

# Further Education Activity in Northern Ireland: 2013/14 to 2015/16

**Date of Publication:**

8<sup>th</sup> December 2016

**Theme:**

Children, Education and Skills

**Issued by:**

Statistics and Research Branch  
(Tertiary Education)  
Department for the Economy  
Adelaide House  
39-49 Adelaide Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8FD

**Lead Statistician:**

Allan Matthews;  
028 9025 7727

**Emails:**

[allan.matthews@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:allan.matthews@economy-ni.gov.uk)

**Internet:**

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

This statistical bulletin presents a range of analysis regarding enrolments (both regulated and non-regulated) in the Northern Ireland Further Education Sector covering academic years 2013/14 to 2015/16. The statistics presented in this bulletin cover the characteristics of those enrolling in FE colleges along with analysis of areas of deprivation, funding streams and performance (retention and success rates).

**Key points:**

- Over the past three academic years, the number of enrolments at FE colleges has decreased by 14.9%, from 180,825 in 2013/14 to 153,817 in 2015/16 (Figure 1, Table A1).
- The proportion of all enrolments that are regulated increased from 78.4% in 2013/14 to 84.0% in 2015/16 (Figure 6, Table A5).
- Of the 129,274 regulated enrolments in 2015/16 nearly four-fifths (78.2%) were at 'Level 2 or above' (Figure 16, Table A14).
- The number of Higher Education enrolments at FE colleges increased by 0.5% from 11,576 in 2013/14 to 11,631 in 2015/16. (Table 3).
- Over the period 2013/14 to 2015/16: the retention rate in FE colleges increased from 89.1% to 90.2%; the achievement rate increased from 87.1% to 89.4%; and the success rate increased from 77.6% to 80.7% (Figure 35, Table A29).

## Reader Information

Purpose	Monitor and report on enrolment activity in FE colleges in Northern Ireland.
Authors	Allan Matthews, Allan Nesbitt, Brian French.
Publication Date	Thursday 8 <sup>th</sup> December 2016.
Reporting Period	Academic Years 2013/14 to 2015/16.
Publication Issue	3
Statistical Quality	Information detailed in this release has been quality assured with FE colleges prior to release.
Target audience	DfE, Directors of FE colleges in Northern Ireland, Board members of FE colleges, educational professionals, academics, media and members of the public interested in the FE sector.
Further copies from	<a href="mailto:analyticalservices@economy-ni.gov.uk">analyticalservices@economy-ni.gov.uk</a>
Internet address	<a href="https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/higher-and-further-education-and-training-statistics">https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/higher-and-further-education-and-training-statistics</a>
Price	Free
Copyright	This publication is Crown copyright and may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium. Any material used must be acknowledged, and the title of the publication specified.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

READER INFORMATION .....	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	3
LIST OF FIGURES .....	5
LIST OF TABLES.....	6
ABOUT STATISTICS & RESEARCH BRANCH (TERTIARY EDUCATION)..	7
INTRODUCTION .....	8
STRUCTURE.....	8
EXPLANATORY NOTES .....	9
CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION .....	11
POLICY AND OPERATIONAL CONTEXT.....	11
<b>SECTION 1: FURTHER EDUCATION COLLEGE ENROLMENTS .....</b>	<b>12</b>
1.1 All enrolments .....	12
Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16 .....	12
FE colleges .....	13
Age .....	14
Gender .....	15
Mode of attendance .....	15
1.2 Regulated and Non-regulated enrolments .....	17
Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16.....	17
FE colleges .....	18
Age .....	19
Gender .....	20
Mode of attendance .....	20
1.3 Funding streams 2015/16.....	21
<b>SECTION 2: REGULATED ENROLMENTS IN 2015/16 .....</b>	<b>22</b>
Overview .....	22
FE colleges .....	22
Age .....	23
Gender .....	23
Mode of attendance .....	24
Mode of attendance and gender .....	24
Provision area .....	25
Level of study .....	26
Subject area .....	27
Subject area and gender .....	27
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) .	28
Deprivation .....	29
<b>SECTION 3: FLU FUNDING .....</b>	<b>31</b>
Background .....	31
Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16.....	31
FE colleges .....	32
Regulated and Non-regulated .....	32
Mode of attendance.....	34
Level of study .....	35
Subject area .....	36

<b>SECTION 4: HIGHER EDUCATION ENROLMENTS IN FE COLLEGES ....</b>	<b>38</b>
Background .....	38
Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16 .....	38
FE colleges .....	38
Higher Education Enrolments in 2015/16 .....	39
Age .....	39
Gender .....	40
Mode of attendance .....	41
Mode of attendance and gender .....	41
Level of study .....	41
Subject area .....	42
Subject area and gender .....	43
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) ..	43
Deprivation .....	44
<b>SECTION 5: QUALIFICATIONS AND PERFORMANCE.....</b>	<b>47</b>
5.1 Final year enrolments .....	47
Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16 .....	47
FE colleges .....	47
5.2 Qualifications .....	48
Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16 .....	48
FE colleges .....	48
5.3 Performance .....	49
Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16 .....	49
FE colleges .....	50
Academic year 2015/16.....	51
Performance by age .....	51
Performance by gender .....	52
Performance by mode of attendance .....	53
Performance by provision area .....	54
Performance by level of study .....	55
Performance by subject area .....	56
Performance by STEM.....	58
Performance by deprivation .....	59
<b>ANNEX A: DEFINITIONS.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>ANNEX B: TECHNICAL NOTES.....</b>	<b>67</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Number of individuals and all enrolments by academic year .....	12
Figure 2: Proportion of all enrolments by FE college in 2015/16 .....	13
Figure 3: Proportion of all enrolments by age band and academic year .....	14
Figure 4: Proportion of all enrolments by gender and FE college in 2015/16 .....	15
Figure 5: All enrolments by mode of attendance and FE college in 2015/16.....	16
Figure 6: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by academic year .....	18
Figure 7: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by FE college in 2015/16.....	19
Figure 8: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by age by academic year .....	20
Figure 9: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by gender by academic year ...	20
Figure 10: Proportion of all enrolments by funding stream in 2015/16.....	21
Figure 11: Proportion of regulated enrolments by FE college in 2015/16 .....	22
Figure 12: Proportion of regulated enrolments by age band and FE college in 2015/16.....	23
Figure 13: Proportion of regulated enrolments by gender and FE college in 2015/16.....	24
Figure 14: Proportion of regulated enrolments by gender and mode of attendance in 2015/16...	25
Figure 15: Proportion of regulated enrolments by provision area in 2015/16 .....	26
Figure 16: Proportion of regulated enrolments by level of study in 2015/16 .....	27
Figure 17: Regulated enrolments by subject area and gender in 2015/16 .....	28
Figure 18: Proportion of regulated enrolments by STEM indicators and FE college in 2015/16 ..	29
Figure 19: Proportion of regulated enrolments by deprivation quintiles and FE college in 2015/16 .....	30
Figure 20: All enrolments and FLU enrolments by academic year .....	31
Figure 21: FLU enrolments by FE college and academic year .....	32
Figure 22: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated FLU enrolments by academic year .....	33
Figure 23: Proportions of FLU funded enrolments by regulated status and FE college in 2015/16 .....	33
Figure 24: Proportion of FLU enrolments by mode of attendance and FE college in 2015/16 .....	34
Figure 25: Proportion of FLU enrolments by level of study and FE college in 2015/16 .....	36
Figure 26: Proportion of FLU enrolments by subject area in 2015/16.....	37
Figure 27: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by FE college in 2015/16 .....	39
Figure 28: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by age band and FE college in 2015/16 ..	40
Figure 29: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by gender and FE college in 2015/16 .....	40
Figure 30: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by gender and mode of attendance in 2015/16 .....	41
Figure 31: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by level of study in 2015/16 .....	42
Figure 32: Higher Education enrolments by subject area and gender in 2015/16 .....	43
Figure 33: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by STEM indicators and FE college in 2015/16 .....	44
Figure 34: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by deprivation quintiles and FE college in 2015/16 .....	45
Figure 35: Performance of regulated enrolments by academic year .....	50
Figure 36: Performance of regulated enrolments by age band in 2015/16 .....	52
Figure 37: Performance of regulated enrolments by gender in 2015/16 .....	53
Figure 38: Performance of regulated enrolments by mode of attendance in 2015/16 .....	54
Figure 39: Performance of regulated enrolments by provision area in 2015/16 .....	55
Figure 40: Performance of regulated enrolments in by level of study in 2015/16 .....	56
Figure 41: Retention rate for regulated enrolments by subject area in 2015/16 .....	57
Figure 42: Success rate for regulated enrolments by subject area in 2015/16 .....	58
Figure 43: Performance of regulated enrolments by STEM indicators in 2015/16 .....	59
Figure 44: Performance of regulated enrolments by deprivation quintile in 2015/16 .....	60

## List of Tables

Table 1: All enrolments by FE college and academic year .....	13
Table 2: Proportion of regulated enrolments with and without ROI domicile students in NWRC by deprivation quintiles in 2015/16 .....	30
Table 3: Higher Education enrolments by FE college and academic year.....	38
Table 4: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments with and without ROI domicile students in NWRC by deprivation quintiles in 2015/16 .....	46
Table 5: Number of final year enrolments by FE college and academic year .....	47
Table 6: Number of qualifications by FE college and academic year .....	48

## About Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education)

Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education) is responsible for the collection, quality assurance, analysis and publication of Further and Higher Education statistical information 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 customers in the DfE Committee, Further Education 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.

Information is disseminated through a number of key statistical publications.

A 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 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>

### Feedback

As we want to engage with users of our statistics, we invite you to feedback your comments on this publication to:

**Allan Matthews**

**Email:** [allan.matthews@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:allan.matthews@economy-ni.gov.uk)

**Tel:** 028 9025 7727

## Introduction

Further Education (FE) colleges are the main providers of further education and training in Northern Ireland (NI). The sector plays a central role in raising literacy and numeracy levels and in up-skilling and re-skilling the population through a broad range of courses leading to qualifications, particularly at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) levels 2 and 3 and equivalents. Higher Education (at level 4 and above) is also delivered across the FE colleges.

This statistical bulletin has been produced by statisticians within DfE and presents a range of analysis regarding enrolments in the NI FE Sector covering academic years 2013/14 to 2015/16. The statistics presented in this bulletin cover the characteristics of those enrolling in FE colleges and trends across a range of variables, including gender, age, mode of attendance, provision area, level of study, subject area, areas of deprivation, funding streams, and performance (retention, achievement and success rates) over the three year period.

The figures in this statistical bulletin are a full year count of enrolments; however, it should be noted that students may be enrolled on more than one course at a given time and may, therefore, be counted as two or more enrolments. This report includes data relating to the academic years 2013/14 to 2015/16. Previous statistical reports can be found at:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/professional-and-technical-enrolments-northern-ireland-further-education-sector>

## Structure

The bulletin is divided into five sections:

- [Section 1](#) focuses on all enrolments at FE colleges in NI, including:
  - an analysis of all enrolments
  - regulated and non-regulated provision
  - the funding streams of enrolments.
- [Section 2](#) focuses on regulated enrolments only
- [Section 3](#) focuses on FLU funded enrolments only
- [Section 4](#) focuses on Higher Education enrolments in FE Colleges only
- [Section 5](#) details the qualifications and performance of final year enrolments at FE colleges in NI.

In all five sections, the analysis is broken down into the trend and patterns of the entire FE sector, the individual FE colleges and then a focus on the most recent full 2015/16 academic year.



## **Explanatory Notes**

The 'Technical Notes' in [Annex B](#) 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 statistical bulletin has been derived from the Consolidated Data Return (CDR), which is provided by FE colleges.

The CDR came into operation for the 2013/14 academic year and is used for analysis related to the years 2013/14 to 2015/16. Each of the data returns are computerised data files consisting of individual records for each enrolment recorded by FE colleges during each academic year.

The CDR brings together into a single dataset the five main individual Departmental returns from FE colleges, namely, Funded Learning Unit (FLU), Further Education Statistical Return (FESR), Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER), Entitlement Framework (EF) and Further Education Leavers Survey (FELS).

There are significant benefits to be realised in collating all DfE's data requirements 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 by reducing the potential of using several datasets. 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. More information on the CDR process can be found at [Annex B](#).

### **Additional Tables**

Detailed Additional and Supplementary Tables are available on the DfE web page: [Further Education Activity in FE Colleges in Northern Ireland 2015/16](#).

## **Rounding**

Percentages have been rounded to one decimal place and, as a consequence, some percentages may not sum to 100. Furthermore, 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 is based on data that have 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), which performs a series of validation checks to ensure that information is consistent both within and across returns and analyses to monitor annual variations and emerging trends. Queries arising from validation checks are presented to FE colleges for clarification and, if required, returns may be amended and/or re-submitted. Finally, prior to the publication of this information, the data are presented to FE colleges for final sign-off.

## **Main Uses of Data**

The main uses of these data are: to monitor FE activity; to help assess FE college performance; for corporate monitoring; to inform and monitor related policy; and to respond to assembly questions and ad-hoc queries from the public.

DfE is responsible for the policy, strategic development and financing of the statutory FE sector. Analysis of data trends against key strategic priorities remains a crucial component of data development within DfE. The analysis within this report is particularly relevant in the context of the 2011-2015 Programme for Government commitment of delivering over 200,000 qualifications at level 2 and above.

## **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 within and those derived from this bulletin are currently used by DfE policy officials in their role of assisting and advising the Minister for the Economy discharging his duties; by the NI Assembly and DfE committee to scrutinise the FE sector; by other NI government departments, such as the Department of Education; by prospective students to inform their choices around further education; by local businesses to quantify the supply of those qualifying in their business area; and by researchers and academics to try and understand the underlying trends in FE. Further details about the uses made of FE statistics can be found in the notes and definitions section below.

## **Contextual Information**

For contextual information for on the use of FE statistics and comparing levels of qualifications, please see the document:

[Contextual Information for Using Further Education Statistics](#)

## **Policy and Operational Context**

For information on policy and operational context, please refer to:

[Policy and Operational Context](#)

## **Further Education Activity Information Elsewhere in the United Kingdom**

Users should be aware that FE activity information in other administrations is not always measured in a comparable manner to that in Northern Ireland. Details of the FE activity information published elsewhere in the UK can be found as detailed below.

England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fe-data-library>

Scotland

[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/statistics/further\\_education\\_statistics/infact\\_database/infact\\_database.aspx](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/statistics/further_education_statistics/infact_database/infact_database.aspx)

Wales

<http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2014/140326-further-education-work-based-learning-adult-community-learning-2012-13-en.pdf>

## Section 1: Further Education college enrolments

### 1.1 – All enrolments

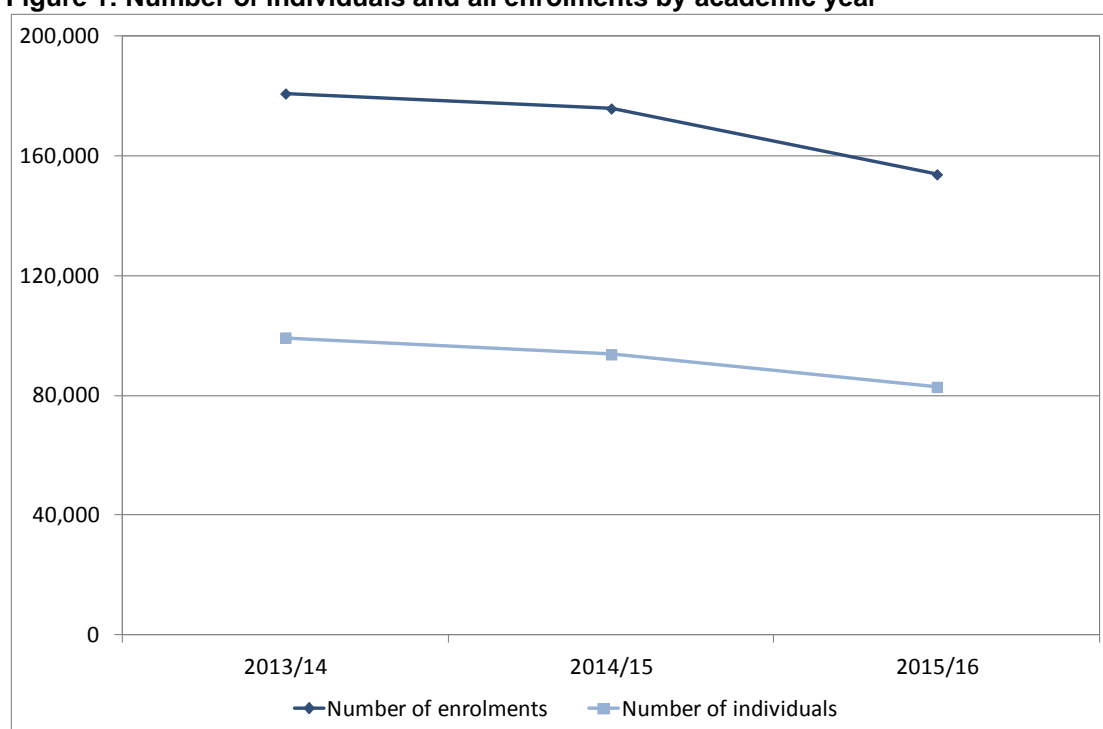
#### **Background**

This section provides detail on all Further Education (FE) college enrolments, which include general further education courses, Essential Skills provision and Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE). General FE courses include enrolments funded through Funded Learning Unit (FLU), government training programmes, Entitlement Framework and cost recovery. Most FE college provision includes courses that can potentially lead to a regulated qualification on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ); a smaller proportion are non-regulated, that is, courses that have the potential to lead to a formal qualification not on the RRQ, as well as hobby and leisure (recreational) courses.

#### Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16

Over the past three academic years, the number of enrolments at FE colleges has decreased by 14.9%, from 180,825 in 2013/14 to 153,817 in 2015/16. The number of individuals has also decreased, with a fall of 16.6% from 99,293 students in 2013/14 to 82,818 in 2015/16. There has been a steady decline in the number of students in each year over the period. The number of enrolments per individual has increased slightly from 1.8 to 1.9 over the three years (Figure 1, Table A1).

**Figure 1: Number of individuals and all enrolments by academic year**



## FE colleges

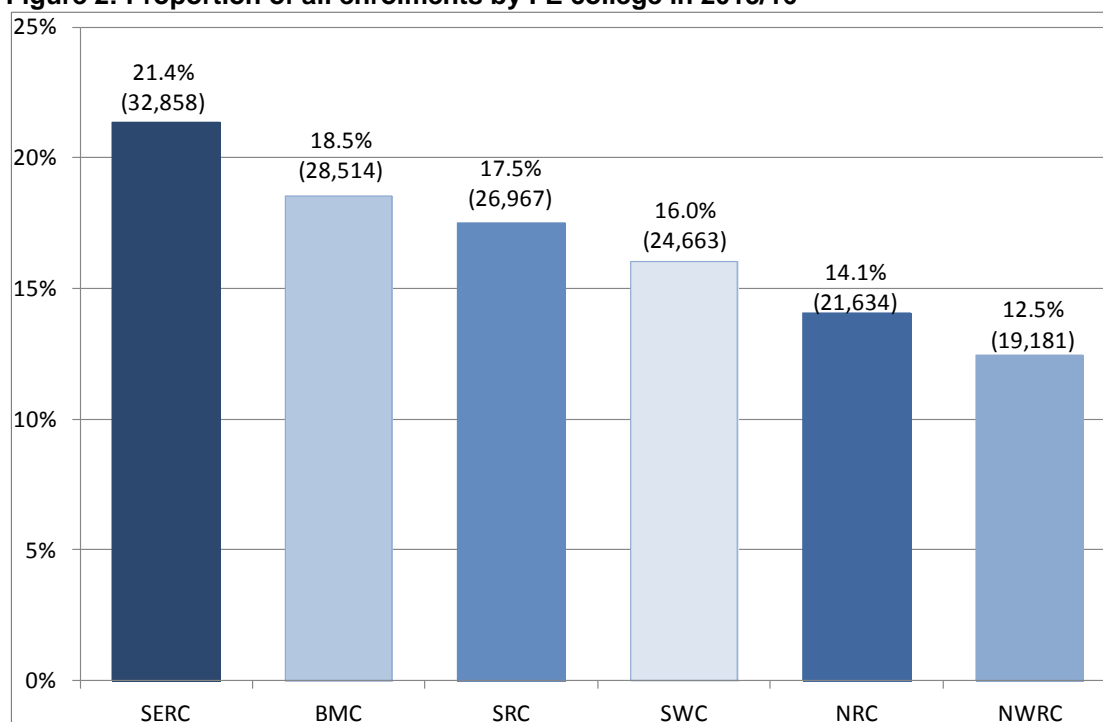
Over the last three academic years, all six FE colleges have shown an overall decrease in enrolments [BMC (-23.0%), SRC (-18.5%), NWRC (-17.2%), NRC (-11.9%), SWC (-9.1%) and SERC (-8.3%)]. While all colleges experienced a decrease in enrolments in the year to 2015/16, of particular note was a 22.3% decrease in BMC enrolments (Table 1).

**Table 1: All enrolments by FE college and academic year**

FE college	Academic Year		
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
<b>BMC</b>	37,055	36,685	28,514
<b>NRC</b>	24,557	25,014	21,634
<b>NWRC</b>	23,167	22,603	19,181
<b>SERC</b>	35,832	35,520	32,858
<b>SRC</b>	33,075	30,076	26,967
<b>SWC</b>	27,139	25,920	24,663
<b>FE Sector Total</b>	<b>180,825</b>	<b>175,818</b>	<b>153,817</b>

In the most recent academic year (2015/16), of 153,817 enrolments, SERC had the highest proportion, accounting for 21.4% (32,858) and NWRC the lowest with 12.5% (19,181) (Figure 2, Table 1).

**Figure 2: Proportion of all enrolments by FE college in 2015/16**



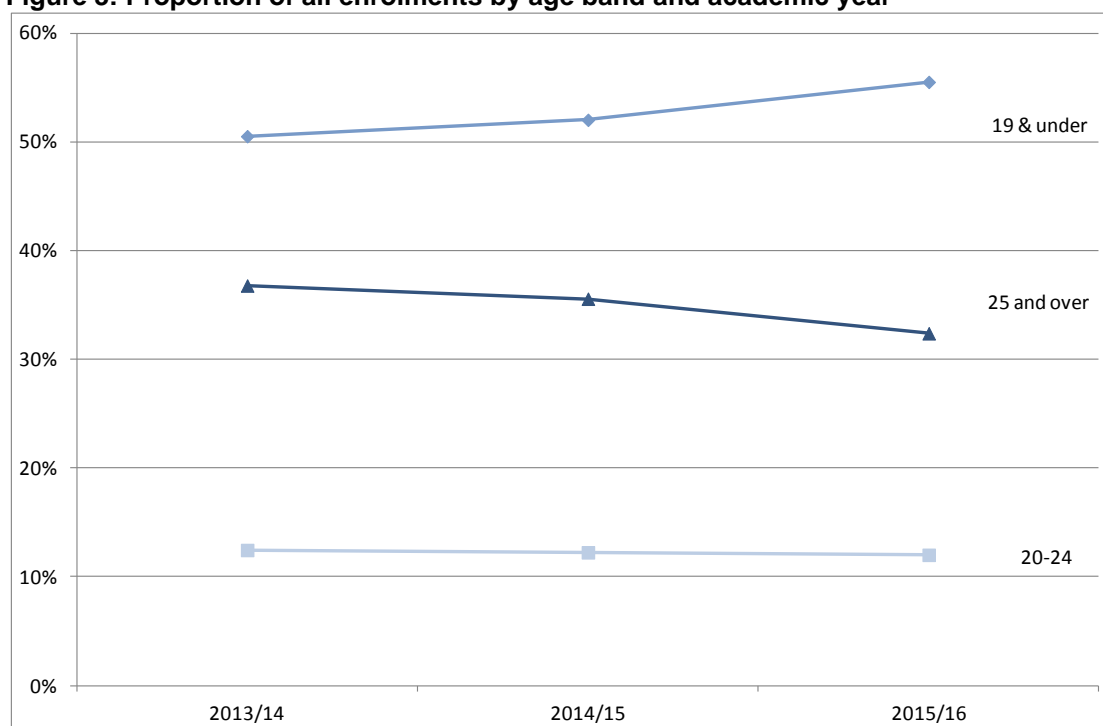
### FE College Abbreviations

BMC: Belfast Metropolitan College  
 NRC: Northern Regional College  
 NWRC: North West Regional College  
 SERC: South Eastern Regional College  
 SRC: Southern Regional College  
 SWC: South West College

## Age

In 2013/14, the proportion of enrolments in the age band '19 and under' accounted for over half (50.5%) of all enrolments, while those aged '25 and over' accounted for 36.8% and those aged '20 to 24' made up 12.5%. Since then, the '19 and under' proportion has increased to 55.5%, while the '25 and over' group's share has decreased to 32.4%. The '20 to 24' year-old proportion has decreased slightly to 12.0% over the three year period (Figure 3, Table A2)

**Figure 3: Proportion of all enrolments by age band and academic year**



Please note there are a small element of unknown ages (<0.5%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A2.

