have been at Level 2 (175,616), accounting for 48.5% of all qualifications issued. This indicates that many students have qualified at a higher level than the target level they enrolled at.

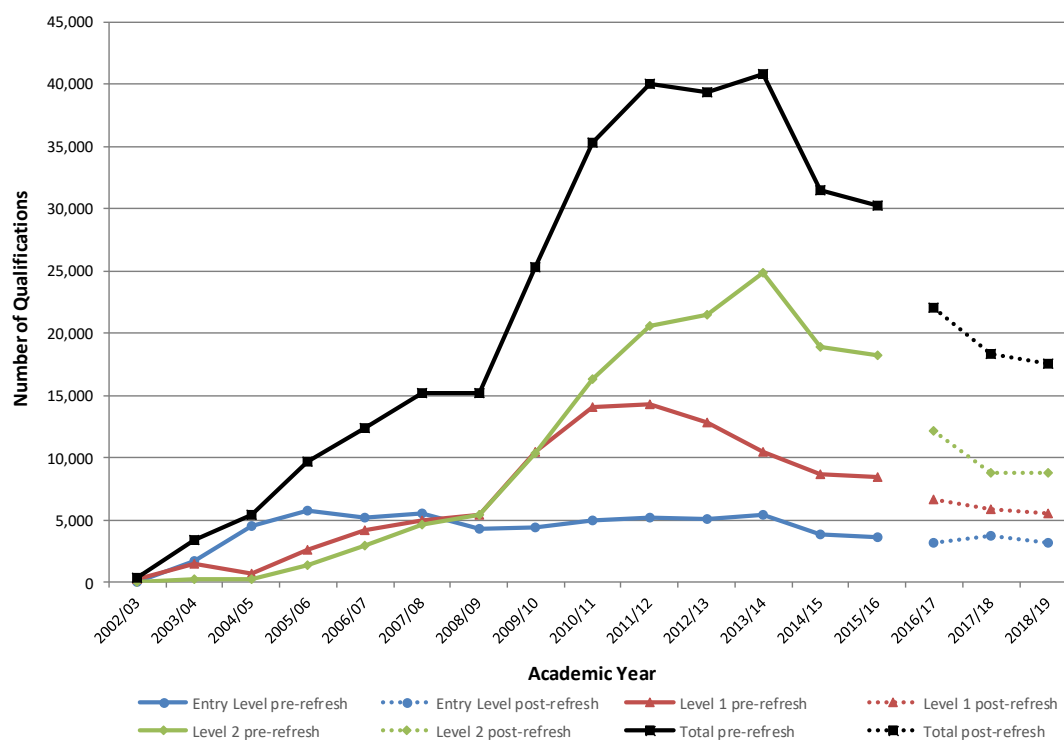
Level 2 qualifications accounted for 50.4% of the qualifications issued in 2018/19, up from 47.6% in 2017/18. Conversely, a 2.5 percentage point decrease occurred in the share of Entry Level qualifications between 2017/18 (20.5%) and 2018/19 (18%) (Figure 13 and Table 13).

Figure 13: Percentage of Essential Skills qualifications issued by level achieved since 2002/03



Of the 17,514 qualifications issued in 2018/19, 3,148 were at Entry Level, 5,532 at Level 1 and 8,834 at Level 2. Of these, Level 2 alone saw an increase on its 2017/18 figure (8,763) (Figure 14 and Table 13).

Figure 14: Number of Essential Skills qualifications issued by level achieved and academic year



Note: The dotted lines illustrate the impact of a refresh of the Essential Skills curriculum standards on qualifications issued from 2016/17.

