



# Further Education Activity in Northern Ireland: 2010/11 to 2014/15

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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 2010/11 to 2014/15. 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) over the five year period.

**Key points:**

- Over the past five academic years, the number of enrolments at FE colleges decreased by 5.7% from 186,470 in 2010/11 to 175,818 in 2014/15 (Figure 1, Table A1).
- The proportion of all enrolments that are regulated decreased from 83.4% in 2010/11 to 79.7% in 2014/15 (Figure 6, Table A5).
- Of the 140,137 regulated enrolments in 2014/15 nearly four-fifths (78.3%) were at 'Level 2 or above' (Figure 16, Table A14).
- The number of Higher Education enrolments at FE colleges increased by 6.5% from 11,004 in 2010/11 to 11,722 in 2014/15. (Table 3).
- Over the period 2010/11 to 2014/15 the retention rate in FE colleges increased from 87.7% to 89.3%; the achievement rate increased from 80.3% to 88.9%; and the success rate increased from 70.4% to 79.4% (Figure 35, Table A29).

## Reader Information

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

READER INFORMATION .....	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	3
LIST OF FIGURES .....	5
LIST OF TABLES.....	6
ABOUT STATISTICS & RESEARCH BRANCH .....	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
Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15 .....	12
FE colleges .....	13
Age .....	14
Gender .....	15
Mode of attendance .....	15
1.2 Regulated & Non-regulated enrolments .....	17
Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15.....	17
FE colleges .....	18
Age .....	19
Gender .....	20
Mode of attendance .....	20
1.3 Funding streams 2014/15.....	21
<b>SECTION 2: REGULATED ENROLMENTS IN 2014/15 .....</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
Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15.....	31
FE colleges .....	32
Regulated/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
Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15.....	31
FE colleges .....	38
Higher Education Enrolments in 2014/15 .....	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 &amp; PERFORMANCE .....</b>	<b>47</b>
5.1 Final year enrolments .....	47
Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15 .....	47
FE colleges .....	47
5.2 Qualifications .....	48
Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15 .....	48
FE colleges .....	48
5.3 Performance .....	49
Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15 .....	49
FE colleges .....	50
Academic year 2014/15.....	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 2014/15 .....	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 2014/15 .....	15
Figure 5: All Enrolments by mode of attendance and FE college in 2014/15 .....	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 2014/15.....	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 2014/15.....	21
Figure 11: Proportion of regulated enrolments by FE college in 2014/15 .....	22
Figure 12: Proportion of regulated enrolments by age band and FE college in 2014/15.....	23
Figure 13: Proportion of regulated enrolments by gender and FE college in 2014/15.....	24
Figure 14: Proportion of regulated enrolments by gender and mode of attendance in 2014/15 ...	25
Figure 15: Proportion of regulated enrolments by provision area in 2014/15 .....	26
Figure 16: Proportion of regulated enrolments by level of study in 2014/15 .....	27
Figure 17: Regulated enrolments by subject area and gender in 2014/15 .....	28
Figure 18: Proportion of regulated enrolments by STEM indicators and FE college in 2014/15 ..	29
Figure 19: Proportion of regulated enrolments by deprivation quintiles and FE college in 2014/15 .....	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 2014/15 .....	33
Figure 24: Proportion of FLU enrolments by mode of attendance and FE college in 2014/15 .....	34
Figure 25: Proportion of FLU enrolments by level of study and FE college in 2014/15 .....	36
Figure 26: Proportion of FLU enrolments by subject area in 2014/15.....	37
Figure 27: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by FE college in 2014/15 .....	39
Figure 28: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by age band and FE college in 2014/15 ..	40
Figure 29: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by gender and FE college in 2014/15 .....	40
Figure 30: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by gender and mode of attendance in 2014/15 .....	41
Figure 31: Proportion of higher education enrolments by level of study in 2014/15 .....	42
Figure 32: Higher Education enrolments by subject area and gender in 2014/15 .....	43
Figure 33: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by STEM indicators and FE college in 2014/15 .....	44
Figure 34: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by deprivation quintiles and FE college in 2014/15 .....	45
Figure 35: Performance of regulated enrolments by academic year .....	50
Figure 36: Performance of regulated enrolments by age band in 2014/15 .....	52
Figure 37: Performance of regulated enrolments by gender in 2014/15 .....	53
Figure 38: Performance of regulated enrolments by mode of attendance in 2014/15 .....	54
Figure 39: Performance of regulated enrolments by provision area in 2014/15 .....	55
Figure 40: Performance of regulated enrolments in by level of study in 2014/15 .....	56
Figure 41: Retention rate for regulated enrolments by subject area in 2014/15 .....	57
Figure 42: Success rate for regulated enrolments by subject area in 2014/15 .....	58
Figure 43: Performance of regulated enrolments by STEM indicators in 2014/15 .....	59
Figure 44: Performance of regulated enrolments by deprivation quintile in 2014/15 .....	60

## List of Tables

Table 1: All enrolments by FE college and academic year .....	13
Table 2: Proportion of regulated enrolments with & without ROI domicile students in NWRC by deprivation quintiles in 2014/15 .....	30
Table 3: Higher Education enrolments by FE college and academic year.....	38
Table 4: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments with & without ROI domicile students in NWRC by deprivation quintiles in 2014/15 .....	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 & Research Branch (SRB)

Statistics & Research Branch 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, Mrs. Laura Smyth. The Branch aims to present information in a meaningful way and provide advice on its uses to customers in the DEL Committee, Further Education Colleges, Universities, Professional Advisory Groups, policy branches within the DEL, 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:

**Website:** <https://www.delni.gov.uk/publications/statistics-publication-schedule>

### An Official Statistics Publication

The statistics within this bulletin were 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 DEL Statement of Compliance in relation to the 'Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order (Northern Ireland) 2009 is available at:

<https://www.delni.gov.uk/publications/dels-statement-compliance>

### Feedback

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

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## 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 DEL and presents a range of analysis regarding enrolments in the NI FE Sector covering academic years 2010/11 to 2014/15. 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 five 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 will therefore be counted as two or more enrolments. This report includes data relating to the academic years 2010/11 to 2014/15. Previous statistical reports can be found at:

<https://www.delni.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 examination of all enrolments
  - regulated/non-regulated provision
  - the funding streams of enrolments.
- [Section 2](#) concentrates on all regulated enrolments.
- [Section 3](#) focuses on FLU funded enrolments only.
- [Section 4](#) focuses on Higher Education enrolments in FE Colleges only.
- The final [Section 5](#) details the qualifications and performance of final year enrolments at FE colleges in NI.

In all five sections the analysis are 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 2014/15 academic year, examining both the FE sector and FE colleges.



## 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 a series of statistical returns (listed below) provided by FE colleges.

- Further Education Statistical Return (FESR)
- Further Education Leavers Survey (FELS)
- Consolidated Data return (CDR)
- Funded Learning Unit (FLU)

The statistics in regard to 2010/11 to 2012/13 have been derived from the FESR, FELS and FLU. The CDR only came into operation for the 2013/14 academic year and is used for analysis related to the years 2013/14 to 2014/15. Each of the data returns are computerised data files consisting of individual records for each enrolment recorded by FE colleges during each academic year.

Over the last number of years there has been extensive work carried out to develop a CDR, which aims to bring the five main individual Departmental returns from FE colleges, namely FLU, FESR, Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER), Entitlement Framework (EF) and FELS, together into a single dataset.

There are significant benefits to be realised in collating all the data requirements of the Department into one single return. Streamlining the production process of data increases the efficiency of the process in generating the data. With extra information now available for each enrolment record, it also increases the potential in terms of analytical ability, whilst 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 with regards to the CDR process can be found at [Annex B](#).

## Additional Tables

There are detailed Additional and Supplementary Tables available on the DEL web page: [Further Education Activity in FE Colleges in Northern Ireland 2014/15](#).

## **Rounding**

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

## **Data Quality**

All information presented in this bulletin has been validated and quality assured by FE colleges prior to publication. FE colleges are given a set period of time to submit the information to Statistics & Research Branch. Following submission, SRB perform a series of validation checks to ensure that information is consistent both within and across returns. Trend analyses are used 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 is presented to FE colleges for final sign-off.

## **Main Uses of Data**

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

The Department for Employment & Learning (DEL) is responsible for the policy, strategic development and financing of the statutory FE sector. Analysis of data trends against key strategic priorities remain a crucial component of data development within DEL. 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 DEL policy officials in their role of assisting and advising the Minister for DEL to discharge his duties; by the NI Assembly and DEL committee to scrutinise the FE sector; by other 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 information regarding to contextual Information for Using Further Education Statistics and comparing levels of qualifications please see the document:-

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

## **Policy and Operational Context**

For information regarding to Policy and Operational Context please refer to:-

[Policy and Operational Context](#)

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

While it is our intention to direct users to Further Education activity information elsewhere in the UK, users should be aware that Further Education activity information in other administrations are not always measured in a comparable manner to those in Northern Ireland due to differing counting rules. Details of the Further Education 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

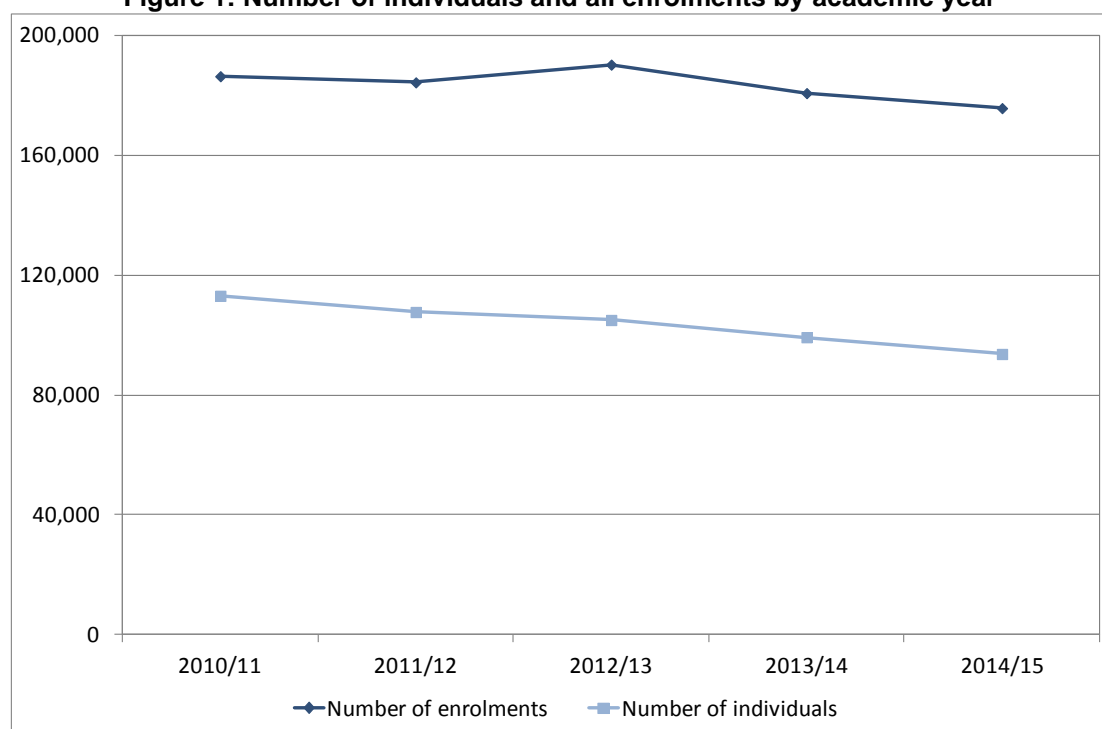
#### **Background**

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

#### Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15

Over the past five academic years, the number of enrolments at FE colleges decreased by 5.7% from 186,470 in 2010/11 to 175,818 in 2014/15. The number of individuals also decreased but more substantially, with a fall of 17.2% from 113,113 students in 2010/11 to 93,681 in 2014/15. There has been a steady decline in the number of students in each year over the period. This would suggest that while there are fewer students enrolling at FE colleges, those that do enrol are undertaking a higher number of courses. The number of enrolments per individual has increased from 1.6 to 1.9 over the five years (Figure 1, Table A1).

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



## FE colleges

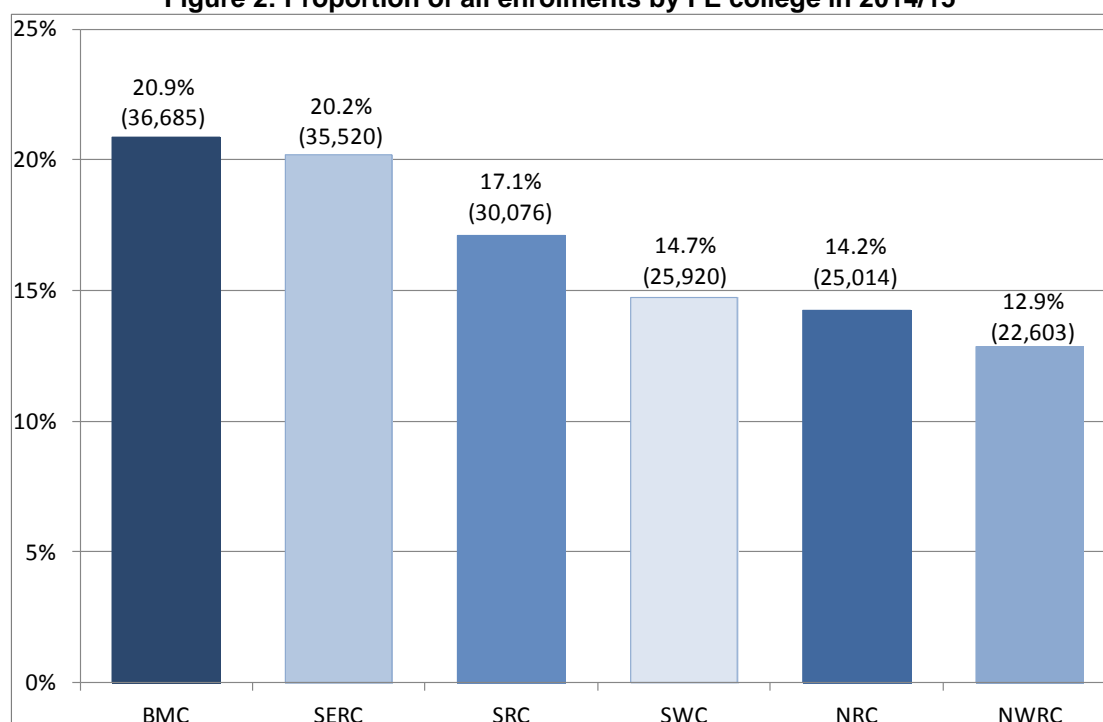
Over the last five academic years only Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC) had a pattern for all enrolments that was consistent with the entire FE sector. Four of the six colleges showed an overall decrease in enrolments [SRC (-18.9%), BMC (-15.0%), NWRC (-13.3%) and NRC (-1.8%)] across the five year period while enrolments at SERC (17.3%) and SWC (6.2%) increased. Of particular note, in SERC there was a 19.3% increase in enrolments from 2011/12 to 2012/13 but in each year since there has been a decrease in enrolments. NWRC and SRC showed a year on year decrease in enrolments over the period (Table 1).

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

FE college	Academic Year				
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
<b>BMC</b>	43,171	38,563	39,950	37,055	36,685
<b>NRC</b>	25,468	26,861	25,285	24,557	25,014
<b>NWRC</b>	26,072	25,662	24,953	23,167	22,603
<b>SERC</b>	30,275	31,267	37,312	35,832	35,520
<b>SRC</b>	37,081	35,492	35,436	33,075	30,076
<b>SWC</b>	24,403	26,575	27,408	27,139	25,920
<b>FE Sector Total</b>	<b>186,470</b>	<b>184,420</b>	<b>190,344</b>	<b>180,825</b>	<b>175,818</b>

All colleges experienced a decrease in enrolments in 2014/15 with the exception of NRC. In the most recent academic year (2014/15), of 175,818 enrolments, BMC had the highest proportion, accounting for 20.9% (36,685) and NWRC the lowest with 12.9% (22,603) (Figure 2, Table 1).

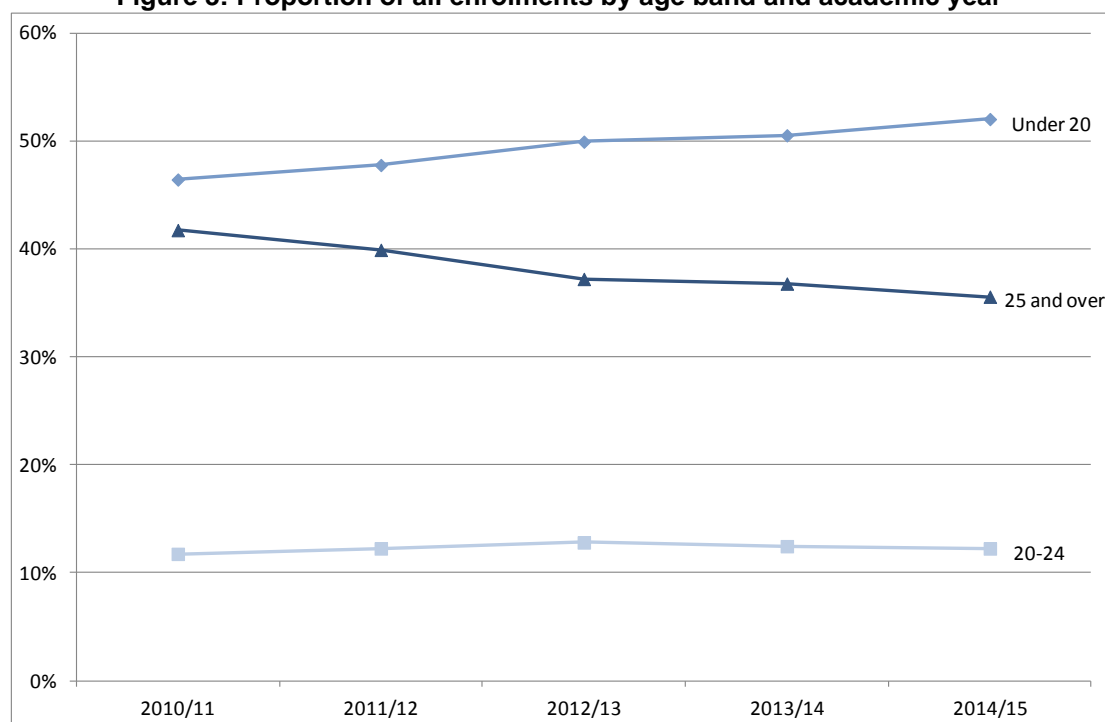
**Figure 2: Proportion of all enrolments by FE college in 2014/15**



## Age

In 2010/11, the proportion of enrolments in the age bands '19 and under' and '25 and over' accounted for similar proportions (46.4% and 41.7%, respectively). Since then, year on year, these proportions have diverged from one another with '19 and under' accounting for over half (52.0%) and '25 and over' accounting for 35.6% in 2014/15. Over the same period the proportion of '20 to 24' year olds increased slightly from 11.7% to 12.2% (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 43.8% in BMC to 68.0% in SERC, however in NWRC the majority were aged '25 and over' (50.8%) (Table A2).

An individual can attend any FE college across Northern Ireland, although typically individuals will attend their local college, in terms of proximity. 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. Please refer to [Annex B](#) for further details on HRCCA.

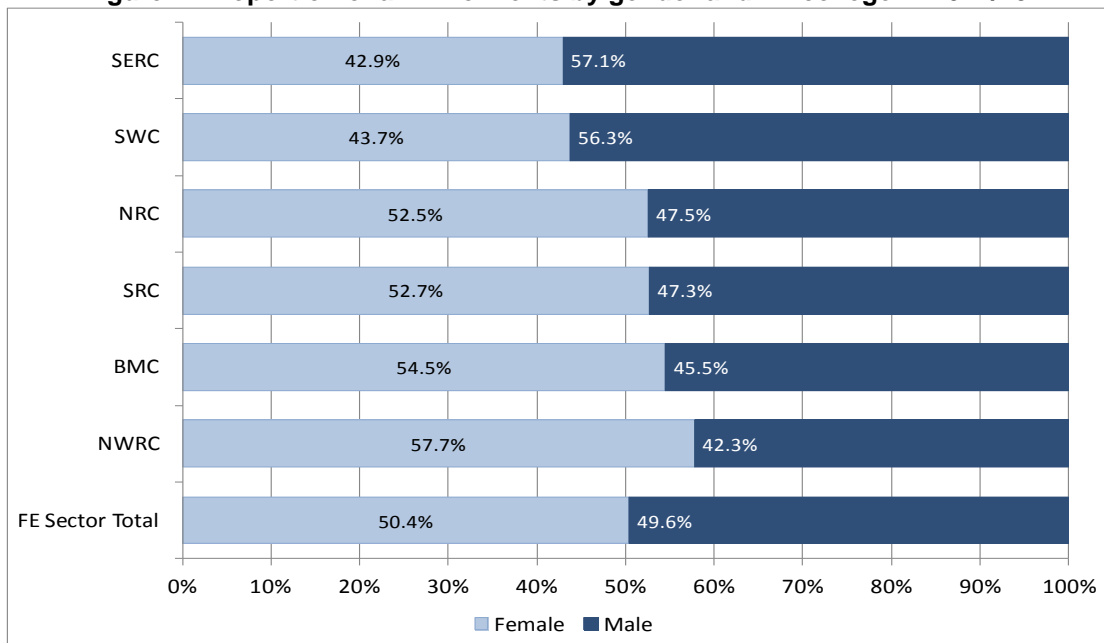
Based on [mid-year population estimates in 2014](#), the age profile in each of the six college HRCCAs indicates that the majority (typically over 80%) of individuals are aged 25 or over. This is only reflected in the proportions of enrolments in NWRC, where the majority are aged '25 and over'.

## Gender

Over the last five academic years, while females have accounted for the majority of enrolments each year, the proportion has decreased from 52.4% in 2010/11 to 50.4% in 2014/15. Conversely, the proportion of enrolments for males increased from 47.6% to 49.6% over the same period (Table A3).