In five of the six colleges, the highest proportion of enrolments were aged '19 and under', ranging from 48.8% in BMC to 67.7% in SERC; however, in NWRC the highest proportion were aged '25 and over' (48.4%) (Table A2).

An individual can attend any FE college across Northern Ireland, although typically individuals will attend their nearest college. Hypothetical Regional College Catchment Areas (HRCCA) have been created for each of the six colleges to provide information, beyond enrolment data, on all eligible individuals aged 16 and above within the catchment area to each college, who may or may not be enrolled at a FE college. Please refer to [Annex B](#) for further details on HRCCA.

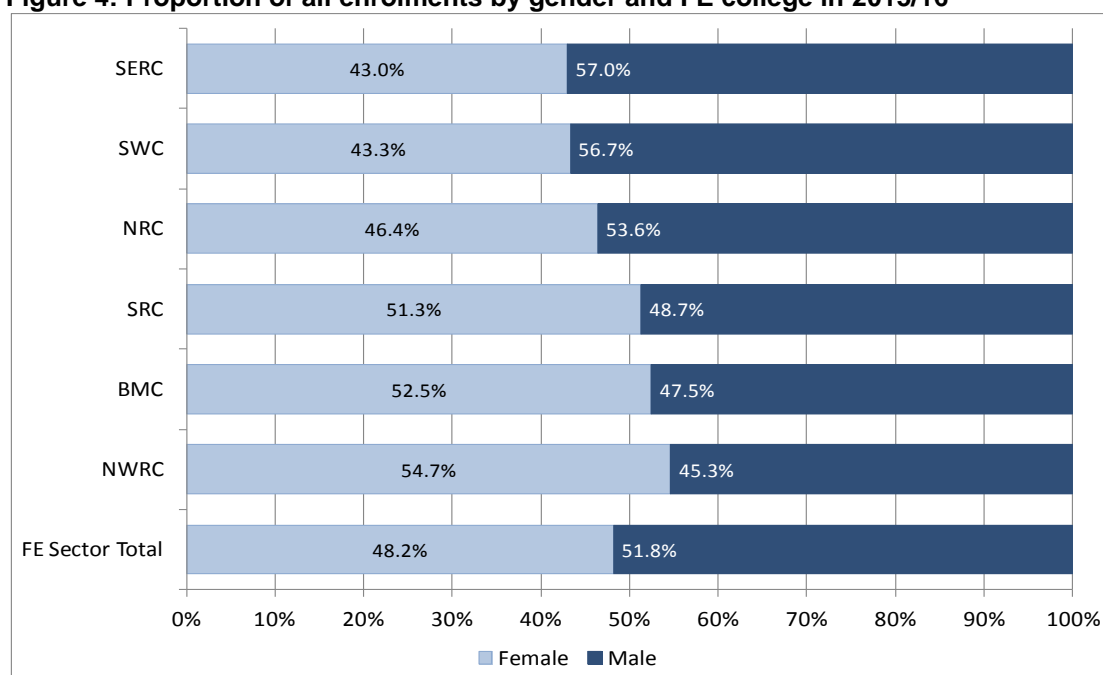
Based on [mid-year population estimates in 2015](#), the age profile in each of the six college HRCCAs indicates that the majority (typically over 80%) of eligible individuals are aged 25 or over. This is only reflected in the proportions of enrolments in NWRC, where the highest proportion is aged '25 and over'.

## Gender

In general, there is a fairly even split in terms of the gender profile across the FE sector. Whereas female students accounted for a slight majority of enrolments in 2013/14 (50.8%) and 2014/15 (50.4%), most enrolments in 2015/16 (51.8%) related to males (Table A3).

In the last academic year (2015/16), there was wide variation across the six colleges in terms of the gender profile. Three of the six colleges had a higher proportion of females enrolled [NWRC (54.7%), BMC (52.5%) and SRC (51.3%)]. The other three colleges had higher proportions of males enrolled [SERC (57.0%), SWC (56.7%) and NRC (53.6%)]. (Figure 4, Table A3).

**Figure 4: Proportion of all enrolments by gender and FE college in 2015/16**



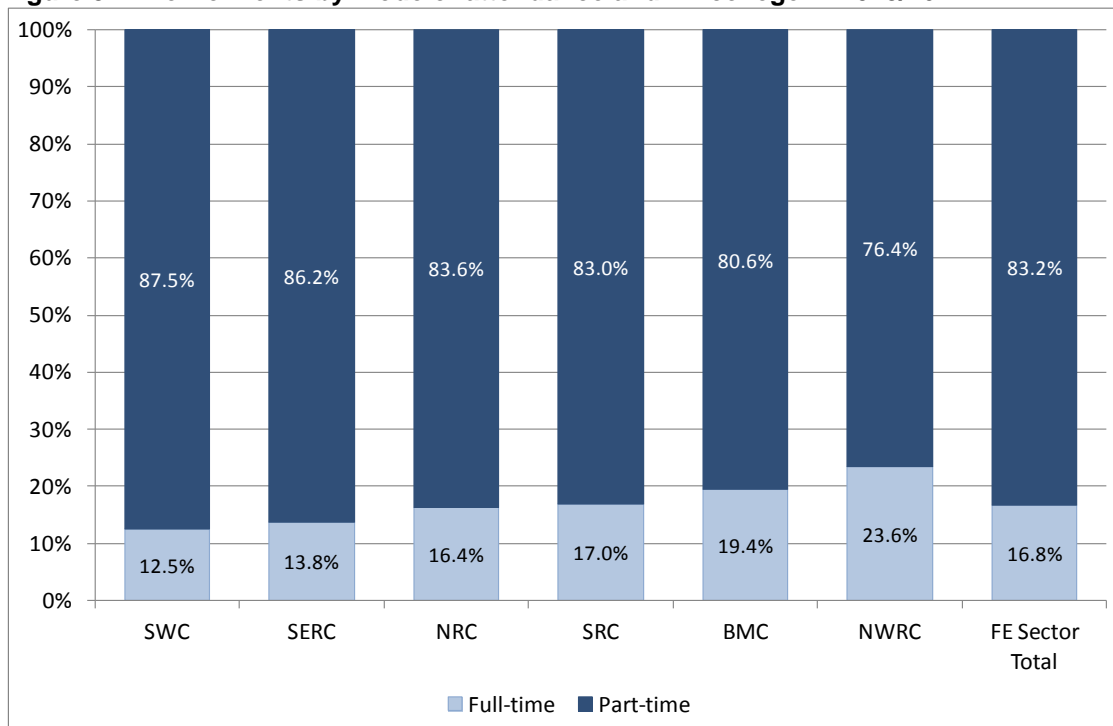
Based on [mid-year population estimates for 2015](#), all college HRCCA, for those aged 16 and above, have more females than males. This is reflected in the proportions of gender in three colleges (NWRC, BMC and SRC). Converse to this are SERC, SWC and NRC, which have more males than females enrolled on their courses.

## Mode of attendance

In 2013/14, the proportion of all enrolments within full-time provision was 14.3%, with 85.7% part-time. This split, in terms of mode of attendance, has changed slightly to 16.8% full-time and 83.2% part-time in 2015/16 (Table A4).

Comparing the FE colleges in 2015/16 indicates that NWRC had the highest proportion of full-time (23.6%), while SWC had the lowest proportion (12.5%) (Figure 5, Table A4).

**Figure 5: All enrolments by mode of attendance and FE college in 2015/16**





## **1.2 - Regulated and Non-regulated enrolments**

### **Background**

An internal departmental review was conducted in 2014 on the definition of 'regulated' provision to ensure clarity and consistency across data analysis. Consequently, from the academic year 2013/14, 'regulated enrolments' are regarded as those on courses that are at

- 'level 3 or below' and appear on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ), which contains qualifications on both the Qualifications and Credit Framework and the National Qualifications Framework or part of the Department's Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications<sup>1</sup> (PLAQ/Access list)
- Higher Education qualifications ('level 4 and above').

From 2013/14, 'non-regulated enrolments' are those which potentially lead to a formal qualification (at 'level 3 or below') but do not appear on the RRQ or where a qualification is not expected, typically hobby and leisure, or recreational courses.

The new definition of 'regulated enrolments' from 2013/14 onwards may result in a change in the number of regulated enrolments and, therefore, comparison with earlier years needs to take this into context. This publication reports on trend analysis over three years from 2013/14. This is the first such publication where there are three years' trend data to report since the review on 'regulated' provision. Refer to [Annex B](#) for further details on this estimation work.

The changes in the proportions of regulated and non-regulated enrolments, over the period 2013/14 to 2015/16, reflect the '[Further Education Means Business](#)' strategy, aimed at reducing the number of non-regulated enrolments and encouraging regulated economically focused provision.

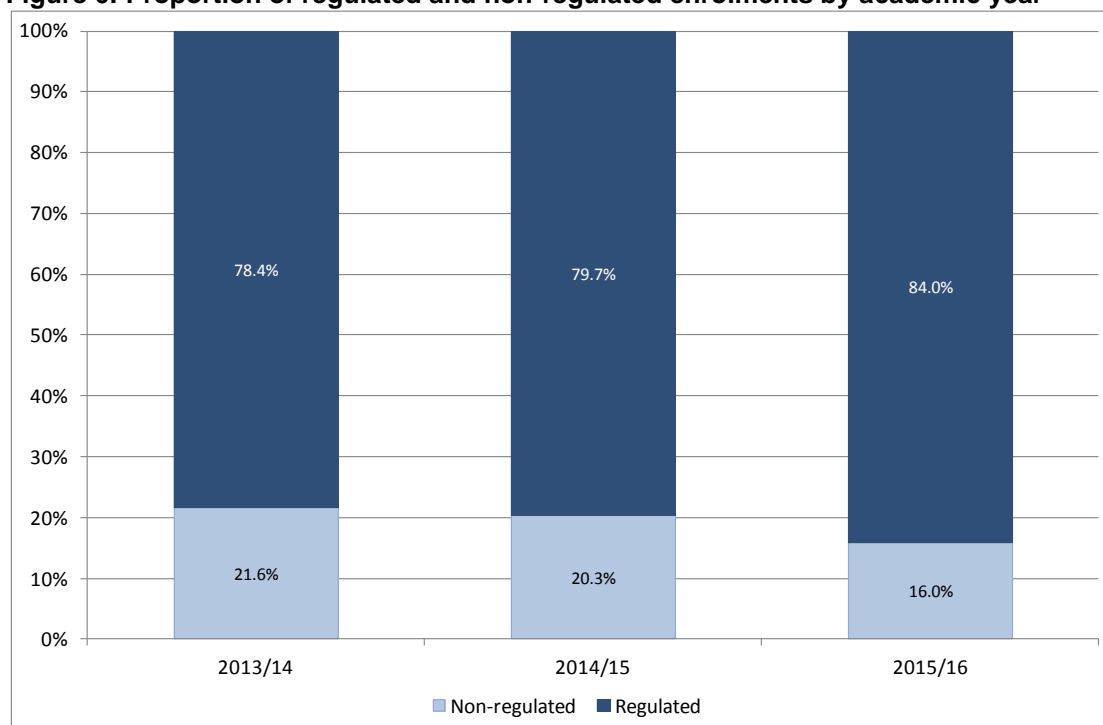
### **Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16**

The proportion of regulated enrolments has increased by 5.6 percentage points from 78.4% in 2013/14 to 84.0% in 2015/16. Conversely, non-regulated enrolment proportions have decreased from 21.6% to 16.0% over this period (Figure 6, Table A5).

---

<sup>1</sup> Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications (PLAQ) are defined within [Annex A: Definitions](#)

**Figure 6: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by academic year**



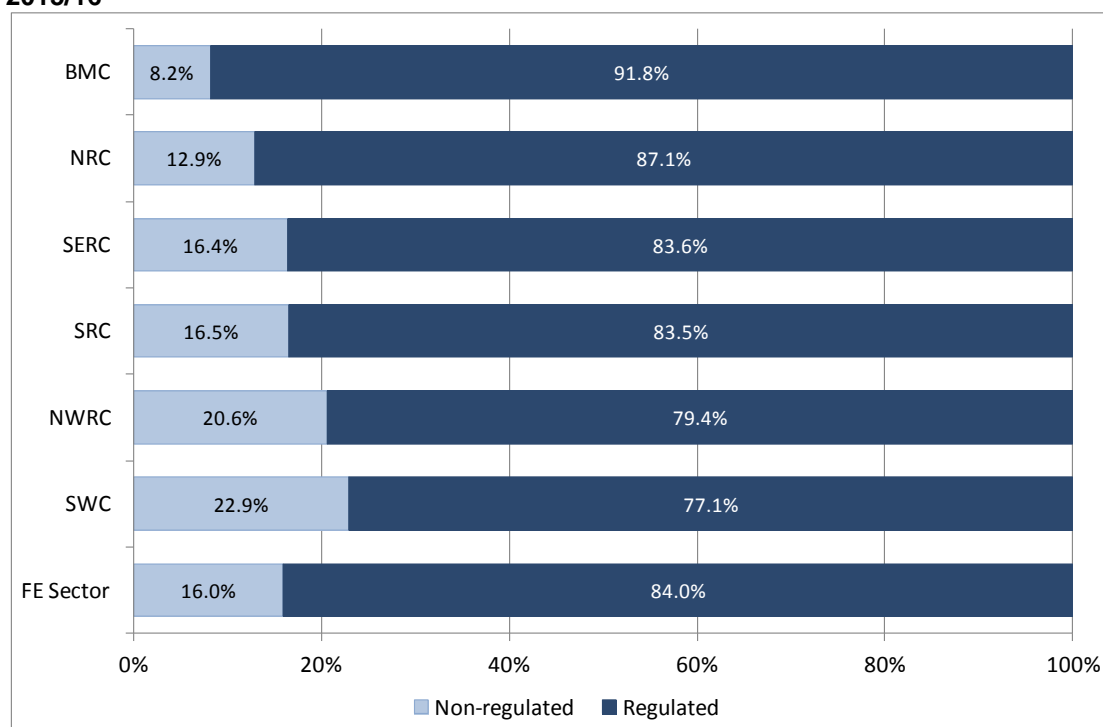
## FE colleges

The majority of enrolments were on regulated courses in all six colleges over the three year period 2013/14 to 2015/16. All six colleges followed the sector trend of an increase in the proportion of regulated enrolments over the period.

Over the three year period, NRC reported the largest increase in the proportion of regulated enrolments (14.1 percentage points), increasing from 73.0% in 2013/14 to 87.1% in 2015/16 (Table A5).

In 2015/16, the proportion of regulated enrolments ranged from 77.1% in SWC to 91.8% in BMC (Figure 7, Table A5).

**Figure 7: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by FE college in 2015/16**



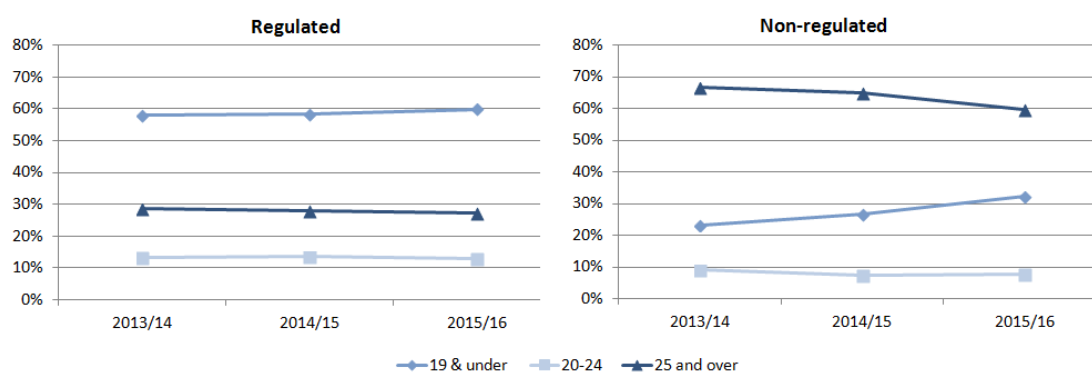
## Age

Over the three year period between 2013/14 and 2015/16, the majority of regulated enrolments were aged '19 and under', with a year-on-year increase from 58.0% in 2013/14 to 59.9% in 2015/16. Conversely, the proportion of regulated enrolments aged '25 and over' has decreased each year from 28.6% in 2013/14 to 27.2% in 2015/16. Those aged '20 to 24' decreased slightly, accounting for 13.4% in 2013/14 and 12.8% in 2015/16.

A very different pattern is apparent with non-regulated enrolments across the same three year period. The majority of non-regulated enrolments each year were aged '25 and over'- in 2013/14, 66.6% of all non-regulated enrolments were aged '25 and over', falling each year to 59.6% in 2015/16. Non-regulated enrolments aged '19 and under' increased year on year from 23.3% in 2013/14 to 32.2% in 2015/16. Non-regulated enrolments aged '20 to 24' decreased from 9.1% in 2013/14 to 7.4% in 2014/15 but increased to 7.7% again by 2015/16.

Older people (aged '25 and over') are more likely to enrol on 'non-regulated' type courses, while younger people (aged '19 and under') typically enrol on formally recognised qualification based courses. However, over the period there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of enrolments by younger people in non-regulated courses (Figure 8, Table A6).

**Figure 8: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by age by academic year**



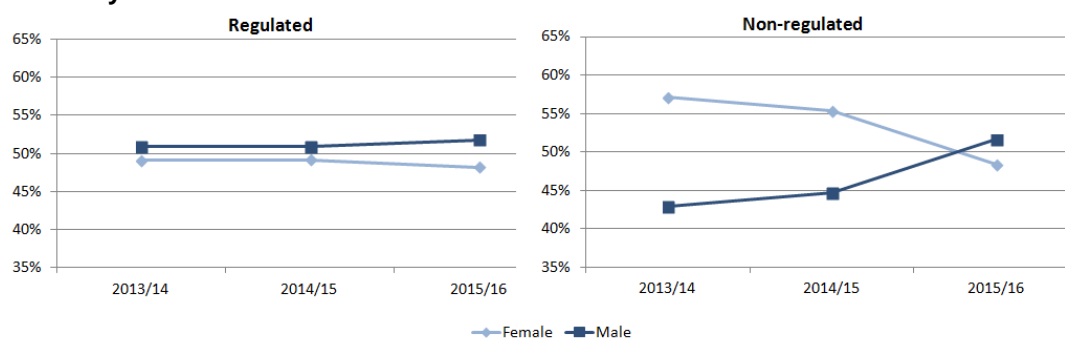
Please note there are a small element of unknown ages (<0.5%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A6

## Gender

In both 2013/14 and 2014/15, 50.9% of regulated enrolments were male and the remaining 49.1% female. In 2015/16 the gender split widened with 51.8% for male and 48.2% for female.

Gender differences are more notable for non-regulated courses with females (57.1%) accounting for a much higher proportion in 2013/14. However this has been decreasing over time as the proportion of females on non-regulated courses has decreased to a minority of 48.4% in 2015/16, while the proportion of male enrolments increased from 42.9% to 51.6% over the same period (Figure 9, Table A7).

**Figure 9: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by gender by academic year**



## Mode of attendance

In 2013/14, 18.2% of all regulated enrolments were full-time and 81.8% were part-time. The full-time proportion has since increased each year to 19.9% in 2015/16.

For non-regulated courses, almost all enrolments were part-time, ranging from 99.8% in 2015/16 to 99.9% in 2013/14 and 2014/15 (Table A8).

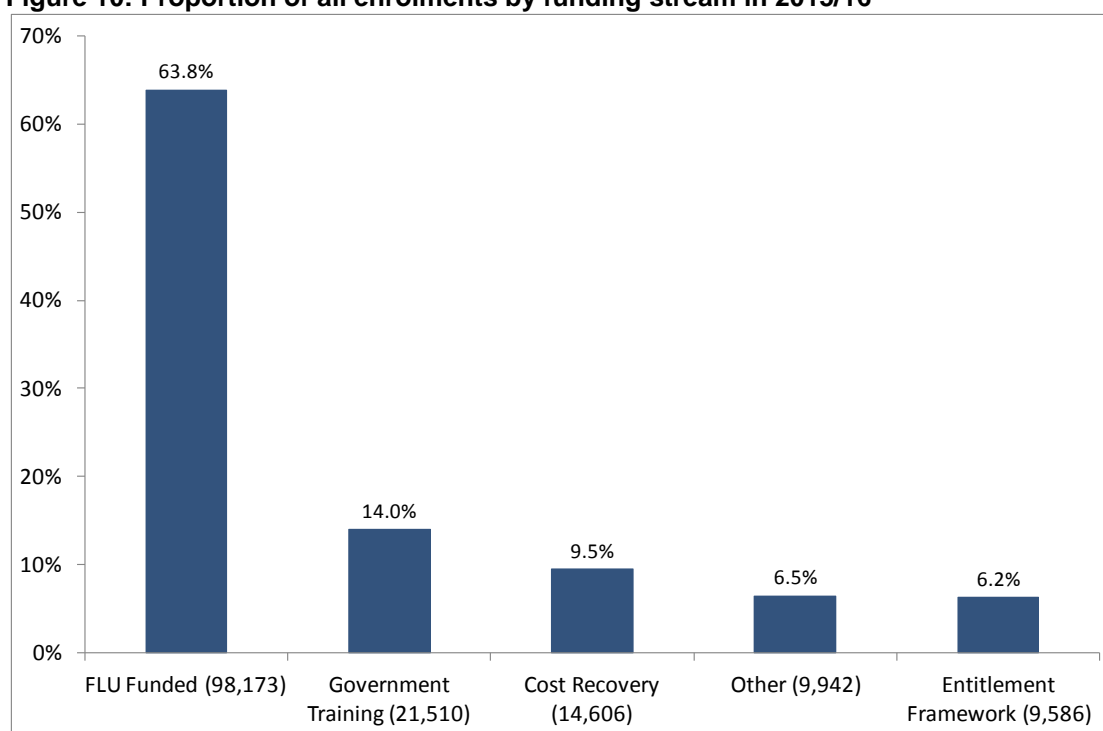
### 1.3 – Funding streams 2015/16

A number of funding streams are available to FE colleges to deliver provision. These include direct funding from DfE, through either the Funded Learning Unit (FLU) mechanism or government training programmes, such as Training for Success or Steps to Work. FE colleges can also receive funding from businesses/individuals, termed as cost recovery, or from other government departments, such as Department of Education (DE), through the Entitlement Framework programme. These are the main funding streams available and are analysed below for the academic year 2015/16.

Of the 153,817 enrolments in 2015/16, almost two-thirds (63.8%) were funded through the Funded Learning Unit (FLU), 14.0% were funded through government training programmes, 9.5% were cost recovery and 6.2% were funded through the Entitlement Framework programme. For a further 6.5% of enrolments, the funding stream was classed as 'Other' (Figure 10, Table A9).

In 2015/16, the FLU proportion of all enrolments in colleges ranged from 51.1% in SWC to 77.2% in BMC (Table A9).

**Figure 10: Proportion of all enrolments by funding stream in 2015/16**



For further information regarding Funding streams, please see the [Funding Streams](#) definition at Annex A (page 62).