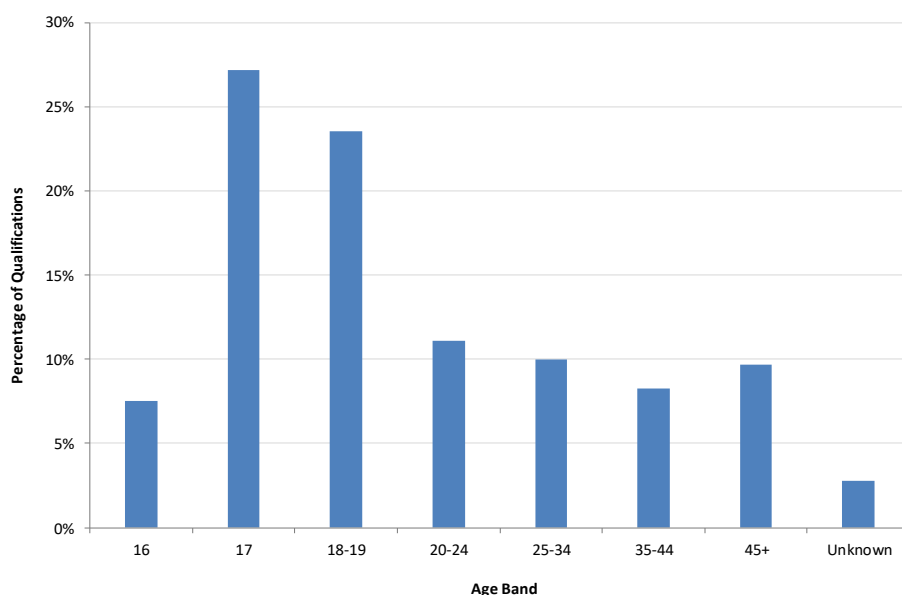
Qualifications issued by age band

Since the start of the Strategy, similar to the pattern of enrolments, the majority (58.2%) of qualifications have been issued to those between the ages of 16 and 19, including 61.5% in the most recent academic year. Seventeen-year-olds alone have accounted for over a quarter (27.2%) of all Essential Skills qualifications issued.

Students aged 35 and over accounted for 15.4% of enrolments in 2018/19, while over the 17-year history of the Strategy they have accounted for 17.9% (Figure 15 and Table 14).

Differences in the way age is calculated for enrolments and qualifications are explained in Annex 2.

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

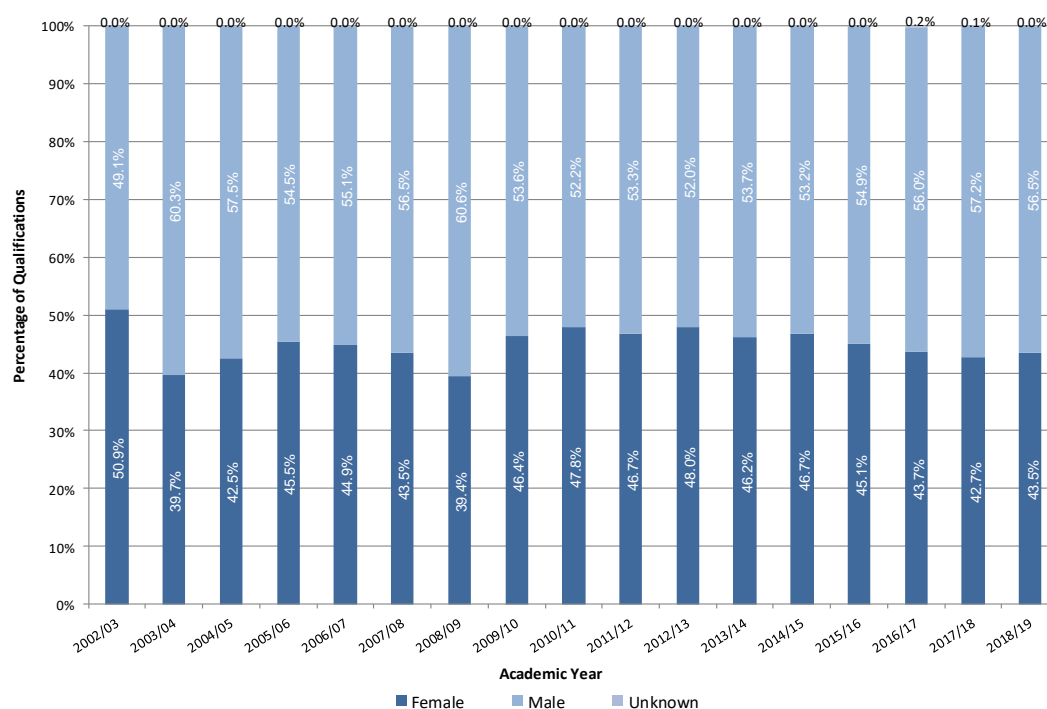


Qualifications issued by sex

In each academic year, with the exception of 2002/03, 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 2018/19, males gained 9,891 qualifications (56.5%), with females gaining 7,623 (43.5%). The share of qualifications over the 17-year history of the Strategy is 54.4% male and 45.5% female (Figure 16 and Table 15).