In the last academic year (2014/15) there was wide variation across the six colleges in terms of the gender profile. Four of the six colleges had a higher proportion of females enrolled [NWRC (57.7%), BMC (54.5%), SRC (52.7%) and NRC (52.5%)]. The other two colleges had higher proportions of males enrolled [SERC (57.1%), SWC (56.3%)]. The resultant effect was a fairly even split in terms of the gender profile of enrolments, with 50.4% female and 49.6% male (Figure 4, Table A3).

**Figure 4: Proportion of all Enrolments by gender and FE college in 2014/15**



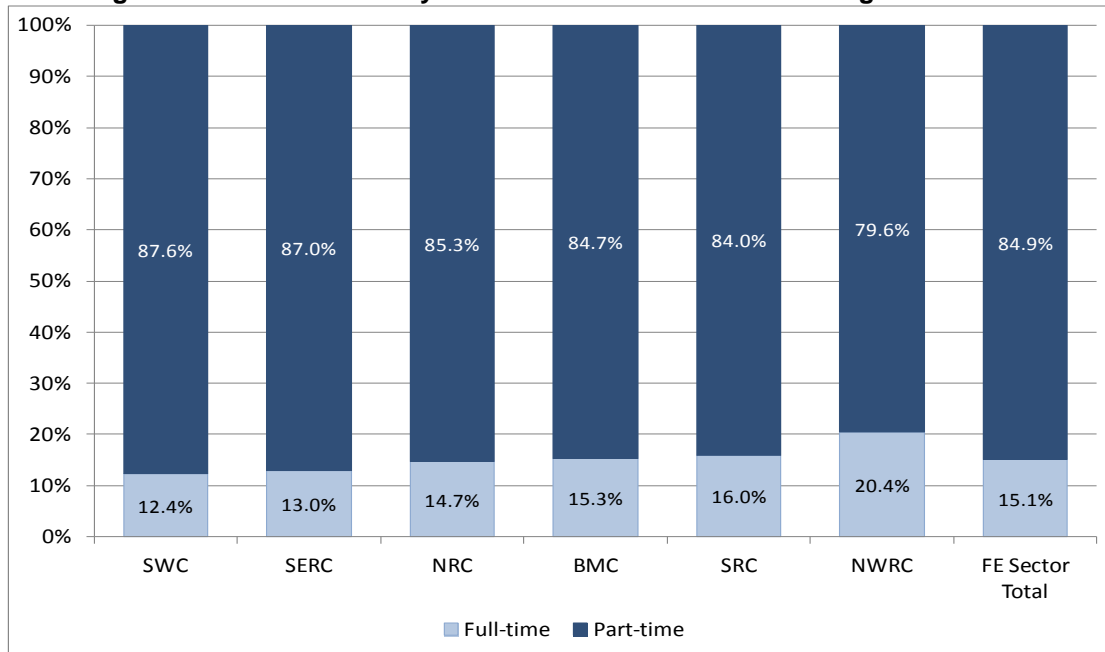
Based on [mid-year population estimates for 2014](#), all college HRCCAs, for those aged 16 and above, have more females than males. This is reflected in the proportions of gender in four colleges (NWRC, BMC, SRC and NRC). Converse to this are SERC and SWC who have more males than females enrolled on their courses.

## Mode of attendance

In 2010/11, the proportion of all enrolments within full-time provision was 15.7%, with 84.3% part-time. This split, in terms of mode of attendance, has remained fairly constant over the five year period. In 2014/15 the proportions were 15.1% full-time and 84.9% part-time (Table A4).

Comparing the FE colleges in 2014/15 indicates that NWRC (20.4%) had the highest proportion of full-time, while SWC (12.4%) had the lowest proportion (Figure 5, Table A4).

**Figure 5: All Enrolments by mode of attendance and FE college in 2014/15**





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

### **Background**

Within this section of analysis 'regulated enrolments' between 2010/11 and 2012/13 are defined as any enrolment which are not hobby & leisure, or recreational, identified through the qualification aim supplied by the FE college.

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) and 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 & leisure, or recreational courses.

The new definition of 'regulated enrolments' from 2013/14 onwards may result in a change in the proportion of regulated enrolments and therefore comparison with earlier years will need to take this into context. Consequently only trend analyses which are appropriate are included in this publication. 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 2010/11 to 2014/15, reflect the '[Further Education Means Business](#)' strategy, aimed at reducing the number of non-regulated enrolments and encouraging regulated economically focused provision.

### **Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15**

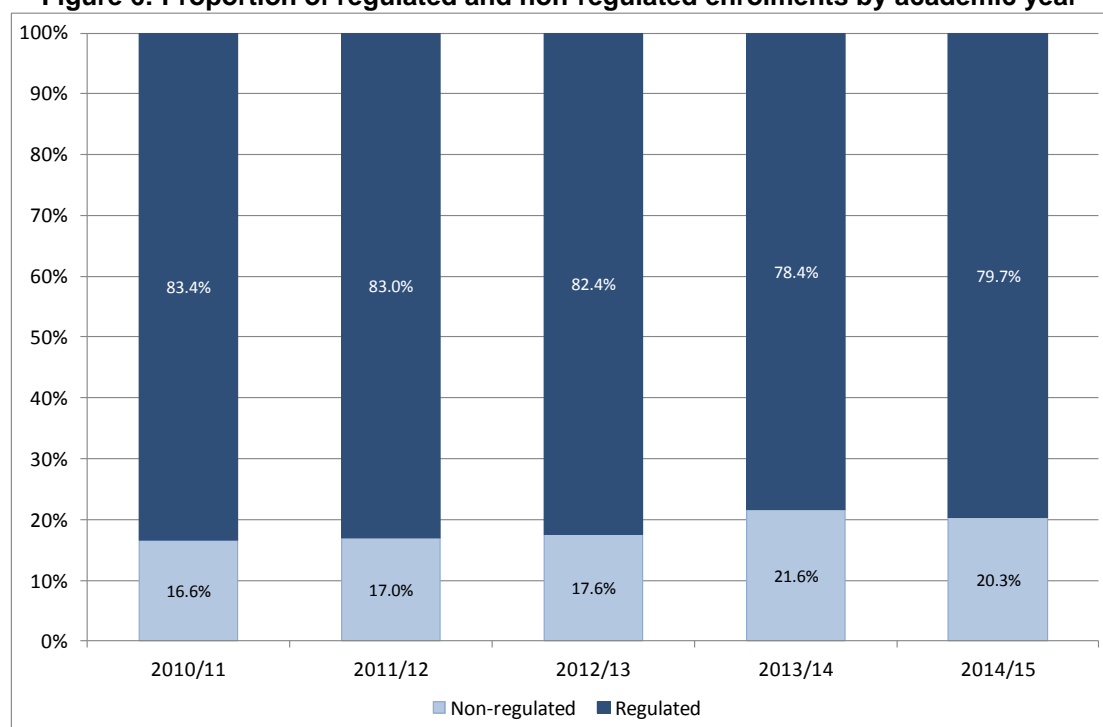
The proportion of regulated enrolments has decreased by over 3.6 percentage points from 83.4% in 2010/11 to 79.7% in 2014/15 (Figure 6, Table A5). However, the estimated real change in regulated enrolments is only a 0.6 percentage point decrease based on comparisons of the regulated enrolment count, if the 'old' definition was applied in 2014/15.

Non-regulated enrolment proportions have increased by over 3.6 percentage points from 16.6% in 2010/11 to 20.3% in 2014/15 (Figure 6, Table A5). However, the estimated real change in regulated enrolments is only a 0.6 percentage point increase based on comparisons of the regulated enrolment count, if the 'old' definition was applied in 2014/15.

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<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**



Of the 175,818 enrolments during the latest academic year (2014/15), almost four-fifths (79.7%, 140,137) were on regulated courses and 20.3% (35,681) were on non-regulated courses (Figure 6, Table A5). However, it should be noted that in line with the 'Further Education Means Business' policy, only 2% of the Department's funding for further education colleges, in 2014/15, is in respect of recreational provision, part of the non-regulated element.

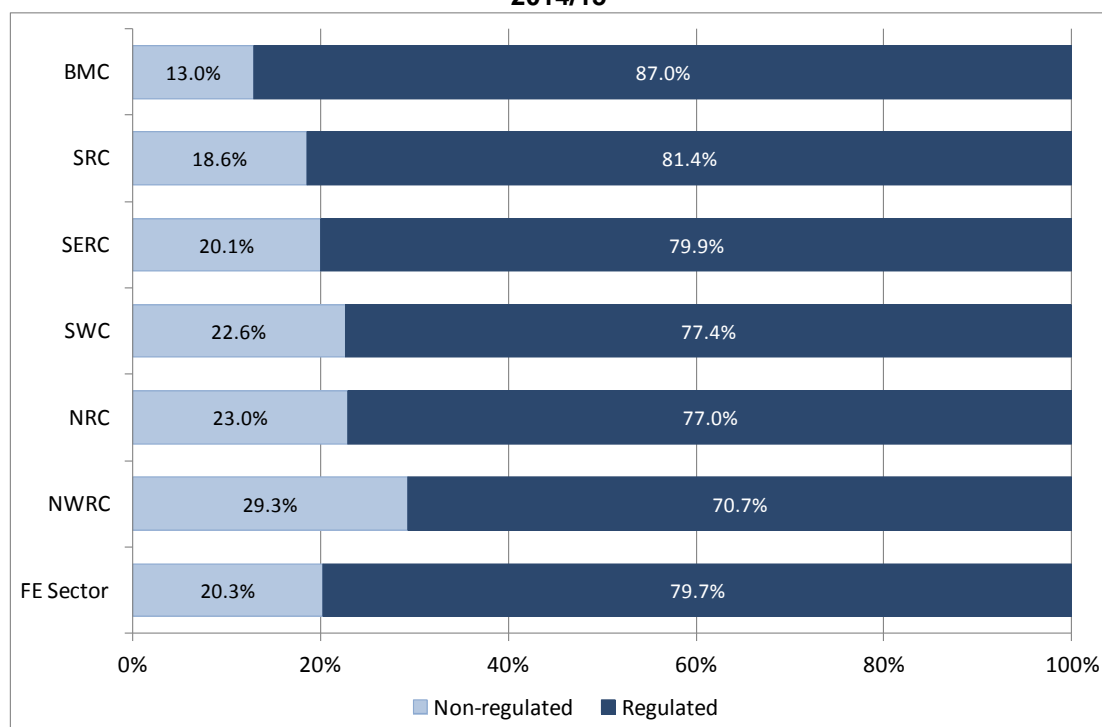
### FE colleges

The majority of enrolments were on regulated courses in all six colleges over the five year period 2010/11 to 2014/15, ranging from 87.9% in SERC (2010/11) to 70.7% in NWRC (2014/15). Five of the six colleges followed the sector trend of a decrease in the proportion of regulated enrolments over the period. The exception was BMC where the proportion of regulated enrolments increased by almost 5.5 percentage points, rising from 81.6% in 2010/11 to 87.0% in 2014/15.

Over the five year period NWRC reported the largest reduction in the proportion of regulated enrolments (9.7 percentage points) falling from 80.4% in 2010/11 to 70.7% in 2014/15 (Table A5).

In 2014/15 the proportion of regulated enrolments ranged from 70.7% in NWRC to 87.0% in BMC (Figure 7, Table A5).

**Figure 7: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by FE college in 2014/15**



## Age<sup>2</sup>

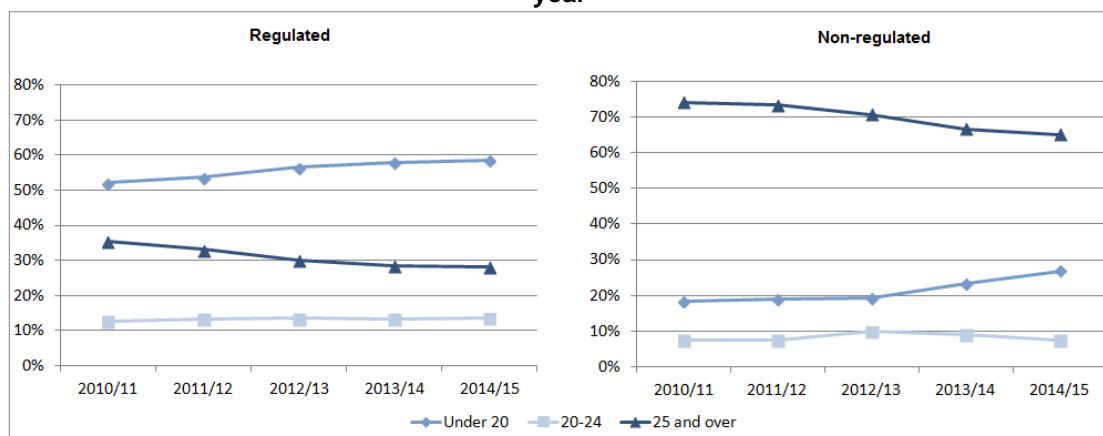
Over the five year period between 2010/11 and 2014/15, the majority of regulated enrolments were aged '19 and under', with a year-on-year increase from 52.0% in 2010/11 to 58.4% in 2014/15. Conversely, the proportion of regulated enrolments aged '25 and over' have decreased each year from 35.3% in 2010/11 to 28.1% in 2014/15. Those aged '20 to 24' increased slightly, accounting for 12.6% in 2010/11 and 13.5% in 2014/15.

A very different pattern is apparent with non-regulated enrolments across the same five year period. The majority of non-regulated enrolments each year were aged '25 and over'- in 2010/11, 74.0% of all non-regulated enrolments were aged '25 and over', falling each year to 65.0% in 2014/15. Non-regulated enrolments aged '19 and under' increased year on year from 18.2% in 2010/11 to 26.8% in 2014/15. Non-regulated enrolments aged '20 to 24' increased from 7.4% in 2010/11 to 9.1% in 2013/14 but decreased to 7.4% again by 2014/15.

Older people are enrolling on 'non-regulated' type courses, while younger people enrol on formally recognised qualification based courses. However, over the period there has been a gradual increase in enrolments by younger people in non-regulated courses (Figure 8, Table A6).

<sup>2</sup> Please note any comparisons on regulated and non-regulated provision made to 2013/14 and 2014/15 need to take into account the change in definition of 'regulated'. Refer to technical note 15 (page 69) for further details on this.

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



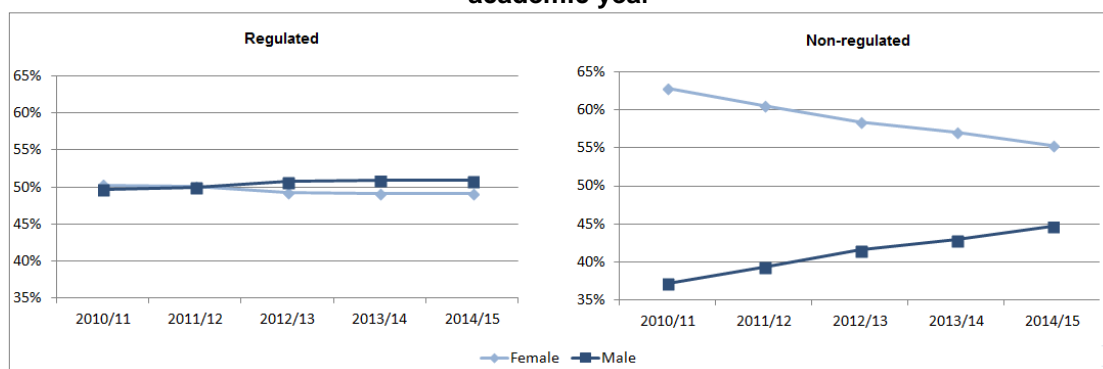
Please note there are a small element of unknown ages (<0.5%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A6

## Gender<sup>2</sup>

In 2010/11, 50.3% of regulated enrolments were female and the remaining 49.7% male. In 2011/12 however, the gender split became balanced with 50.0% for both female and male. Since 2012/13 male enrolments have accounted for the larger share of regulated provision. In 2014/15 male enrolments accounted for just over half (50.9%) of the regulated enrolments.

Gender differences are more notable for non-regulated courses with females accounting for a much higher proportion. However this has been decreasing over time as the proportion of females on non-regulated courses has decreased from 62.8% in 2010/11 to 55.3% in 2014/15, while male enrolments increased from 37.2% to 44.7% 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<sup>2</sup>

In 2010/11, 18.3% of all regulated enrolments were full-time and 81.7% were part-time. This pattern of provision remained almost constant across the following four years, with 18.9% full-time and 81.1% part-time in 2014/15.

For non-regulated courses, almost all enrolments were part-time, ranging from 97.3% in 2010/11 to 99.9% in 2014/15 (Table A8).

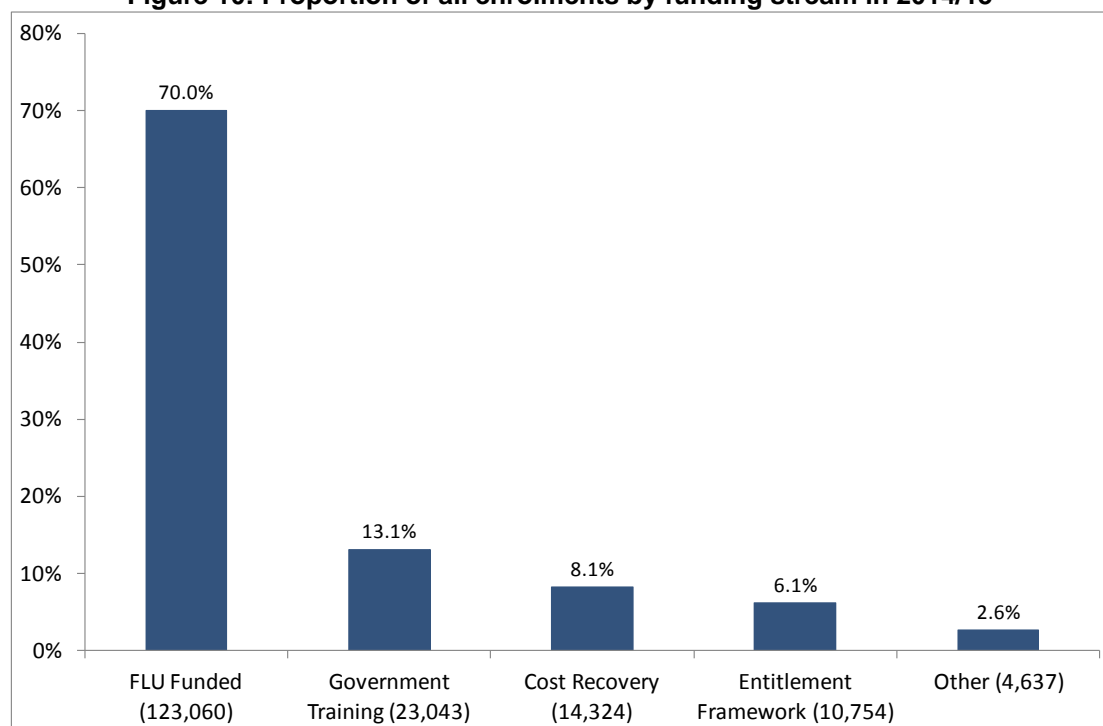
### 1.3 – Funding streams 2014/15

There are a number of funding streams available to FE colleges to deliver provision. These include direct funding from the Department for Employment & Learning (DEL) 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 2014/15.

Of the 175,818 enrolments in 2014/15, over two-thirds (70.0%) were funded through the Funded Learning Unit (FLU), 13.1% were funded through government training programmes, 8.1% were cost recovery and 6.1% through the Entitlement Framework programme. There were a further 2.6% of enrolments where the funding stream was classed as 'Other' (Figure 10, Table A9).

In 2014/15, the FLU proportion of all enrolments in colleges ranges from 57.5% in SWC to 83.3% in NWRC (Table A9).

**Figure 10: Proportion of all enrolments by funding stream in 2014/15**



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

## Section 2: Regulated enrolments in 2014/15

### Overview

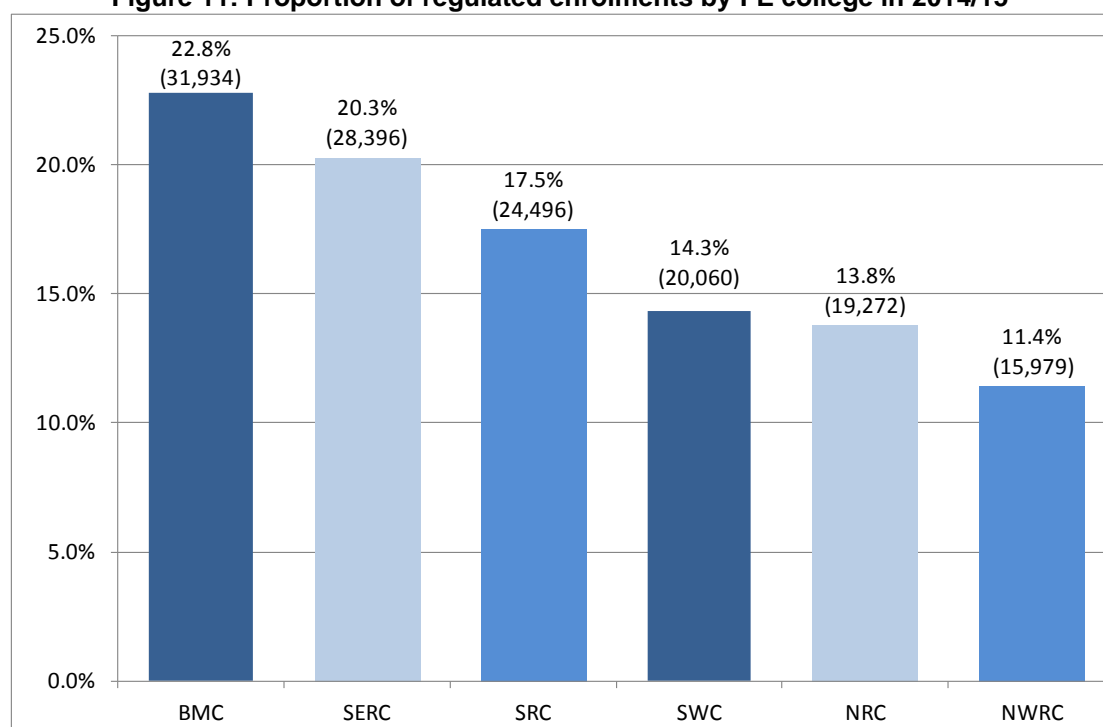
The following section focuses solely on regulated enrolments at FE colleges in the 2014/15 academic year. The Department's ['Further Education Means Business'](#) aims to deliver a more economically focused provision of further education which meets the needs of the economy. The strategy states that this should be delivered through regulated provision.