## Section 2: Regulated enrolments in 2015/16

### Overview

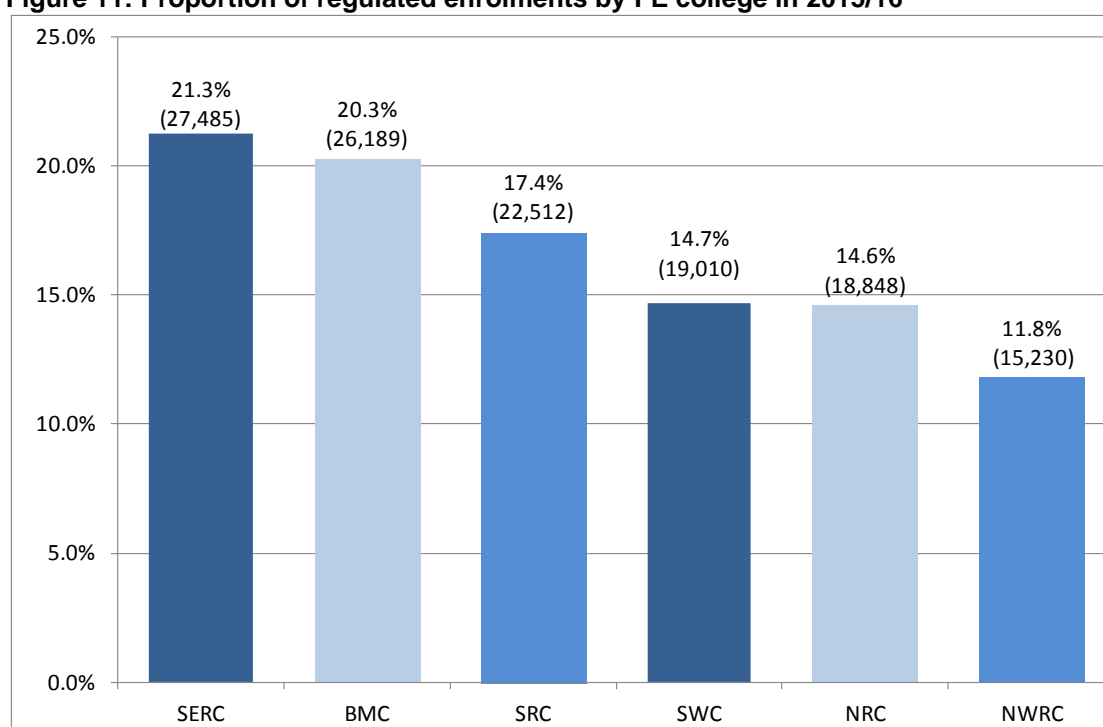
The following section focuses solely on regulated enrolments at FE colleges in the 2015/16 academic year. The Department's ['Further Education Means Business'](#) strategy aimed to deliver a more economically focused provision of further education, which meets the needs of the economy. The strategy states that this should be delivered through regulated provision.

In 2015/16, the 129,274 enrolments on regulated courses at FE colleges in Northern Ireland related to 70,222 individual students. Nearly 30,000 of these students were enrolled on more than one programme of study, resulting in 1.8 enrolments on regulated courses per individual in 2015/16 (Table A1).

### **FE colleges**

Of the 129,274 regulated enrolments, SERC accounted for the highest proportion with 21.3% (27,485) and NWRC the lowest with 11.8% (15,230) (Figure 11, Table A5). This distribution of regulated enrolments is very similar to the pattern within all enrolments, as seen previously in (Figure 2).

**Figure 11: Proportion of regulated enrolments by FE college in 2015/16**



## Age

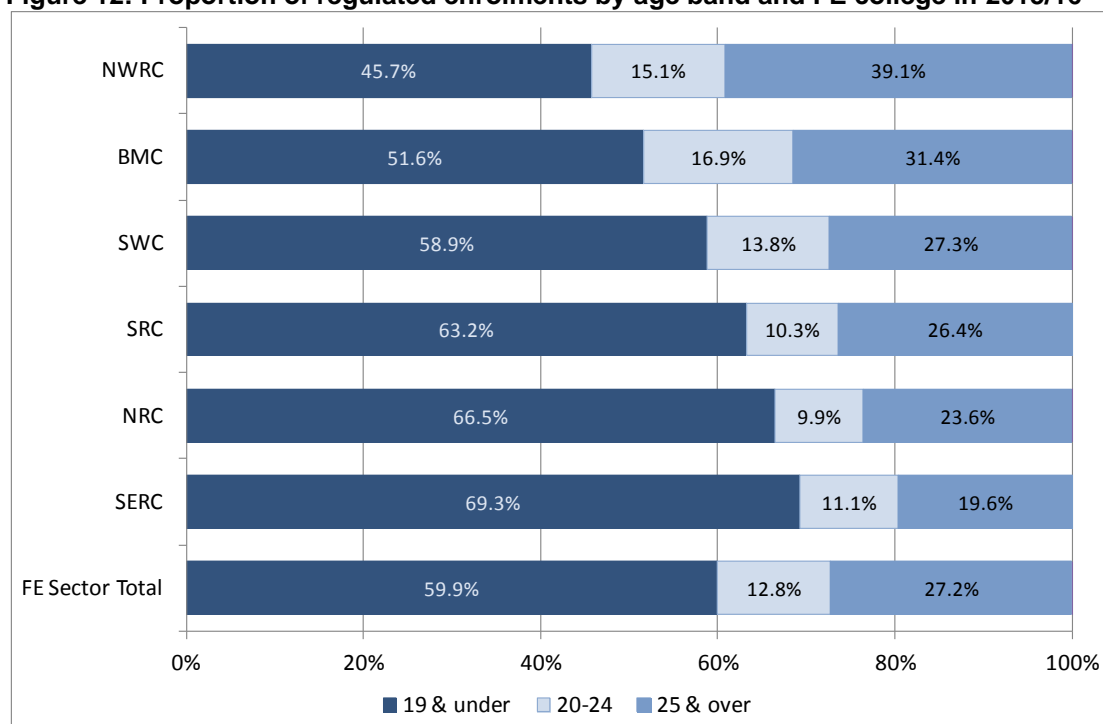
Of the 129,274 regulated enrolments in 2015/16, the majority (59.9%) were aged '19 and under', 12.8% were aged '20 to 24' and 27.2% were aged '25 and over'.

The six FE colleges show a similar trend to the overall FE sector, with the age band '19 and under' having the highest proportions of regulated enrolments and '20 to 24' years olds having the lowest proportions.

In comparison with the FE sector age-profile, SERC (69.3%), NRC (66.5%) and SRC (63.2%) had greater proportions in '19 and under', but had smaller proportions of enrolments in the older age bands. Conversely, NWRC (45.7%), BMC (51.6%) and SWC (58.9%) had lower proportions of enrolments aged '19 and under' and larger proportions within the older age bands. SWC showed a very similar pattern to the FE sector in terms of the proportional share across the age bands (Figure 12, Table A10).

As noted earlier (page 14) for NWRC, the highest proportion of all enrolments relates to those aged '25 and over', while for regulated enrolments only, it relates to those aged '19 and under'. This change in pattern indicates that most of the non-regulated enrolments within NWRC are being undertaken by older people (aged '25 and over') (Table A2, Table A10).

**Figure 12: Proportion of regulated enrolments by age band and FE college in 2015/16**



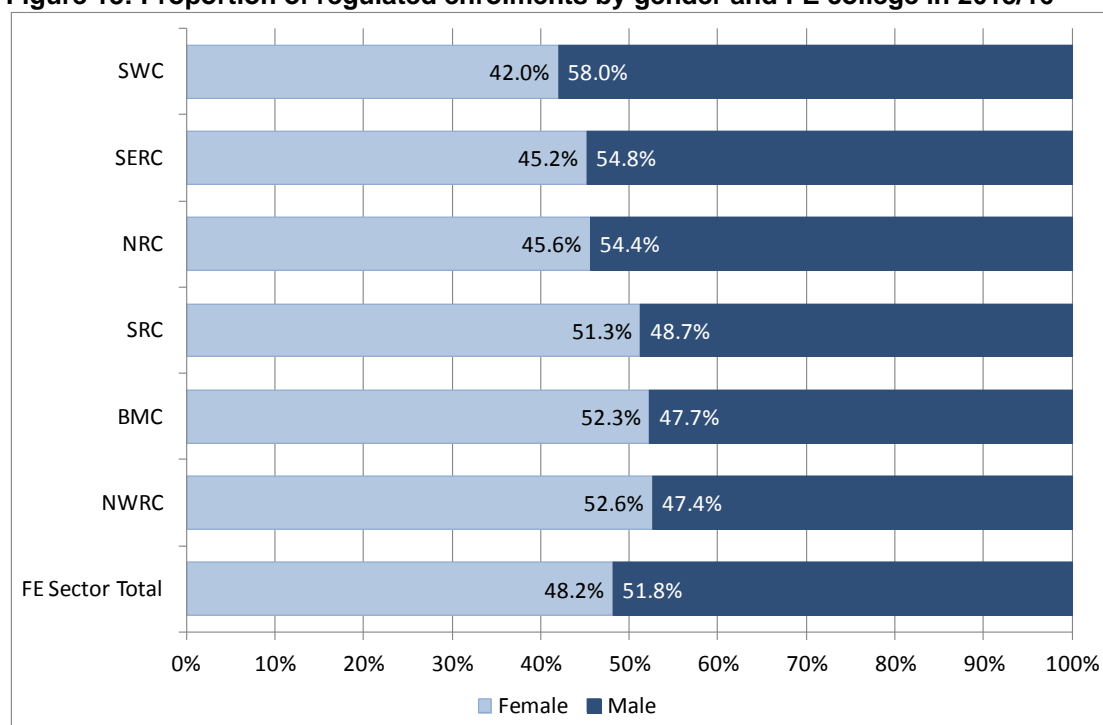
Please note there is a small element of unknown ages (<0.5%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A10.

## Gender

The gender profile varied greatly across the six colleges, in 2015/16. Half the colleges had a higher proportion of males [SWC (58.0%), SERC (54.8%) and NRC (54.4%)], while the others had higher proportions of females [NWRC (52.6%), BMC (52.3%) and SRC (51.3%)]. The resultant effect was a fairly

even split in terms of the gender profile, with 48.2% female and 51.8% male. This was the same pattern as in all enrolments (Figure 13, Table A11).

**Figure 13: Proportion of regulated enrolments by gender and FE college in 2015/16**



### Mode of attendance

In 2015/16, 19.9% (25,747) of regulated enrolments were on a full-time basis and over four fifths (80.1%, 103,527) were part-time. In comparison with the FE sector, NWRC (29.7%) had the highest proportion of full-time, while SWC (16.2%) and SERC (16.5%) had lower proportions. Across all colleges, the vast majority of regulated enrolments were on a part-time basis (Table A12).

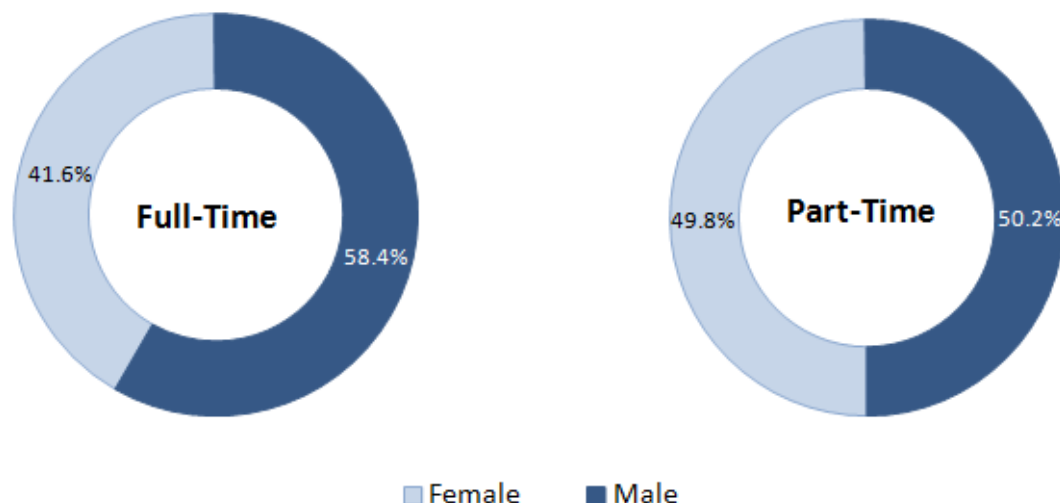
### Mode of attendance and gender

Whereas the gender split was fairly even (males 50.2%) across 2015/16 part-time regulated enrolments, males accounted for approaching three-fifths (58.4%) of full-time enrolments (Figure 14, Table A12).

In terms of part-time provision and gender profile for each college, BMC (55.5%), SRC (54.3%) and NWRC (53.3%) deviated from the overall FE pattern, with more females than males. In full-time provision, only NWRC differed from the FE sector pattern, with more females (51.1%) than males (Table A12).



**Figure 14: Proportion of regulated enrolments by gender and mode of attendance in 2015/16**



### Provision area

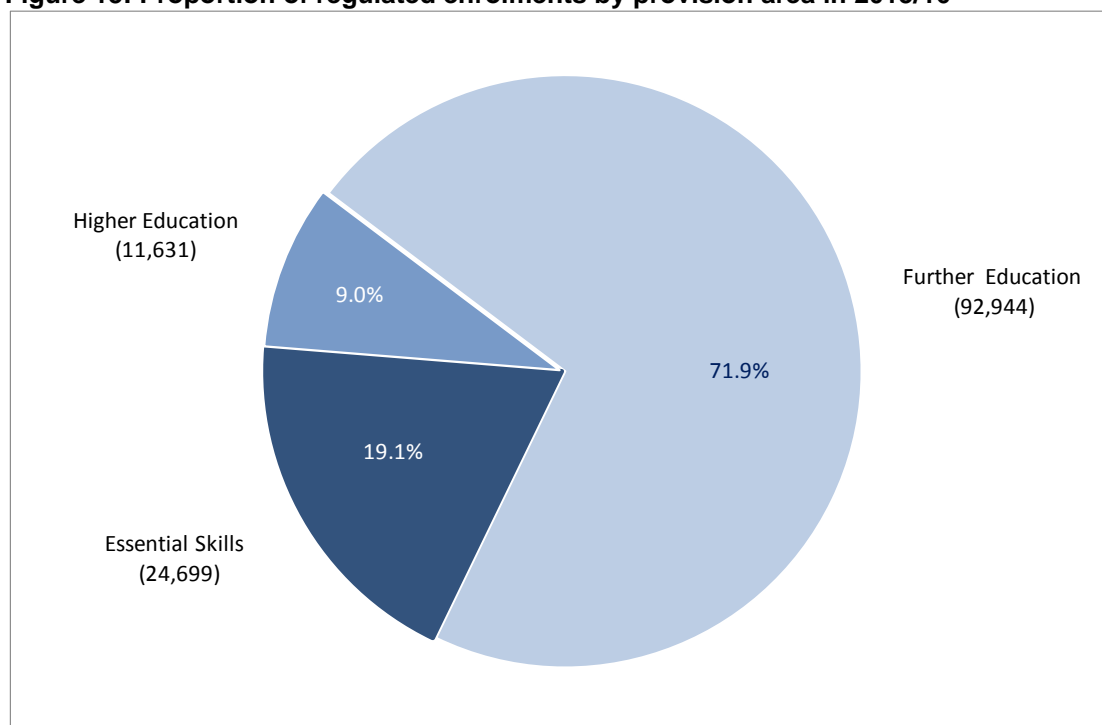
Three main provision areas are delivered within FE colleges:

- i. Further Education is regarded as enrolments at 'Level 3 or below', such as: professional and technical provision; A-Levels; GCSEs and Apprenticeships.
- ii. Higher Education is regarded as enrolments at 'Level 4 or above', such as: Certificate of Higher Education; Diplomas of Higher Education; Foundation degrees; Higher National Certificates (HNCs); Higher National Diplomas (HNDs); Bachelor Degrees; Masters degrees; Postgraduate certificates; and Doctorates.
- iii. Essential Skills provision can be at Entry Level up to Level 2, which is equivalent to GCSEs. This cohort is separate from i Further Education. Further information on Essential Skills provision is available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/essential-skills-statistics>

Of the 129,274 regulated enrolments in 2015/16, nearly three-quarters (71.9%) were in Further Education (FE) courses, 9.0% were in Higher Education (HE) courses and 19.1% in Essential Skills (Figure 15, Table A13). Across each of the FE colleges, the proportions for each provision area generally followed the overall FE sector.

In SERC, the proportion of enrolments in FE courses (76.7%) was the highest across all colleges, while in HE (5.7%) it was the lowest. In BMC, the proportion of enrolments in HE courses (12.2%) was the highest across all colleges, while in Essential Skills (16.8%) it was the lowest. NWRC had the highest proportion of enrolments in Essential Skills (24.0%), while having the lowest share in FE (65.5%). The other three colleges (NRC, SRC and SWC) had similar proportions of enrolments in provision area to the FE sector (Table A13).

**Figure 15: Proportion of regulated enrolments by provision area in 2015/16**



### Level of study

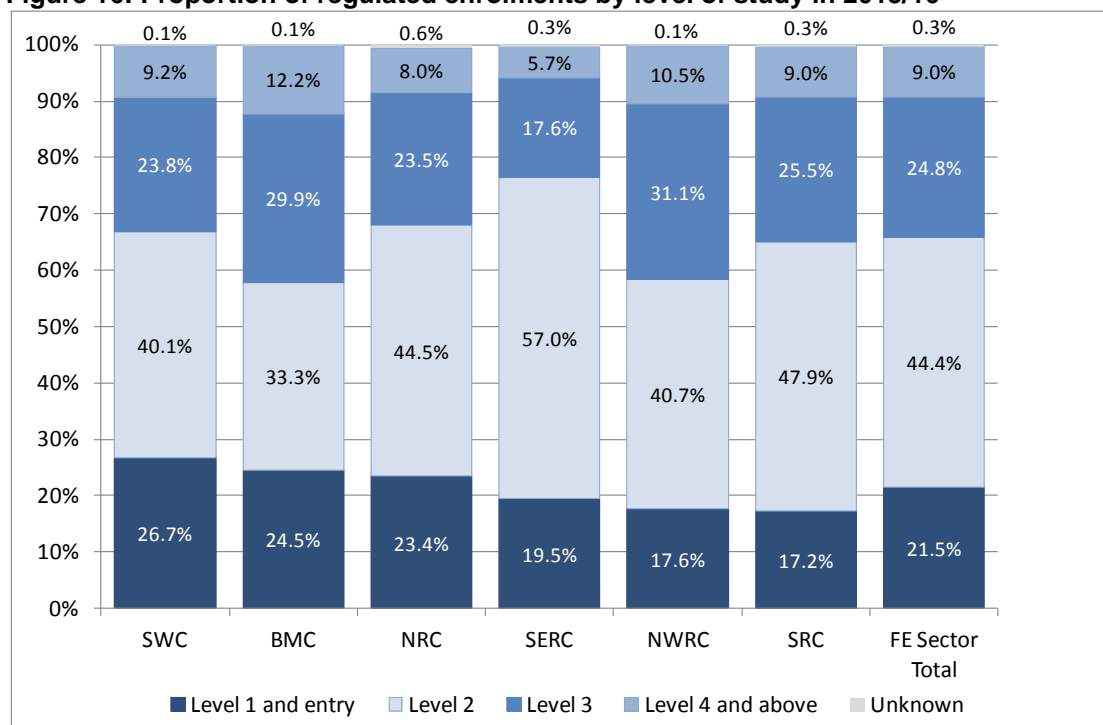
Each enrolment on a regulated course is assigned a level between 'Entry Level' and 'Level 8'. Qualifications at the same level have a similar level of demand or difficulty, for example at:

- 'Level 1 and Entry Level' includes, Vocational Qualifications Level 1, GCSEs at grade D–G , English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Essential Skills;
- 'Level 2' includes Vocational Qualifications Level 2, GCSEs at grade A\*–C, ESOL and Essential Skills;
- 'Level 3' includes Vocational Qualifications Level 3, GCE AS and A Level;
- 'Level 4 and above' includes Vocational Qualifications Levels 4 to 8; Higher National certificate (HNC), Higher National Diplomas (HND); Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE) and degrees.

Of the 129,274 regulated enrolments in 2015/16, those at 'Level 1 and below' accounted for 21.5% (27,806); 44.4 % (57,408) were at 'Level 2', 24.8% (32,104) were at 'Level 3' and 9.0% (11,631) were at 'Level 4 and above'. This indicates that nearly four-fifths (78.2%) of regulated provision was at 'Level 2' or above.

There was a notable variation across the six colleges in terms of the level of study. While all colleges had their largest proportion of enrolments at 'Level 2', this ranged from 57.0% in SERC to 33.3% in BMC. SERC was the only college where the majority of enrolments were at 'Level 2'. Over two-fifths of provision in both BMC (42.1%) and NWRC (41.6%) was at 'Level 3' and above (Figure 16, Table A14).

**Figure 16: Proportion of regulated enrolments by level of study in 2015/16**



## Subject area

Of the 129,274 regulated enrolments in 2015/16, the subject area 'Preparation for Life and Work' had the largest share (34.7%). This was followed by 'Information and Communication Technology (ICT)' (11.2%) and 'Health, Public Services and Care' (9.8%). Almost two-fifths (37.7%, 16,924) of regulated enrolments within the subject area 'Preparation for Life and Work' used Essential Skills courses in Literacy and Numeracy (Table A15).

## Subject area and gender

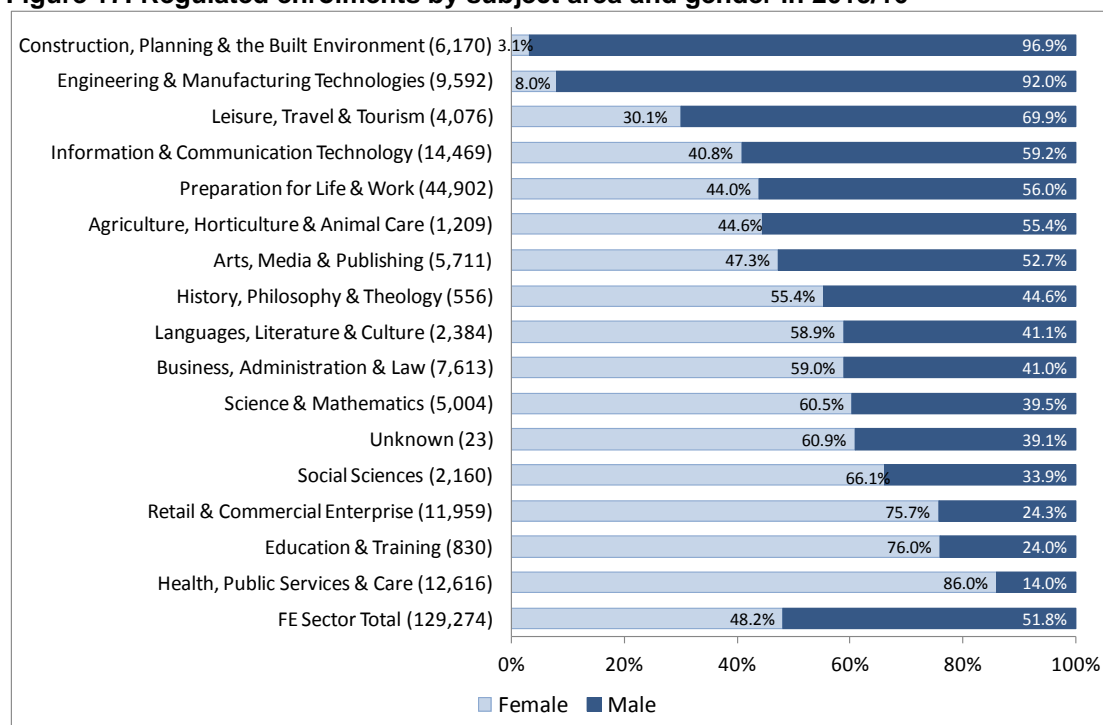
Although the overall gender profile was fairly evenly split for all regulated enrolments in 2015/16, there was wide variation between males and females across the subject areas. Females accounted for the vast majority in 'Health, Public Services and Care' (86.0%) and in 'Education and Training' enrolments (76.0%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' (96.9%) and 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (92.0%) (Figure 17, Table A15).