Figure 16: Essential Skills qualifications issued by sex and academic year

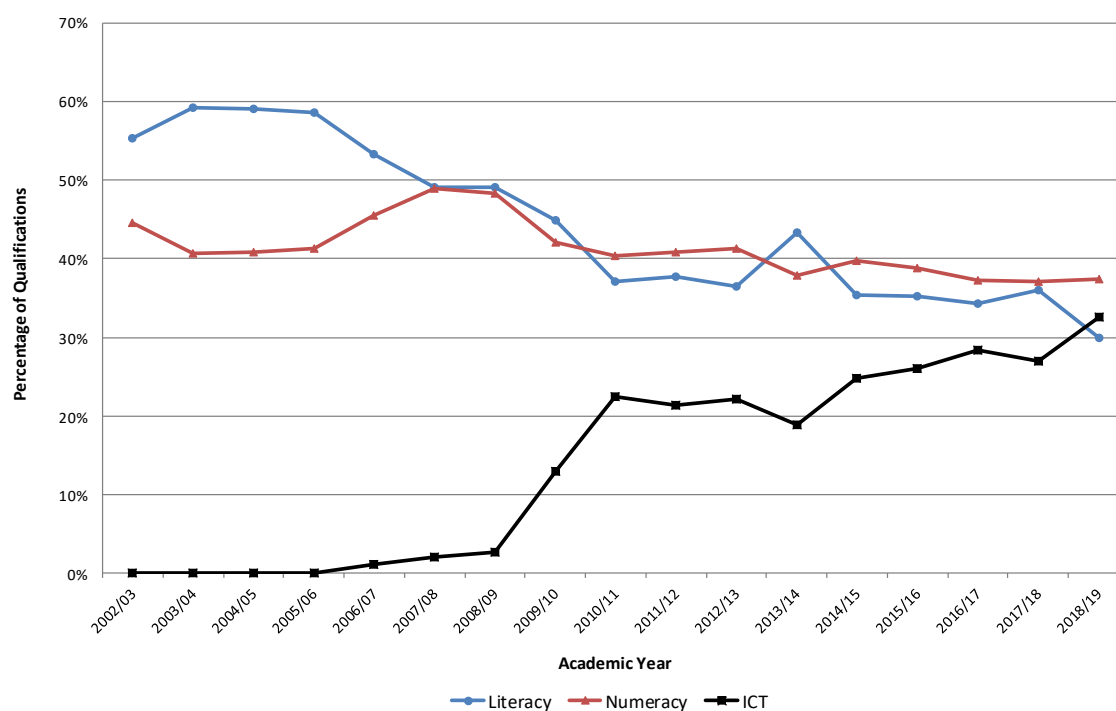


Qualifications issued by subject

Until 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.

While Literacy has accounted for 40.2% of qualifications over the past 17 years, its share fell to a low of 30.0% in 2018/19. In the same year, the share of ICT qualifications reached a high of 32.7%. Numeracy's share has been more stable in recent years, accounting for 37.3% of qualifications issued in 2018/19 (Figure 17 and Table 16).

Figure 17: Essential Skills qualifications issued by subject and academic year



Section C: Performance

Performance can be measured across three indicators:

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

Further details on how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated can be found in Annex 2. No individual academic year figures are presented within performance analysis, as explained in technical note 9 (Annex 3).

Essential Skills performance

Over the course of the Strategy, the retention rate within Essential Skills courses has been 89.4%, the achievement rate has been 73.1%, while the success rate has been 65.3%. Therefore, almost two-thirds of Essential Skills enrolments result in a qualification being issued (Table A).

Performance by subject

The retention rate has ranged from 87.8% in ICT to 90.0% in Numeracy. There has been a larger range in the achievement rate, from 66.6% in ICT to 74.7% and 74.9% in Literacy and Numeracy respectively. The success rates for Literacy (67.0%) and Numeracy (67.4%) have also been similar over the 17 years of the Strategy, while ICT has had a lower success rate of 58.4% (Table A and Table 18).

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

Subject	Performance Indicator		
	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
Literacy	89.6%	74.7%	67.0%
Numeracy	90.0%	74.9%	67.4%
ICT	87.8%	66.6%	58.4%
Total	89.4%	73.1%	65.3%

Performance by sex

While females have a slightly higher achievement rate (73.3%) than males (72.8%), males have a higher retention rate (91.0%) than females (87.4%). The higher retention rate means that males (66.3%) also have a higher success rate than females (64.1%) (Table B and Table 19).

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

Sex	Performance Indicator		
	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
Female	87.4%	73.3%	64.1%
Male	91.0%	72.8%	66.3%
Total	89.4%	73.1%	65.3%

Performance by age band

The retention rate generally decreases inversely with age band of participant, with those aged 16 having the highest retention rate (92.4%) and those aged 45+ having the lowest (84.3%) (Table C and Table 20). Achievement and success rates have not been calculated by age band due to differences in the way age is calculated for enrolments and qualifications (see Annex 2).