In 2014/15 there were 140,137 enrolments on regulated courses at FE colleges in Northern Ireland, of which there were 74,837 individual students. Further analysis indicates that over 30,000 of these students were enrolled on more than one programme of study resulting in 1.9 enrolments on regulated courses per individual in 2014/15 (Table A1).

### **FE colleges**

Of the 140,137 regulated enrolments, BMC accounted for the highest proportion with 22.8% (31,934) and NWRC the lowest with 11.4% (15,979) (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 2014/15**



## Age

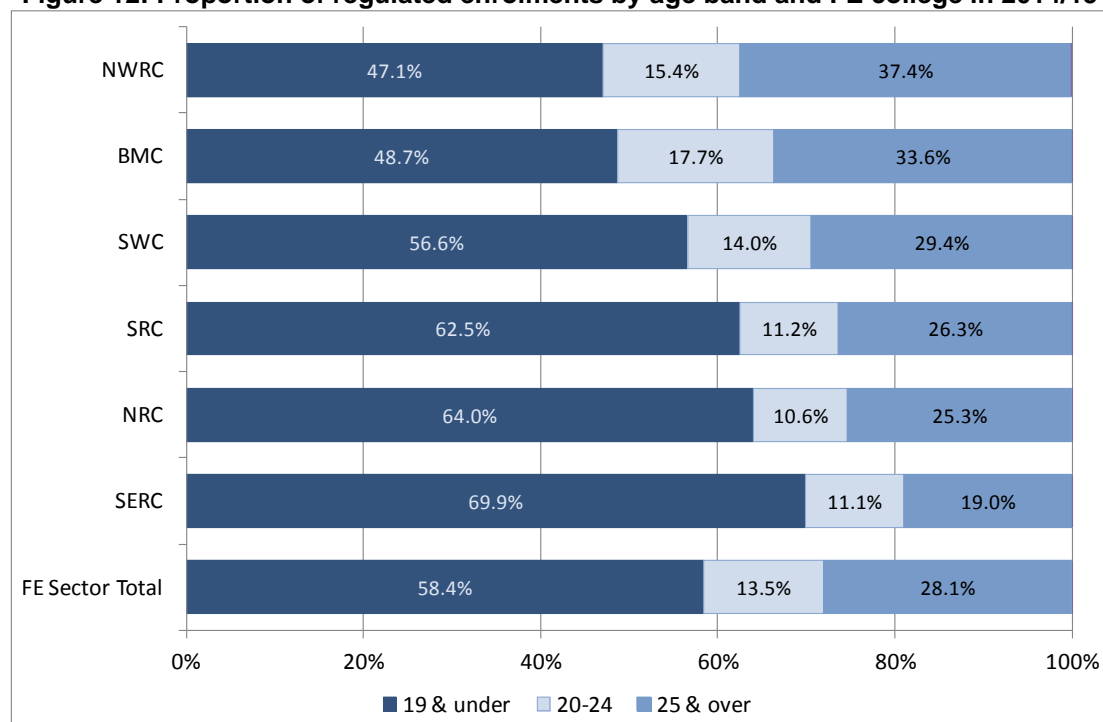
Of the 140,137 regulated enrolments in 2014/15, the majority (58.4%) were aged '19 and under', 13.5% aged '20 to 24' and 28.1% aged '25 and over'.

Each of 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 (69.9%), NRC (64.0%) and SRC (62.5%) had greater proportions in '19 and under' but had smaller proportions of enrolments in the older age bands. Conversely, NWRC (47.1%), BMC (48.7%) and SWC (56.6%) 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 was those aged '25 and over', while for regulated enrolments only, it changes to '19 and under'. This change in pattern indicates that most of the non-regulated enrolments are being undertaken by older people within NWRC (Table A2, Table A10).

**Figure 12: Proportion of regulated enrolments by age band and FE college in 2014/15**



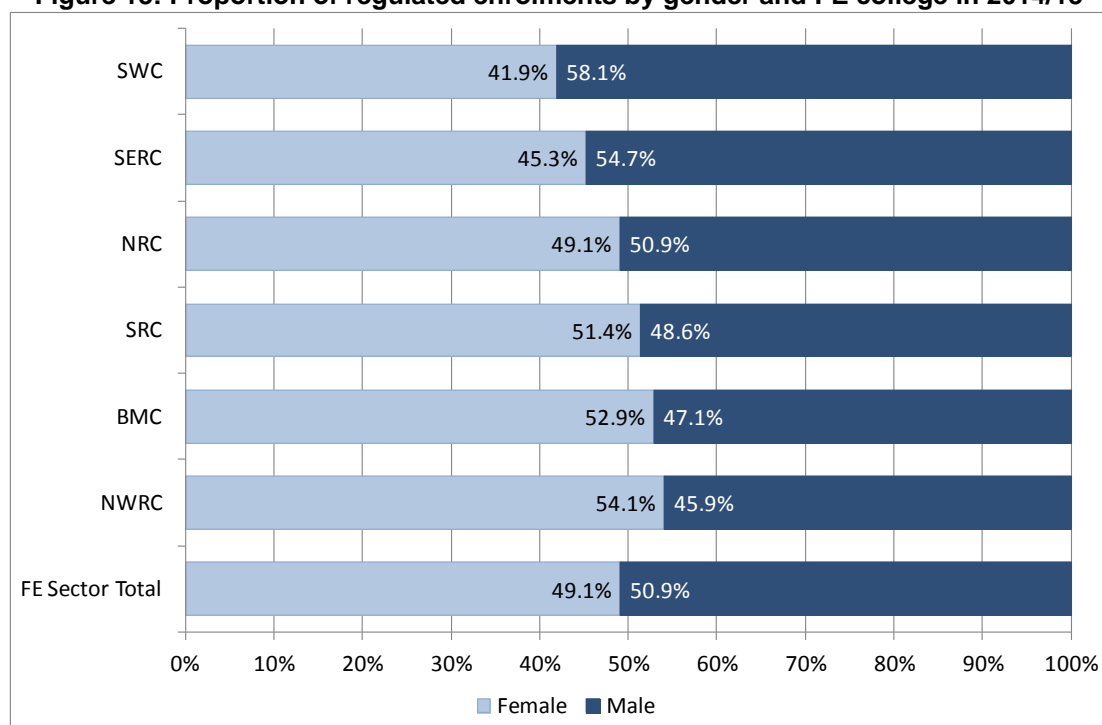
Please note there are a small element of unknown ages (<0.5%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A10.

## Gender

There was wide variation across the six colleges, in terms of the gender profile. Half the colleges had a higher proportion of males [SWC (58.1%), SERC (54.7%) and NRC (50.9%)], while the others had higher proportions of females [NWRC (54.1%), BMC (52.9%) and SRC (51.4%)]. The resultant effect was a fairly even split in terms of the gender profile with 49.1% female

and 50.9% 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 2014/15**



### Mode of attendance

In 2014/15, 18.9% (26,517) of regulated enrolments were on a full-time basis and over four fifths (81.1%, 113,620) were part-time. In comparison with the FE sector, NWRC (28.9%) had the highest proportion of full-time, while SWC (16.0%) and SERC (16.3%) had lower proportions. Across all colleges the vast majority of regulated enrolments were on a part-time basis (Table A12).

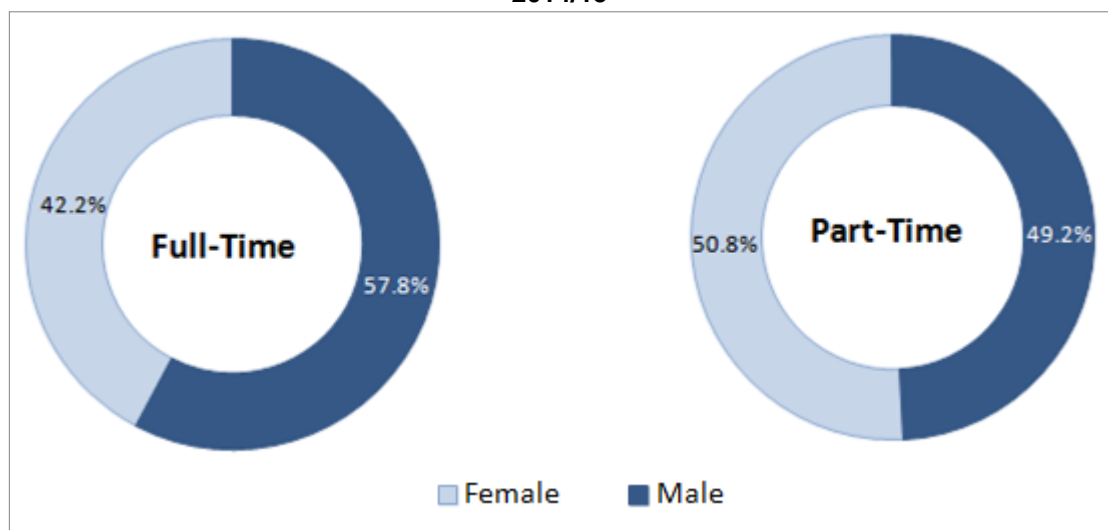
### Mode of attendance and gender

It is interesting to note that upon examining regulated enrolments by mode of attendance and gender, it illustrated that in part-time provision there is a fairly even gender split, while in full-time provision, males (57.8%) are in the majority (Figure 14, Table A12).

In terms of part-time provision and gender profile for each college, SWC and SERC deviated from the overall FE pattern with more males (57.4% and 53.7% respectively) than females. In full-time provision, only NWRC differed from the FE sector pattern with more females (50.4%) than males (Table A12).



**Figure 14: Proportion of regulated enrolments by gender and mode of attendance in 2014/15**



### Provision area

There are three main provision areas delivered within FE colleges:

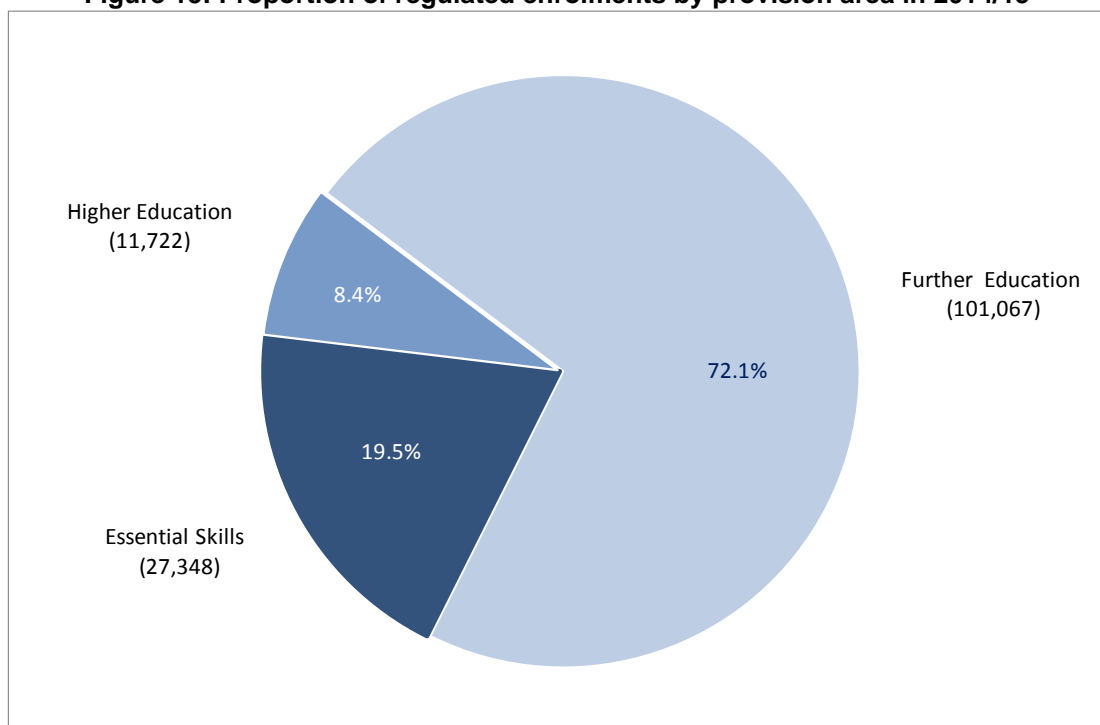
- i. Further Education is regarded as enrolments at 'Level 3 or below' such as professional & technical provision; A-Levels; GCSEs and Apprenticeships.
- ii. Higher Education is regarded as enrolments at 'Level 4 or above' such as Certificate of Higher Education; Diplomas of Higher Education; Foundations 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.delni.gov.uk/topics/del-s-and-research/essential-skills>

Of the 140,137 regulated enrolments in 2014/15, nearly three-quarters (72.1%) were in Further Education (FE) courses, 8.4% in Higher Education (HE) courses and 19.5% 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 NWRC the proportion of enrolments in Essential Skills (25.3%) and HE (10.9%) were the highest across all colleges, while the proportion of enrolments in FE courses (63.9%) was the lowest. The lowest proportion of enrolments in Essential Skills was in BMC (15.7%).

SERC had the highest proportion of enrolments in FE (76.0%) while the lowest share in HE (5.1%). 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 2014/15**



### Level of study

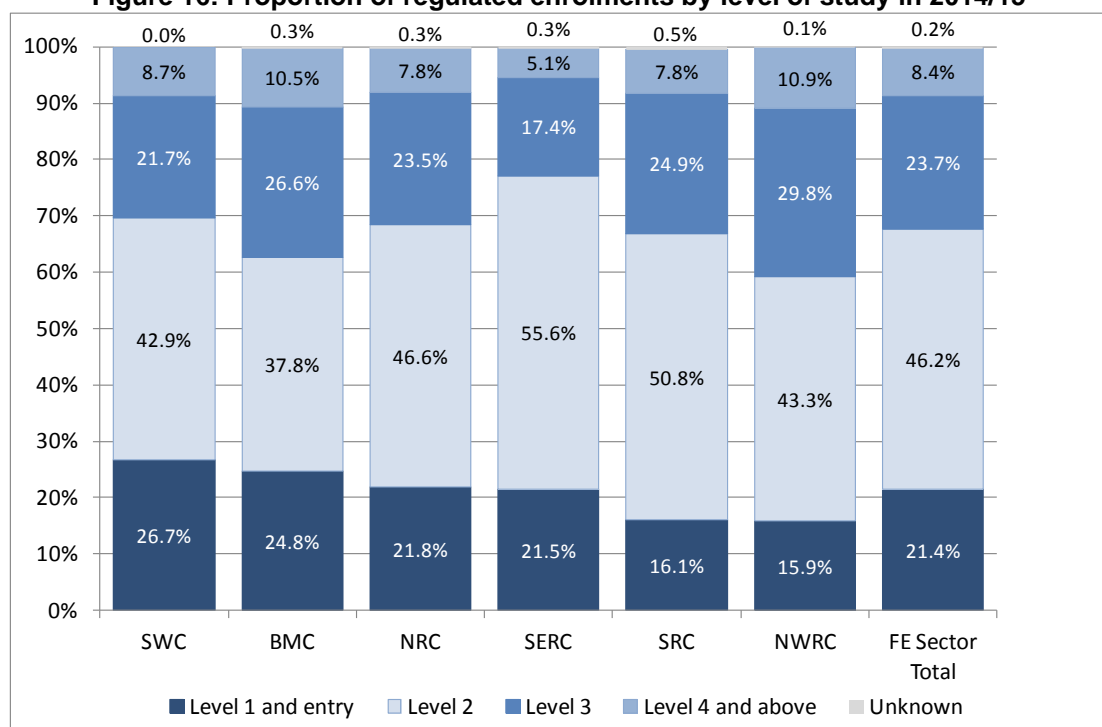
Each enrolment on a regulated course is assigned a level between 'Entry Level' and 'Level 8'. Qualifications at the same level have a similar level of demand or difficulty. For example some of the qualifications at:

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

Of the 140,137 regulated enrolments in 2014/15 those at 'Level 1 and below' accounted for 21.4% (30,053), 46.2% (64,806) at 'Level 2', 23.7% (33,207) at 'Level 3' and 8.4% (11,722) were at 'Level 4 and above'. This indicates that nearly four-fifths (78.3%) of regulated provision are at level 2 or above.

There is 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 37.8% in BMC to 55.6% in SERC. Over two-fifths of provision in NWRC (40.7%) and over a third in BMC (37.1%) is at level 3 and above. The majority of enrolments in SERC (55.6%) and SRC (50.8%) are at Level 2 (Figure 16, Table A14).

**Figure 16: Proportion of regulated enrolments by level of study in 2014/15**



## Subject area

Of the 140,137 regulated enrolments in 2014/15, the subject area 'Preparation for Life and Work' had the largest share (33.0%). This was followed by 'Information and Communication Technology (ICT)' (11.4%) and 'Retail & Commercial Enterprise' (9.6%). Over two-fifths (40.3%, 18,654) of regulated enrolments within the subject area 'Preparation for Life and Work' are Essential Skills courses in Literacy and Numeracy (Table A15).

## Subject area and gender

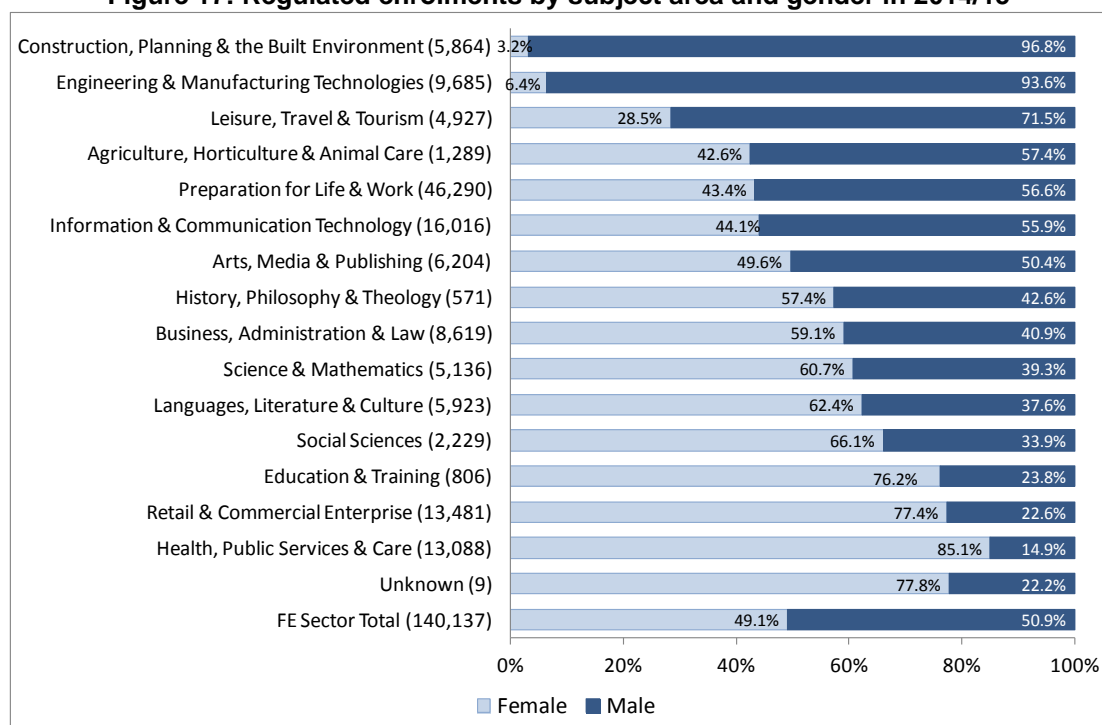
Although the overall gender profile was fairly evenly split for all regulated enrolments in 2014/15, there was wide variation between males and females across the subject areas. Females accounted for the vast majority in 'Health, Public Services and Care' (85.1%) and in 'Retail and Commercial Enterprise' enrolments (77.4%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' (96.8%) and 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (93.6%) (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', where there are only 1,289 enrolments across the sector. In BMC, SERC and NRC the female share of this subject area was 79.6%, 65.4% and 56.9% respectively compared to the female sector share of 42.6%. In SWC and SRC the male share in 'Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care' was 80.8% and 78.9% respectively, while the male FE sector share in this subject was 57.4%.

In NWRC the female share in 'Education and Training' was 88.4% compared to the female FE sector share of 76.2%. In contrast to this the female share of this subject in BMC was 61.7%. In SWC there was a 79.8% female share in

'Social Sciences' compared to an FE Sector female share of 66.1% (Table A15).

**Figure 17: Regulated enrolments by subject area and gender in 2014/15**



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

As detailed in the Department's '[Success through Skills – transforming futures](#)' publication there is a need to address subject imbalances as forecasts predict that degree subject requirements will become more skewed towards STEM.

A joint DEL and Department of Education publication of 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'.