Across the FE colleges, there was a similar trend to the subject area by gender profile. Any college variations from the sector were mainly in 'Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care', which accounted for 1,209 enrolments across the FE sector. In BMC, SERC and NRC the female share of this subject area was 77.2%, 67.7% and 58.8% respectively, compared with the 'FE sector female' share of 44.6%. In NWRC, SRC and SWC the male share in 'Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care' was 85.7%, 82.8% and 77.4% respectively, while the 'FE sector male' share in this subject was 55.4%.

In NRC, the female share in 'Education and Training' was 87.4% compared with the 'FE sector female' share of 76.0%. In contrast to this the female share

of this subject in SWC was 63.6%. In SWC, there was a 86.8% female share in 'Social Sciences', compared with the 'FE Sector female' share of 66.1% (Table A15).

**Figure 17: Regulated enrolments by subject area and gender in 2015/16**



## Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

The '[Success through Skills – transforming futures](#)' publication highlights a need to address subject imbalances, as forecasts predict that degree subject requirements will become more skewed towards STEM. The '[Report of the STEM Review](#)' examines ways in which Government and business can increase the number of people with STEM qualifications entering the workplace.

This section examines the level of enrolments within STEM subject areas to illustrate the further education contribution towards those undertaking STEM courses.

STEM or 'Broad' STEM provision is identified by the type of subject the course has been categorised as. 'Broad' STEM enrolments are regarded as those on courses of 'Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects', 'Biological and Physical Sciences'; 'Agriculture; Mathematics and IT', 'Engineering and Technology', 'Architecture, Building and Planning'.

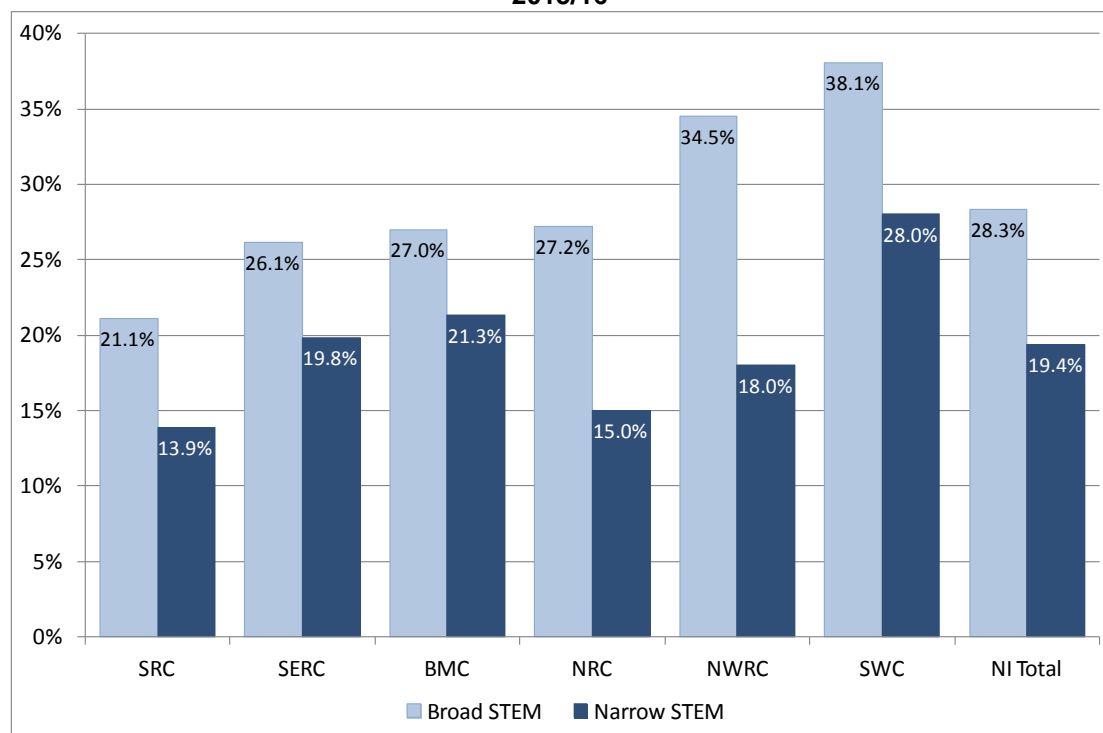
A subset of this cohort is termed 'Narrow' STEM and is identified as those enrolment records within courses classed as: 'Biological and Physical Sciences'; 'Mathematics and IT', and 'Engineering and Technology'.

In 2015/16, 'Broad' STEM enrolments accounted for 28.3% (36,634) of all regulated enrolments, while 'Narrow' STEM enrolments accounted for 19.4% (25,052) (Figure 18, Table A16). Males accounted for over two-thirds of both 'Broad' STEM (69.4%) and 'Narrow' STEM (73.1%) enrolments (Table A16).

Two of the six colleges had 'Broad' STEM proportions higher than the FE sector, namely SWC (38.1%) and NWRC (34.5%). 'Broad' STEM enrolment proportions were lower in SRC (21.1%), SERC (26.1%), BMC (27.0%) and NRC (27.2%).

'Narrow' STEM proportions in SWC (28.0%), BMC (21.3%) and SERC (19.8%) were above the FE sector level, while the other three colleges had proportions of 'Narrow' STEM that were lower [SRC (13.9%), NRC (15.0%) and NWRC (18.0%)] (Figure 18, Table A16).

**Figure 18: Proportion of regulated enrolments by STEM indicators and FE college in 2015/16**



## Deprivation

Deprivation has been measured using the official Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM), which categorises areas across Northern Ireland into five geographical 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 group of areas.

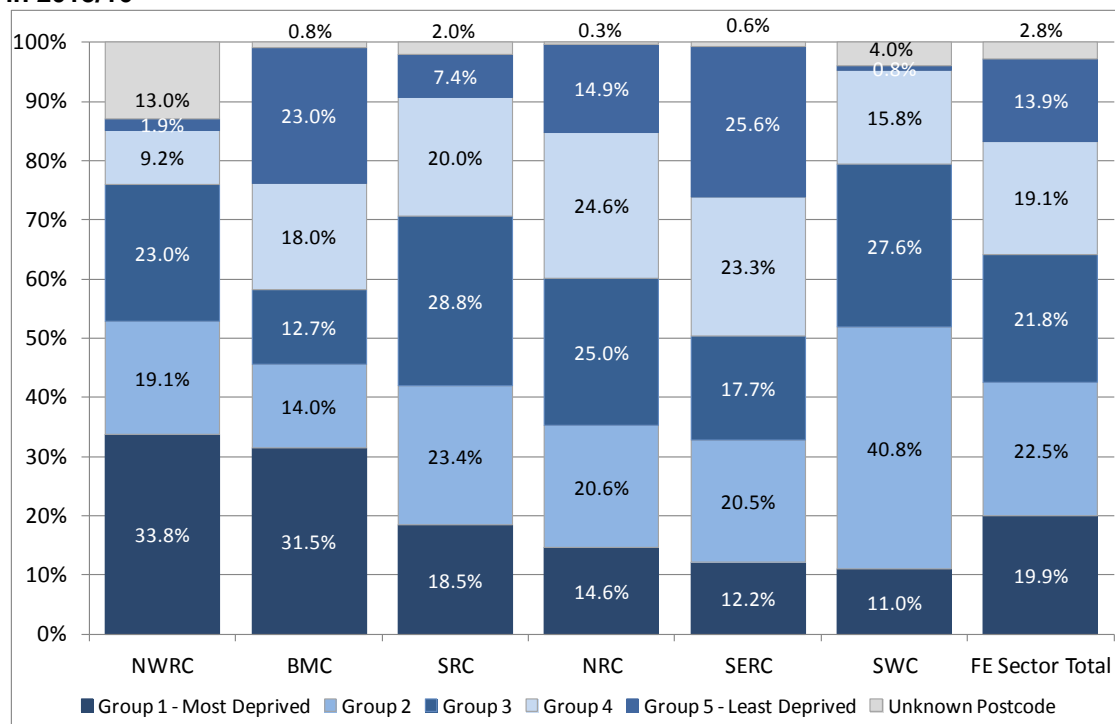
In 2015/16, over two-fifths (42.5%) of regulated enrolments were from the two most deprived quintiles. A fifth (19.9%) of regulated enrolments came from the most deprived quintile, compared with 13.9% from the least deprived quintile.

When considering enrolments from different areas of deprivation across the six FE colleges, there was a lot of regional variation. NWRC had over a third (33.8%) of enrolments from the most deprived quintile, in contrast to 1.9% from the least deprived quintile. BMC, another college with a large urban concentration, is quite polarised in terms of deprivation levels of where individuals come from and enrol in the college. Over half of BMC regulated enrolments (54.5%) were from either the most or least deprived quintile. SWC

(11.0%), SERC (12.2%), NRC (14.6%) and SRC (18.5%) all had lower proportions than the FE sector of regulated enrolments from the most deprived quintile.

The largest proportion of regulated enrolments for SERC was from the least deprived quintile (25.6%), whereas over 50% of NWRC and SWC regulated enrolments came from the two most deprived quintiles (Figure 19, Table A17).

**Figure 19: Proportion of regulated enrolments by deprivation quintiles and FE college in 2015/16**



Notably, NWRC had a significant proportion of enrolments with unknown postcodes (13.0%). This is largely due to a student flow from the Republic of Ireland (RoI). Of the 1,977 enrolments with unknown postcodes in NWRC, 1,849 were RoI domiciled student enrolments. Excluding these enrolments from the NWRC analysis, 38.4% of enrolments were from the most deprived quintile and 2.1% were from the least deprived quintile (Table 2). These RoI enrolments (1,849) accounted for 12.1% of regulated enrolments in NWRC (15,230) (Table A17).

**Table 2: Proportion of regulated enrolments with and without RoI domicile students in NWRC by deprivation quintiles in 2015/16**

Domicile	Group 1 - Most Deprived	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5 - Least Deprived	Unknown Postcode
Including RoI	33.8%	19.1%	23.0%	9.2%	1.9%	13.0%
Excluding RoI	38.4%	21.8%	26.2%	10.5%	2.1%	1.0%

## Section 3: FLU funding

### Background

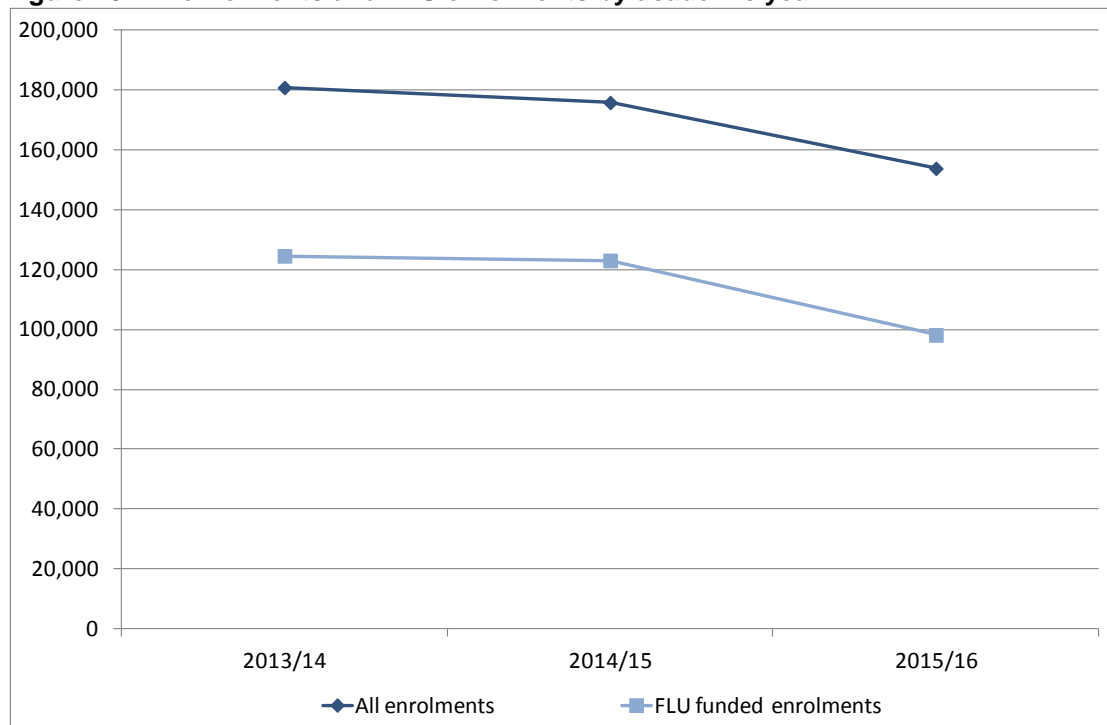
FE colleges are funded through the FLU funding model, a distributive funding mechanism designed to support DfE's strategic priorities for further education, which have previously been outlined. It provides funding to enable colleges to deliver further education, Essential Skills and Higher Education delivered within FE colleges. In this section, FLU enrolments refer to enrolments eligible for FLU funding. They are a subset of all enrolments at FE colleges and include both regulated and non-regulated provision.

The largest proportion of enrolments in FE colleges (63.8% in 2015/16) is funded through FLU each year (Figure 10). This is also the element of colleges' activity that is regarded as mainstream further education provision. Therefore, the following section will focus solely on FLU enrolments at FE colleges in Northern Ireland over the last three academic years.

### Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16

Between 2013/14 and 2015/16, FLU enrolments followed a similar pattern to all enrolments, decreasing by 21.2% from 124,597 to 98,173. Over the three year period, the number of FLU funded enrolments decreased each year. Notably, while FLU enrolments decreased by 1.2% between 2013/14 and 2014/15, they fell by 20.2% from 123,060 in 2014/15 to 98,173 in 2015/16 (Figure 20, Table A18).

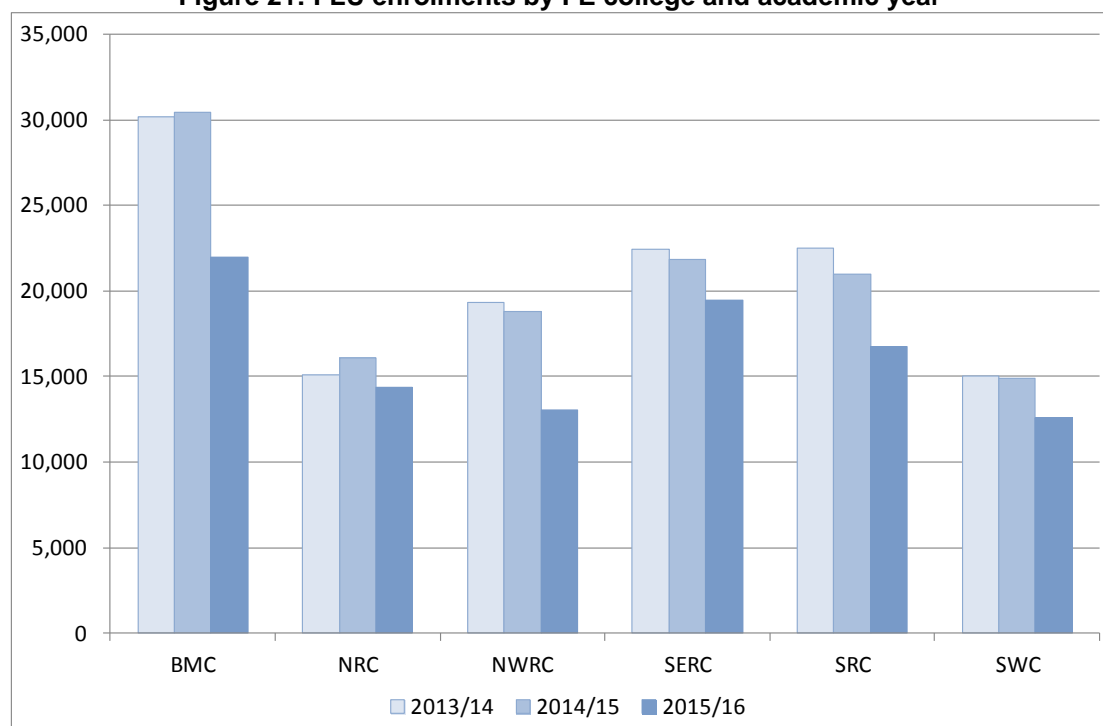
**Figure 20: All enrolments and FLU enrolments by academic year**



## FE colleges

The number of FLU enrolments in each of the six colleges has decreased over the past three academic years. Between 2013/14 and 2015/16, the number of FLU enrolments decreased in each of the six colleges, ranging from 5.1% in NRC to 32.7% in NWRC.

Figure 21: FLU enrolments by FE college and academic year



Of the 98,173 FLU enrolments in 2015/16, BMC accounted for the highest proportion, (22.4%, 22,004), while the lowest proportion was in SWC (12.8%, 12,596) (Figure 21, Table A18).

## Regulated and non-regulated

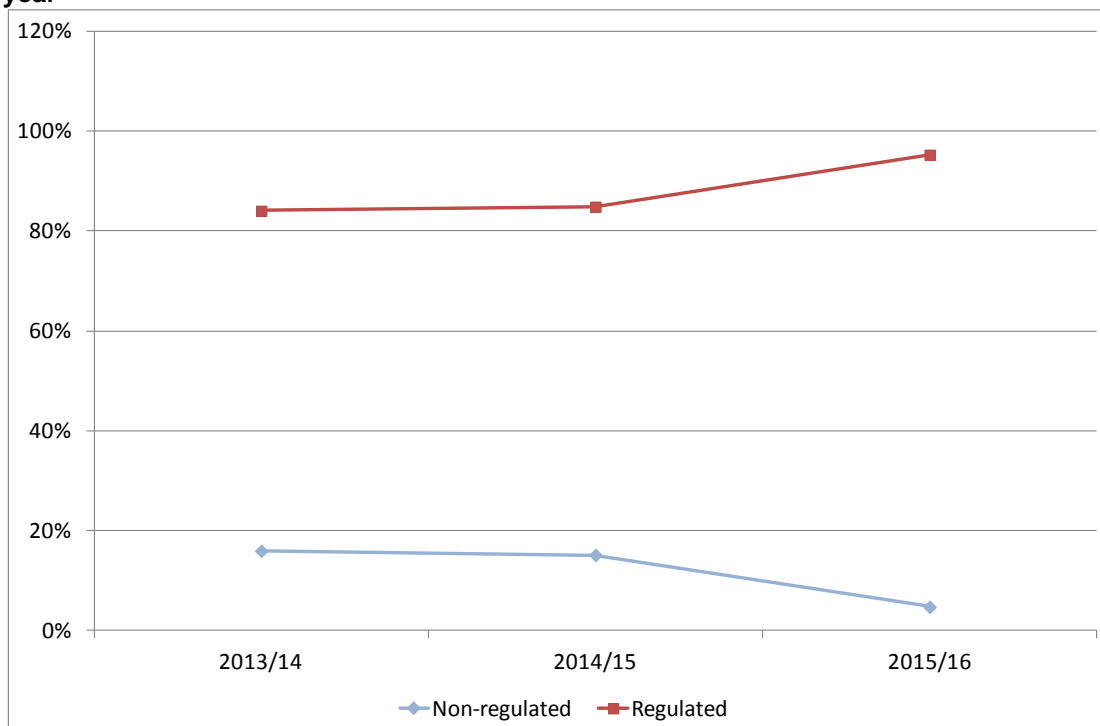
The proportion of FLU enrolments, that were regulated<sup>2</sup> increased slightly from 84.1% in 2013/14 to 84.9% in 2014/15 and then to 95.3% in 2015/16 (Figure 22, Table A18).

As indicated earlier, the changes in the proportions of regulated and non-regulated FLU enrolments over the period 2013/14 to 2015/16 reflect the [‘Further Education Means Business’](#) strategy, aimed at reducing the number of non-regulated enrolments and encouraging regulated economically-focused provision.

<sup>2</sup> Please note, within FLU analysis the definition of ‘regulated’ provision has remained consistent across academic years and the relevant information is available within the FLU return. This information is not available in historical FESR or FELS returns.

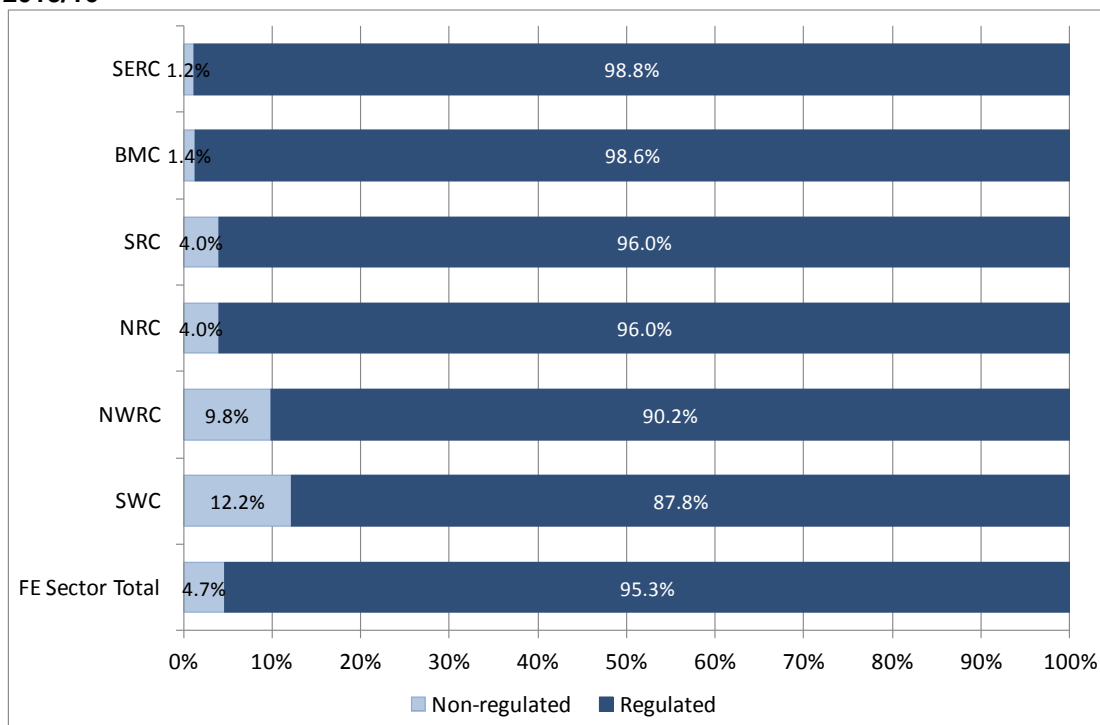


**Figure 22: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated FLU enrolments by academic year**



Proportions of regulated and non-regulated FLU enrolments varied across the six colleges in 2015/16. The proportions of regulated enrolments ranged from 87.8% in SWC to 98.8% in SERC. SWC is the only college where regulated enrolments account for less than 90% of the total enrolments (Figure 23, Table A18).

**Figure 23: Proportions of FLU funded enrolments by regulated status and FE college in 2015/16**



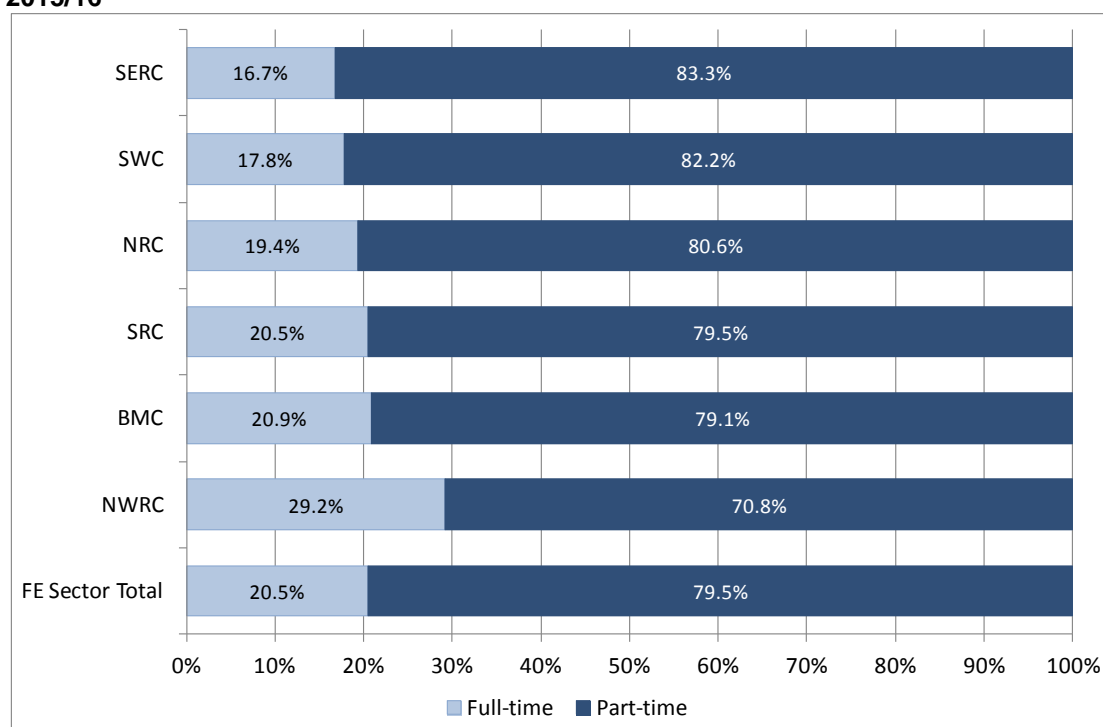
## Mode of attendance

Over the period 2013/14 to 2015/16, the majority of FLU enrolments were part-time. The proportion of FLU enrolments that are part-time has decreased by 3.4 percentage points from 82.9% in 2013/14 to 79.5% in 2015/16.