Table C: Essential Skills retention rate by age band since 2002/03

Age Band	Retention rate
16	92.4%
17	90.7%
18-19	87.5%
20-24	90.7%
25-34	86.8%
35-44	86.5%
45+	84.3%
Total	89.4%

Performance by target level of study

Across the five levels of study, the retention rate has ranged from 87.3% at Entry Level 1 to 90.7% at Level 1 over the 17 years of the Strategy (Table D and Table 21). Achievement and success rates have not been calculated by level as students may qualify at a different level to the target level at which they enrolled.

Table D: Essential Skills retention rate by target level since 2002/03

Target Level	Retention rate
Entry Level 1	87.3%
Entry Level 2	89.2%
Entry Level 3	89.2%
Level 1	90.7%
Level 2	89.6%
Total	89.4%

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	9,110	5,887
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	13,067	7,922
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	17,265	10,165
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	20,272	10,296
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	25,580	12,098
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	35,006	15,319
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	49,981	20,407
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	59,961	22,859
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	59,412	21,460
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	51,878	18,182
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	45,494	16,241
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	39,021	14,255
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	35,884	12,997
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	32,598	11,784
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	30,904	11,033
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	30,051	10,030
Total	559,494	223,959

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Individual students are 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 target level of study and academic year

Academic Year	Target Level						Total
	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	1,264	1,808	2,943	2,280	759	56	9,110
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	1,598	4,103	5,726	4,755	254	17,265
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	690	1,610	4,587	7,572	5,567	246	20,272
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	577	1,732	4,583	10,104	8,197	387	25,580
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	499	1,490	4,702	16,473	11,842	-	35,006
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	506	1,424	4,263	26,420	16,566	802	49,981
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	825	1,448	4,888	30,990	21,043	767	59,961
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	600	1,571	4,631	29,104	22,757	749	59,412
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	566	1,162	4,064	23,919	21,578	589	51,878
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	468	1,174	3,578	20,382	19,114	778	45,494
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	409	811	2,974	17,789	16,699	339	39,021
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	261	788	2,879	16,343	15,336	277	35,884
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	207	970	2,993	15,147	12,922	359	32,598
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	424	1,012	2,987	13,919	12,130	432	30,904
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	329	1,012	3,125	13,195	12,068	322	30,051
Total	10,535	22,121	62,622	253,725	203,339	7,152	559,494

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 3: Essential Skills enrolments by age band and academic year

Academic Year	Age band								Total
	16	17	18-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Unknown	
Up to 31 July 2003	209	200	280	585	982	826	867	61	4,010
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	1,659	1,150	605	1,121	1,717	1,431	1,291	136	9,110
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	2,105	1,761	927	1,326	2,345	2,397	2,059	147	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	4,198	3,317	1,815	1,473	2,138	2,309	1,985	30	17,265
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	6,193	4,937	2,834	1,602	1,641	1,664	1,358	43	20,272
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	8,641	5,966	3,721	2,971	1,581	1,469	1,195	36	25,580
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	9,739	7,444	4,431	3,531	3,709	3,293	2,850	9	35,006
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	12,326	10,280	6,859	5,229	5,022	4,490	5,701	74	49,981
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	13,628	11,746	7,982	6,905	7,222	5,451	6,969	58	59,961
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	13,925	11,440	7,864	7,082	7,021	5,387	6,646	47	59,412
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	12,978	10,769	7,036	7,125	5,346	3,777	4,774	73	51,878
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	12,005	9,396	6,254	7,426	3,941	2,880	3,568	24	45,494
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	10,964	8,054	5,636	5,825	3,247	2,374	2,896	25	39,021
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	10,252	7,038	5,240	5,788	2,834	2,052	2,626	54	35,884
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	8,753	5,894	5,094	5,476	2,756	2,023	2,595	7	32,598
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	9,121	6,578	5,250	4,538	1,940	1,487	1,746	244	30,904
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	8,685	6,190	5,205	4,607	2,042	1,616	1,701	5	30,051
Total	145,381	112,160	77,033	72,610	55,484	44,926	50,827	1,073	559,494

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change. Age is calculated based on date of birth and start date of the enrolment.