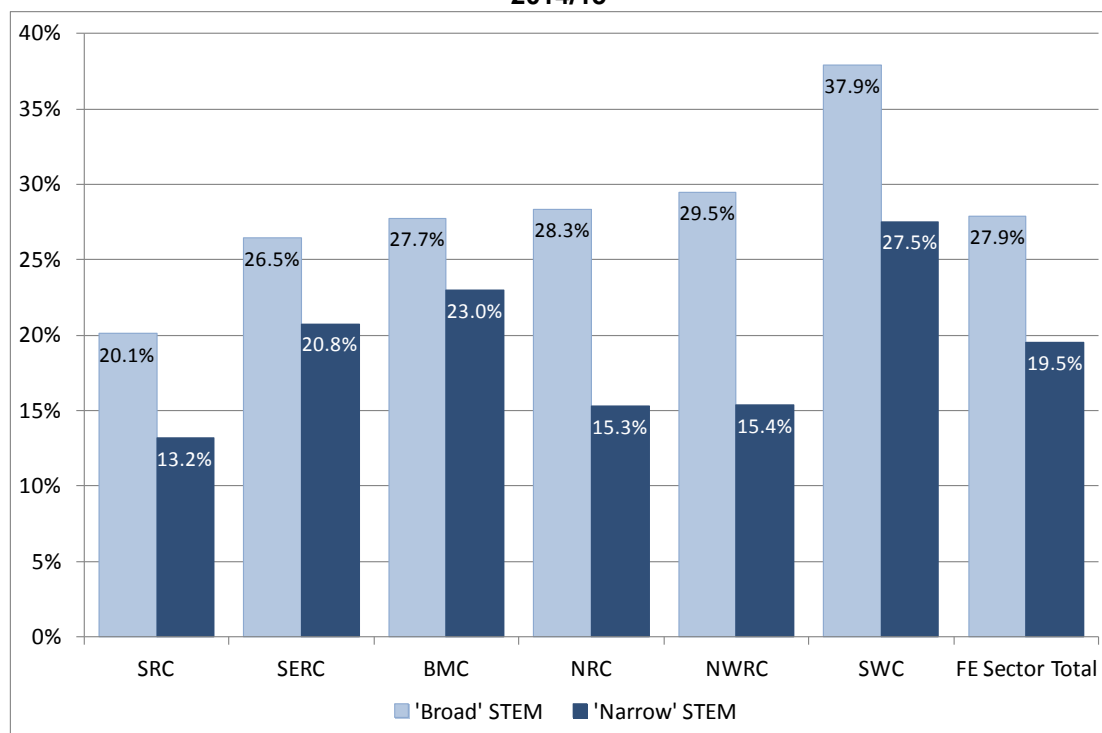
A subset of this cohort is termed 'Narrow' STEM and is identified as those enrolment records within courses classed as 'Biological and Physical Sciences'; 'Mathematics and IT' and 'Engineering and Technology'.

In 2014/15, 'Broad' STEM enrolments accounted for 27.9% (39,057) of all regulated enrolments, while 'Narrow' STEM enrolments accounted for 19.5% (27,389) (Figure 18, Table A16). Males accounted for over two-thirds of both 'Broad' STEM (67.9%) and 'Narrow' STEM (71.1%) enrolments (Table A16).

Three of the six colleges had 'Broad' STEM proportions higher than the FE sector, namely SWC (37.9%), NWRC (29.5%) and NRC (28.3%). 'Broad' STEM enrolment proportions were lower in SRC (20.1%), SERC (26.5%) and in BMC (27.7%).

'Narrow' STEM proportions in SWC (27.5%), BMC (23.0%) and SERC (20.8%) were above the FE sector level, while the other three colleges had proportions of 'Narrow' STEM that were lower [SRC (13.2%), NRC (15.3%) and NWRC (15.4%)] (Figure 18, Table A16).

**Figure 18: Proportion of regulated enrolments by STEM indicators and FE college in 2014/15**



## 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.

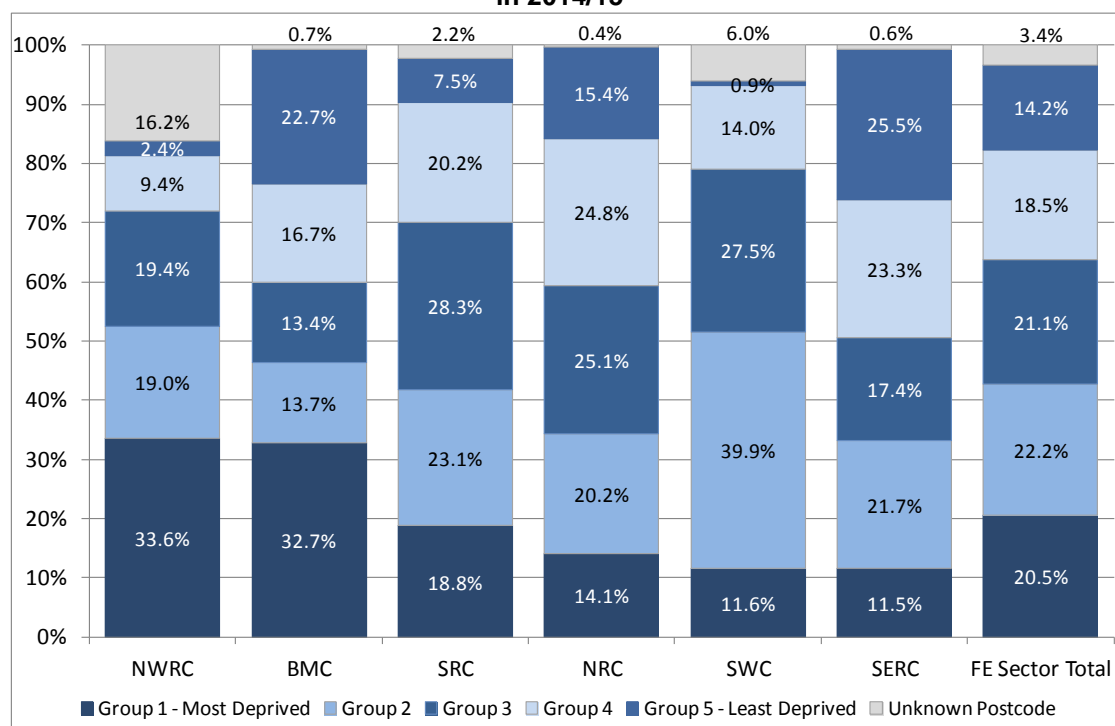
In 2014/15, over two-fifths (42.7%) of regulated enrolments are from the two most deprived quintiles. Just over a fifth (20.5%) of regulated enrolments came from the most deprived quintile, compared to 14.2% from the least deprived quintile.

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 (33.6%) of enrolments from the most deprived quintile, however only 2.4% 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 (55.5%) are from either the most or least deprived quintile. SERC (11.5%), SWC (11.6%), NRC (14.1%) and SRC (18.8%) all had lower proportions than the FE sector of regulated enrolments coming from the most deprived quintile.

The largest proportion of regulated enrolments for SERC was from the least deprived quintile (25.5%). 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 2014/15**



Notably NWRC had a significant proportion of enrolments with unknown postcodes (16.2%). This is largely due to a student flow from the Republic of Ireland (ROI). Of the 2,595 enrolments with unknown postcodes in NWRC, 2,303 are ROI domiciled student enrolments. If these 2,303 ROI enrolments were excluded from the NWRC analysis, the resultant figures would indicate that 39.2% of enrolments were from the most deprived quintile and 2.8% were from the least deprived quintile (Table 2). These ROI enrolments (2,303) account for 14.4% of regulated enrolments in NWRC (15,979) (Table A17).

**Table 2: Proportion of regulated enrolments with & without ROI domicile students in NWRC by deprivation quintiles in 2014/15**

Domicile	Group 1 - Most Deprived	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5 - Least Deprived	Unknown Postcode
Including ROI	33.6%	19.0%	19.4%	9.4%	2.4%	16.2%
Excluding ROI	39.2%	22.2%	22.7%	11.0%	2.8%	2.1%

## Section 3: FLU funding

### Background

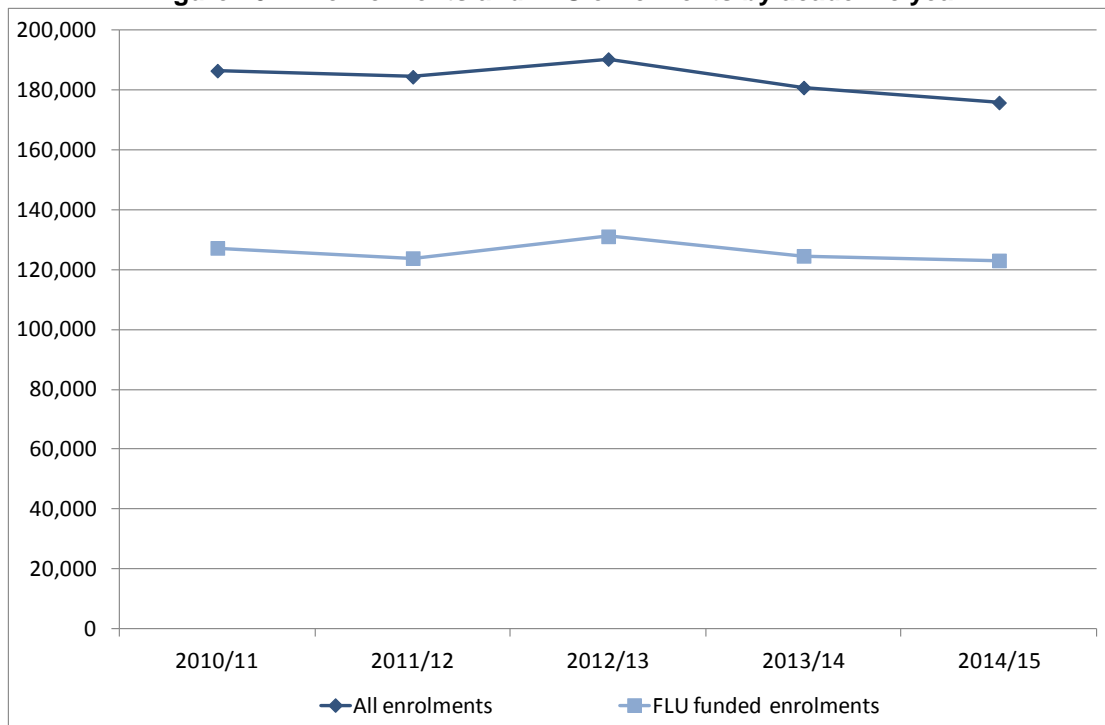
FE colleges are funded through the FLU funding model which is a distributive funding mechanism designed to support the Department for Employment and Learning's strategic priorities (introduced in September 2007) for further education which have previously been outlined. It provides funding to enable colleges to deliver further education, Essential Skills and Higher Education delivered within FE colleges. In this section FLU enrolments refer to enrolments which are 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 (70.0% in 2014/15) 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 five academic years.

### Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15

Between 2010/11 and 2014/15, FLU enrolments followed a similar pattern to all enrolments decreasing by 3.3% from 127,256 to 123,060. Over the five year period, the number of FLU funded enrolments was highest in 2012/13 at 131,108 and lowest in 2014/15 at 123,060 (Figure 20, Table A9).

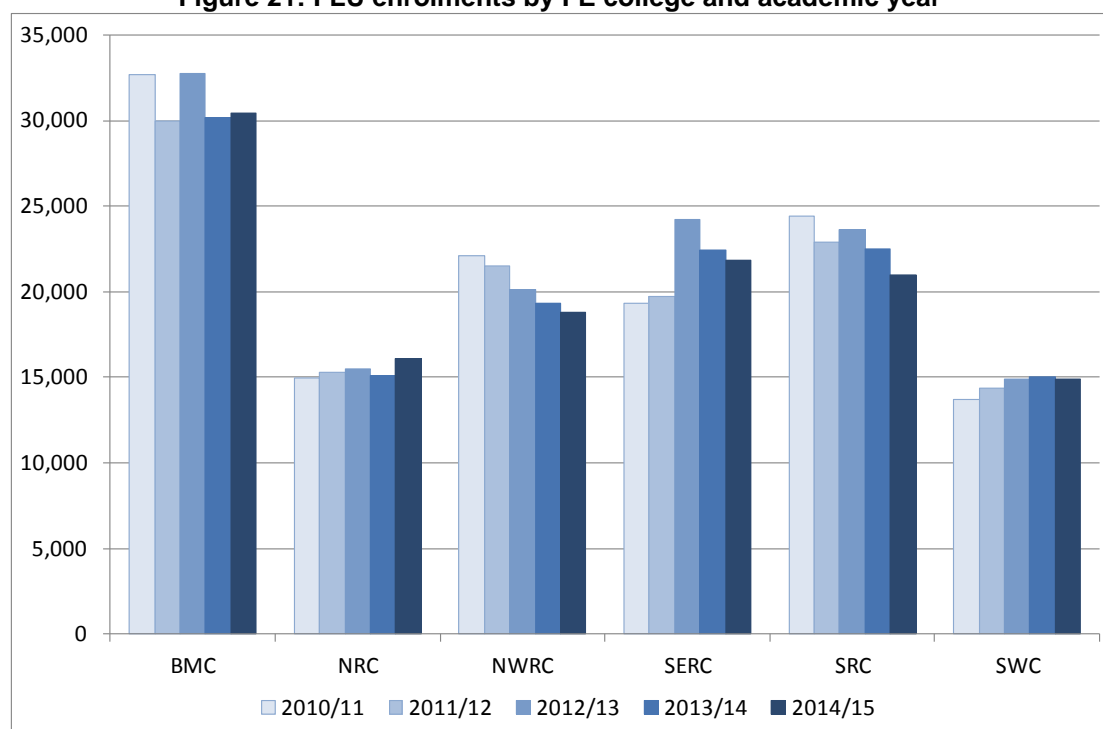
**Figure 20: All enrolments and FLU enrolments by academic year**



## FE colleges

The number of FLU enrolments in each of the six colleges fluctuated over the past five academic years. Between 2010/11 and 2014/15, the number of FLU enrolments in three of the six colleges decreased [NWRC by 14.9%, SRC by 14.2% and BMC by 6.8%]. Conversely, the other three colleges showed increases [SERC by 12.7%, SWC by 9.0% and NRC by 7.4%].

**Figure 21: FLU enrolments by FE college and academic year**



Of the 123,060 FLU enrolments in 2014/15, BMC accounted for the highest proportion, (24.8%, 30,465) while the lowest proportion was in SWC (12.1%, 14,916). (Figure 21, Table A18).

## Regulated/Non-regulated

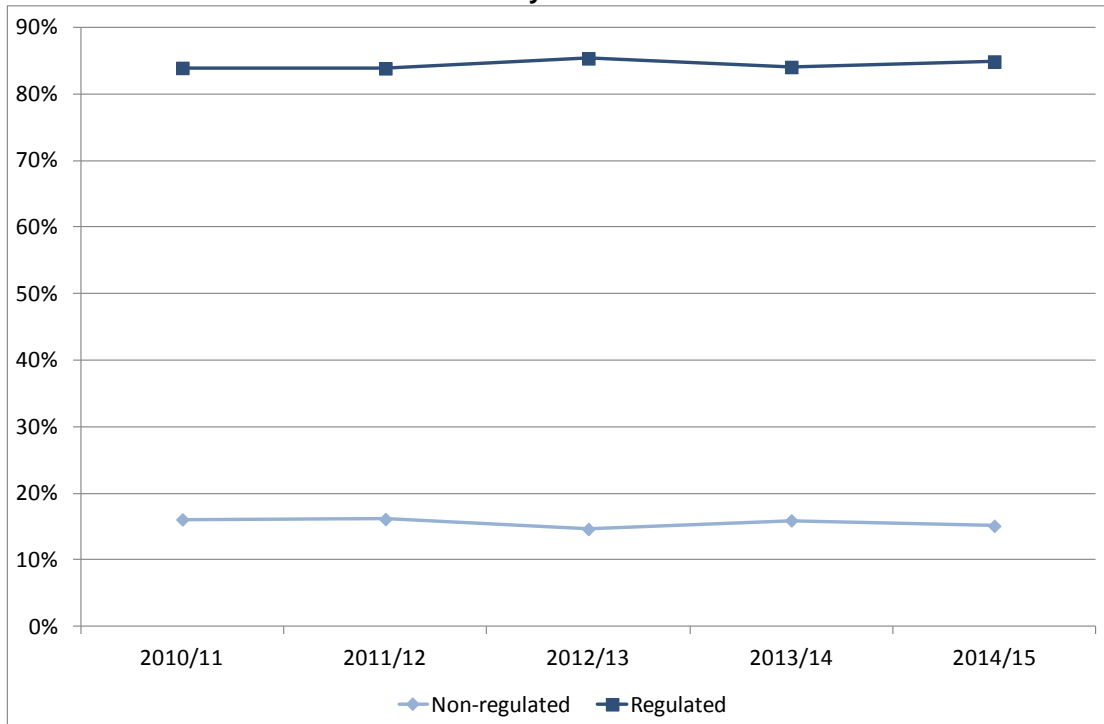
Between 2010/11 and 2014/15 the proportion of FLU enrolments, that were regulated<sup>3</sup> fluctuated, rising initially from 83.9% in 2010/11 to a peak of 85.4% in 2012/13 and falling slightly to 84.9% by 2014/15 (Figure 22, Table A18).

As indicated earlier, the changes in the proportions of regulated and non-regulated FLU enrolments over the period 2010/11 to 2014/15 reflect the '[Further Education Means Business](#)' strategy, aimed at reducing the number of non-regulated enrolments and encouraging regulated economically-focused provision.

<sup>3</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.

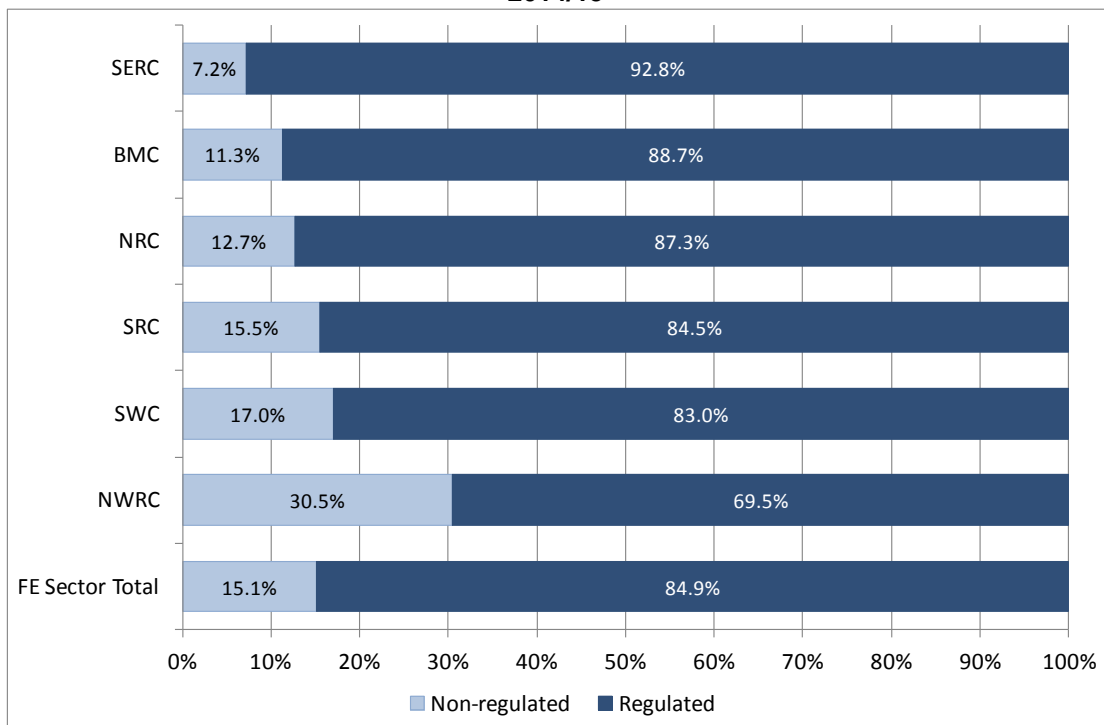


**Figure 22: Proportion of Regulated and non-regulated FLU enrolments by academic year**



Proportions of regulated and non-regulated FLU enrolments varied across the six colleges. The proportions of regulated enrolments ranged from 69.5% in NWRC to 92.8% in SERC. This indicates that almost a third of FLU enrolments in NWRC (30.5%) were non-regulated (Figure 23, Table A18).

**Figure 23: Proportions of FLU funded enrolments by regulated status and FE college in 2014/15**



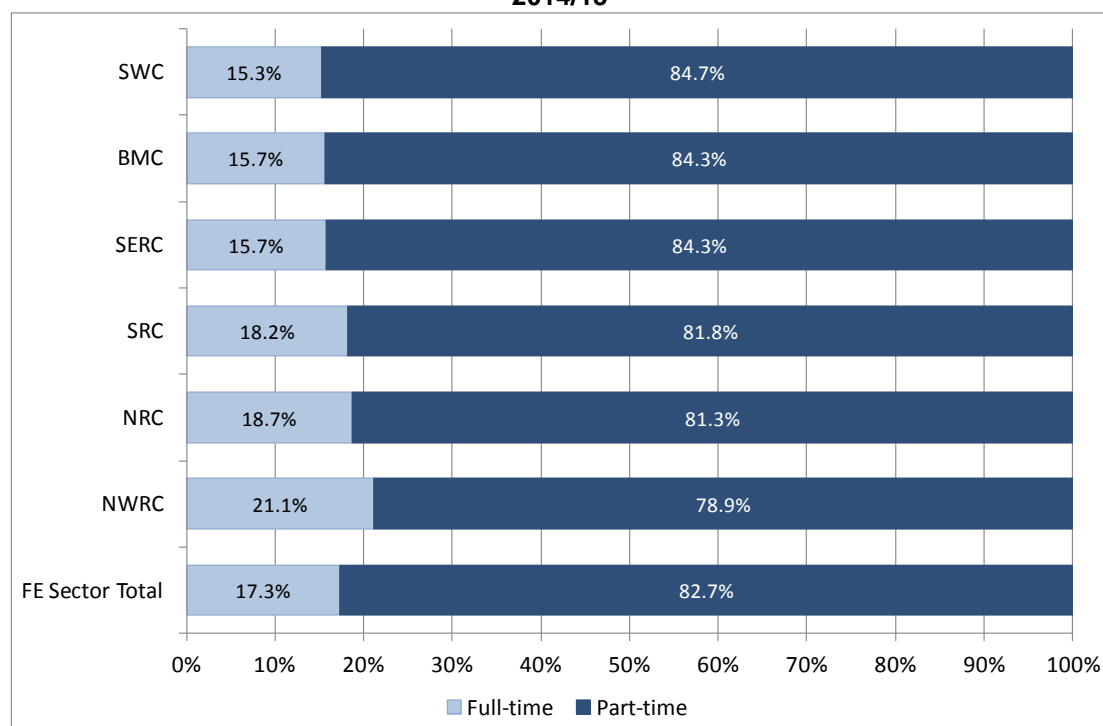
## Mode of attendance

Over the period 2010/11 to 2014/15, the majority of FLU enrolments were part-time. The proportion of FLU enrolments which are part-time has remained fairly static, increasing by 0.3 percentage points from 82.4% in 2010/11 to 82.7% in 2014/15.