Across all colleges, the majority of FLU enrolments were also in part-time provision in each year over the three year period. In five of the six colleges, there was also a decrease in the proportion of enrolments being part-time. In NRC, the part-time proportion increased by 1.8 percentage points from 78.8% to 80.6% over the period. In NWRC, the part-time proportion decreased by 9.4 percentage points from 80.2% to 70.8% over the period (Table A21).

In the latest academic year (2015/16), a similar breakdown to the FE sector was evident in each of the six colleges. Proportions of part-time provision ranged from 70.8% in NWRC to 83.3% in SERC (Figure 24, Table A21).

**Figure 24: Proportion of FLU enrolments by mode of attendance and FE college in 2015/16**



## Level of study

Over the three year period 2013/14 to 2015/16, the proportion of 'Level 1 and entry' FLU enrolments fell by 9.0 percentage points from 33.3% to 24.3%. Conversely, the proportion of FLU enrolments at 'Level 2' and 'Level 3' both increased over the period. The proportion of 'Level 2' enrolments increased by 3.1 percentage points from 36.2% in 2013/14 to 39.3% in 2015/16. The proportion of FLU enrolments at 'Level 3' increased by 4.2 percentage points, from 21.3% to 25.5% over the period. The proportion of FLU enrolments at 'Level 4 and above' increased by 1.9 percentage points from 8.7% in 2013/14 to 10.6% in 2015/16.

All six colleges followed the FE sector trend of a decrease in the proportion of 'Level 1 and entry' FLU enrolments. This ranged from a decrease of 5.0 percentage points in SERC to a decrease of 16.0 percentage points in NWRC.

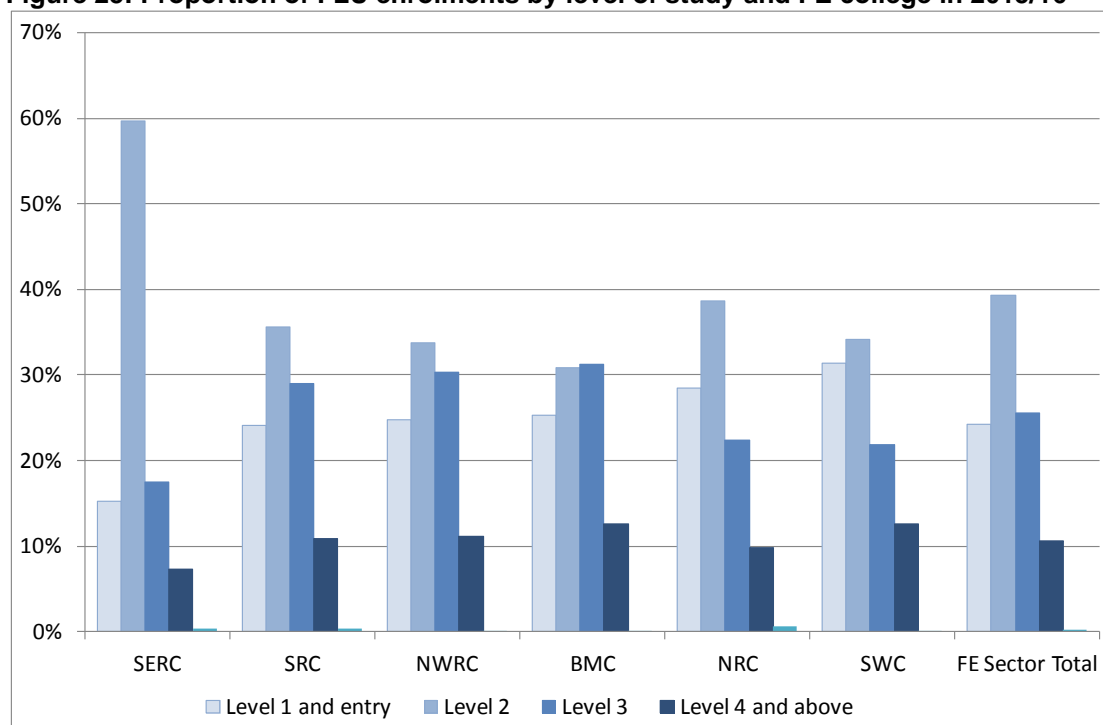
Four of the six colleges had increases in their proportions of 'Level 2' FLU enrolments. The largest increase was in NRC, with almost a 7.5 percentage point increase from 31.3% in 2013/14 to 38.7% in 2015/16, whereas SRC showed a decrease (37.5% to 35.7%) over the period.

Four of the six colleges experienced increases in their proportions of 'Level 3' FLU enrolments. In SERC, the percentage share of 'Level 3' FLU enrolments decreased by 0.9 percentage points from 18.4% to 17.5% over the three year period. In NRC, the percentage share of 'Level 3' FLU enrolments decreased by 0.3 percentage points from 22.6% to 22.3% over the three year period. All six colleges followed the FE sector trend of an increase in the proportion of 'Level 4 and above' FLU enrolments (Table A23).

In the latest academic year (2015/16), of all FLU enrolments those at 'Level 1 and entry' accounted for 24.3% (23,828); 39.3% (38,611) were at 'Level 2', 25.5% (25,037) at 'Level 3' and 10.6% (10,432) at 'Level 4 and above'.

While 'Level 2' accounted for the largest proportion of FLU enrolments (39.3%) across the FE sector, in BMC the largest proportion was in 'Level 3' (31.2%). The trend for the FE sector is skewed by the large proportion (59.7%) of 'Level 2' FLU enrolments in SERC. This is prominently illustrated within Figure 25 (Table A23).

**Figure 25: Proportion of FLU enrolments by level of study and FE college in 2015/16**



Please note there are a small element of unknown levels of study (<1.0%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A23.

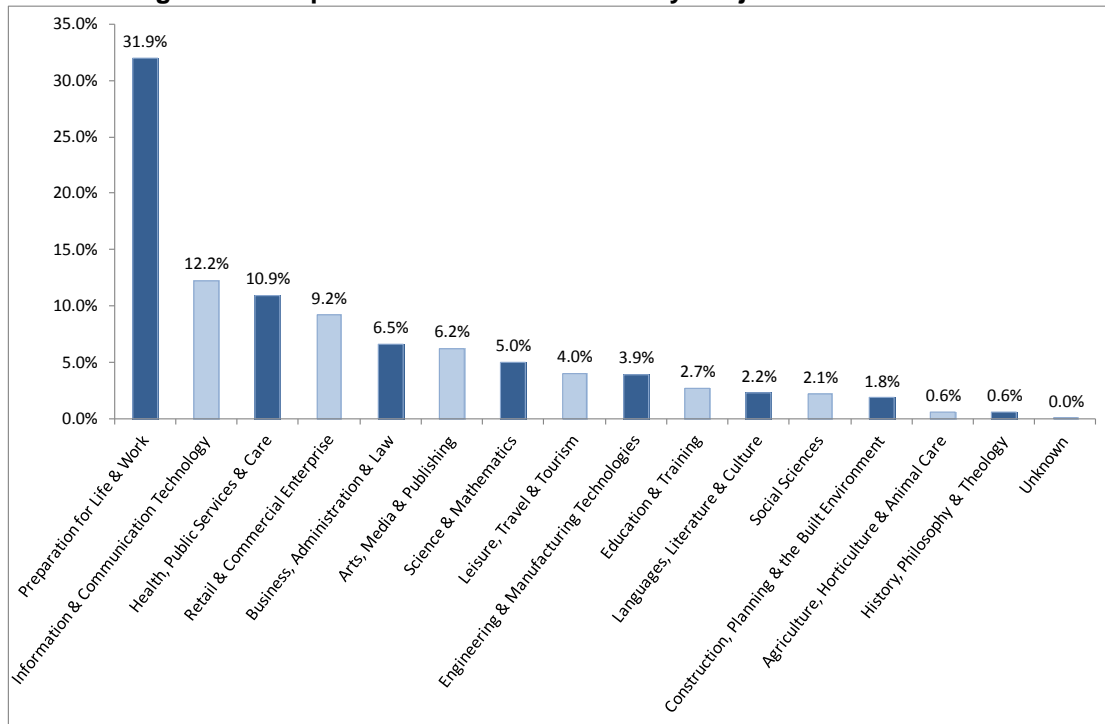
## Subject area

In 2015/16, the largest proportion (31.9%) of FLU funded enrolments was in the subject area 'Preparation for life and work'. This was followed by 'Information and communication technology' (12.2%) and 'Health, Public Services & Care' (10.9%) (Figure 26, Table A24).

In each of the six colleges, the subject area 'Preparation for life and work' had the highest number of FLU enrolments. This share of the subject area ranged from 19.1% in NWRC to 56.7% in SERC. For four of the six colleges [(SRC (14.6%), SWC (12.5%), BMC (12.3%) and SERC (10.3%)], 'Information and communication technology' had the second highest level of FLU enrolments. In SWC 'Retail and Commercial Enterprise' also had 12.5% of the college share. In NRC (12.2%), 'Information and communication technology' ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> after 'Health, Public Services and Care' (13.7%). In NWRC (11.7%), it ranked 4<sup>th</sup> after 'Health, Public Services and Care' (19.0%) and 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (12.8%).

In BMC, the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest share of FLU enrolments was in 'Science and Mathematics' (8.5%). In SRC and SERC, the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest share of FLU enrolments was in 'Health, Public Services and Care' (13.1% and 5.1% respectively) (Table A24).

**Figure 26: Proportion of FLU enrolments by subject area in 2015/16**



## Section 4: Higher Education Enrolments in Further Education Colleges

### Background

Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) is regarded as enrolments to FE Colleges in Northern Ireland at 'Level 4 or above', such as: Certificates of Higher Education; Diplomas of Higher Education; Foundation degrees; Higher National Certificates (HNCs); Higher National Diplomas (HNDs); Bachelors degrees; Masters degrees; Postgraduate certificates; and Doctorates. HE in FE is a subset of all regulated provision within FE Colleges. Within this report, the term HE enrolments will be used to represent HE in FE provision. For further details on HE provision at UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), please click [Higher Education Statistics](#).

### Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16

Over the last three academic years, the number of HE enrolments at FE colleges has increased by 0.5% from 11,576 in 2013/14 to 11,631 in 2015/16 (Table 3).

**Table 3: Higher Education enrolments by FE college and academic year**

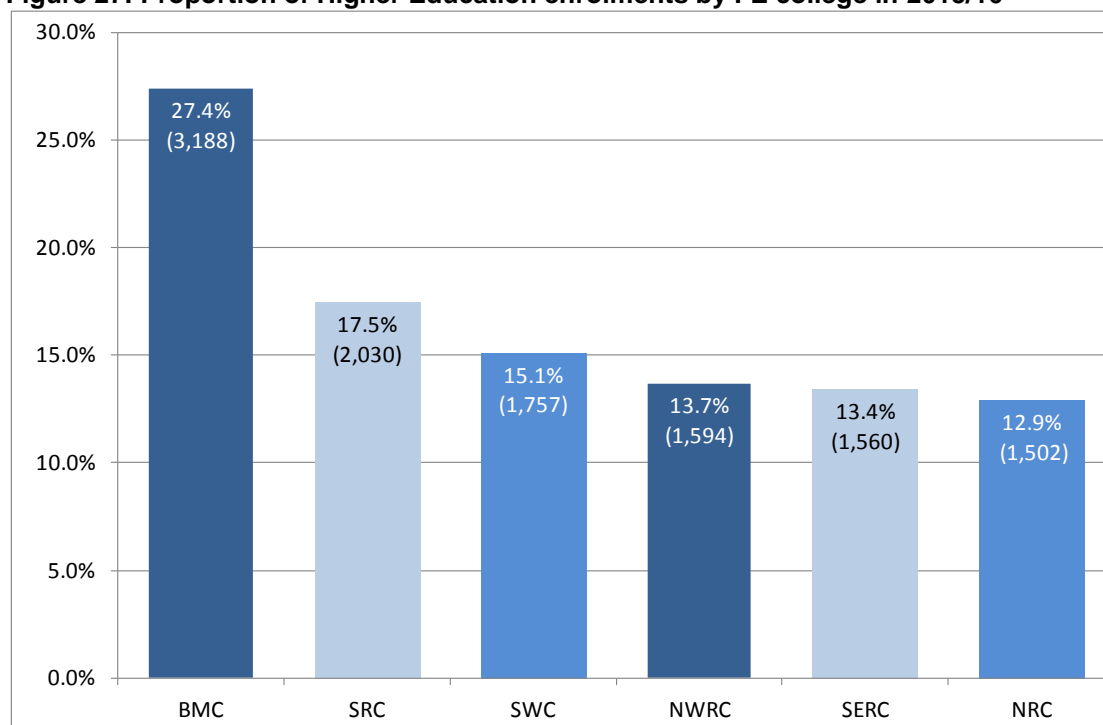
FE college	Academic Year		
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
BMC	3,285	3,348	3,188
NRC	1,511	1,508	1,502
NWRC	1,682	1,736	1,594
SERC	1,498	1,461	1,560
SRC	1,905	1,922	2,030
SWC	1,695	1,747	1,757
<b>FE Sector Total</b>	<b>11,576</b>	<b>11,722</b>	<b>11,631</b>

### **FE colleges**

Over the last three academic years, three of the six colleges experienced increases in the number of HE enrolments [SRC (6.6%), SERC (4.1%) and SWC (3.7%)]. Conversely, the other three colleges had decreases in the number of HE enrolments [NWRC (-5.2%), BMC (-3.0%) and NRC (-0.6%)].

In the most recent academic year (2015/16), BMC accounted for the highest proportion of all HE enrolments (27.4%, 3,188) and NRC for the lowest with 12.9% (1,502) (Figure 27, Table 3).

**Figure 27: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by FE college in 2015/16**



## **Higher Education Enrolments in 2015/16**

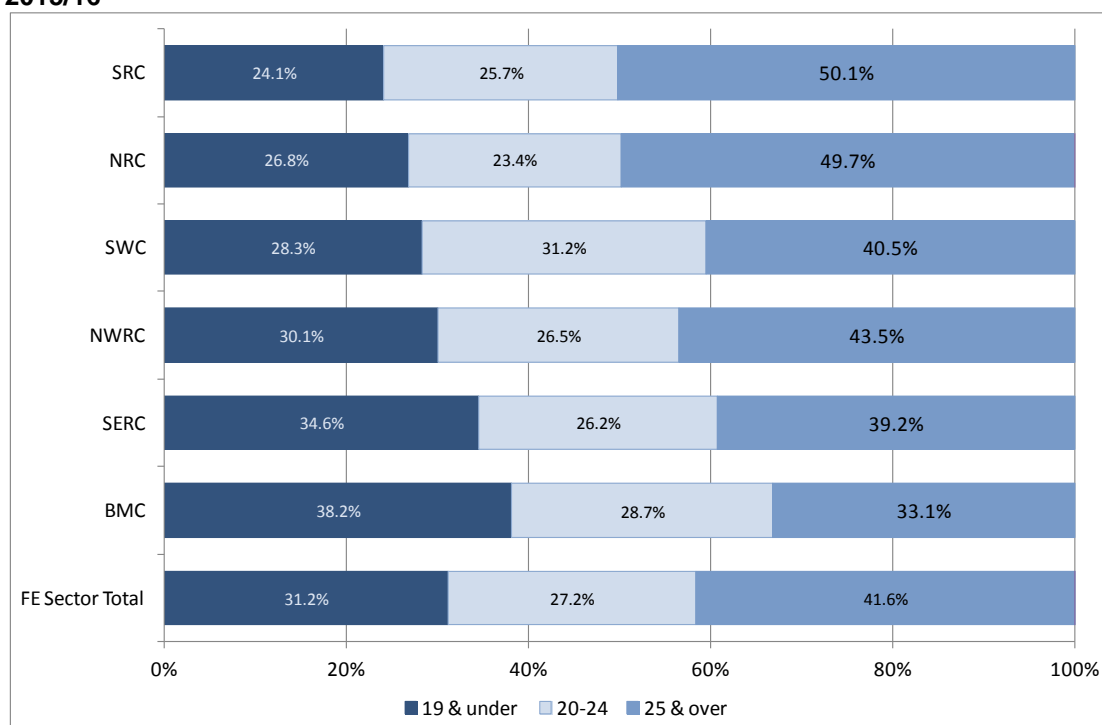
### **Age**

Of the 11,631 Higher Education enrolments in 2015/16, the highest proportion was in the age group '25 and over' (41.6%), followed by those aged '19 and under' (31.2%) and those aged '20 to 24' (27.2%).

Three of the six FE colleges, NRC (49.7%), NWRC (43.5%) and SERC (39.2%), show a similar trend to the overall FE sector with the age band '25 and over' having the highest proportions of HE enrolments and '20 to 24' years olds having the lowest proportions (23.4%, 26.5% and 26.2% respectively).

In comparison with the FE sector age-profile, SRC (50.1%) and SWC (40.5%) had greater proportions aged '25 and over', but had smaller proportions of enrolments in the youngest age band. Across the colleges, BMC (38.2%) had the highest proportion of enrolments in those aged '19 and under' and also had the lowest proportion within the oldest age group (33.1%). BMC was the only college where the largest share of HE enrolments was in the youngest age group rather than the oldest (Figure 28, Table A27).

**Figure 28: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by age band and FE college in 2015/16**

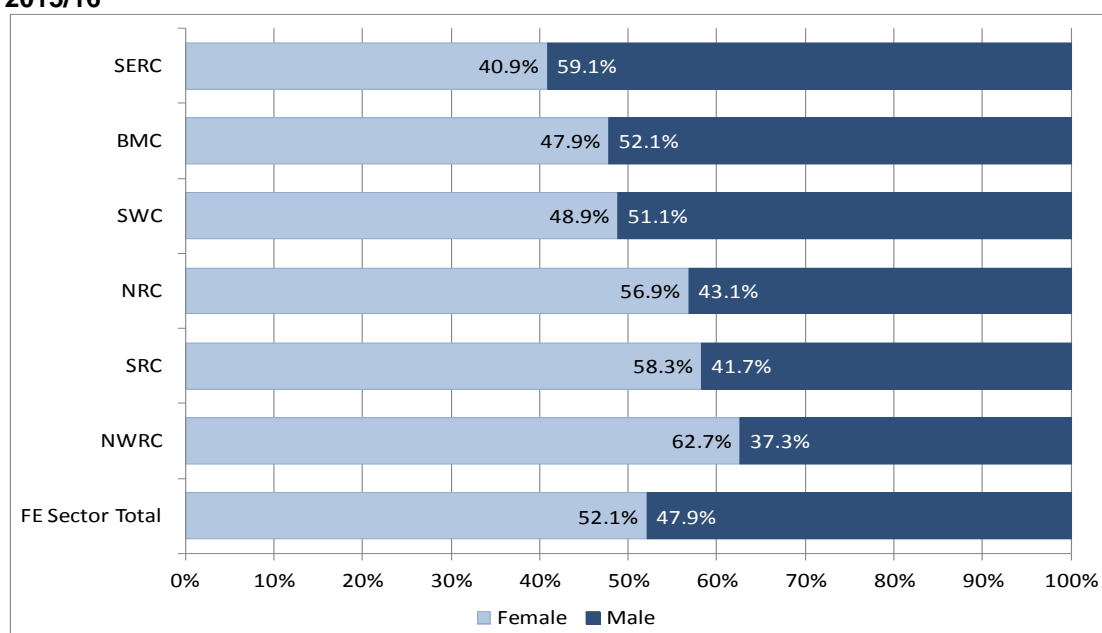


Please note there are a small element of unknown ages (<0.5%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A27.

## Gender

The gender profile varied greatly across the six colleges. Half of the colleges had a higher proportion of males studying higher education [SERC (59.1%), BMC (52.1%) and SWC (51.1%)], while the others had higher proportions of females [NWRC (62.7%), SRC (58.3%) and NRC (56.9%)]. The resultant effect was a fairly even split in the FE sector, in terms of the gender profile of HE enrolments, with 52.1% female and 47.9% male (Figure 29, Table A28).

**Figure 29: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by gender and FE college in 2015/16**





## Mode of attendance

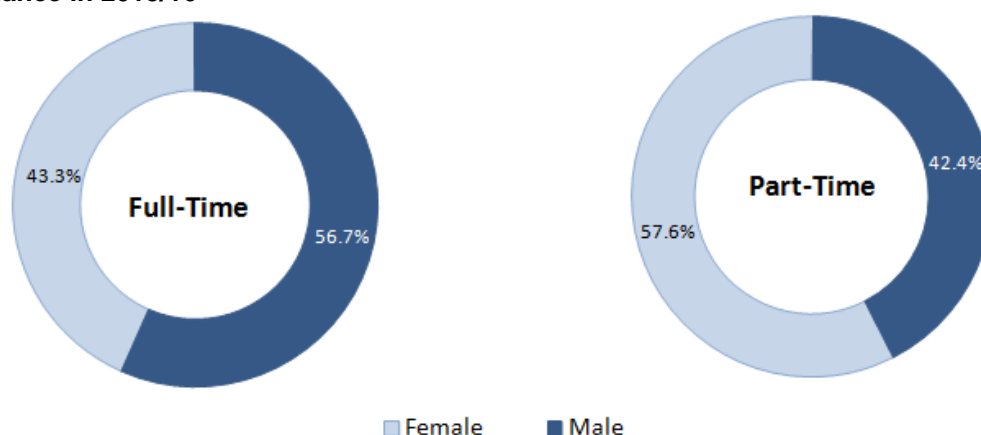
In 2015/16, 38.5% (4,473) of higher education enrolments were on a full-time basis and 61.5% were part-time (7,158). In comparison with the FE sector, BMC (49.4%) and NWRC (45.0%) had higher proportions of full-time, while NRC (25.4%), SRC (30.6%), SWC (33.5%) and SERC (37.8%) had lower proportions. Across all colleges, the majority of HE enrolments were on a part-time basis (Table A29).

## Mode of attendance and gender

For part-time provision, females (57.6%) make up the majority of enrolments, while in full-time provision males (56.7%) account for the majority (Figure 30, Table A29).

In terms of the part-time provision and gender profile for each college, only SERC deviated from the overall FE pattern, with more male enrolments (55.9%) than female enrolments. In full-time provision, only NWRC (54.7%) differed from the FE sector pattern, with a majority of female enrolments (Table A29).