Table 4: Essential Skills enrolments by employment status and academic year

Academic Year	Employment Status				Total
	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	3,807	9,110
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	2,937	3,081	1,469	5,580	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	3,977	4,074	3,198	6,016	17,265
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	3,403	5,343	3,056	8,470	20,272
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	5,998	6,390	5,100	8,092	25,580
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	11,470	7,798	9,679	6,059	35,006
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	15,808	10,231	18,034	5,908	49,981
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	21,776	11,500	21,042	5,643	59,961
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	20,299	12,683	22,167	4,263	59,412
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	16,923	11,564	18,964	4,427	51,878
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	13,085	11,228	17,987	3,194	45,494
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	11,874	9,889	15,969	1,289	39,021
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	11,982	9,101	12,226	2,575	35,884
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	11,919	7,359	11,208	2,112	32,598
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	9,257	7,212	11,664	2,771	30,904
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	8,657	2,414	13,932	5,048	30,051
Total	172,769	123,120	187,176	76,429	559,494

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 5: Essential Skills enrolments by sex and academic year

Academic Year	Sex		Total
	Female	Male	
Up to 31 July 2003	2,018	1,992	4,010
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	4,114	4,996	9,110
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	6,572	6,495	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	9,306	7,959	17,265
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	9,694	10,578	20,272
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	10,994	14,586	25,580
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	16,733	18,273	35,006
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	23,699	26,282	49,981
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	28,195	31,766	59,961
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	28,140	31,272	59,412
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	23,699	28,179	51,878
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	20,914	24,580	45,494
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	17,942	21,079	39,021
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	16,298	19,586	35,884
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	14,665	17,933	32,598
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	13,767	17,137	30,904
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	12,958	17,093	30,051
Total	259,708	299,786	559,494

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 6: Essential Skills enrolments by deprivation quintile and academic year

Academic Year	SOA MDM Quintile						Total
	Quintile 1 (Most deprived)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (Least deprived)	Not Known	
Up to 31 July 2003	1,187	912	645	434	323	509	4,010
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	2,772	2,160	1,722	1,162	821	473	9,110
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	4,233	2,816	2,490	1,876	1,120	532	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	5,284	3,855	3,280	2,563	1,674	609	17,265
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	6,716	4,488	3,885	2,862	1,994	327	20,272
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	8,144	5,504	5,132	3,884	2,528	388	25,580
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	10,433	7,967	7,254	5,154	3,712	486	35,006
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	14,195	11,528	9,814	7,811	5,528	1,105	49,981
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	16,706	13,779	11,876	9,764	6,409	1,427	59,961
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	16,846	13,914	11,683	9,408	6,167	1,394	59,412
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	14,691	12,058	10,503	8,249	5,232	1,145	51,878
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	12,948	10,654	9,095	7,012	4,486	1,299	45,494
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	10,690	8,798	8,089	5,954	4,192	1,298	39,021
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	9,879	8,160	7,662	5,591	3,697	895	35,884
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	9,011	7,581	6,704	5,196	3,474	632	32,598
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	8,186	7,080	6,261	5,389	3,333	655	30,904
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	7,839	7,077	6,273	5,259	2,970	633	30,051
Total	159,760	128,331	112,368	87,568	57,660	13,807	559,494

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19. Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 7: Essential Skills enrolments by deprivation quintile, subject and target level since 2002/03

Subject	Target Level	SOA MDM Quintile						Total
		Quintile 1 (Most deprived)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (Least deprived)	Not Known	
Literacy	Entry Level 1	2,275	1,353	1,173	941	600	303	6,645
	Entry Level 2	4,606	2,730	2,548	1,647	1,009	371	12,911
	Entry Level 3	11,338	6,386	5,957	3,806	2,481	728	30,696
	Level 1	25,629	20,214	17,075	13,143	8,750	1,614	86,425
	Level 2	20,656	18,898	16,732	13,591	8,398	1,670	79,945
	Not Known	805	547	471	448	281	82	2,634
	Total	65,309	50,128	43,956	33,576	21,519	4,768	219,256
Numeracy	Entry Level 1	1,347	742	591	572	378	123	3,753
	Entry Level 2	3,232	1,932	1,791	1,190	720	211	9,076
	Entry Level 3	11,918	6,450	5,922	4,045	2,523	694	31,552
	Level 1	28,162	21,634	18,324	14,772	9,621	2,048	94,561
	Level 2	19,800	18,842	16,826	13,125	8,220	2,200	79,013
	Not Known	725	442	376	389	303	61	2,296
	Total	65,184	50,042	43,830	34,093	21,765	5,337	220,251
ICT	Entry Level 1	57	23	28	18	11	0	137
	Entry Level 2	29	33	34	19	17	2	134
	Entry Level 3	125	77	52	65	32	23	374
	Level 1	18,555	17,055	14,768	11,898	9,109	1,354	72,739
	Level 2	9,971	10,424	9,270	7,500	4,934	2,282	44,381
	Not Known	530	549	430	399	273	41	2,222
	Total	29,267	28,161	24,582	19,899	14,376	3,702	119,987
Total	Entry Level 1	3,679	2,118	1,792	1,531	989	426	10,535
	Entry Level 2	7,867	4,695	4,373	2,856	1,746	584	22,121
	Entry Level 3	23,381	12,913	11,931	7,916	5,036	1,445	62,622
	Level 1	72,346	58,903	50,167	39,813	27,480	5,016	253,725
	Level 2	50,427	48,164	42,828	34,216	21,552	6,152	203,339
	Not Known	2,060	1,538	1,277	1,236	857	184	7,152
	Total	159,760	128,331	112,368	87,568	57,660	13,807	559,494