Across all colleges the majority of FLU enrolments were also in part-time provision in each year over the five year period. In three of the six colleges there was an increase in the proportion of enrolments being part-time and conversely the other three colleges had a decrease. In NRC the part-time proportion increased by 5.5 percentage points from 75.8% to 81.3% over the period. In SERC the part-time proportion increased by over 3.6 percentage points from 80.6% to 84.3% between 2010/11 and 2014/15. In SWC the part-time proportion increased by 1.3 percentage points from 83.4% to 84.7% over the period. (Table A19).

In the latest academic year (2014/15) a similar breakdown was evident in each of the six colleges to the FE sector. Proportions of part-time provision ranged from 78.9% in NWRC to 84.7% in SWC. (Figure 24, Table A19).

**Figure 24: Proportion of FLU enrolments by mode of attendance and FE college in 2014/15**



## Level of study

Over the five year period 2010/11 to 2014/15, the proportion of 'Level 1 and entry' FLU enrolments fell by 5.5 percentage points decreasing from 38.5% to 33.0%. Conversely, the proportion of FLU enrolments at 'Level 2' increased by 4.7 percentage points rising from 31.4% in 2010/11 to 36.1% in 2014/15. The proportion of FLU enrolments at 'Level 3' decreased by 0.4 percentage points, falling from 22.2% to 21.8% over the same period. The proportion of FLU enrolments at 'Level 4 and above' increased by almost 0.9 percentage points rising from 8.0% in 2010/11 to 8.8% in 2014/15.

Four of the six colleges followed the FE sector trend of a decrease in the proportion of 'Level 1 and entry' FLU enrolments. In NRC, the proportion of 'Level 1 and entry' FLU enrolments increased by 9.0 percentage points rising from 24.3% to 33.3% over the period. In SRC the proportion of these FLU enrolments increased by 5.5 percentage points rising from 26.0% in 2010/11 to 31.5% in 2014/15.

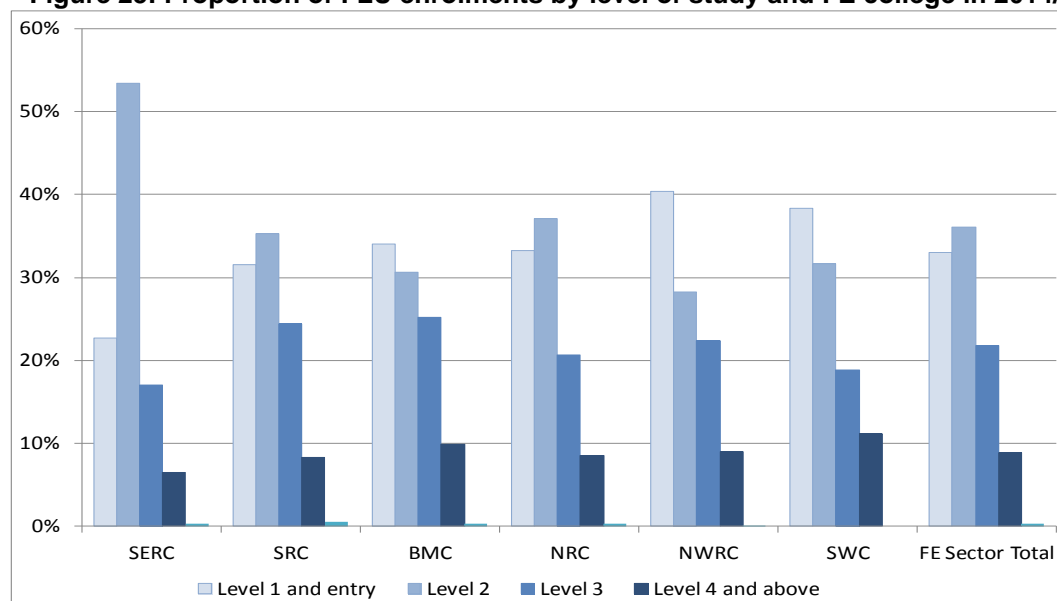
Four of the six colleges had increases in their proportions of 'Level 2' FLU enrolments. The largest increase was in SERC with a 17.3 percentage point increase, rising from 36.2% in 2010/11 to 53.5% in 2014/15. The two colleges which saw decreases over the period were SRC (45.7% to 35.3%) and NRC (44.3% to 37.2%).

In SERC, the percentage share of 'Level 3' FLU enrolments decreased by 5.0 percentage points, falling from 22.0% to 17.0% over the five year period. SERC was the only college where there was a fall (-0.4%) in the proportion of 'Level 4 and above' FLU enrolments (Table A20).

In the latest academic year (2014/15), of all FLU enrolments those at 'Level 1 and entry' accounted for 33.0% (40,614), 36.1% (44,417) at 'Level 2', 21.8% (26,850) at 'Level 3' and 8.8% (10,864) were at 'Level 4 and above'.

While 'Level 2' accounted for the largest proportion of FLU enrolments (36.1%) across the FE sector, the proportion of 'Level 1 and entry' FLU enrolments was greater than that for 'Level 2' in three of the six colleges, NWRC (40.4%), SWC (38.4%) and BMC (34.1%). The trend for the FE sector is skewed by the large proportion (53.5%) of 'Level 2' FLU enrolments in SERC. This is prominently illustrated within Figure 25 (Table A20).

**Figure 25: Proportion of FLU enrolments by level of study and FE college in 2014/15**



Please note there are a small element of unknown levels of study (<2.0%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A21.

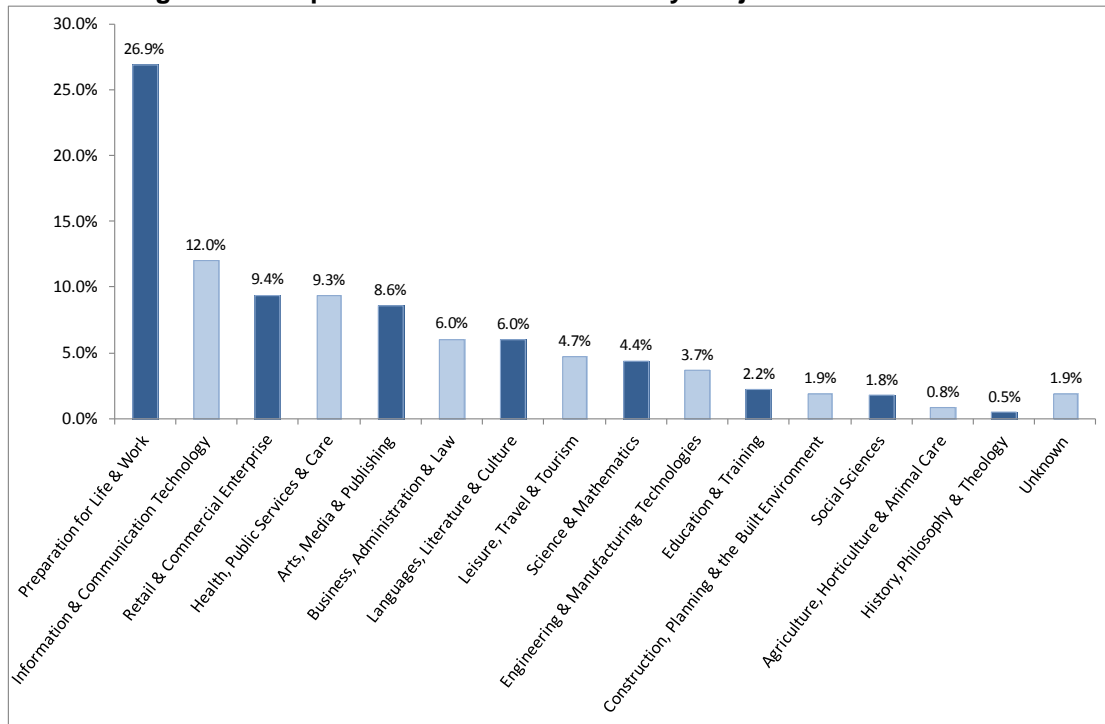
## Subject area

In 2014/15, the largest proportion (26.9%) of FLU funded enrolments was in the subject area 'Preparation for life and work'. This was followed by in 'Information and communication technology' (12.0%) and 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (9.4%) (Figure 26, Table A21).

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 15.1% in NWRC to 48.7% in SERC. For three of the six colleges (SRC (14.4%), SERC (11.5%) and BMC (11.0%)) 'Information and communication technology' had the second highest level of FLU enrolments. In NRC (12.5%) and SWC (12.1%), 'Information and communication technology' ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> after 'Health, Public Services & Care' (13.4%) and 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (13.3%) respectively. In NWRC it ranked 5<sup>th</sup> after 'Health, Public Services & Care' (13.9%), 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (13.6%) and 'Arts, Media & Publishing' (12.8%).

In BMC the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest share of FLU enrolments was in 'Science & Mathematics' (6.8%). In SRC and SERC the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest share of FLU enrolments was in 'Arts, Media & Publishing' (12.5% and 5.6% respectively). (Table A21).

**Figure 26: Proportion of FLU enrolments by subject area in 2014/15**



## 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: Certificate of Higher Education; Diplomas of Higher Education; Foundations degrees; Higher National Certificates (HNCs); Higher National Diplomas (HNDs); Bachelor 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](#).

### Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15

Over the last five academic years, the number of HE enrolments at FE colleges has increased, year on year, from 11,004 in 2010/11 to 11,722 in 2014/15 representing an overall increase of 6.5% (Table 3).

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

FE college	Academic Year				
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
<b>BMC</b>	3,771	3,513	3,324	3,285	3,348
<b>NRC</b>	1,173	1,388	1,548	1,511	1,508
<b>NWRC</b>	1,537	1,628	1,560	1,682	1,736
<b>SERC</b>	1,364	1,469	1,588	1,498	1,461
<b>SRC</b>	1,860	1,901	1,857	1,905	1,922
<b>SWC</b>	1,299	1,417	1,576	1,695	1,747
<b>FE Sector Total</b>	<b>11,004</b>	<b>11,316</b>	<b>11,453</b>	<b>11,576</b>	<b>11,722</b>

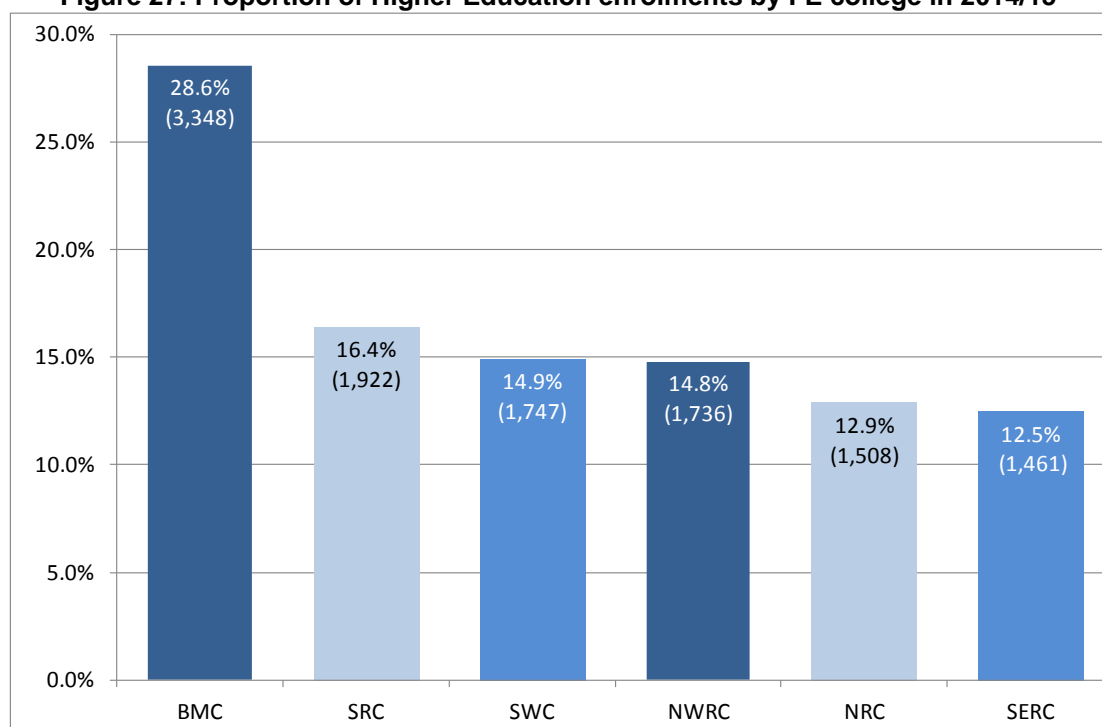
### **FE colleges**

Over the last five academic years, five of the six colleges had increases in the number of HE enrolments [SWC (34.5%), NRC (28.6%), NWRC (12.9%), SERC (7.1%) and SRC (3.3%)]. Only BMC had a decrease (-11.2%) between 2010/11 and 2014/15.

Only SWC had the same pattern as the FE sector, with an increase in HE enrolments in each year over the period (Table 3).

In the most recent academic year (2014/15), BMC accounted for the highest proportion of all HE enrolments (28.6%, 3,348) and SERC for the lowest with 12.5% (1,461) (Figure 27, Table 3).

**Figure 27: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by FE college in 2014/15**



## Higher Education Enrolments in 2014/15

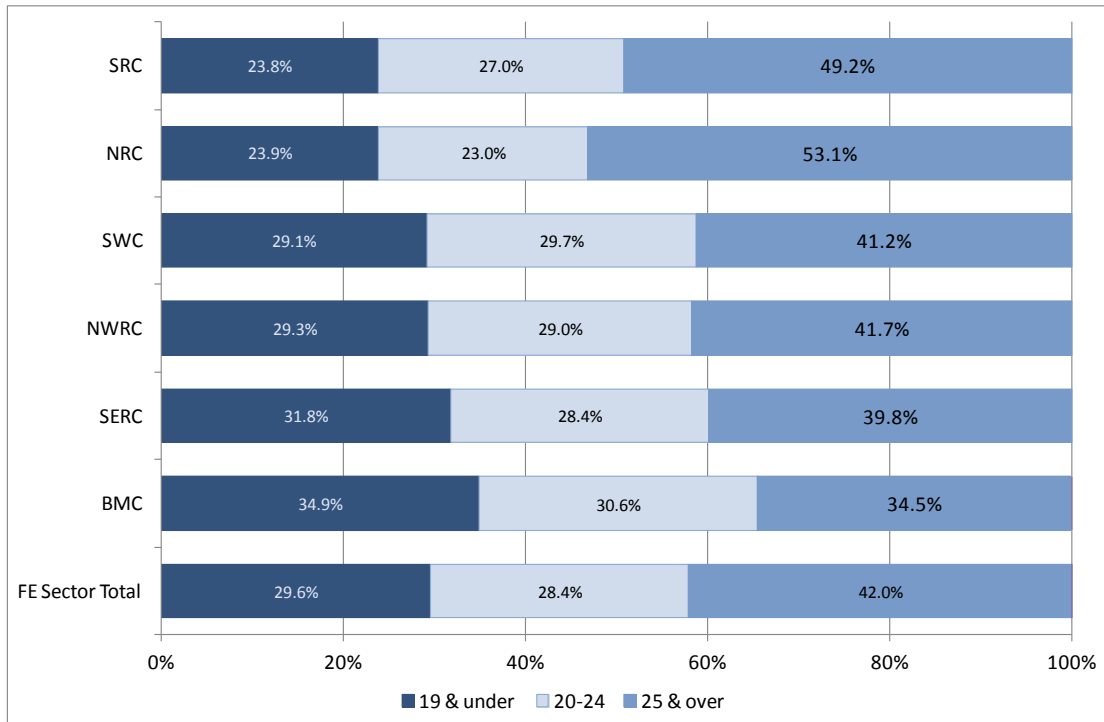
### Age

Of the 11,722 Higher Education enrolments in 2014/15, the highest proportion was in the age group '25 and over' (42.0%) followed by those aged '19 and under' (29.6%) and those aged '20 to 24' (28.4%).

Three of the six FE colleges, NRC (53.1%), NWRC (41.7%) and SERC (39.8%) 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 (23.0%, 29.0% and 28.4% respectively).

In comparison with the FE sector age-profile, SRC (49.2%) and SWC (41.2%) had greater proportions aged '25 and over' but had smaller proportions of enrolments in the youngest age band. Across the colleges BMC (34.9%) had the highest proportion of enrolments in those aged '19 and under' and also had the lowest proportion within the oldest age group (34.5%). 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 A22).

**Figure 28: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by age band and FE college in 2014/15**

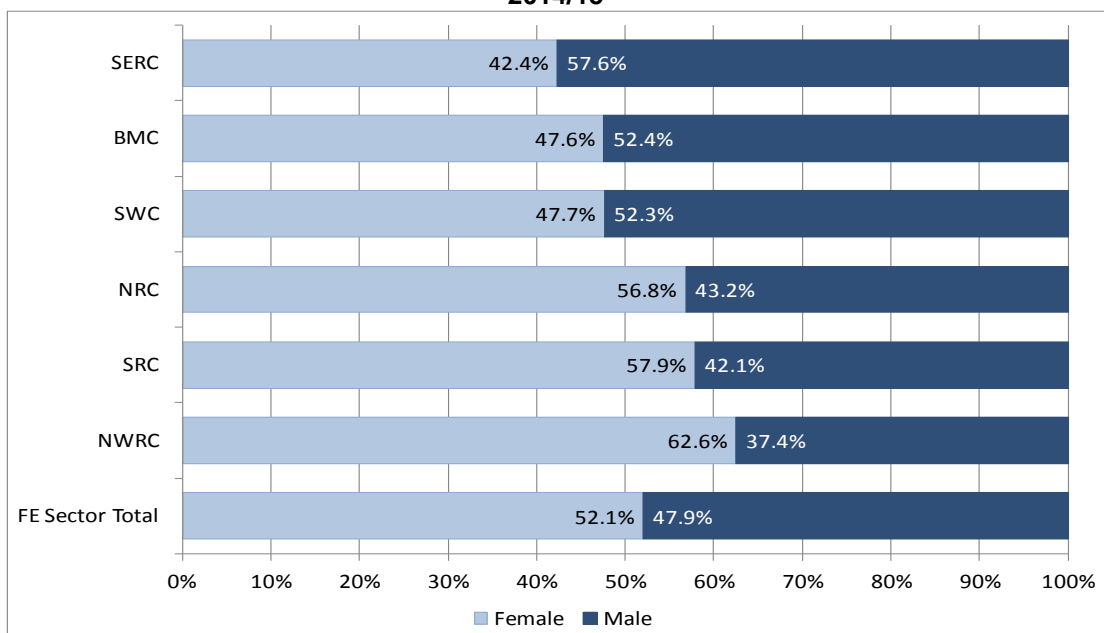


Please note there are a small element of unknown ages (<0.5%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A22.

## Gender

There was wide variation across the six colleges, in terms of the gender profile. Half of the colleges had a higher proportion of males studying higher education [SERC (57.6%), BMC (52.4%) and SWC (52.3%)], while the others had higher proportions of females [NWRC (62.6%), SRC (57.9%) and NRC (56.8%)]. 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 A23).

**Figure 29: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by gender and FE college in 2014/15**





## Mode of attendance

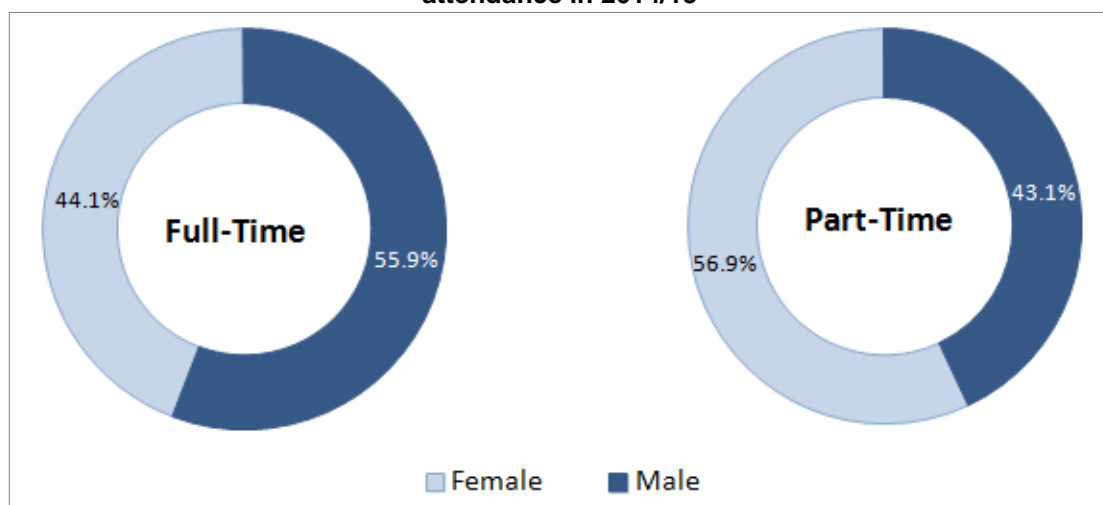
In 2014/15, 37.5% (4,401) of higher education enrolments were on a full-time basis and 62.5% were part-time (7,321). In comparison with the FE sector, BMC (46.4%), NWRC (44.0%) and SERC (39.1%) had higher proportions of full-time, while NRC (21.4%), SRC (30.3%) and SWC (34.7%) had lower proportions. Across all colleges the majority of HE enrolments were on a part-time basis (Table A24).