**Figure 30: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by gender and mode of attendance in 2015/16**



## Level of study

Each enrolment on a higher education course is assigned a level between 'Level 4' and 'Level 8'. Qualifications at the same level typically have a similar level of demand or difficulty:

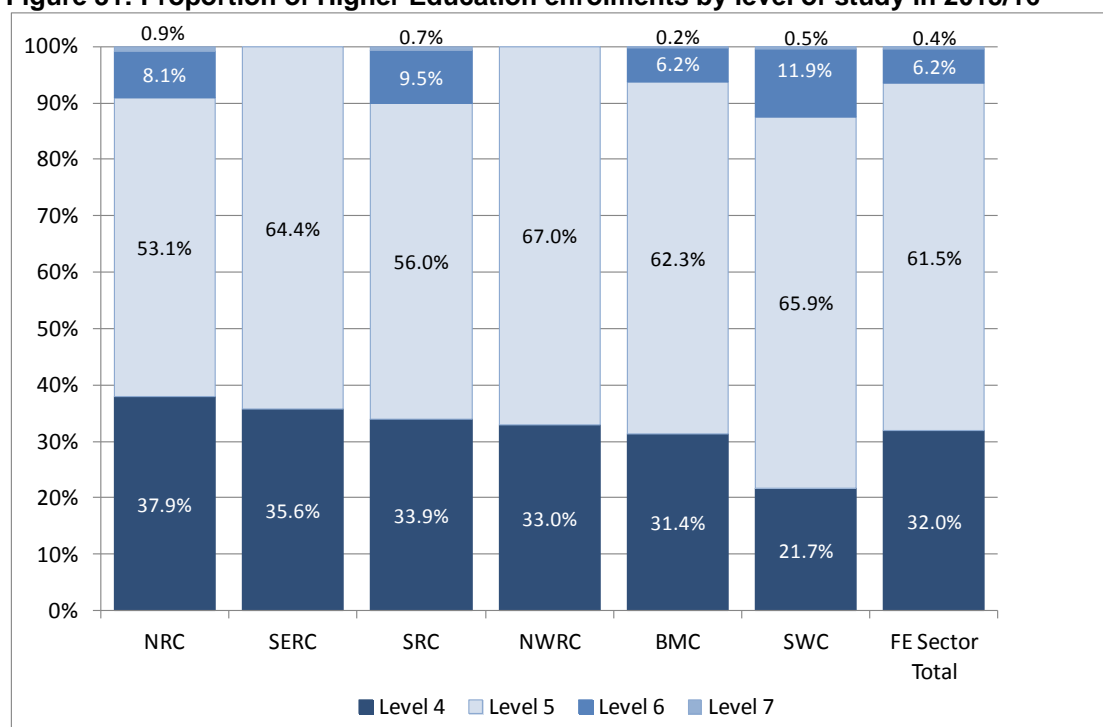
- 'Level 4' are Vocational Qualifications Level 4, Higher National certificate (HNC); qualifications are at a level equivalent to Certificates of Higher Education
- 'Level 5' are Vocational Qualifications Level 5 and qualifications at a level equivalent to intermediate Higher Education qualifications such as Higher National Diplomas (HND), Foundation and other degrees that do not typically provide access to postgraduate programmes

- 'Level 6' are Vocational Qualifications Level 6 and qualifications at a level equivalent to Bachelor's degrees with honours, graduate certificates and graduate diplomas
- 'Level 7' are Vocational Qualifications Levels 7 and qualifications at a level equivalent to Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas
- 'Level 8' are Vocational Qualifications Levels 8 and qualifications at a level equivalent to doctorates.

Of the 11,631 HE enrolments in 2015/16, 'Level 5' accounted for 61.5% (7,149) and 'Level 4' 32.0% (3,721); 6.2% (720) were 'Level 6' and 0.4% (41) at 'Level 7'. This indicates that the vast majority (93.5%) of HE enrolments are at level 4 or 5.

There is notable variation across the six colleges in terms of the level of study. While all colleges had their largest share of enrolments at 'Level 5', this ranged from 53.1% in NRC to 65.9% in SWC. In all six colleges, over four-fifths of HE enrolments were at 'Level 4' or 'Level 5', ranging from 87.6% in SWC to 100% in both NWRC and SERC (Figure 31, Table A30).

**Figure 31: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by level of study in 2015/16**



### Subject area

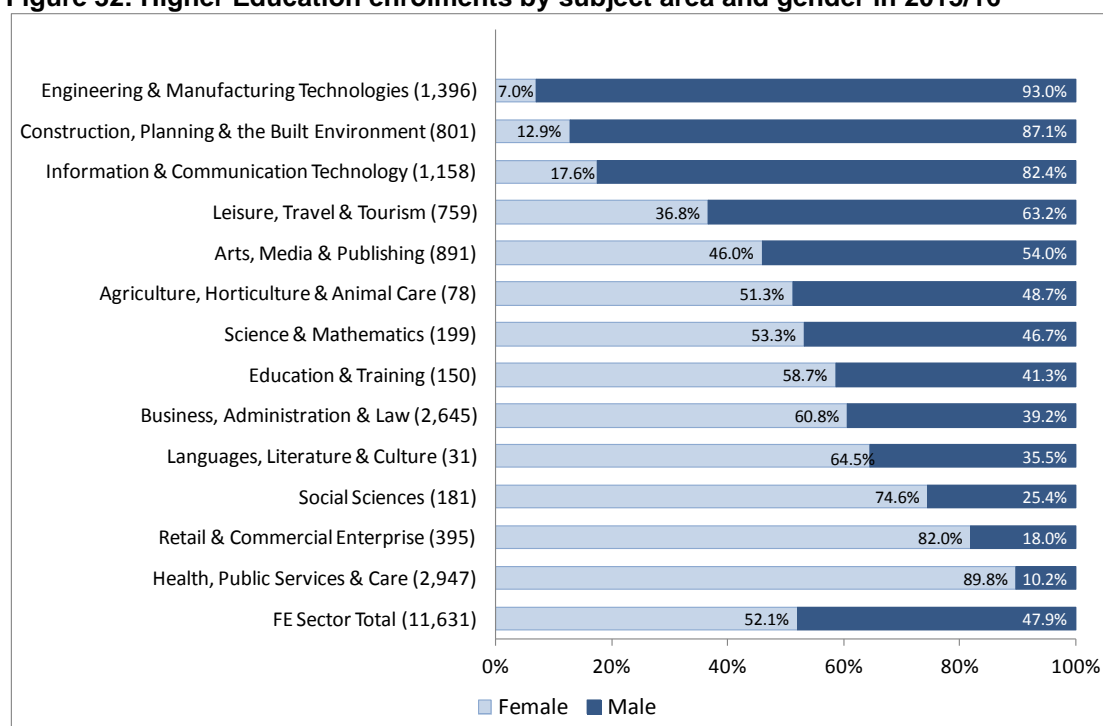
Of the 11,631 HE enrolments in 2015/16, the subject area 'Health, Public Services and Care' had the largest share (25.3%, 2,947). This was followed by 'Business, Administration and Law' (22.7%, 2,645) and 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (12.0%, 1,396). Over three-fifths (60.1%, 6,988) of higher education enrolments fell within these three subject areas (Table A31).

## Subject area and gender

While the overall gender profile was fairly evenly split for all higher education enrolments in 2015/16, there was wide variation between male and female enrolment shares across the subject areas. Females accounted for the vast majority in 'Health, Public Services and Care' (89.8%) and in 'Retail and Commercial Enterprise' enrolments (82.0%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (93.0%) and 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment (87.1%) (Figure 32, Table A31).

Across the FE colleges, there was a similar trend to the FE sector subject area by gender profile. Some notable differences were in BMC, where there was a 63.0% male share of enrolments in 'Science and Mathematics' compared with the FE sector share of 46.7%. In contrast, the female share of the same subject area was 71.4% in NRC, as opposed to 53.3% in the FE sector. In NRC, the proportion of male enrolments in 'Leisure, Travel and Tourism' was 82.9%, in comparison with 63.2% in the FE sector. In contrast the female share of the same subject area was 54.3% in NWRC, as opposed to 36.8% in the FE sector. In NRC and SERC, the proportions of male enrolments in 'Arts, Media and Publishing' were 80.0% and 68.8% respectively in comparison with 54.0% in the FE sector (Table A31).

**Figure 32: Higher Education enrolments by subject area and gender in 2015/16**



Please note there were no HE in FE enrolments in the subject areas of 'History, Philosophy & Theology' and 'Preparation for Life & Work'.

## Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

'Broad' STEM enrolments are regarded as those on courses of: 'Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects'; 'Biological and Physical Sciences'; 'Agriculture'; 'Mathematics and IT'; 'Engineering and Technology; 'Architecture, Building and Planning'. A subset of this cohort is termed 'Narrow' STEM and is identified as those enrolment records within courses classed as; 'Biological

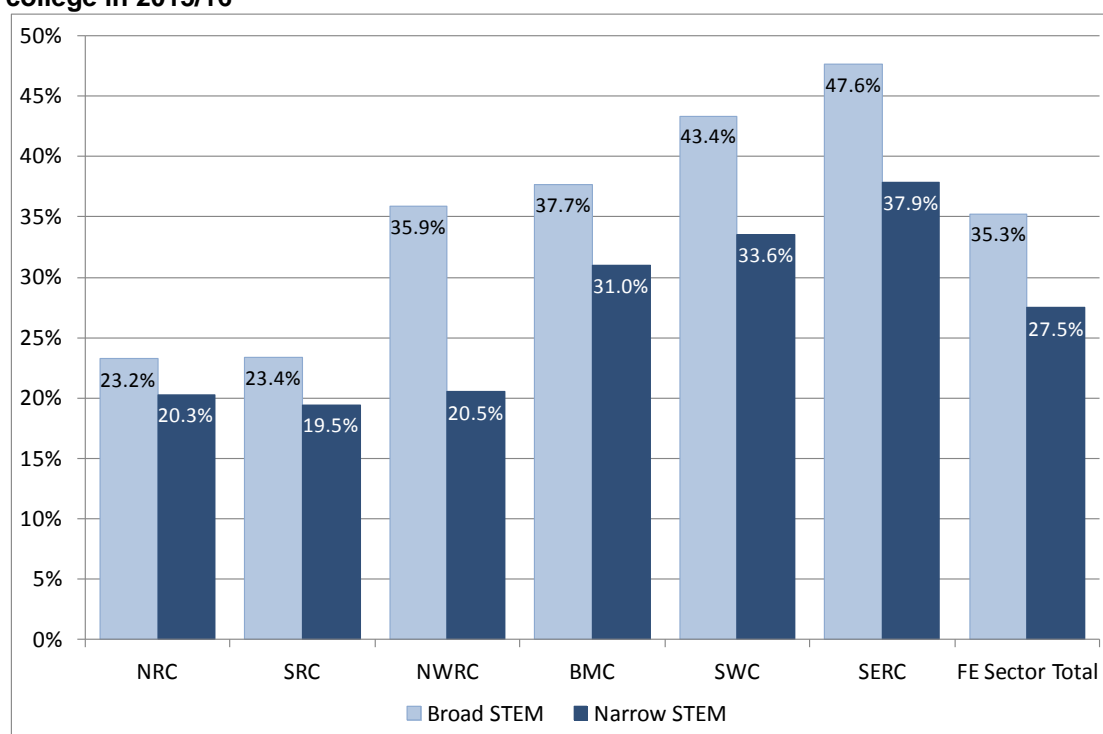
and Physical Sciences'; 'Mathematics and IT'; and 'Engineering and Technology'.

In 2015/16, 'Broad' STEM enrolments accounted for 35.3% (4,102) of all Higher Education enrolments in the FE sector, while 'Narrow' STEM enrolments accounted for 27.5% (3,196). Males accounted for over three-quarters of 'Broad' STEM (78.7%) and for over four-fifths of 'Narrow' STEM (82.1%) enrolments (Table A32).

In comparison with the FE sector, SERC (47.6%), SWC (43.4%), BMC (37.7%) and NWRC (35.9%) had higher 'Broad' STEM proportions; 'Broad' STEM enrolment proportions were lower in NRC (23.2%) and SRC (23.4%).

'Narrow' STEM proportions in three of the six colleges, namely SERC (37.9%), SWC (33.6%) and BMC (31.0%), were above the FE sector level, while the other three colleges had proportions of 'Narrow' STEM that were lower than the FE sector figure [SRC (19.5%), NRC (20.3%) and NWRC (20.5%)] (Figure 33, Table A32).

**Figure 33: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by STEM indicators and FE college in 2015/16**



## Deprivation

Deprivation has been measured on 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 group of areas.

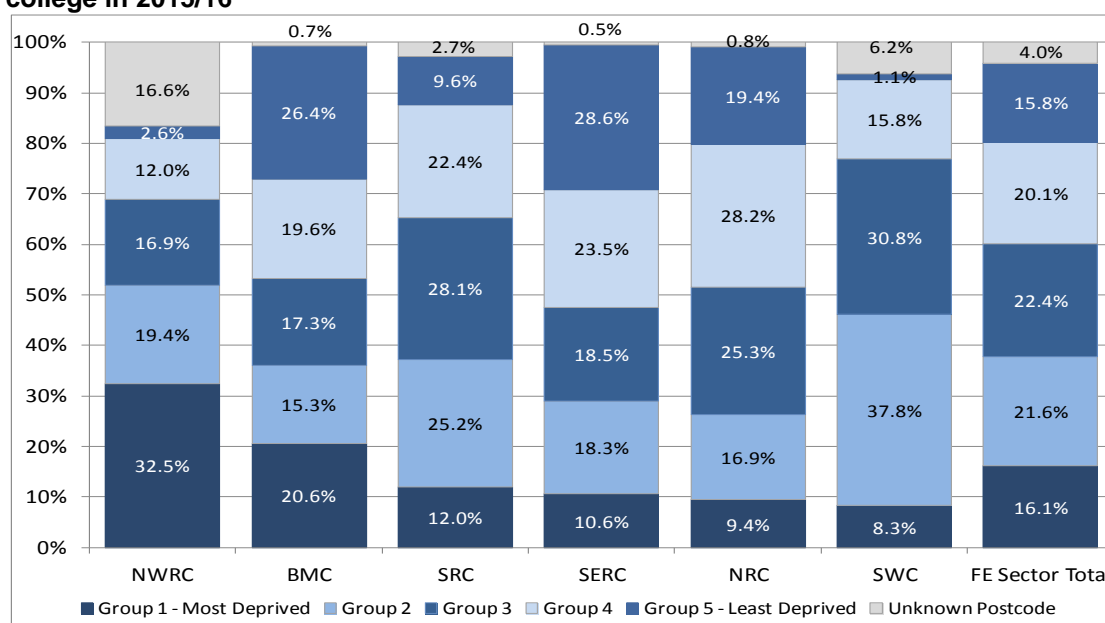
Over a third (37.7%) of 2015/16 HE enrolments were from the two most deprived quintiles. Less than one sixth (16.1%) of higher education

enrolments in 2015/16 came from the most deprived quintile, compared with 15.8% from the least deprived quintile.

When considering enrolments from different areas of deprivation across the six FE colleges, there was a lot of regional variation in 2015/16. NWRC had 32.5% of HE enrolments from the most deprived quintile, compared with 2.6% from the least deprived quintile. BMC, another college with a large urban concentration, is quite polarised in terms of deprivation levels of where individuals come from and enrol in the college. Almost half (just under 47.1%) of BMC HE enrolments were from either the most or least deprived quintile. In contrast, 9.4% of SWC HE enrolments came from these two quintiles. While 8.3% of HE enrolments in SWC were from the most deprived quintile, 37.8% were from the 2<sup>nd</sup> most deprived quintile.

Compared with the FE sector, SWC (8.3%), NRC (9.4%), SERC (10.6%) and SRC (12.0%) all had lower proportions of HE enrolments from the most deprived quintile in 2015/16. Indeed the largest proportion of HE enrolments for SERC was from the least deprived quintile (28.6%) (Figure 34, Table A33).

**Figure 34: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by deprivation quintiles and FE college in 2015/16**



Notably, NWRC had a significant proportion of enrolments with unknown postcodes (16.6%). This is largely due to a student flow from the Republic of Ireland (ROI). Of the 264 enrolments with unknown postcodes in NWRC, 247 were ROI domiciled student enrolments. If these 247 ROI enrolments were excluded from the NWRC analysis, the resultant figures would indicate that 38.5% of enrolments were from the most deprived quintile and 3.0% were from the least deprived quintile. Over three-fifths (61.5%) of enrolments were from the two most deprived areas (Table 4). These ROI enrolments (247) accounted for 15.5% of higher education enrolments in NWRC (1,594) (Table A33).

**Table 4: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments with and without Rol domicile students in NWRC by deprivation quintiles in 2015/16**

<b>Domicile</b>	<b>Group 1 - Most Deprived</b>	<b>Group 2</b>	<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Group 4</b>	<b>Group 5 - Least Deprived</b>	<b>Unknown Postcode</b>
Including Rol	32.5%	19.4%	16.9%	12.0%	2.6%	16.6%
Excluding Rol	38.5%	23.0%	20.0%	14.3%	3.0%	1.3%

## Section 5: Qualifications & Performance

### 5.1 - Final year enrolments

A student can enrol on a course that is multiple years in length but will only have the opportunity to achieve within the final year. Regulated enrolments are those which potentially have a formal qualification at the end of the study. Consequently, performance analysis is only focused on final year regulated enrolments, for example regulated enrolments on a one year course, or the second year of a two year course. Please refer to [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#) for further details on the definitions and changes to these in regard to performance analysis.

#### Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16

In each year between 2013/14 and 2015/16, over four-fifths of all regulated enrolments were in the final year and as such are included in any performance analysis over this period. The percentage of final year enrolments within all regulated enrolments has increased from 82.5% in 2013/14 to 84.6% in 2015/16.

In line with the trend of regulated enrolments decreasing over this three year period, final year enrolments have also decreased (6.6%) from 117,022 in 2013/14 to 109,303 in 2015/16. The number of individuals enrolled in their final year has fallen by 8.5%, from 66,565 to 60,907 over the same period (Table 5).

**Table 5: Number of final year enrolments by FE college and academic year**

FE college	Academic Year		
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
BMC	26,462	27,629	22,765
NRC	14,110	15,581	15,484
NWRC	14,088	13,128	12,785
SERC	24,341	24,244	23,317
SRC	21,569	20,112	19,606
SWC	16,452	15,783	15,346
<b>Total Final Year enrolments</b>	<b>117,022</b>	<b>116,477</b>	<b>109,303</b>
<b>Total Regulated enrolments</b>	<b>141,778</b>	<b>140,137</b>	<b>129,274</b>
<b>Final Year/Regulated (%)</b>	<b>82.5%</b>	<b>83.1%</b>	<b>84.6%</b>
<b>Total Final Year individuals</b>	<b>66,565</b>	<b>64,162</b>	<b>60,907</b>

#### **FE colleges**

In terms of final year enrolments, there are different trends over the three year period across the six colleges. Final year enrolments increased by 9.7% in NRC between 2013/14 and 2015/16, while they decreased at BMC (14.0%), NWRC (9.2%), SRC (9.1%) SWC (6.7%) and SERC (4.2%) (Table 5).

## **5.2 – Qualifications**

The following section focuses solely on qualifications from final year enrolments in regulated courses at FE colleges. An individual can fully achieve, partially achieve or fail their qualification. The number of qualifications presented within this section includes both full and partial achievements. Partial achievement accounted for 5.4%, 5.9% and 5.3% of total achievements in 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16 respectively. Please refer to [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#) for further information on partial and full achievement.

### **Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16**

Over the three year period (2013/14 to 2015/16), the number of qualifications in FE colleges decreased by 3.0%, from 90,851 to 88,153. The volume of qualifications peaked in 2014/15 (92,479) and then declined to 88,153 in 2015/16 (Table 6).

### **FE colleges**

There were decreases in the number of qualifications awarded in five of the six colleges over the three year period to 2015/16. [NWRC (-9.9%), BMC (-7.7%), SRC (-6.9%), SWC (-0.8%) and SERC (-0.1%)], in NRC, there was an increase of 11.4%, from 10,787 to 12,022 (Table 6).

**Table 6: Number of qualifications by FE college and academic year**

<b>FE College</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
<b>BMC</b>	19,244	20,811	17,766
<b>NRC</b>	10,787	12,113	12,022
<b>NWRC</b>	11,135	10,291	10,029
<b>SERC</b>	19,438	20,176	19,416
<b>SRC</b>	17,808	16,626	16,575
<b>SWC</b>	12,439	12,462	12,345
<b>FE Sector Total</b>	<b>90,851</b>	<b>92,479</b>	<b>88,153</b>

In 2015/16, the proportional share across the FE Colleges of the number of qualifications awarded ranged from 11.4% in NWRC to 22.0% in SERC (Table 6).



## **5.3 - Performance**

The strategic driver for analysing performance was the Department's commitments under the Programme for Government (2011-2015), which includes the delivery of 210,000 qualifications at Level 2 and above between 2011/12 and 2015/16. The focus, therefore, is on outputs, and necessitates a much greater priority on student retention and, in particular, the achievement of qualifications. Performance can be measured across three indicators:

- **Retention rate** is defined as the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study to the number of final year enrolments. Since 2012/13, those who complete their course early (and recorded in the data as a withdrawal) and who have subsequently achieved their programme of study qualification have been regarded as a 'completer'.
- **Achievement rate** relates to the percentage of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study and achieve their qualification to the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study. Please note that, within this publication, achievement rate is presented within the three year trend and FE College sections below' but not in the remaining sections of the 2015/16 analysis. These figures are available in the accompanying tables in Excel or comma separated values (CSV).
- **Success rate** is the overall measure of performance, which is the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study and achieve their qualification to the number of final year enrolments.

### **Three year trend – 2013/14 to 2015/16**

#### **Retention rate**

Over the period 2013/14 to 2015/16, the retention rate in FE colleges increased by 1.1 percentage points, from 89.1% to 90.2%. Compared with 2013/14 this implies that more people are staying on and completing their course in the most recent year (Figure 35, Table A34).

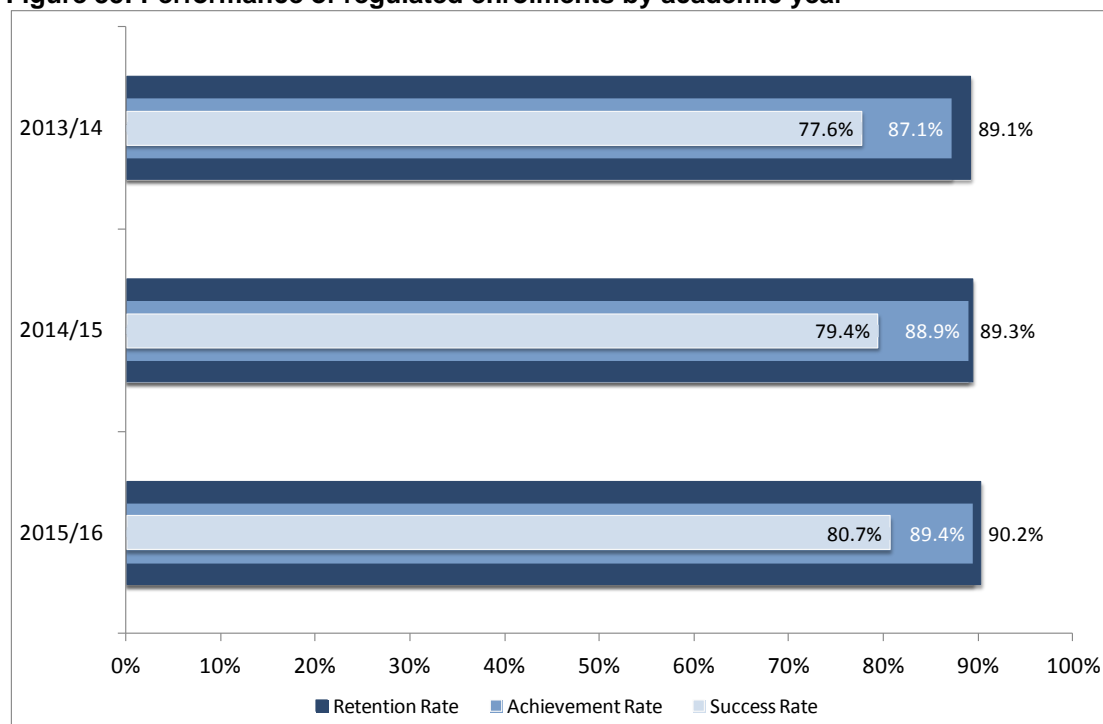
#### **Achievement rate**

The achievement rate of FE colleges rose by 2.3 percentage points from 87.1% to 89.4% over the period 2013/14 to 2015/16. This indicates that of those who completed their course, proportionately more people achieved their qualification in 2015/16 than in 2013/14 (Figure 35, Table A34).