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19. Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 8: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and academic year

Academic Year	Subject			Total
	Literacy	Numeracy	ICT	
Up to 31 July 2003	2,607	1,403	-	4,010
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	5,939	3,171	-	9,110
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	8,217	4,850	-	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	9,837	7,428	-	17,265
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	10,432	9,579	261	20,272
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	12,384	12,391	805	25,580
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	16,007	16,182	2,817	35,006
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	18,527	18,691	12,763	49,981
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	22,144	23,126	14,691	59,961
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	21,481	22,783	15,148	59,412
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	18,707	20,171	13,000	51,878
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	15,898	16,963	12,633	45,494
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	13,048	14,286	11,687	39,021
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	12,131	13,281	10,472	35,884
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	11,242	12,027	9,329	32,598
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	10,409	11,760	8,735	30,904
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	10,246	12,159	7,646	30,051
Total	219,256	220,251	119,987	559,494

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 9: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and age band since 2002/03

Age band	Subject			Total
	Literacy	Numeracy	ICT	
16	56,223	56,468	32,690	145,381
17	41,562	44,713	25,885	112,160
18-19	27,439	31,830	17,764	77,033
20-24	31,355	32,274	8,981	72,610
25-34	24,994	23,217	7,273	55,484
35-44	19,704	17,589	7,633	44,926
45+	17,384	13,774	19,669	50,827
Unknown	595	386	92	1,073
Total	219,256	220,251	119,987	559,494

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 10: Essential Skills enrolments by sex, subject and academic year

Academic Year	Literacy			Numeracy			ICT			Total
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	
Up to 31 July 2003	1,325	1,282	2,607	693	710	1,403	-	-	-	4,010
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	2,677	3,262	5,939	1,437	1,734	3,171	-	-	-	9,110
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	4,157	4,060	8,217	2,415	2,435	4,850	-	-	-	13,067
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	5,198	4,639	9,837	4,108	3,320	7,428	-	-	-	17,265
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	4,825	5,607	10,432	4,767	4,812	9,579	102	159	261	20,272
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	5,074	7,310	12,384	5,630	6,761	12,391	290	515	805	25,580
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	7,266	8,741	16,007	8,234	7,948	16,182	1,233	1,584	2,817	35,006
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	8,263	10,264	18,527	9,252	9,439	18,691	6,184	6,579	12,763	49,981
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	9,816	12,328	22,144	11,322	11,804	23,126	7,057	7,634	14,691	59,961
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	9,570	11,911	21,481	11,375	11,408	22,783	7,195	7,953	15,148	59,412
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	8,026	10,681	18,707	9,752	10,419	20,171	5,921	7,079	13,000	51,878
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	6,757	9,141	15,898	8,201	8,762	16,963	5,956	6,677	12,633	45,494
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	5,510	7,538	13,048	6,881	7,405	14,286	5,551	6,136	11,687	39,021
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	5,182	6,949	12,131	6,416	6,865	13,281	4,700	5,772	10,472	35,884
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	4,736	6,506	11,242	5,666	6,361	12,027	4,263	5,066	9,329	32,598
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	4,367	6,042	10,409	5,592	6,168	11,760	3,808	4,927	8,735	30,904
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	4,148	6,098	10,246	5,728	6,431	12,159	3,082	4,564	7,646	30,051
Total	96,897	122,359	219,256	107,469	112,782	220,251	55,342	64,645	119,987	559,494

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 11: Essential Skills enrolments by FE College, 2018/19

FE College	Enrolments
Belfast Metropolitan College	3,491
Northern Regional College	3,796
North West Regional College	2,629
South Eastern Regional College	3,931
Southern Regional College	3,512
South West College	3,183
Total	20,542

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

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	22,030
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	18,394
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	17,514
Total	362,338

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 13: Essential Skills qualifications issued by level achieved and academic year

Academic Year	Level Achieved					Total
	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	2,120	6,678	12,215	22,030
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	453	778	2,537	5,863	8,763	18,394
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	292	577	2,279	5,532	8,834	17,514
Total	7,850	14,883	46,824	117,165	175,616	362,338