## Mode of attendance and gender

It is interesting to note that upon examining HE enrolments by mode of attendance and gender, it illustrates that for part-time provision females (56.9%) make up the majority of enrolments, while in full-time provision males (55.9%) account for the majority (Figure 30, Table A24).

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 (54.8%) than female enrolments. In full-time provision, only NWRC (52.7%) differed from the FE sector pattern with a majority of female enrolments (Table A24).

**Figure 30: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by gender and mode of attendance in 2014/15**



## 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 have a similar level of demand or difficulty. For example, some of the qualifications at:

- '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

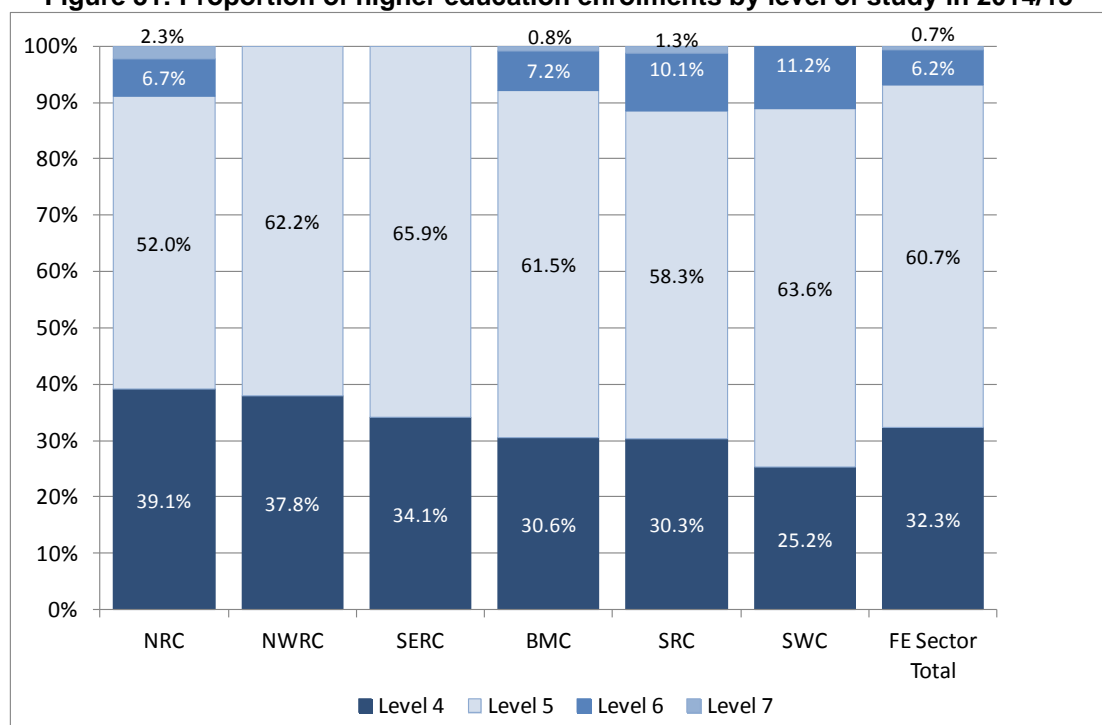
Higher National Diplomas (HND), Foundation and other degrees that do not typically provide access to postgraduate programmes.

- '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 11,722 HE enrolments in 2014/15, 'Level 4' accounted for 32.3% (3,790), 60.7% (7,116) at 'Level 5', 6.2% (731) at 'Level 6' and 0.7% (85) were at 'Level 7'. This indicates that nearly all (93.0%) 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 52.0% in NRC to 65.9% in SERC. In all six colleges over four fifths of HE enrolments were at 'Level 4' or 'Level 5', ranging from 88.6% in SRC to 100% in both NWRC and SERC (Figure 31, Table A25).

**Figure 31: Proportion of higher education enrolments by level of study in 2014/15**



## Subject area

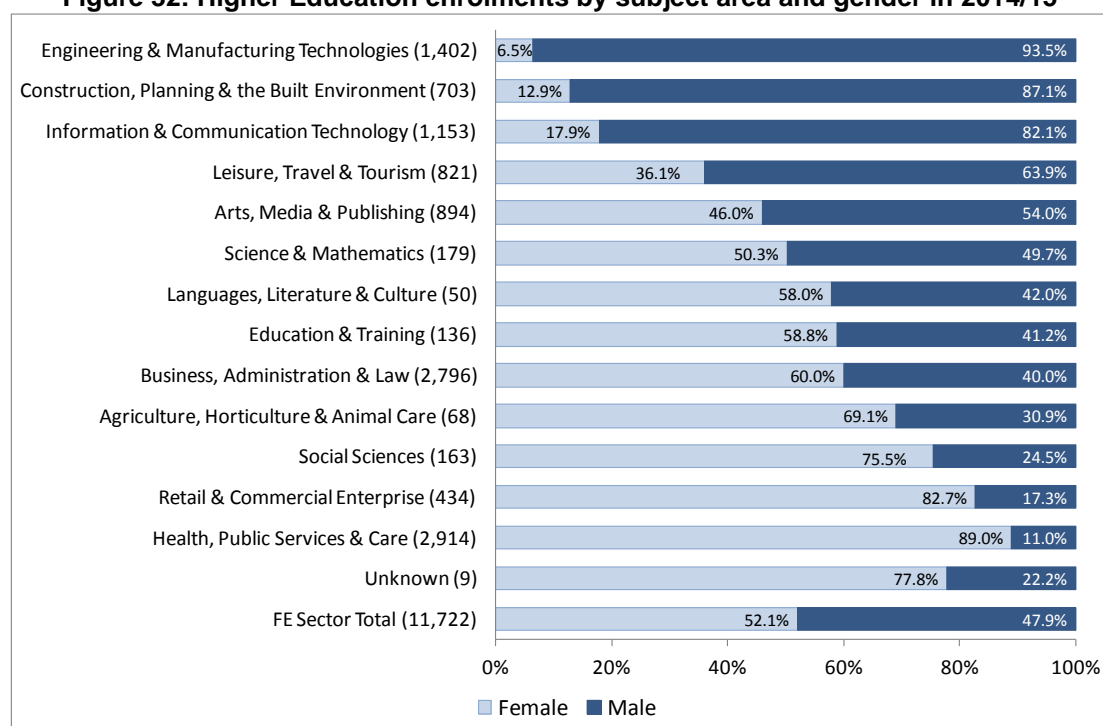
Of the 11,722 HE enrolments in 2014/15, the subject area 'Health, Public Services & Care' had the largest share (24.9%, 2,914). This was followed by 'Business, Administration & Law' (23.9%, 2,796) and 'Engineering & Manufacturing Technologies' (12.0%, 1,402). Over three-fifths (60.7%, 7,112) of higher education enrolments fall within these three subject areas. (Table A26).

## Subject area and gender

While the overall gender profile was fairly evenly split for all higher education enrolments in 2014/15, there was wide variation between males and females across the subject areas. Females accounted for the vast majority in 'Health, Public Services and Care' (89.0%) and in 'Retail and Commercial Enterprise' enrolments (82.7%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Engineering & Manufacturing Technologies' (93.5%) and 'Construction, Planning & the Built Environment' (87.1%) (Figure 32, Table A26).

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 67.2% male share of enrolments in 'Science and Mathematics' compared to the FE sector share of 49.7%. In contrast the female share of the same subject area was 73.0% in NWRC as opposed to 50.3% in the FE Sector. In NRC the proportion of male enrolments in 'Leisure, Travel & Tourism' was 86.1% and in SERC, 80.8% in comparison to 63.9% in the FE Sector. In NWRC and SWC the proportions of female enrolments in 'Retail and Commercial Enterprise' were 97.9% and 93.8% respectively in comparison to 82.7% in the FE Sector (Table A26).

**Figure 32: Higher Education enrolments by subject area and gender in 2014/15**



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

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

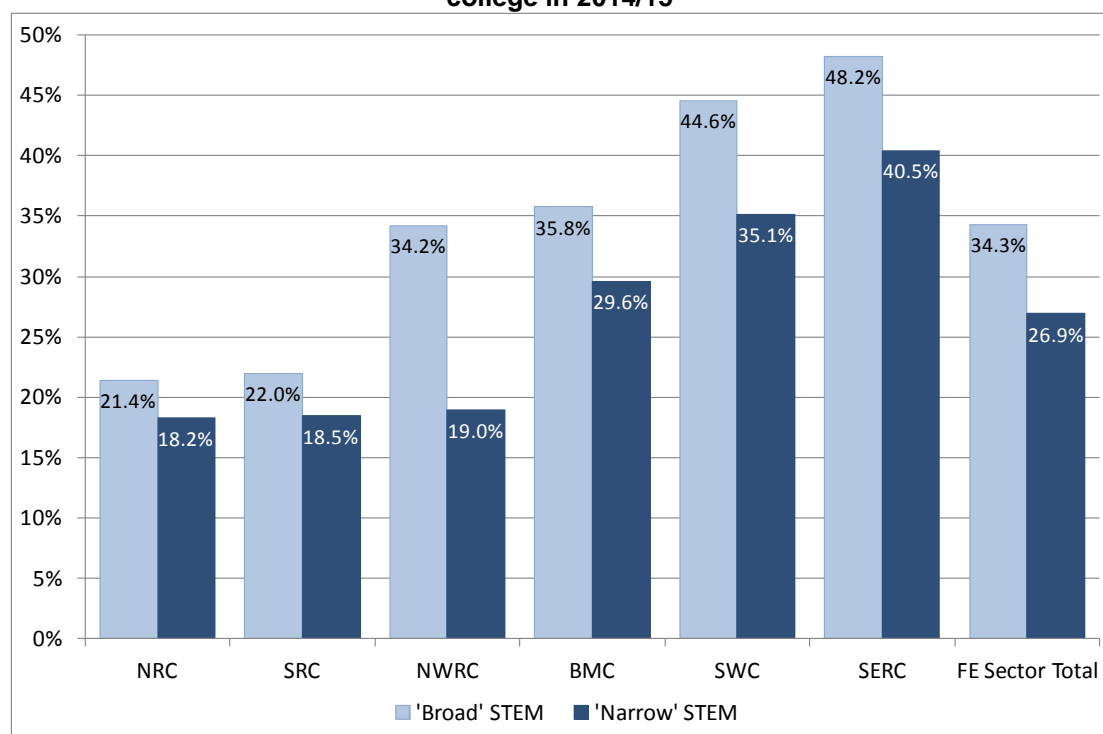
'Broad' STEM enrolments are regarded as those on courses of 'Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects'; 'Biological and Physical Sciences'; 'Agriculture; Mathematics and IT'; 'Engineering and Technology; Architecture', 'Building and Planning'. A subset of this cohort is termed 'Narrow' STEM and is identified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

In 2014/15, 'Broad' STEM enrolments accounted for 34.3% (4,019), while 'Narrow' STEM enrolments accounted for 26.9% (3,155) of all Higher Education enrolments in the FE sector. Males accounted for over three-quarters of 'Broad' STEM (77.9%) and for over four-fifths of 'Narrow' STEM (81.7%) enrolments (Table A27).

In comparison with the FE sector, SERC (48.2%), SWC (44.6%) and BMC (35.8%) had 'Broad' STEM proportions higher than the FE sector. 'Broad' STEM enrolment proportions were lower in NRC (21.4%), SRC (22.0%) and NWRC (34.2%).

'Narrow' STEM proportions in three of the six colleges, namely SERC (40.5%), SWC (35.1%) and BMC (29.6%), were above the FE sector level, while the other three colleges had proportions of 'Narrow' STEM that were lower than the FE sector figure [NRC (18.2%), SRC (18.5%) and NWRC (19.0%)] (Figure 33, Table A27).

**Figure 33: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by STEM indicators and FE college in 2014/15**



## 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.

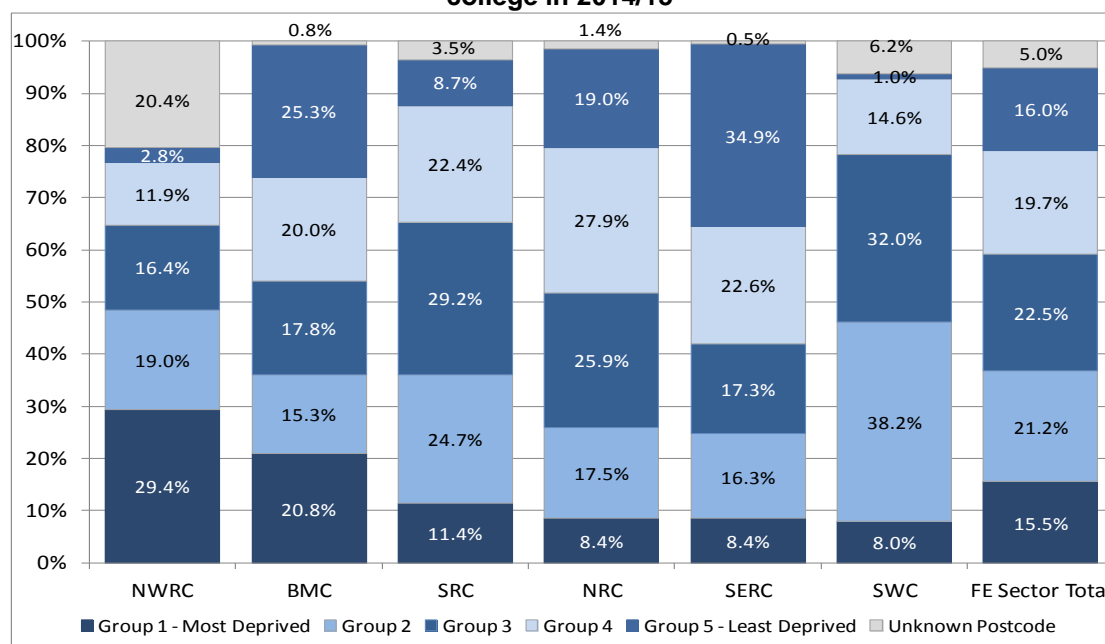
Over a third (36.7%) of HE enrolments are from the two most deprived quintiles. Less than one sixth (15.5%) of higher education enrolments in 2014/15 came from the most deprived quintile, compared to 16.0% from the least deprived quintile.

When considering enrolments from different areas of deprivation across the six FE colleges, there was a lot of regional variation. NWRC had 29.4% of HE enrolments from the most deprived quintile, however only 2.8% 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 (46.2%) of BMC HE enrolments are from either the most or least deprived quintile. In contrast just over 8.9% of SWC HE enrolments come from these two quintiles. While 8.0% of HE enrolments in SWC were from the most deprived quintile, 38.2% were from the 2<sup>nd</sup> most deprived quintile.

SWC (8.0%), SERC (8.4%), NRC (8.4%) and SRC (11.4%) all had lower proportions than the FE sector of HE enrolments coming from the most deprived quintile.

The largest proportion of HE enrolments for SERC was from the least deprived quintile (34.9%). (Figure 34, Table A28).

**Figure 34: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by deprivation quintiles and FE college in 2014/15**



Notably NWRC had a significant proportion of enrolments with unknown postcodes (20.4%). This is largely due to a student flow from the Republic of Ireland (ROI). Of the 355 enrolments with unknown postcodes in NWRC, 324 are ROI domiciled student enrolments. If these 324 ROI enrolments were excluded from the NWRC analysis, the resultant figures would indicate that 36.2% of enrolments were from the most deprived quintile and 3.5% were from the least deprived quintile. Nearly three-fifths (59.6%) of enrolments were from the two most deprived areas (Table 4). These ROI enrolments (324) account for 18.7% of higher education enrolments in NWRC (1,736) (Table A28).

**Table 4: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments with & without ROI domicile students in NWRC by deprivation quintiles in 2014/15**

<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 ROI	29.4%	19.0%	16.4%	11.9%	2.8%	20.4%
Excluding ROI	36.2%	23.4%	20.1%	14.7%	3.5%	2.2%

## 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 i.e. regulated enrolments on a one year course, or the second year of a two year course etc. Please refer to [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#) for further details on the definitions and changes to these in regard to performance analysis.

#### Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15

In each year between 2010/11 and 2014/15, the majority (approximately 80%) of all regulated enrolments are 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 79.0% in 2010/11 to 83.1% in 2014/15.

In line with the trend of regulated enrolments decreasing over this five year period, final year enrolments have also decreased (5.1%) from 122,783 in 2010/11 to 116,477 in 2014/15. The number of individuals enrolled in their final year has fallen by 19.7%, from 79,923 to 64,162 over the same period (Table 5).

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

FE college	Academic Year				
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
BMC	30,421	27,679	28,910	26,462	27,629
NRC	15,760	16,451	15,622	14,110	15,581
NWRC	17,421	16,829	16,559	14,088	13,128
SERC	21,243	22,069	26,118	24,341	24,244
SRC	23,194	24,222	25,327	21,569	20,112
SWC	14,744	17,187	17,298	16,452	15,783
<b>Total Final Year enrolments</b>	<b>122,783</b>	<b>124,437</b>	<b>129,834</b>	<b>117,022</b>	<b>116,477</b>
<b>Total Regulated enrolments</b>	<b>155,425</b>	<b>153,076</b>	<b>156,806</b>	<b>141,778</b>	<b>140,137</b>
<b>Final Year/Regulated (%)</b>	<b>79.0%</b>	<b>81.3%</b>	<b>82.8%</b>	<b>82.5%</b>	<b>83.1%</b>
<b>Total Final Year individuals</b>	<b>79,923</b>	<b>77,440</b>	<b>75,587</b>	<b>66,565</b>	<b>64,162</b>

#### FE colleges

In terms of final year enrolments there are different patterns of trend over the five year period across the six colleges. Final year enrolments increased by 14.1% in SERC and 7.0% in SWC between 2010/11 to 2014/15, while they decreased at NWRC (24.6%), SRC (13.3%), BMC (9.2%) and NRC (1.1%) (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 either fully or partially achieve as well as fail their qualification. The number of qualifications presented within this section includes both full and partial achievements. Partial achievement accounts for 6.9%, 6.5%, 5.3%, 5.4% and 5.9% of total achievements in 2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 respectively. Please refer to [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#) for further information on partial and full achievement.

Since 2010/11, outcome data, which provides qualification counts, has been assessed as valid and reliable to be disseminated.

### Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15

Over the five year period (2010/11 to 2014/15) the number of qualifications in FE colleges increased by 7.0%, from 86,417 to 92,479. The volume of qualifications peaked in 2012/13 (101,179) and then declined to 90,851 in 2013/14 increasing again in 2014/15 to 92,479 qualifications (Table 6).

### **FE colleges**

Four of the six colleges followed the same trend as the FE sector. There were large increases in qualifications for SERC (31.6%), NRC (13.0%) and SWC (11.0%) and a smaller increase in BMC (3.2%) over this period. In NWRC, there was a decrease of 7.4%, falling from 11,112 qualifications to 10,291 qualifications and in SRC a decrease of 6.9%, falling from 17,852 qualifications to 16,626 qualifications (Table 6).

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

<b>FE College</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>
<b>BMC</b>	20,175	19,668	21,160	19,244	20,811
<b>NRC</b>	10,717	11,606	11,612	10,787	12,113
<b>NWRC</b>	11,112	12,198	13,044	11,135	10,291
<b>SERC</b>	15,330	16,564	20,816	19,438	20,176
<b>SRC</b>	17,852	19,564	21,196	17,808	16,626
<b>SWC</b>	11,231	13,084	13,351	12,439	12,462
<b>FE Sector Total</b>	<b>86,417</b>	<b>92,684</b>	<b>101,179</b>	<b>90,851</b>	<b>92,479</b>

It is interesting to note that while the number of qualifications have increased by 7.0% over the five year period, the number of final year enrolments have decreased by 5.1%. This indicates that there are more qualifications per final year enrolment now in 2014/15 (0.8) than there was in 2010/11 (0.7) (Table 5 and Table 6).

In 2014/15 the proportional share across the FE Colleges of the number of qualifications ranged from 11.1% in NWRC to 22.5% in BMC (Table 6).



## **5.3 - Performance**<sup>4</sup>

The strategic driver for analysing performance is the Department's commitments under the Programme for Government which includes the delivery of 210,000 qualifications at Level 2 and above between 2011/12 and 2014/15. 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'. This may inflate the retention rate from 2012/13 onwards in comparison to earlier academic years. Reproducing the retention rate using the old methodology and comparing to the new indicates that of the 0.9% rise between 2011/12 and 2012/13, 0.6% is down to the change in the definition.
- **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 five year trend and FE College sections below but not in the remaining sections of the 2014/15 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.

### **Five year trend – 2010/11 to 2014/15**

#### **Retention rate**

Over the period 2010/11 to 2014/15 the retention rate in FE colleges increased by 1.6 percentage points, from 87.7% to 89.3%. This implies that more people are staying on and completing their course in the most recent year as compared to 2010/11 (Figure 35, Table A29).

#### **Achievement rate**

The achievement rate of FE colleges rose by 8.6 percentage points from 80.3% to 88.9% over the period 2010/11 to 2014/15. This indicates that of those who complete their course, there are more people achieving their qualification now in 2014/15 than in 2010/11 (Figure 35, Table A29).