## Success rate

The success rate (that is the proportion of students staying on their course and achieving a qualification) increased from 77.6% in 2013/14 to 80.7% in 2015/16 (over 3 percentage points). This increase is consistent with the fact that both retention and achievement rates increased over the three year period (Figure 35, Table A34).

**Figure 35: Performance of regulated enrolments by academic year**



## FE colleges

### Retention rate

In contrast to the FE sector trend of a rise in retention rates over the three year period, SRC's retention rate fell by 1.0 percentage points from 93.0% to 92.0%. The other five colleges followed the FE sector trend, with increases in retention rates ranging from 0.6 percentage points in NWRC to 2.2 percentage points in both SWC and BMC (Table A34).

### Achievement rate

Five of the six colleges followed the FE sector trend of an increase in achievement rate between 2013/14 and 2015/16. The largest increase (3.9 percentage points) over this three-year period was in BMC, improving from 83.4% to 87.3% while the smallest increase was in NRC (almost 0.2 percentage points), improving from 88.8% to 88.9%. NWRC's achievement rate fell from 90.1% in 2013/14 to 88.8% in 2015/16 (-1.3 percentage points) (Table A34).

## **Success rate**

Five of the six colleges followed the FE sector trend of an increase in success rate between 2013/14 and 2015/16. The largest increase (5.3 percentage points) over this three year-period was in BMC, improving from 72.7% to 78.0%, while the smallest increase was in NRC (1.2 percentage points), improving from 76.4% to 77.6%. NWRC's success rate fell from 79.0% in 2013/14 to 78.4% in 2015/16 (-0.6 percentage points) (Table A34).

## **Academic Year 2015/16**

### **Performance by age**

#### **Retention rate**

In 2015/16, the retention rate for those aged '19 and under' was 90.4%, for the '20 to 24' age group it was 89.3%, and for those aged '25 and over' it was 90.3% (Figure 36, Table A35).

In four of the six colleges, the highest retention rates were also in the youngest age group. The exceptions were in both BMC (88.3%) and NWRC, (87.1%) where the highest retention rates were for the '25 and over' age group (90.7% and 90.9% respectively).

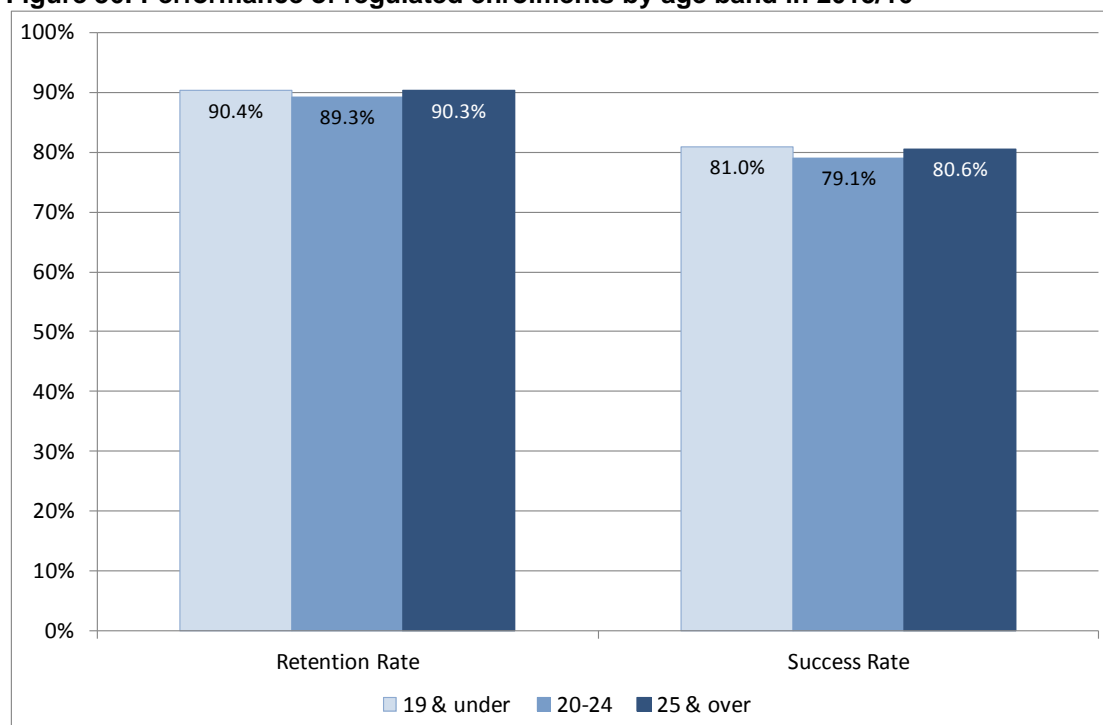
The retention rate for the '19 and under' age group ranged from 87.1% in NWRC to 92.7% in SWC. For the '20 to 24' age group, the retention rate ranged from 84.8% in NRC to 91.3% in both SERC and SWC, while for the '25 and over' age group it ranged from 85.6% in NRC to 92.2% in SWC (Table A35).

#### **Success rate**

In 2015/16, the success rate for those aged '19 and under' was 81.0%, for the '20 to 24' age group it was 79.1%, and for those aged '25 and over' it was 80.6% (Figure 36 , Table A35).

The success rate for the '19 and under' age group ranged from 76.2% in BMC to 85.5% in SRC. For the '20 to 24' age group, the success rate ranged from 75.4% in NWRC to 83.2% in SERC, while for the '25 and over' age group it ranged from 76.6% in NRC to 83.5% in SRC (Table A35).

**Figure 36: Performance of regulated enrolments by age band in 2015/16**



## Performance by gender

### Retention rate

In 2015/16, within the FE sector, males (90.7%) had a slightly higher retention rate than females (89.7%) (Figure 37, Table A36).

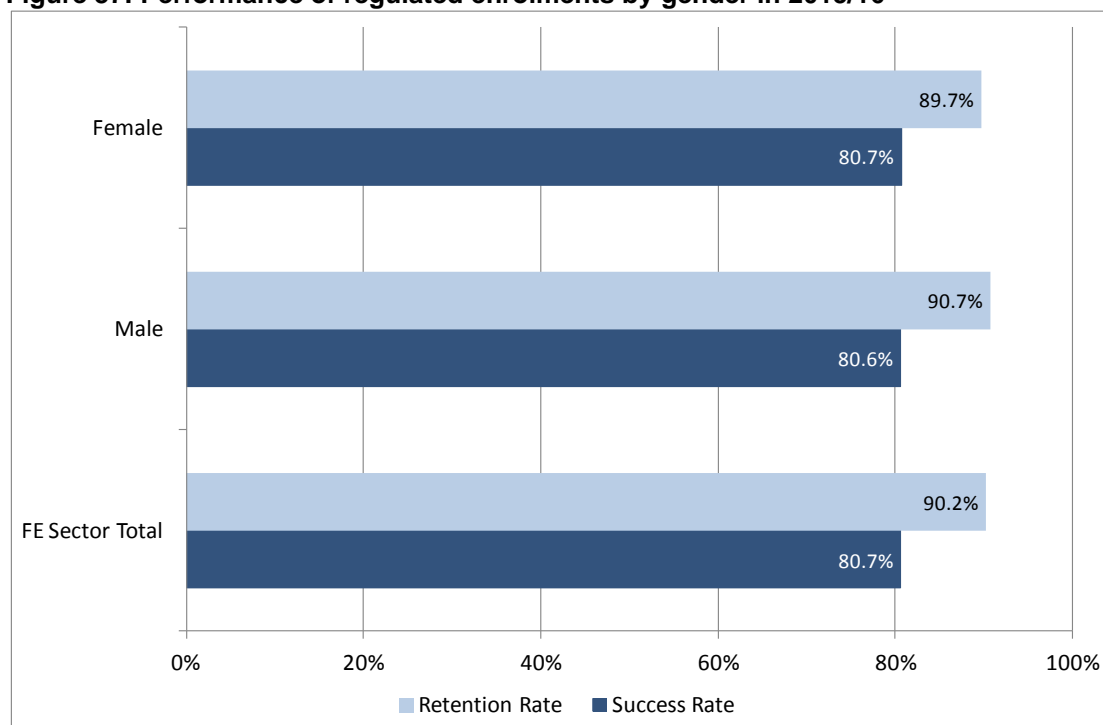
All six colleges followed the FE sector pattern of the male retention rate being greater than the female rate. The largest difference in retention rates between males (93.5%) and females (90.9%) was in SWC (over 2.5 percentage points). (Table A36).

### Success rate

The FE sector success rates by gender were similar at 80.7% for females and 80.6% for males (Figure 37, Table A36).

In three of the six colleges, the success rate for females was higher than for males (BMC, NRC and SERC); in the other three colleges (SWC, NWRC and SRC), males had higher success rates. The largest difference in success rates between males and females was in SWC (1.8 percentage points), 81.3% for males and 79.5% for females (Table A36).

**Figure 37: Performance of regulated enrolments by gender in 2015/16**



## Performance by mode of attendance

### Retention rate

In 2015/16, within the FE sector, the retention rates were similar for full-time (88.2%) and part-time (90.6%) regulated enrolments (Figure 38, Table A37).

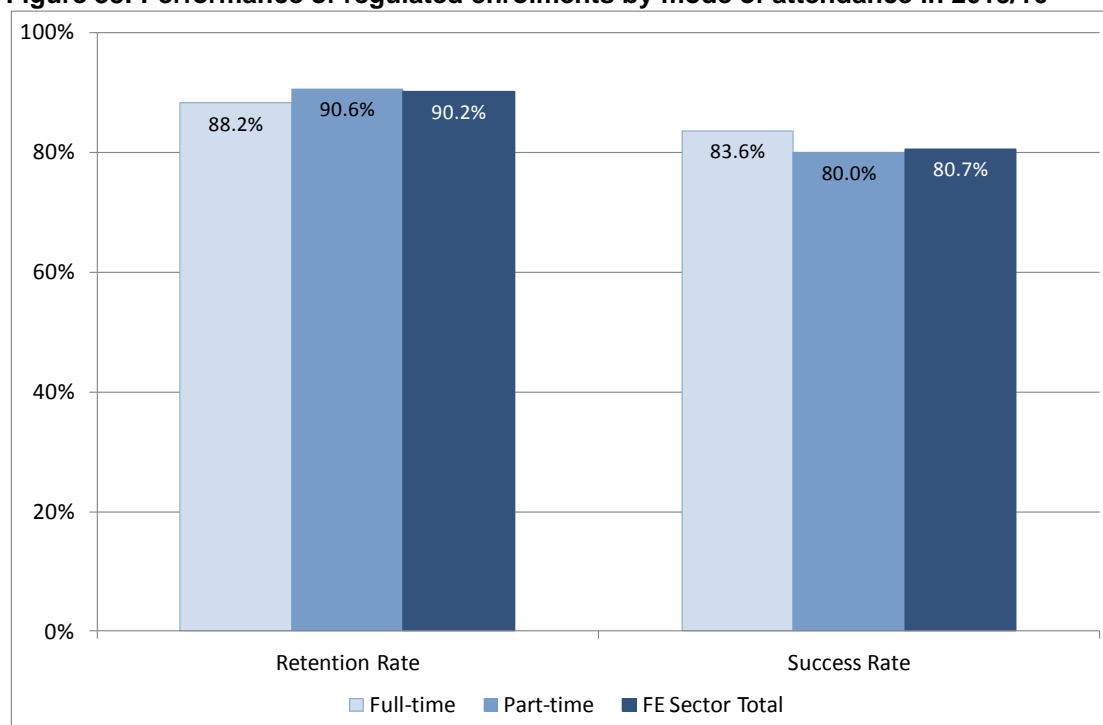
Only in NRC was the full-time retention rate greater than the part-time rate. SERC had the biggest difference in retention rates, of 5.4 percentage points, between part-time (91.9%) and full-time (86.5%) enrolments (Table A37).

### Success rate

The success rates across the sector were 80.0% for part-time and 83.6% for full-time (Figure 38, Table A37).

In five of the colleges, the full-time success rate was greater than the part-time rate. The exception was SERC, where the success rate for part-time (83.3%) was slightly greater than full-time (83.1%). Success rates within part-time provision ranged from 76.7% in BMC to 83.9% in SRC, while for full-time provision it ranged from 79.9% in NWRC to 87.7% in SRC (Table A37).

**Figure 38: Performance of regulated enrolments by mode of attendance in 2015/16**



## Performance by provision area

### Retention rate

In 2015/16, within the FE colleges, more students were likely to complete a Higher Education (HE) course than a Further Education or Essential Skills course. The retention rates across the three main provision areas were 95.0% for HE, 91.4% for FE and 84.9% for Essential Skills (ES) (Figure 39, Table A38).

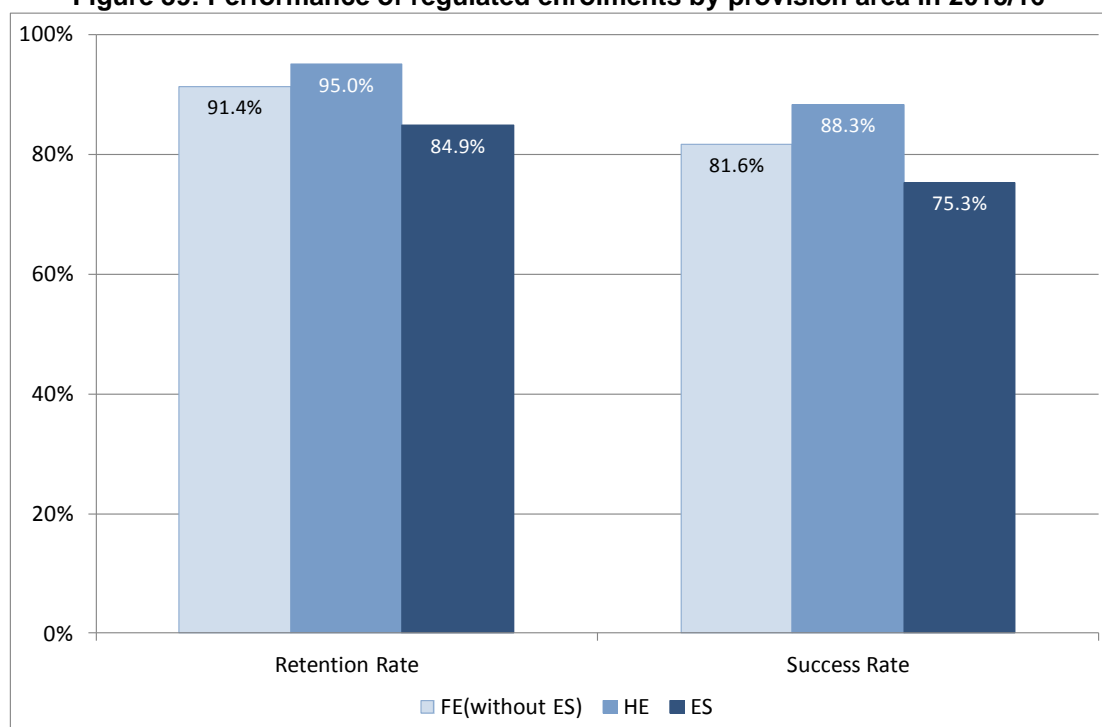
The HE provision area had the highest retention rate across all colleges, ranging from 92.9% in NRC to 97.2% in BMC. For FE provision it ranged from 89.0% in NRC to 92.9% in SERC. Retention rates within ES provision ranged from 81.8% in NRC to 89.9% in SWC (Table A38).

### Success rate

Within the FE sector, the success rates were 75.3% for Essential Skills, 81.6% for FE and 88.3% for HE. Based on this information, there were higher proportions of people staying on and achieving within higher education than either FE or Essential Skills (Figure 39, Table A38).

Success rates within HE provision ranged from 82.0% in NRC to 92.8% in BMC, while for FE provision this ranged from 76.9% in BMC to 85.7% in SRC. Success rates within ES provision ranged from 69.6% in NRC to 79.5% in SRC. Interestingly, BMC had the lowest success rate in FE, but the highest success rate in HE. Across all colleges, the highest success rate was within HE provision (Table A38).

**Figure 39: Performance of regulated enrolments by provision area in 2015/16**



## Performance by level of study

### Retention rate

The retention rate in FE colleges ranging from 87.0% at 'Level 1 and Entry' to 95.0% at 'Level 4 and above' generally increased as the level of study increased (Figure 40, Table A39).

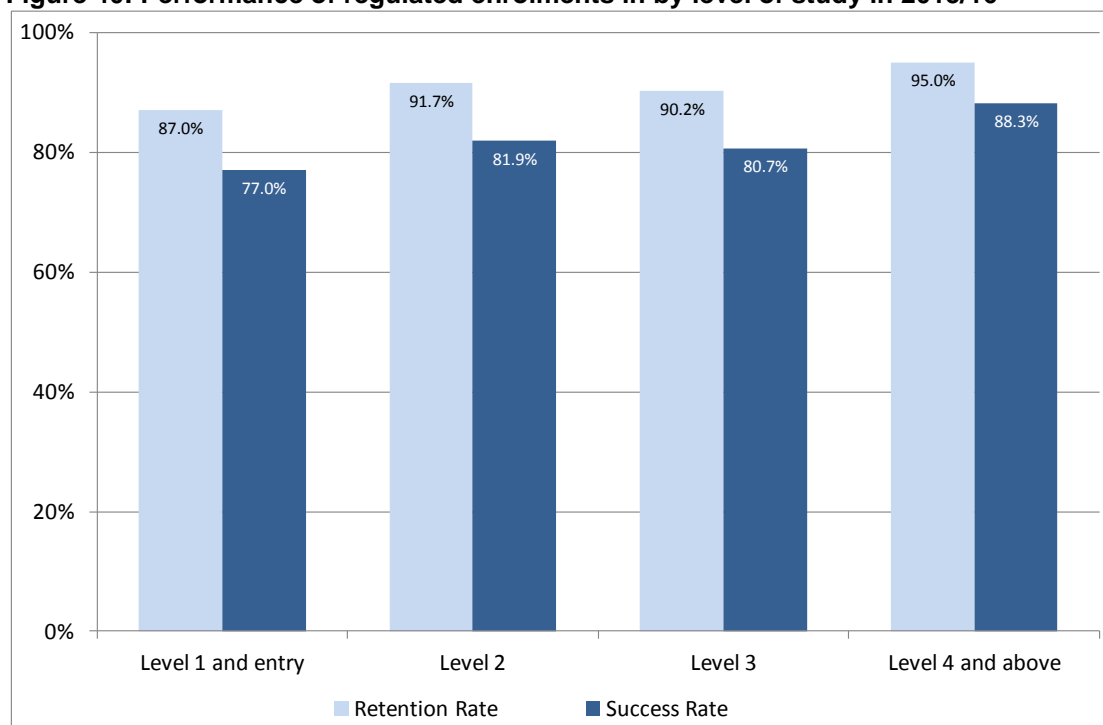
This same pattern of increasing retention rates as the level increased occurred across all the colleges. In all six colleges, the lowest retention rates were at 'Level 1 and Entry', ranging from 84.5% in NRC to 90.8% in SRC. In all six colleges, the highest retention rates were at 'Level 4 and above', ranging from 92.9% in NRC to 97.2% in BMC (Table A39).

### Success rate

The success rate in FE colleges, generally increased as the level increased ranging from 77.0% ('Level 1 and Entry') to 88.3% ('Level 4 and above'). This would follow on from the patterns seen within retention rates, and it seems that those on higher levels of study are more likely to stay on and achieve in their course (Figure 40, Table A39).

In five of the six colleges, the lowest success rates were in 'Level 1 and entry'. The exception to this was in BMC, where the lowest success rate (74.3%) was for those on 'Level 3' courses. In four colleges, the highest success rates were in 'Level 4 and above'. The two exceptions were SRC (86.9%) and NRC (84.1%), where the highest success rates were at 'Level 2' and 'Level 3' respectively. The highest success rate was at 'Level 4 and above' within BMC (92.8%). This was over 14.6 percentage points higher than the second highest success rate in the college ('Level 2', 78.1%) (Table A39).

**Figure 40: Performance of regulated enrolments in by level of study in 2015/16**



## Performance by subject area

### Retention rate

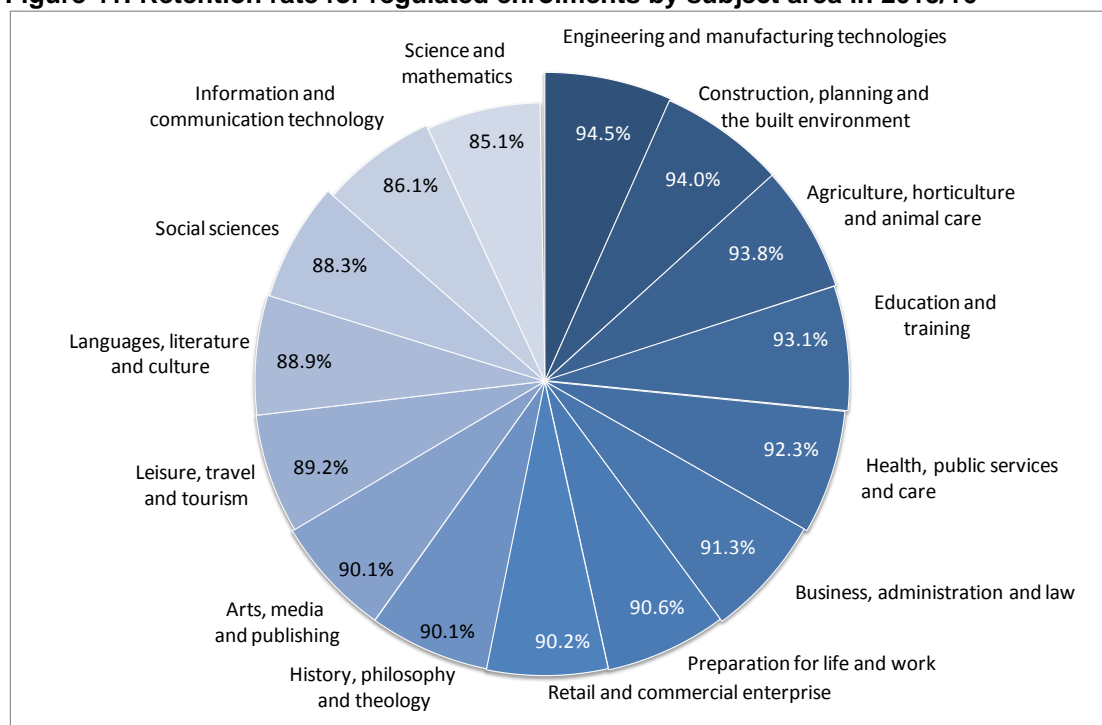
The retention rate by subject area ranged from 85.1% in 'Science and mathematics' to 94.5% in 'Engineering and manufacturing technologies' (Figure 41, Table A40).

None of the six colleges followed the sector trend with their highest retention rates in 'Engineering and manufacturing technologies'. 'Agriculture, horticulture and animal' had the highest retention rate in two of the six colleges, NWRC (100.0%) and SRC (99.3%). 'Education and training' also had the highest retention rate in two colleges, SWC (100.0%) and BMC (94.8%). The highest rates in SERC and NRC were for 'Business, administration and law' (94.9%) and 'Construction, planning and the built environment' (94.5%) respectively.

Following the FE Sector trend, the lowest retention rate in NRC was in 'Science and mathematics' (77.8%). The lowest retention rates in NWRC (77.8%) and SWC (80.3%) were in 'Social Sciences'. The lowest retention rate in SRC was in 'Education and training' (81.1%). In SERC, the lowest retention rate was in 'Information and communication technology' (82.3%), while in BMC the lowest retention rates were in both 'Information and communication technology' and 'Agriculture, horticulture and animal' (85.4%) (Table A40).