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 14: Essential Skills qualifications issued by age band and academic year

Academic Year	Age Band								Total
	16	17	18-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Unknown	
Up to 31 July 2003	15	34	44	47	72	56	46	2	316
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	192	721	327	497	718	513	409	66	3,443
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	191	1,517	847	560	715	733	718	184	5,465
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	178	2,659	1,857	1,014	1,251	1,415	1,237	80	9,691
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	392	4,217	2,999	1,216	1,243	1,246	1,026	88	12,427
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	518	5,341	4,002	1,545	1,250	1,251	1,076	214	15,197
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	543	5,466	4,075	1,743	1,095	913	826	492	15,153
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	1,221	7,134	6,070	2,869	2,457	2,283	2,750	549	25,333
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	1,497	9,221	8,768	4,042	3,467	3,215	4,546	581	35,337
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	2,367	9,603	9,412	4,706	4,485	3,732	4,725	1,064	40,094
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	3,131	9,751	8,832	4,434	4,408	3,412	4,410	1,003	39,381
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	3,511	10,789	9,172	4,824	4,618	3,281	3,675	981	40,851
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	2,999	8,525	7,612	3,493	3,096	2,310	2,548	870	31,453
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	3,864	8,377	7,012	3,114	2,529	1,891	2,309	1,163	30,259
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	2,818	5,627	5,257	2,309	1,863	1,299	1,737	1,120	22,030
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	2,489	4,663	4,402	1,834	1,481	1,140	1,444	941	18,394
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	1,322	4,830	4,621	1,942	1,453	1,157	1,544	645	17,514
Total	27,248	98,475	85,309	40,189	36,201	29,847	35,026	10,043	362,338

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

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

Academic Year	Sex			Total
	Female	Male	Unknown	
Up to 31 July 2003	161	155	-	316
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	1,366	2,077	-	3,443
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	2,325	3,140	-	5,465
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	4,407	5,284	-	9,691
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	5,577	6,850	-	12,427
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	6,615	8,582	-	15,197
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	5,966	9,187	-	15,153
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	11,763	13,570	-	25,333
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	16,907	18,430	-	35,337
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	18,720	21,364	10	40,094
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	18,887	20,484	10	39,381
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	18,884	21,956	11	40,851
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	14,697	16,747	9	31,453
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	13,645	16,614	-	30,259
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	9,634	12,346	50	22,030
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	7,859	10,524	11	18,394
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	7,623	9,891	-	17,514
Total	165,036	197,201	101	362,338

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 16: Essential Skills qualifications issued by subject and academic year

Academic Year	Subject			Total
	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	7,542	8,221	6,267	22,030
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	6,612	6,822	4,960	18,394
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	5,254	6,541	5,719	17,514
Total	145,567	147,074	69,697	362,338

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 17: Essential Skills qualifications issued by subject, level achieved and academic year

Academic Year	Literacy			Numeracy			ICT	
	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 1	Level 2
Up to 31 July 2003	0	123	52	0	115	26	0	0
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	904	952	184	764	532	107	0	0
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	2,603	519	109	1,974	170	90	0	0
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	3,202	1,659	819	2,530	974	507	0	0
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	2,895	2,210	1,521	2,357	1,920	1,379	101	44
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	2,889	2,437	2,138	2,611	2,350	2,467	225	80
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	2,212	2,557	2,660	2,138	2,514	2,667	303	102
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	2,256	4,352	4,768	2,182	4,029	4,450	2,153	1,143
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	2,369	4,602	6,154	2,572	4,818	6,903	4,669	3,250
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	2,464	4,753	7,926	2,775	5,081	8,501	4,439	4,155
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	2,355	4,126	7,894	2,680	4,661	8,926	4,074	4,665
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	2,255	3,441	11,998	3,143	4,137	8,181	2,952	4,744
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	1,830	2,839	6,486	1,974	3,228	7,309	2,673	5,114
1 August 2015 - 31 July 2016	1,656	2,853	6,137	1,914	3,111	6,723	2,440	5,425
1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017	1,392	2,158	3,992	1,745	2,586	3,890	1,934	4,333
1 August 2017 - 31 July 2018	1,662	1,865	3,085	2,106	2,338	2,378	1,660	3,300
1 August 2018 - 31 July 2019	1,342	1,406	2,506	1,806	2,386	2,349	1,740	3,979
Total	34,286	42,852	68,429	35,271	44,950	66,853	29,363	40,334

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

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

Subject	Enrolments (enrolments dataset)	Completers (enrolments dataset)	Retention rate	Qualifications (awarding organisations dataset)	Achievement rate	Success rate
Literacy	217,408	194,888	89.6%	145,567	74.7%	67.0%
Numeracy	218,257	196,379	90.0%	147,074	74.9%	67.4%
ICT	119,298	104,704	87.8%	69,697	66.6%	58.4%
All Subjects	554,963	495,971	89.4%	362,338	73.1%	65.3%

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19; Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Qualifications figures are correct as at 30th September 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change.