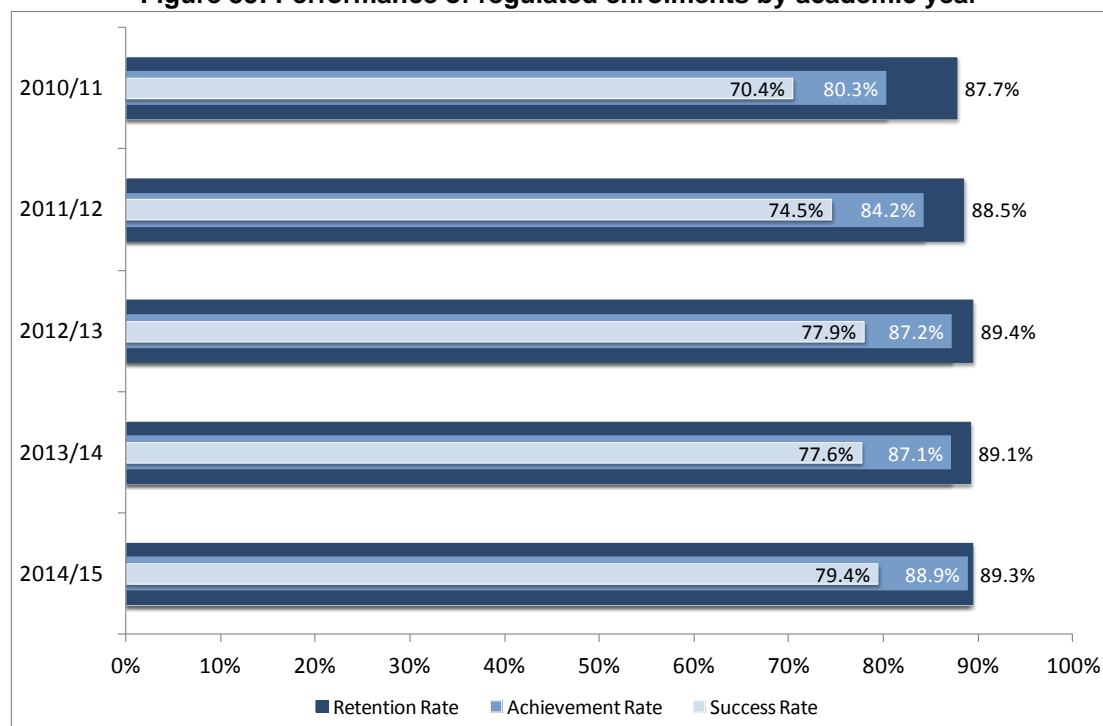
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<sup>4</sup> As performance analysis is focused only on regulated provision the same issue mentioned in Technical note 15 (page 69) applies but the impact is minimal.

## Success rate

The success rate (i.e. the proportion of students staying on their course and achieving a qualification) increased from 70.4% in 2010/11 to 79.4% in 2014/15 (9.0 percentage points). This increase is expected given that both retention and achievement rates increased over the five year period (Figure 35, Table A29).

Figure 35: Performance of regulated enrolments by academic year



## FE colleges

### Retention rate

NRC, SRC and BMC did not follow the FE sector trend of a rise in retention rates over the five year period. NRC's retention rate fell by 1.3 percentage points from 87.1% to 85.8%, while SRC's retention rate fell by just over 0.2 percentage points from 92.4% to 92.2% over the period. BMC's retention rate fell slightly (less than 0.1 percentage points) from 87.5% to 87.4%. The two colleges with the biggest increases in retention rates were SERC and NWRC. In SERC the retention rate increased 5.6 percentage points from 85.5% to 91.1%, while NWRC increased by almost 3.3 percentage points from 83.8% to 87.0% over the five year period (Table A29).

### Achievement rate

All six colleges followed the FE sector trend of an increase in achievement rate between 2010/11 and 2014/15. The largest increase (just over 13.9 percentage points) over this five year period was in NWRC, improving from 76.1% to 90.1%. Increases in the other five colleges ranged from 0.7 percentage points in SWC to 12.6 percentage points in NRC (Table A29).

## **Success rate**

All six colleges followed the FE sector trend of an increase in success rate between 2010/11 and 2014/15. The largest increase was in NWRC (14.6 percentage points) rising from 63.8% to 78.4%. The other five colleges followed the sector trend with percentage point increases ranging from 2.8% in SWC to almost 11.1% in SERC (Table A29).

## **Academic Year 2014/15**

### **Performance by age**

#### **Retention rate**

In 2014/15 the retention rate for those aged '19 and under' was 89.8%, for the '20 to 24' age group it was 88.4% and for those aged '25 and over' it was 88.9%, (Figure 36 Table A30).

In four of the six colleges the highest retention rates were also in the youngest age group. The exceptions were in both BMC (89.4%) and NWRC (88.4%) where the highest retention rates were for the '25 and over' age group.

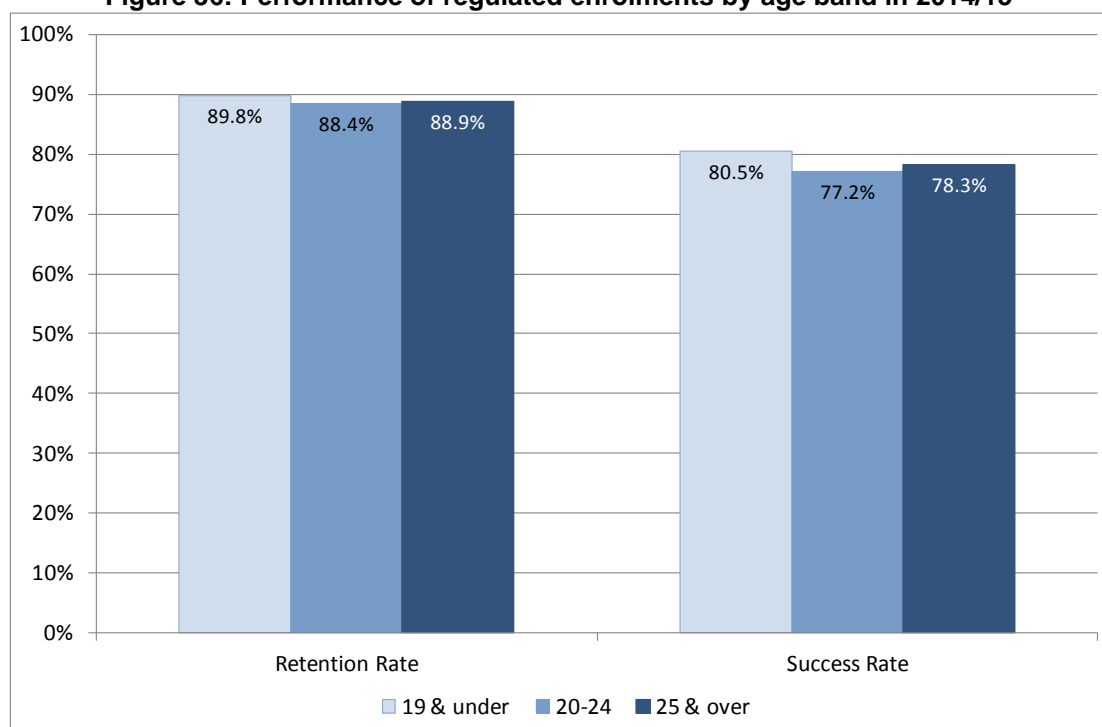
The retention rate for the '19 and under' age group ranged from 85.5% in BMC to 93.5% in SRC. For the '20 to 24' age group the retention rate ranged from 83.1% in NWRC to 92.0% in SWC, while for the '25 and over' age group it ranged from 85.2% in NRC to 90.4% in SWC (Table A30).

#### **Success rate**

In 2014/15 the success rate for those aged '19 and under' was 80.5%, for the '20 to 24' age group it was 77.2% and for those aged '25 and over' it was 78.3% (Figure 36 , Table A30).

The success rate for the '19 and under' age group ranged from 72.8% in BMC to 85.6% in SRC. For the '20 to 24' age group the success rate ranged from 73.1% in NWRC to 80.5% in SERC, while for the '25 and over' age group it ranged from 75.8% in SWC to 81.3% in NWRC (Table A30).

**Figure 36: Performance of regulated enrolments by age band in 2014/15**



## Performance by gender

### Retention rate

In 2014/15, within the FE sector, retention rates across gender were fairly even with males (89.9%) having a slightly higher rate than females (88.8%) (Figure 37, Table A31).

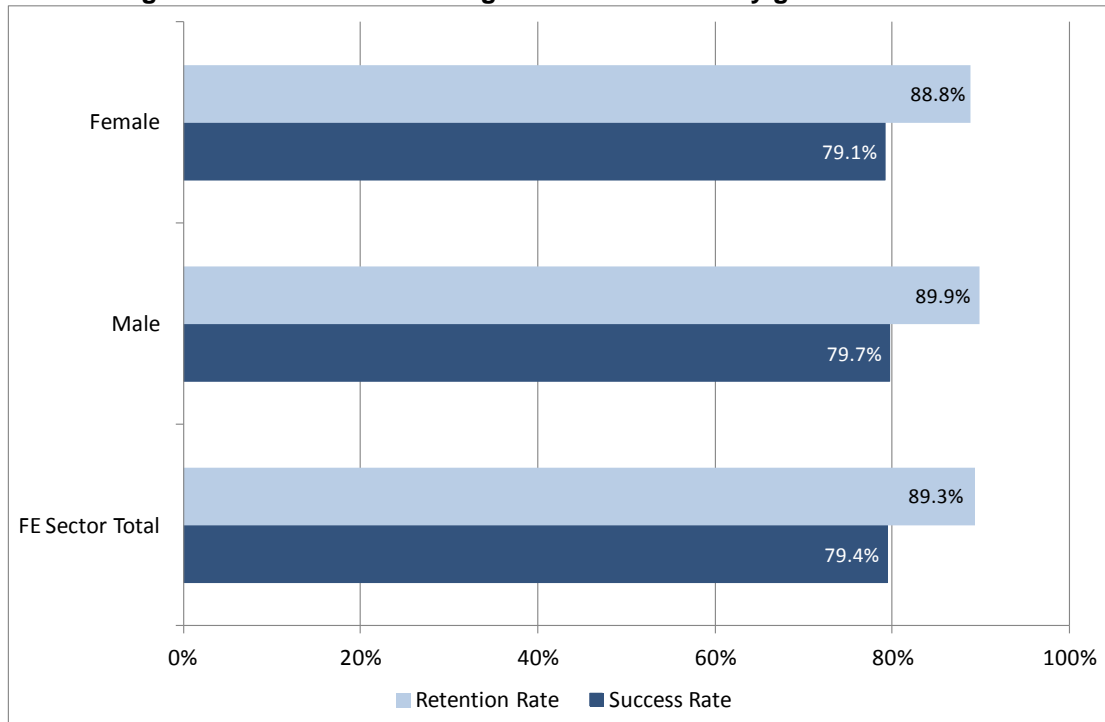
Within the colleges, five of the six colleges followed the FE sector trend of the male retention rate being greater than the female rate. Only in SRC was the retention rate for females (92.3%) slightly higher than males (92.2%) (Table A31).

### Success rate

The FE sector success rates were 79.1% for females and 79.7% for males. This indicates that males are slightly more likely to stay on the course and achieve than females (Figure 37, Table A31).

Three of the six colleges followed the FE sector trend of the success rate for males being higher rate than for females (NRC, SERC and SWC). The largest difference in success rates, between males and females, was in SWC and SERC. The success rate for males attending SERC was 79.5% and in SRC it was 83.8%. The corresponding rates for females were 78.2% in SWC and 82.6% in SERC. The difference in success rates was 0.8 percentage points or less across the other four colleges (Table A31).

**Figure 37: Performance of regulated enrolments by gender in 2014/15**



## Performance by mode of attendance

### Retention rate

In 2014/15, within the FE sector, the retention rates were similar for both full (87.7%) and part-time (89.6%) regulated enrolments. It appears that it does not matter if an individual attends on a part or full-time basis in terms of staying on and completing their course (Figure 38, Table A32).

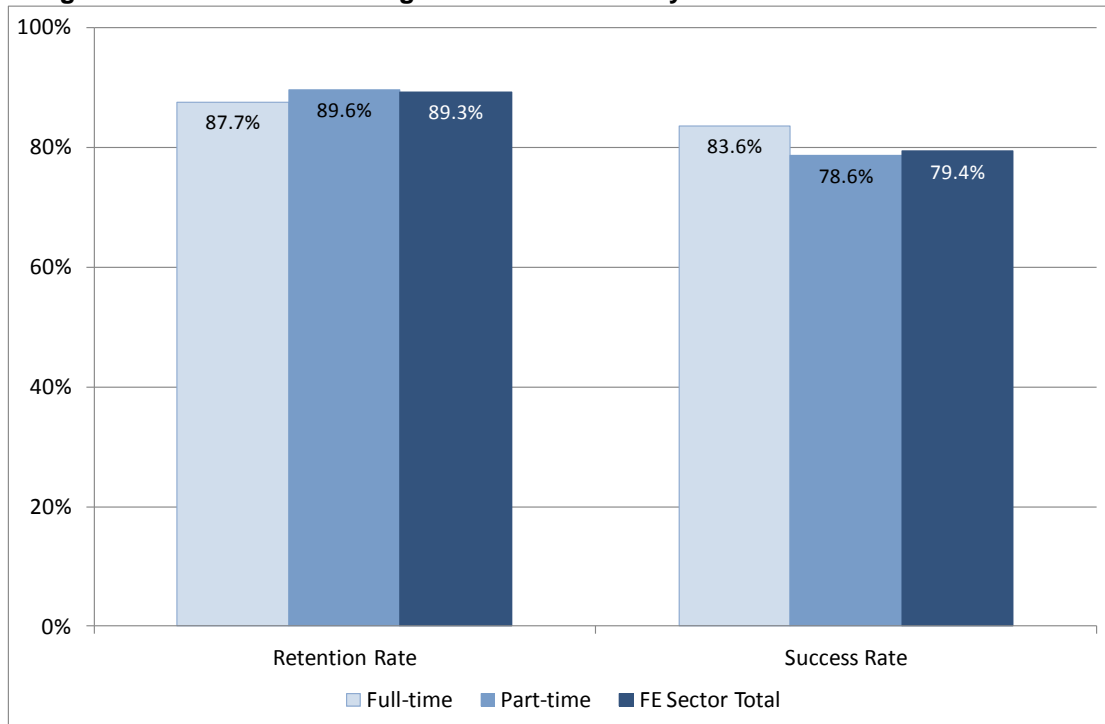
However, only in two colleges, namely NWRC and SERC, was the part-time retention rate greater than the full-time rate. NWRC had the biggest difference in retention rates of 6.8 percentage points between part-time (88.9%) and full-time (82.1%). In SRC both full-time and part-time rates were 92.2%. For the remaining colleges full-time was higher than part-time, with differences ranging from 0.8 to 1.5 percentage points (Table A32).

### Success rate

The success rates across the sector were 78.6% for part-time and 83.6% for full-time (Figure 38, Table A32).

In four of the colleges, the full-time success rate was greater than the part-time rate. The two exceptions were NWRC, where the success rate for part-time (78.5%) was greater than full-time (78.0%) and in SERC, where the full-time and part-time rates were the same, 83.2%. Success rates within part-time provision ranged from 73.9% in BMC to 83.2% in SERC, while for full-time provision it ranged from 78.0% in NWRC to 89.5% in SRC (Table A32).

**Figure 38: Performance of regulated enrolments by mode of attendance in 2014/15**



## Performance by provision area

### Retention rate

In 2014/15, within the FE colleges, more students are 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 95.4% for HE, 90.6% for FE and 83.7% for Essential Skills (ES) (Figure 39, Table A33).

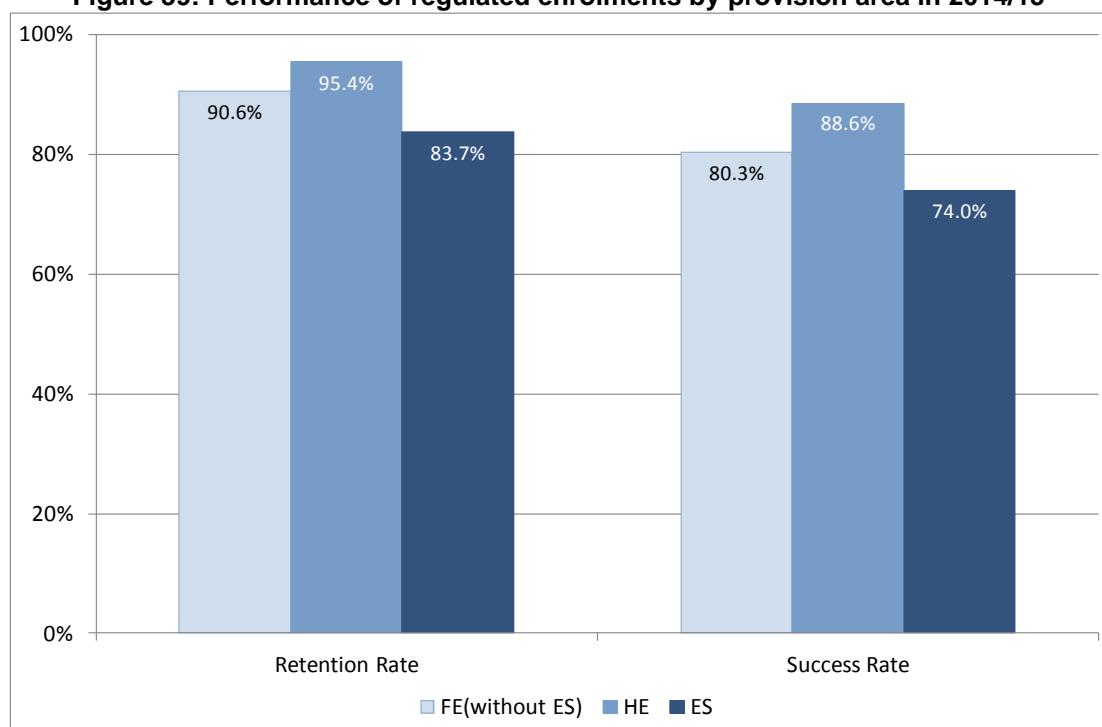
The HE provision area was the highest retention rate across all colleges ranging from 90.8% in NWRC to 97.4% in both BMC and SERC. For FE provision it ranged from 86.6% in NRC to 93.2% in SRC. Retention rates within ES provision ranged from 77.6% in BMC to 88.4% in SRC (Table A33).

### Success rate

Within the FE sector the success rates were 74.0% for Essential Skills, 80.3% for FE and 88.6% for HE. Based on this information, there are higher proportions of people staying on and achieving within higher education than either FE or Essential Skills (Figure 39, Table A33).

Success rates within HE provision ranged from 83.7% in NRC to 93.3% in BMC, while for FE provision it ranged from 74.7% in BMC to 85.4% in SERC. Retention rates within ES provision ranged from 71.1% in BMC to 76.8% in SWC. Interestingly BMC had the lowest success rates in FE and Essential Skills but the highest success rate in HE. Across all colleges the highest success rate was within HE provision (Table A33).

**Figure 39: Performance of regulated enrolments by provision area in 2014/15**



## Performance by level of study

### Retention rate

The retention rate in FE colleges ranged from 85.0% at 'Level 1 and Entry' to 95.4% at 'Level 4 and above'. The retention rate generally increased as the level of study increased (Figure 40, Table A34).

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'. These ranged from 81.6% in NRC to 88.4% in SWC. In all six colleges the highest retention rates were at 'Level 4 and above', ranging from 90.8% in NWRC to 97.4% in both BMC and SERC. (Table A34).

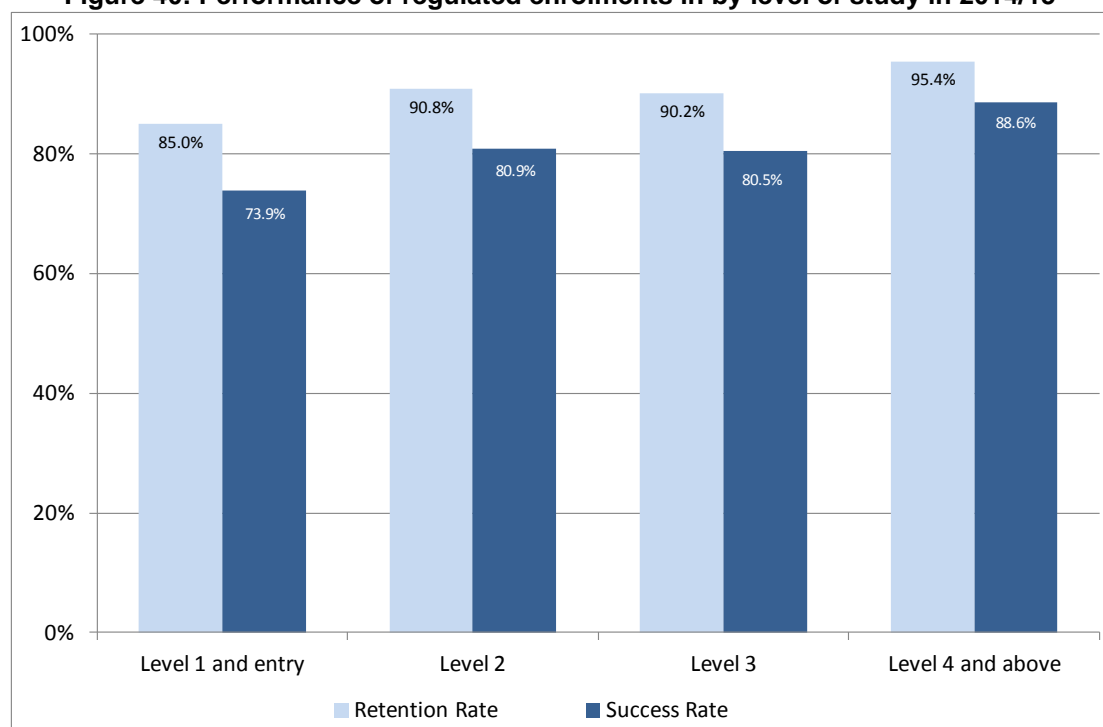
### Success rate

The success rate in FE colleges ranged from 73.9% ('Level 1 and Entry') to 88.6% ('Level 4 and above'). Success rates generally increased as the level increased. 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 A34).