**Figure 41: Retention rate for regulated enrolments by subject area in 2015/16**



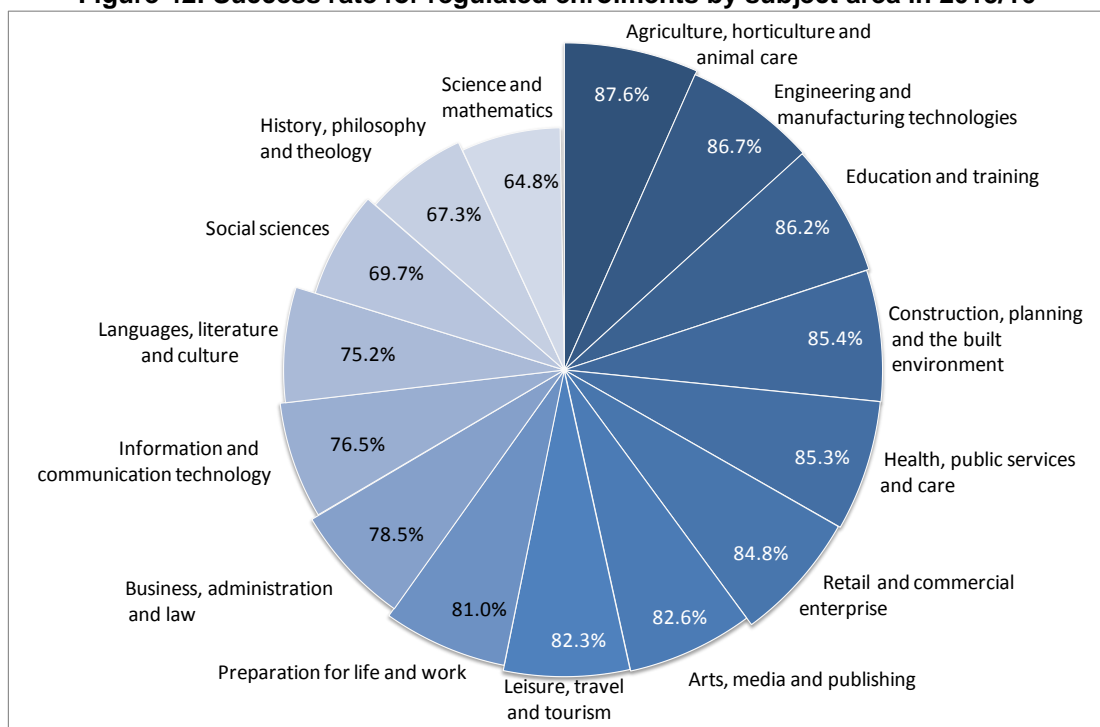
### Success rate

The subject area success rates ranged from 64.8% in 'Science and mathematics' to 87.6% in 'Agriculture, horticulture & animal care' (Figure 42, Table A40).

Four of the six colleges followed the sector trend with their highest success rates in 'Agriculture, horticulture & animal care'; NWRC (100.0%), SRC (98.0%), NRC (91.6%) and SWC (91.2%). In both BMC (91.1%) and SERC (88.8%), the highest success rates were in 'Construction, planning and the built environment'.

Four of the six colleges followed the sector trend with their lowest success rates in 'Science and mathematics'; NWRC (39.8%), SWC (51.4%), BMC (64.5%) and SERC (72.1%). The lowest success rates in SRC and NRC were 'History, philosophy and theology' (69.5%) and NRC, 'Information and communication technology' (73.6%) respectively (Table A40).

**Figure 42: Success rate for regulated enrolments by subject area in 2015/16**



## Performance by STEM

### Retention rate

In 2015/16 students were more likely to complete 'Broad' STEM courses than either 'Narrow' STEM or non-STEM courses. The retention rates for final year enrolments in 'Broad' STEM, 'Narrow' STEM and non-STEM were 91.2%, 89.7% and 89.9% respectively (Figure 43, Table A41).

For 'Broad' STEM, two colleges had higher rates than the FE sector average, SWC (94.7%) and SRC (93.3%), while the other four colleges, [SERC (87.6%), NWRC (90.1%), NRC (90.4%) and BMC (90.9%)] had retention rates below the sector average.

Retention rates in 'Narrow' STEM by college ranged from 86.6% in SERC to 93.9% in SWC (Table A41).

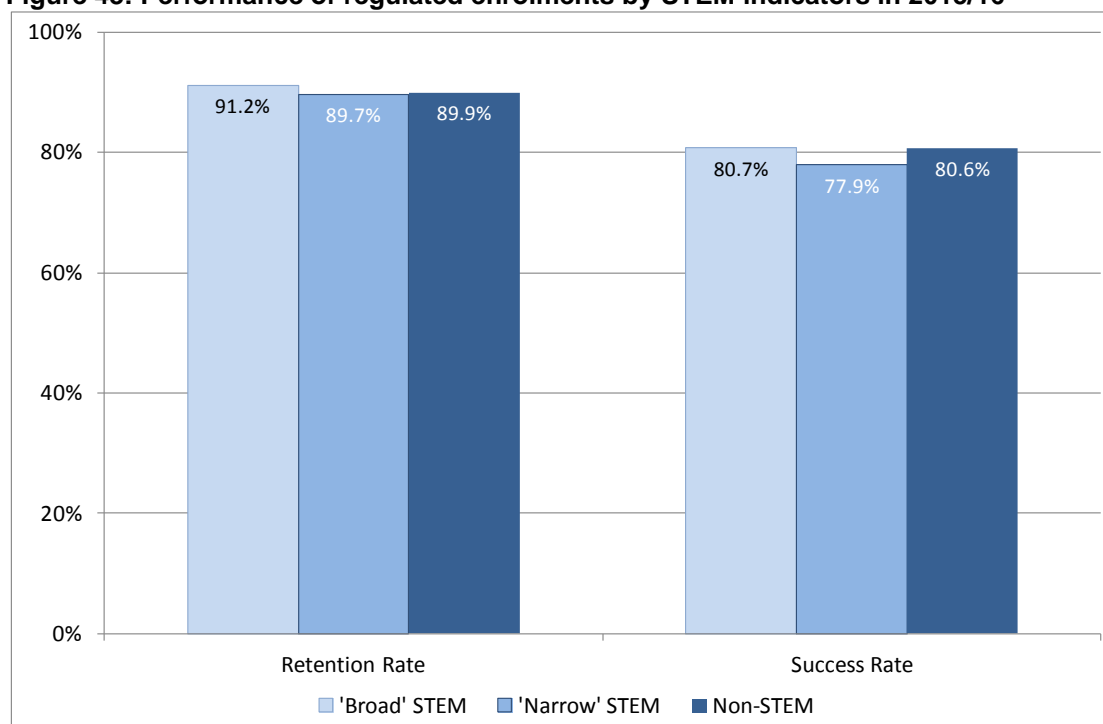
### Success rate

The FE sector success rates for 'Broad' STEM (80.7%) and non-STEM (80.6%) were higher than that for 'Narrow' STEM (77.9%) (Figure 43, Table A41).

For 'Broad' STEM, three colleges had higher rates than the FE sector average [SRC (85.5%), NRC (82.3%) and SWC (82.1%)] while the other three colleges [BMC (78.3%), NWRC (78.3%) and SERC (79.5%)] had success rates below the FE sector average.

Success rates in 'Narrow' STEM by college ranged from 71.6% in NWRC to 82.3% in SWC (Table A41).

**Figure 43: Performance of regulated enrolments by STEM indicators in 2015/16**



## Performance by deprivation

### Retention rate

Across the FE sector, retention rates tended to be slightly higher for less deprived areas ranging from 87.3% for the most deprived quintile to 91.9% for the least deprived quintile (Figure 44, Table A42).

Final year enrolments from the least deprived quintile had the highest retention rate SWC (97.0%), SERC (93.3%) and BMC (92.1%), while the highest retention rates in SRC (93.6%) and NRC (88.9%) were in the 2<sup>nd</sup> least deprived quintile. In NWRC the highest retention rate was in the middle quintile (92.7%).

Across all colleges, final year enrolments from the most deprived quintile had the lowest retention rate. However, the range in retention rates for final year enrolments from the five quintiles varied little across the colleges. The maximum percentage point difference from lowest (85.1%) to highest (92.7%) quintile was 7.6 percentage points in NWRC (Table A42).

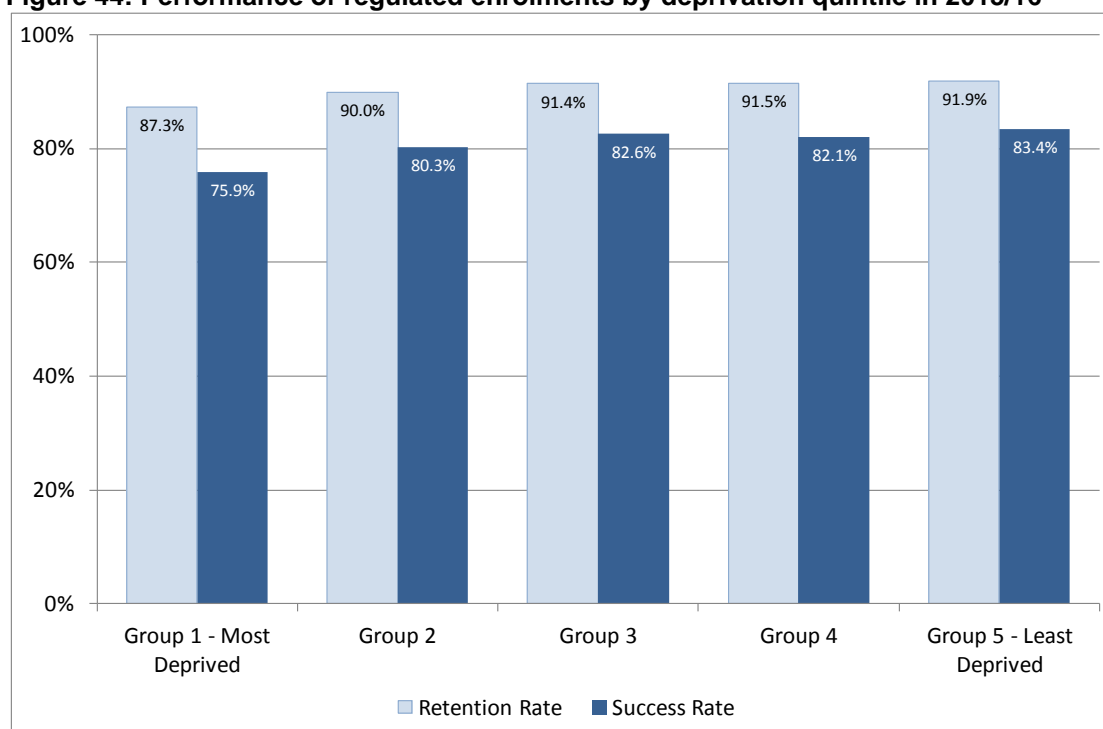
## Success rate

The success rates in the FE sector ranged upwards from 75.9% for final year enrolments from the most deprived quintile to 83.4% for those from the least deprived quintile (Figure 44, Table A42).

In all six colleges, final year enrolments from the most deprived quintile had the lowest success rates. Across colleges, the lowest success rate ranged upwards from 72.0% in NWRC to 81.9% in SRC.

The percentage point range in success rates across deprivation quintiles varied from over 4.5 percentage points in SRC to 14.0 percentage points in NWRC. In SRC, the lowest success rate was in the most deprived quintile (81.9%) and the highest success rate was in the middle quintile (86.5%). In NWRC, the lowest success rate was also in the most deprived quintile (72.0%) and the highest success rate was also in the middle quintile (86.0%) (Table A42).

**Figure 44: Performance of regulated enrolments by deprivation quintile in 2015/16**



## **Annex A: Definitions**

### ***Academic Year***

Each academic year period is defined by each FE college and potentially will differ across all six colleges. An academic year traditionally starts in August and finishes in July the following year.

### ***Achievement rate***

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

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

### ***Age***

Age is at 1<sup>st</sup> July of the previous academic year, based on the start date of the course.

### ***Deprivation***

The analysis presented in the publication utilises 5 groups or quintiles of super output areas (SOAs) across Northern Ireland. These 5 groups are determined based on level of relative deprivation using the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM).

SOAs ranked 1 to 178 are the most deprived quintile of SOAs relative to all other SOAs. Those ranked 713 to 890 are the least deprived relative to all other SOAs.

SOA is determined using the postcode provided on the enrolment record.

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](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/nimdm_2010.htm)

### ***Enrolments***

Total enrolments are taken to be the sum of all regulated and non-regulated enrolments within FE colleges during each academic year. The enrolment figures are simply a count of the number of enrolment records within the data return.

### ***Essential Skills***

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

### ***Final year enrolments***

A student can enrol on a course that is multiple years in length, but those on a one year course or the second year of a two year course are regarded as final year enrolments.

### ***Final year completers***

Those enrolments in their final year who do not withdraw from their course are regarded as final year completers.

### ***Final year achievements***

Those enrolments in their final year, who have completed the course and subsequently achieved are regarded as final year achievements.

### ***Funding streams***

Enrolments at FE colleges can be funded through a variety of funding streams, including DfE funded provisions, such as the Funded Learning Unit (FLU) or government training programmes. These training programmes include Training for Success (TfS), Steps to Work (StW) and apprenticeships; TfS includes Programme Led Apprenticeships (PLA), Skills for Life and Skills for Work. Enrolments can also be funded through non-DfE funded provision, such as Entitlement Framework (EF) or Cost Recovery (CR). EF includes Discrete Special Education/Needs. CR can be either public or private.

### ***Further Education College***

Please refer to the link below for further detail about FE colleges in Northern Ireland.

[Contextual Information regarding the FE Sector](#)

### ***Individual***

The number of individuals for each academic year has been determined (using Student Reference and FE college as the unique identifier) within the specific academic year period. The total number of individuals calculated over the entire time period therefore does not equal the summation of all individual academic years. This is due to the fact an individual may be enrolled in a number of academic years.

### ***Level***

If the enrolment is regulated, then the level is derived from the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ). If the enrolment is not part of the RRQ, the level is based on the information entered against the enrolment by the FE college.

Each regulated qualification has a level between entry level and level 8. Qualifications at the same level typically have a similar level of demand or difficulty. The content and size of qualifications at the same level may be quite different.

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

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

### ***Mode of Attendance***

Mode of attendance identifies enrolments studying full-time or part-time.

For enrolments from 2013/14:

- (a) Full-time enrolments include all enrolments whose attendance is:
- i. full-time (for at least 15 hours and at least 7 sessions per week, or for more than 21 hours per week, with no sessional requirement);
- (b) Part-time enrolments include all enrolments whose attendance is:
- i. on sandwich courses; or
  - ii. on short courses (single self-contained periods of full-time study of under 4 weeks' duration, within one academic year, which do not have to satisfy the hour and session requirement of (a) above).
  - iii. part-time day;
  - iv. block release;
  - v. evening only;
  - vi. open/distance learning; or
  - vii. linked to their attendance at a school on a full-time basis.

### ***Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications (PLAQ)***

Access courses and courses included on the Department's PLAQ reside outside those recognised by OFQUAL, but comply with quality criteria specified by the Department. The DfE has granted all such qualifications the same status as those qualifications on the OFQUAL register for the purposes of funding and performance measurement.

### **Provision Area**

For the purposes of this analysis, the three Provision Areas are Further Education, Higher Education and Essential Skills:

- Further Education provision is identified by the qualification aim and level entered. If the qualification aim is 500 or higher and the level is 3 or lower, this indicates that the enrolment is Further Education. This excludes Essential Skills provision, which is identified by the qualification aim 960, 961 or 962.
- Higher Education provision is identified by the qualification aim and level entered. If the qualification aim is less than 500 and the level is 4 or higher, this indicates that the enrolment is Higher Education.
- Essential Skills provision is identified by the qualification aim entered. If the qualification aim is 960, 961 or 962, this indicates that the enrolment is Essential Skills. Only Essential Skills enrolments in FE colleges are included in this analysis. For further details on all Essential Skills enrolments, please refer to the Essential Skills publications at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/essential-skills-enrolments-publications-2016>

### **Qualifications**

Qualifications are counted for those final year enrolments in regulated courses at FE colleges. An individual can fully achieve, partially achieve or fail their qualification.

The underlying principle is that full achievement and partial achievement should be measured against the programme of study on which a student is enrolled, for example, what is agreed in the learner's Individual Learning Programme. Therefore, full and partial achievements are defined as:

- Full achievement will be recorded when those enrolling on a full qualification achieve that qualification, and when those enrolling on a part/unit of a qualification achieve that part/unit.
- Partial achievement should be recorded when the qualification for which a student has enrolled has not been achieved in full and either: (a) a student achieves a certified component of the intended qualification, for example, a QCF Award instead of a QCF Certificate, or a QCF Certificate instead of a QCF Diploma; or (b) a student does not achieve a certified component of the intended qualification, but still achieves 50% or more of the intended qualification, for example, 50% or more of the QCF units. It should be noted that 50% or more of QCF qualifications is based on units achieved and not on credits; even though credits would be a more accurate measure of achievement, credit information is not readily available to colleges from the examination results provided by awarding organisations.

### **Regulated**

From academic year 2013/14, only those courses on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ) or the Department's Prescribed List of



Approved Non NQF/QCF Qualification (PLAQ) list (for Level 3 and below), or are Higher Education (HE) in FE courses (Level 4 and above), will be deemed as 'regulated' by the Department. Anything that falls outside this definition is not considered, in Departmental terms, as 'regulated', regardless of whether it is considered to produce 'outcomes', for example internal college certification.

In publications for 2013/14, onwards, the term 'regulated', is now used in regard to this type of provision within FE. This cohort of FE provision is comparable with the previous figures for Professional and Technical.

As students can be enrolled in multiple courses the same individual can have enrolments in regulated and non-regulated courses within the one academic year.

### ***Retention rate***

Retention rate is defined as the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study to the number of final year enrolments. Since 2012/13, those who complete their course early (and recorded in the data as a withdrawal) and who have subsequently achieved their programme of study qualification have been regarded as a 'completer'. This may inflate the retention rate from 2012/13 onwards in comparison with earlier academic years.

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

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

### ***Sector Subject Area***

The Sector Subject Area (SSA) code is derived from the official OFQUAL Register of Regulated Qualifications based on the qualification or unit code. The SSA code registered against each qualification or unit has been assigned by the responsible awarding organisation. The SSAs were developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the ACCAC, the Welsh authority, along with other key educational bodies according to industry sector and academic subject area. They aim to allow more consistent reporting of data across the UK.

Further information on SSAs is available at:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+www.ofqual.gov.uk/research-and-statistics/statistics/429-sector-subject-area-classification-system-ssac>

**STEM**

STEM provision is identified by the subject code entered by the FE college. If the subject code starts with a letter between A and K (that is Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects; Biological and Physical Sciences; Agriculture; Mathematics and IT; Engineering and Technology and Architecture, Building and Planning), it is regarded as 'Broad' STEM. 'Narrow' STEM comprises those enrolment records with a subject code starting with a letter C, F, G, H or J (that is Biological and Physical Sciences; Mathematics and IT and Engineering and Technology).

**Success rate**

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

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

OR

Retention rate x Achievement rate

## Annex B: Technical Notes

1. In recent years, extensive work has been carried out to develop a Consolidated Data Return (CDR), which brings together into a single dataset the five main individual Departmental returns from FE colleges, namely FLU, FESR, Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER), Entitlement Framework (EF) and FELS.
2. 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.
3. The information presented in this statistical bulletin has been derived from the CDR, which is provided by FE colleges.

The CDR came into operation for the 2013/14 academic year and is used for analysis related to the years 2013/14 to 2015/16. Each of the data returns are computerised data files consisting of individual records for each enrolment recorded by FE colleges during each academic year.

4. The number of enrolments is simply a count of the number of enrolment records within the relevant data return.
5. The number of individuals for each academic year has been determined (using Student Reference and FE college as the unique identifier) within the specific academic year period.
6. The enrolment information is correct as at 14<sup>th</sup> October 2016.
7. Any enrolments indicated to be Keyskills (qualification 199 and 599) have been excluded from this analysis.
8. The FLU mechanism converts all eligible student enrolments and activity into standard units, known as Funded Learning Units or FLU; the number of FLU generated by each enrolment being determined by the mode of attendance (that is full-time or part-time), duration, level and economic priority of the study, and the appropriate disadvantage weighting.
9. The Student with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (SLDD) field indicates if the student has any Special Learning Difficulties and/or

Disabilities and requires special teaching instruction, for example taught in reduced class number. Students who indicate a learning need on their enrolment form are assessed accordingly by learning support through the student's FE college. For this analysis, a student has been identified, using the SLDD field within the FLU return, as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities if the codes '02' (Mainstream - DO require extra support) or '03' (Discrete) are recorded by the FE college. This group of students is funded through the Additional Support Fund (ASF), which is provided to facilitate SLDD students to attend college.

10. A student can also be registered as '04' (Day Centre). This provision is delivered outside of FE college campuses. As there are no overheads or adjustments to be made to those registered as '04' (Day Centre), these are not included as part of the ASF and therefore excluded from this analysis. Further information is available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/participation-by-and-provision-students-learning-difficulties-and-disabilities-sldd>
11. Since 2013/14, the identification of final year enrolments has changed slightly from the selection criteria within the Further Education Leavers Survey (FELS) data return, which contained final year regulated enrolments only. In academic years prior to 2013/14, any enrolments indicated to be GCSE or A-Levels (qualification aims 560,614 and 615) and Combined Studies (including mixed A levels) (subject code Y400) were excluded from the FELS return.
12. A student can enrol on a course for a matter of weeks (sometimes months) and then transfer to another course. Due to the original course incurring teaching hours and funding, it is included within the overall enrolment count. It is, therefore, a measurable component of enrolment activity actually delivered. The recording of transfers is also important due to particular interest in transferred students and linking this to careers guidance.
13. 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.
14. For academic years from 2013/14, full-time provision consists of either at least 15 hours and at least 7 sessions per week; or more than 21 hours per week, with no sessional requirement. All other mode of attendance options are regarded as part-time.

15. For academic years from 2013/14, 'regulated enrolments' are regarded as those on courses that are at 'Level 3 or below' and appear on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ), which contains qualifications on both the Qualifications and Credit Framework and the National Qualifications Framework or part of the Department's Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications (PLAQ)/Access list) and Higher Education qualifications ('Level 4 and above').

From 2013/14, non-regulated enrolments are those that potentially lead to a formal qualification (at 'Level 3 or below'), but do not appear on the RRQ, or where a qualification is not expected, typically hobby and leisure, or recreational courses.

16. For all enrolments, the Sector Subject Area (SSA) categorisation was revised during 2013/14. It is derived from the official OFQUAL Register of Regulated Qualifications, based on the qualification or unit code. The SSA code registered against each qualification or unit has been assigned by the responsible awarding organisation. Prior to this, it was derived from the subject code entered by the FE college. Following the outcome of the review, when enrolments are presented by SSA, they are only comparable from the academic year 2013/14 onwards.
17. Equality related data, such as political opinion, religious belief and sexual orientation, were introduced in 2013/14 to the data capture process within FE colleges.
18. In 2013/14, additional dependant categories (elderly, disability, no care required) have been added to the data collection process. In previous academic years, only dependant adults and children were recorded. (Table S2).
19. Although typically individuals will attend their local college, an individual can attend any FE college across Northern Ireland. 'Hypothetical Regional College Catchment Areas' (HRCCAs) have been created for each of the six colleges to provide information, beyond enrolment data, on all individuals within the catchment area to each college, who may or may not be in contact with the FE college.
20. The HRCCA geographical areas were created for each of the six regional colleges. These HRCCAs were established by merging certain pre 2015 Local Government District (LGD) areas together based on Further Education enrolments over a five academic year period. This was to determine which LGDs could be assigned to a particular Regional College. The Regional College with the highest percentage of enrolments from a particular LGD was assigned that LGD.
21. The 2015 mid-year population estimates have been examined in terms of the age and gender profile to compare against the profiles within the enrolments of each regional college.
22. Further information on the mid-year population estimates, please visit: <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp17.htm>

## **Further Enquiries**

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

Allan Matthews  
Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education)  
Department for Economy  
Adelaide House  
39/49 Adelaide Street  
BELFAST  
BT2 8FD

Telephone: 028 9025 7727  
Fax: 028 9025 7696  
E-mail: [allan.matthews@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:allan.matthews@economy-ni.gov.uk)

Media enquiries should be made to the Department's Press Office in Netherleigh:

Department for the Economy  
Netherleigh  
Massey Avenue  
BELFAST  
BT4 2JP

Telephone: 028 9052 9604  
Email: [pressoffice@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:pressoffice@economy-ni.gov.uk)

This statistical bulletin and other statistical bulletins published by Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education) are available to download free from the internet at:

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