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

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

Sex	Enrolments (enrolments dataset)	Completers (enrolments dataset)	Retention rate	Qualifications (awarding organisations dataset)	Achievement rate	Success rate
Female	257,574	225,234	87.4%	165,036	73.3%	64.1%
Male	297,389	270,737	91.0%	197,201	72.8%	66.3%
Unknown	-	-	N/A	101	N/A	N/A
Total	554,963	495,971	89.4%	362,338	73.1%	65.3%

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19; Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change. Qualifications figures are correct as at 30th September 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change. Further details on how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated are available in Annex 2.

Table 20: Essential Skills retention rate by age band since 2002/03

Age Band	Enrolments (enrolments dataset)	Completers (enrolments dataset)	Retention rate
16	143,973	133,050	92.4%
17	110,956	100,618	90.7%
18-19	76,418	66,831	87.5%
20-24	72,289	65,579	90.7%
25-34	55,190	47,878	86.8%
35-44	44,642	38,613	86.5%
45+	50,427	42,506	84.3%
Unknown	1,068	896	N/A
Total	554,963	495,971	89.4%

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change. Further details on how retention rate is calculated are available in Annex 2.

Achievement and success rates have not been calculated by age band due to differences in the way age is calculated for enrolments and qualifications (see Annex 2).

Table 21: Essential Skills retention rate by target level since 2002/03

Target level	Enrolments (enrolments dataset)	Completers (enrolments dataset)	Retention rate
Entry Level 1	10,391	9,086	87.3%
Entry Level 2	21,739	19,349	89.2%
Entry Level 3	61,746	54,965	89.2%
Level 1	252,480	229,064	90.7%
Level 2	202,136	181,233	89.6%
Not Known	6,471	2,274	N/A
Total	554,963	495,971	89.4%

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2018/19.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 11th October 2019; they are provisional and are subject to change. Further details on how retention rate is calculated are available in Annex 2.

Achievement and success rates have not been calculated by level as students may qualify at a different level to the 'target level' at which they enrolled.

Annex 2: Definitions

Academic year

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

Achievement rate

Achievement rate is defined as the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their study and achieve their qualification to the number of enrolments who complete their study.

'Completers' include any enrolments not classified as 'Withdrawn' or 'Transferred'.

$$\text{Achievement rate} = \frac{\text{Number of achievements}}{\text{Number of completers}}$$

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 five groups or quintiles of Super Output Areas (SOAs), based on relative level of deprivation using the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM). Enrolments are assigned to SOAs using the postcodes provided on enrolment records.

On 23rd November 2017, NIMDM 2017 replaced NIMDM 2010 as the official measure of relative deprivation in Northern Ireland. This provides a mechanism for ranking the 890 SOAs from the most deprived (rank 1) to the least deprived (rank 890). Accordingly, SOAs ranked 1 to 178 form the most deprived group relative to all other SOAs (Quintile 1), while those ranked 713 to 890 form the least deprived group (Quintile 5).

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

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

Enrolments

The enrolment returns are merged and a process is in place to deal with any duplicate enrolments. The resultant file is then analysed to present the total number of Essential Skills enrolments.

FE College

There are six Further Education (FE) Colleges across Northern Ireland: Belfast Metropolitan College, Northern Regional College, North West Regional College, South Eastern Regional College, Southern Regional College and South West College.

Individuals

Individual students are determined using name and date of birth, and allocated to a particular academic year based on the start date of their first enrolment. Individuals can enrol in more than one course.

Level achieved

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

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 completed enrolments to the number of enrolments.

$$\text{Retention rate} = \frac{\text{Number of completers}}{\text{Number of enrolments}}$$

Success rate

Success rate is recognised as 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.

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

Target level

When an individual enrolls on an Essential Skills course, they are assessed over a 6-8 week period to establish the level they are 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.

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 2018/19. 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 are merged and a process is in place to deal with any duplicate enrolments. 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 11th October 2019. 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 2019. 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 a 'transfer' should have an accompanying second enrolment record (the one they have transferred onto). 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 the Strategy from 2002/03 to 2018/19. 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:

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