In five of the six colleges the lowest success rates were in 'Level 1 and entry'. However, the lowest success rate across all colleges was in BMC (71.6%) for those on 'Level 3' courses. In four colleges the highest success rates were in 'Level 4 and above'. The two exceptions are SRC (87.1%) and NRC (84.6%), where the highest success rates were at 'Level 3'. The highest success rate was at 'Level 4 and above' within BMC (93.3%). This was 17.7 percentage

points higher than the second highest success rate in the college ('Level 2' 75.6%). (Table A34).

**Figure 40: Performance of regulated enrolments in by level of study in 2014/15**



## Performance by subject area

### Retention rate

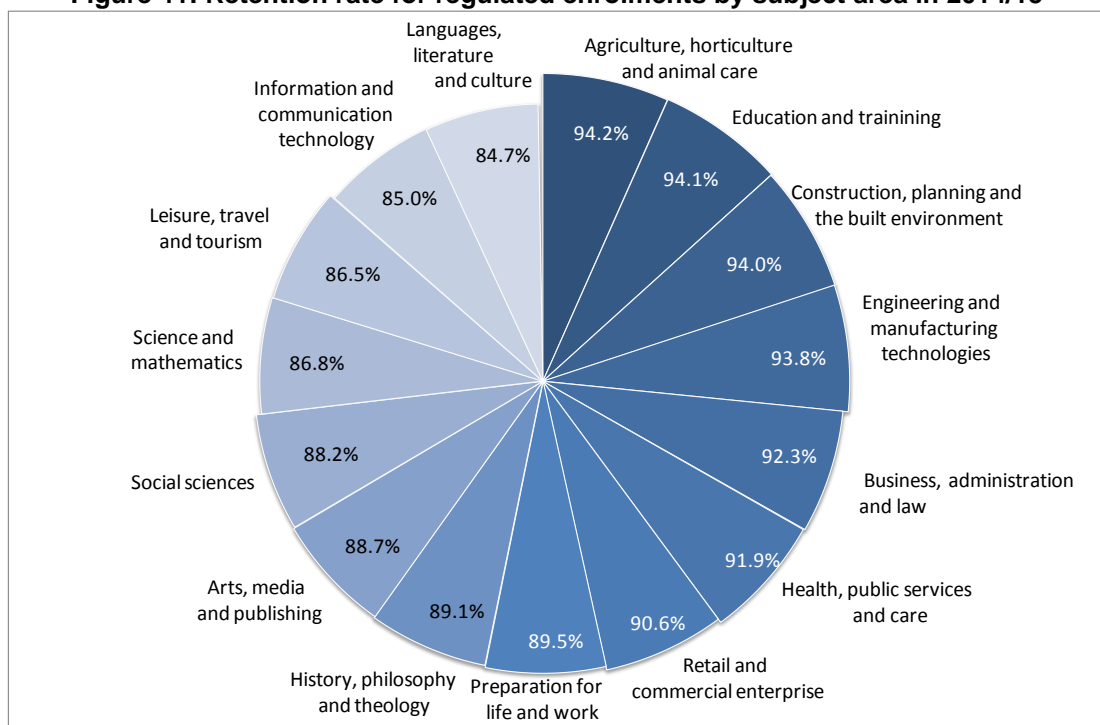
The retention rate by subject area ranged from 84.7% in 'Languages, literature & culture' to 94.2% in 'Agriculture, horticulture & animal care' (Figure 41, Table A35).

Three of the six colleges followed the sector trend with their highest retention rates in 'Agriculture, horticulture & animal care'; NWRC (100.0%), SRC (100.0%) and SWC (97.4%). (In SWC the retention rate in 'Education & Training' was also 97.4%). The highest rates in the other colleges were: SERC 'Education & Training' (97.7%), BMC 'Construction, planning & the built environment' (94.4%), and NRC 'Education & Training' (93.7%).

Following the FE Sector trend, the lowest retention rates in two of the colleges were in 'Languages, literature & culture', NRC (74.1%) and SRC (85.9%). The lowest retention rates in NWRC (77.1%), SERC (79.4%) and SWC (84.5%) were in 'Social Sciences'. The lowest retention rate in BMC was in 'Information and communication technology' (83.8%) (Table A35).



**Figure 41: Retention rate for regulated enrolments by subject area in 2014/15**



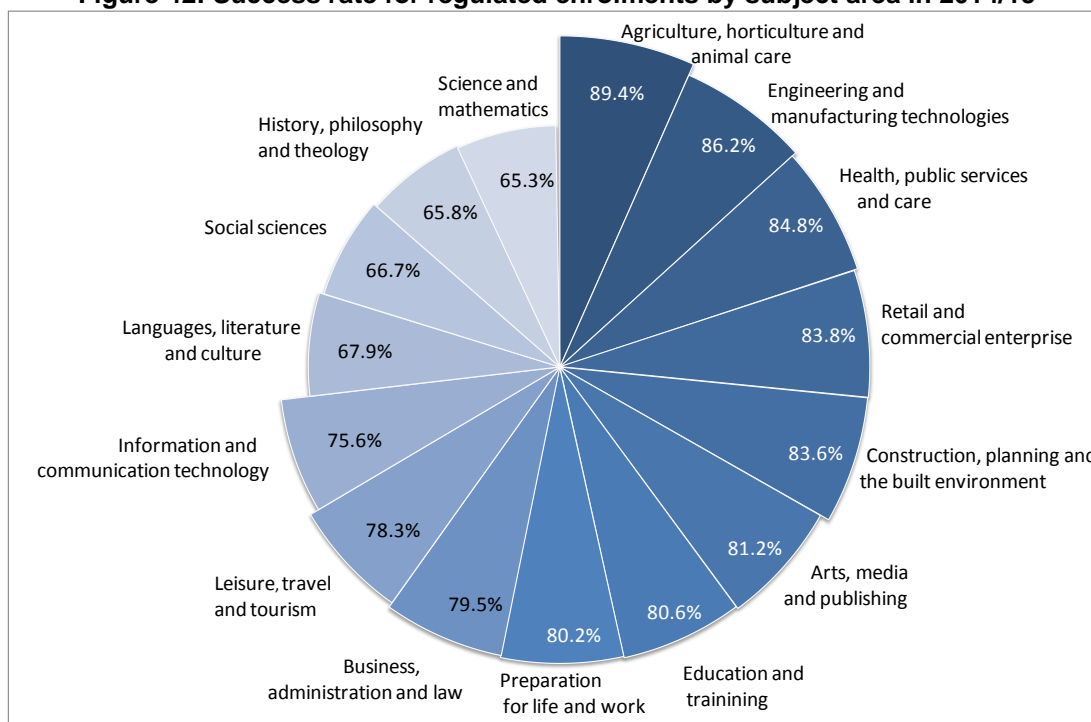
### Success rate

The subject area success rates ranged from 65.3% in 'Science & mathematics' to 89.4% in 'Agriculture, horticulture & animal care'. The success rates indicate that lower proportions of final year enrolments stay on and achieve in 'Science & mathematics' than other subject areas (Figure 42, Table A35).

Three of the six colleges followed the sector trend with their highest success rates in 'Agriculture, horticulture & animal care'; SRC (96.2%), SWC (93.4%) and NRC (85.9%) (In NRC the success rate in 'Engineering & manufacturing technologies' was also 85.9%). In SERC the highest success rate was in 'Education & Training' (93.1%), while in BMC it was in 'Construction, planning & the built environment' (92.0%) and in NWRC it was in 'Health, public services and care' (87.4%).

NWRC (48.1%) and SWC (58.3%) followed the FE sector trend with their lowest success rates in 'Science & mathematics'. The lowest success rates in the other colleges were; BMC, 'History, philosophy and theology' (58.2%), NRC, 'Education & Training' (62.6%), SRC, 'Languages, literature & culture' (64.4%) and SERC, 'Social Sciences' (70.1%) (Table A35).

**Figure 42: Success rate for regulated enrolments by subject area in 2014/15**



## Performance by STEM

### Retention rate

In 2014/15, the retention rate for final year enrolments in 'Broad' and 'Narrow' STEM was 90.5% and 89.3% respectively. Both had slightly higher retention rates than final year enrolments in non-STEM regulated qualifications (89.0%) i.e. more people complete STEM courses (Figure 43, Table A36).

For 'Broad' STEM, three colleges had slightly higher rates than the FE sector average, SRC (93.8%), SWC (93.7%) and BMC (90.7%), while the other three colleges, NWRC (87.7%), SERC (87.9%) and NRC (88.5%), had retention rates below the sector average.

Retention rates in 'Narrow' STEM by college ranged from 85.0% in NWRC to 93.4% in SRC (Table A36).

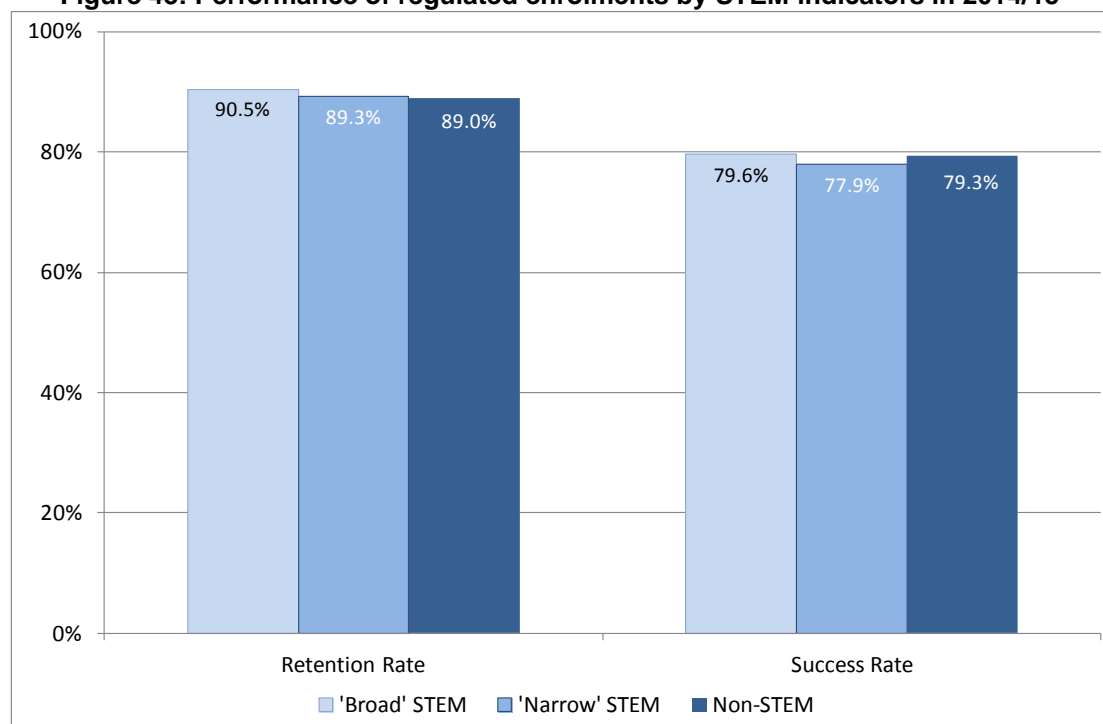
### Success rate

The FE sector success rates were 79.6% for 'Broad' STEM and 77.9% for 'Narrow' STEM. Comparison with the success rate for non-STEM (79.3%) of final year enrolments in regulated qualifications indicates that those enrolled in 'Narrow' STEM subjects are less likely to stay on the course and achieve than in non-STEM courses, while those on 'Broad' STEM are slightly more likely (Figure 43, Table A36).

For 'Broad' STEM, four colleges had higher rates than the FE sector average, SRC (82.7%), SWC (81.7%), SERC (80.4%) and NRC (80.1%), while the other two colleges, NWRC (75.9%) and BMC (77.6%) had success rates below the FE sector average.

Success rates in 'Narrow' STEM by college ranged from 69.9% in NWRC to 81.5% in SWC (Table A36).

**Figure 43: Performance of regulated enrolments by STEM indicators in 2014/15**



## Performance by deprivation

### Retention rate

The retention rate for the FE Sector ranged from 85.5% for the most deprived quintile to 91.0% for both the middle quintile and the 2<sup>nd</sup> least deprived quintile. There is a general trend of the retention rate increasing as the areas where people come from become less deprived; they are more likely to stay on the course (Figure 44, Table A37).

Final year enrolments from the middle quintile had the highest retention rate for SRC (93.5%), SWC (92.7%) and NWRC (92.5%), while the highest retention rates in SERC (92.5%) and BMC (90.2%) were in the 2<sup>nd</sup> least deprived quintile. In NRC the highest retention rate was in the least deprived quintile (87.8%). However, there is only a small range in retention rates for final year enrolments from the five areas across the colleges. The maximum percentage point difference from lowest (83.3%) to highest (92.5%) was 9.2 in NWRC.

Across all colleges, final year enrolments from the most deprived quintile had the lowest retention rate. It is interesting to note that in SWC, the least deprived quintile also had the lowest retention rate (90.7%). In SWC the percentage point difference from highest to lowest was 2.0 (Table A37).

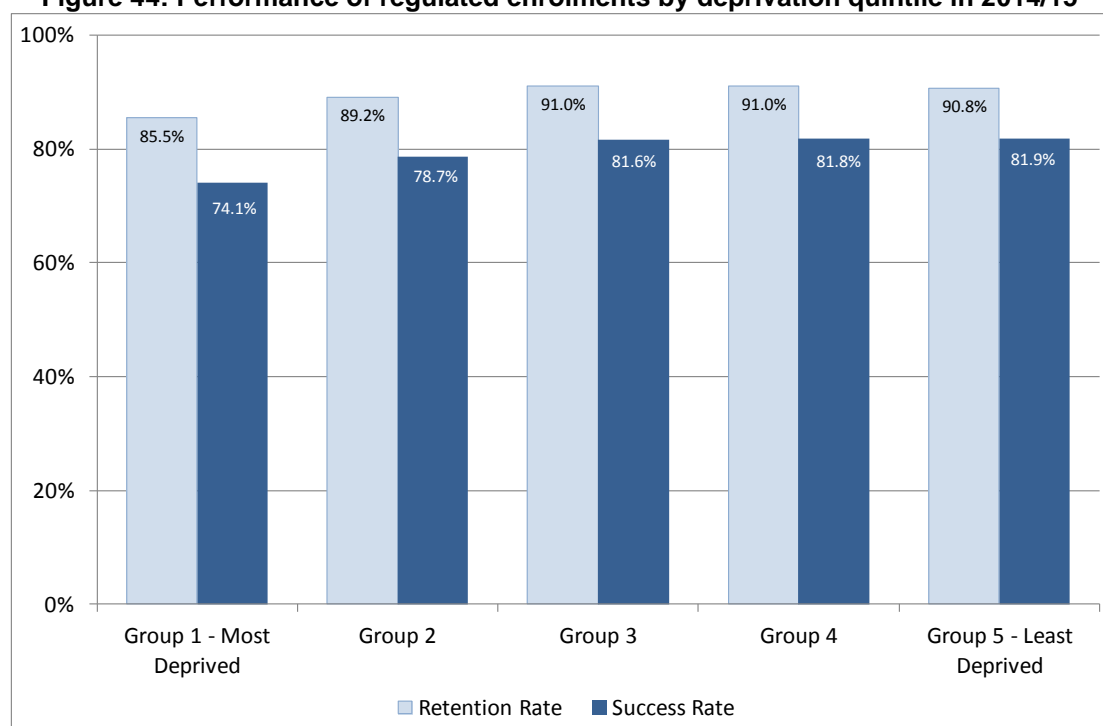
## Success rate

The success rates in the FE sector increased from 74.1% for final year enrolments from the most deprived quintile to 81.9% for those from the least deprived quintile. There is an upward trend in the success rates as deprivation decreased (Figure 44, Table A37).

In five of the six colleges final year enrolments from the most deprived quintile had the lowest success rates. In SERC the most deprived and the 2<sup>nd</sup> most deprived quintiles had the same success rates (80.4%). The exception to this was in SWC where final year enrolments from the least deprived quintile had the lowest success rate (71.3%).

The percentage point range in success rates across deprivation quintiles varied from 5.5 percentage points in SERC to 12.7 percentage points in NWRC. In SERC the lowest success rate was in the most deprived (and the 2<sup>nd</sup> most deprived) quintile (80.4%) and the highest success rate was in the least deprived quintile (85.9%). In NWRC the lowest success rate was also in the most deprived quintile (73.2%) and the highest success rate was in the middle quintile (85.9%) (Table A37).

**Figure 44: Performance of regulated enrolments by deprivation quintile in 2014/15**



## **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 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.

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 deprivation using the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM).

Super Output Areas 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.

Super Output Area (SOA) is determined using the postcode provided on the enrolment record.

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

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 & Communication Technology (ICT) in Northern Ireland. Essential Skills courses which are funded by DEL are free to participants and delivered by accredited tutors working in Further Education (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 enrolment.

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

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

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

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

### ***Funding streams***

Enrolments at Further Education colleges can be funded through a variety of funding streams including DEL 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-DEL funded provision such as Entitlement Framework (EF) or Cost Recovery (CR). EF includes Discrete Special Education Needs. CR is both public and private.

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

Please refer to the link below for further detail about Further Education 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 then 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 are 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 the link:

<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 between 2009/10 and 2012/13:

- (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);
  - ii. on sandwich courses; or
  - iii. 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 i. above).

(b) Part-time enrolments include all enrolments whose attendance is:

- i. part-time day;
- ii. block release;
- iii. evening only;
- iv. open/distance learning; or
- v. linked to their attendance at a school on a full-time basis.

For enrolments in 2013/14 and 2014/15:

- (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 i. 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 are courses which reside outside those recognised by OFQUAL but comply with quality criteria specified by the Department. The Department 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 there are three types of Provision Areas, namely 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. Please refer to the Essential Skills publications at: <https://www.delni.gov.uk/publications/essential-skills-enrolments-publications-2015> for further details on all Essential Skills enrolments.

### **Qualifications**

Qualifications are counted for those final year enrolments in regulated courses at FE colleges. An individual can either fully or partially achieve as well as 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, but when 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) if 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, because 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 which appear 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 which falls outside this definition is not considered, in Departmental terms, as 'regulated' regardless of whether it is considered to produce "outcomes" e.g. internal college certification.

In the publication for 2013/14 and indeed all future releases, the term 'Regulated', will now be 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.

FE enrolment publications between 2003/04 and 2012/13 have used the term 'Professional and Technical' to describe this cohort of FE provision. 'Professional and Technical' were identified as any enrolment not coded as qualification aim '999', '599' or '199' i.e. recreational and KeySkills provision are excluded.

In each academic year students can be enrolled in multiple courses and therefore 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 to earlier academic years.

Number of non-withdrawals – These include any enrolments which 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 sector subject areas 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 sector subject area 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 (Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects; Biological and Physical Sciences; Agriculture; Mathematics and IT; Engineering and Technology; Architecture, Building and Planning) then it is regarded as 'Broad' STEM. 'Narrow' STEM is those enrolment records with a subject code starting with a letter C, F, G, H or J (Biological and Physical Sciences; Mathematics and IT; 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 =  $\frac{\text{Number of achievements}}{\text{Number of Enrolments}}$  OR Retention rate x Achievement rate

## Annex B: Technical Notes

1. Over the last number of years there has been extensive work carried out to develop a CDR, which aims to bring the five main individual Departmental returns from FE colleges, namely FLU, FESR, Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER), Entitlement Framework (EF) and FELS, together into a single dataset.
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, whilst 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.
3. The information presented in this statistical bulletin has been derived from a series of statistical returns (listed below) provided by FE colleges.
  - Further Education Statistical Return (FESR)
  - Further Education Leavers Survey (FELS)
  - Consolidated Data return (CDR)
  - Funded Learning Unit (FLU)

The statistics in regard to 2010/11 to 2012/13 have been derived from the FESR and the FELS. The CDR only came into operation for the 2013/14 academic year and is used for analysis related to this year and 2014/15. 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 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015.
7. Any enrolment 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 (i.e. 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 i.e. taught in reduced class number. Students indicate a learning need on their enrolment form, and 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 are 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), which 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.delni.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 which were indicated to be GCSE or A-Levels (qualification aims 560,614 and 615) and Combined Studies (inc. 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 enrolment recorded as transfers are excluded from performance analysis and are not included in final year enrolment counts.
  
14. For academic years 2009/10 to 2012/13 full-time provision is defined as enrolments '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)'; 'on sandwich courses'; or '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 i. above). Part-time are whose attendance is either 'part-time day'; 'block release'; 'evening only'; 'open/distance learning'; or 'linked to their attendance at a school on a full-time basis'. For academic years 2013/14 and 2014/15 full-time provision is only '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)'. All other mode of attendance options are regarded as part-time.

15. Within this analysis 'regulated enrolments' between 2009/10 and 2012/13 are defined as any enrolment which are not hobby & leisure, or recreational, identified through the qualification aim (999) supplied by the FE college.

For academic years 2013/14 and 2014/15, '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').

In 2013/14 and 2014/15 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 & leisure, or recreational courses.

The new definition of 'regulated enrolments' in 2013/14 may result in a change in the proportion of regulated enrolments and therefore comparison with earlier years will need to take this into context.

16. 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 to earlier academic years. Reproducing the retention rate using the old methodology and comparing to the new indicates that of the 0.9% rise between 2011/12 and 2012/13, 0.6% is down to the change in the definition.
17. For all enrolments the Sector Subject 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 only 2014/15 enrolments are presented by sector subject area categories as it not comparable with academic years prior to 2013/14.

18. Equality related data such as political opinion, religious belief and sexual orientation was introduced in 2013/14 to the data capture process within FE colleges and as such information is only available for 2013/14 and 2014/15.
19. 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. This may inflate the figures presented for the number of enrolments who indicated having a dependant in 2013/14 and 2014/15 in comparison with earlier academic years (Table S15).
20. An individual can attend any FE college across Northern Ireland, although typically individuals will attend their local college, in terms of proximity. '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.
21. The HRCCA geographical areas were created for each of the six regional colleges. These HRCCAs were established by merging certain 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 which had the highest percentage of enrolments from a particular LGD was assigned that LGD.
22. The 2014 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.
23. 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:

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