

Survey of Further Education College Leavers

Report Academic Year 2015/16

Summary of Findings

This report presents findings from the third annual Northern Ireland Survey of Further Education College Leavers. Undertaken approximately six months after course completion, it provides a snapshot of the immediate added value to leavers of completing and achieving a regulated qualification in the FE sector during the academic year 2015/16.

Summary of Key Findings:

All FE College leavers

Almost half (47.6%) of FE College leavers were in employment six months after achieving their 2015/16 qualification, up from 39.1% before their course began; conversely, the proportion in learning had fallen from 44.7% to 36.8%.

The most popular reasons given by FE College leavers for undertaking their 2015/16 course were: 'to learn something new/gain new skills' (67.6%); 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' (63.4%); 'personal interest in the course' (63.2%); and 'to gain a qualification' (58.3%).

The vast majority (95.1%) of leavers agreed that completing their 2015/16 course has had a positive impact on them, among the main non-economic gains being: 'boosted confidence' (84.6% of leavers); 'made new friends/met new people' (83.5%); and 'increased self-esteem' (69.7%).

Over four-fifths (84.6%) of FE College leavers agreed their 2015/16 course has helped them become 'more enthusiastic about learning', while 72.4% agreed that it has helped give them a 'better idea of what they want to do in their life'.

Over three-fifths (61.9%) of leavers agreed that completing their 2015/16 course has 'improved their quality of life', while over four-fifths (84.9%) said they are more likely to 'undertake further learning and training', primarily at a higher level, and almost all (98.4%) would recommend completing a course in further education to a friend.

FE College leavers in employment

Over a quarter (28.9%) of the FE College leavers in employment had not been in employment before they started their 2015/16 course – of these, almost three-quarters had been in learning.

Over half (51.8%) of the FE College leavers in employment said their 2015/16 qualification is relevant to their current job, while almost a quarter (24.2%) said they could not have obtained/stayed in their employment without completing the course.

Over three-fifths (62.3%) of FE College leavers in employment were earning less than £300 per week, 20.4% were earning between £300 and £399, while 17.2% were earning £400 or more.

The vast majority (96.7%) of FE College leavers in employment were working in Northern Ireland, while 2.6% were working in the Republic of Ireland, 0.5% in Great Britain and 0.3% overseas.

Most (91.8%) of FE College leavers in employment were paid employees, with most in jobs classified as: 'Skilled Non-manual' (29.4%); 'Managerial and Technical' (22.5%); 'Partly Skilled' (22.4%); or 'Skilled Manual' (20.6%).

Over two-thirds (69.9%) of FE College leavers in employment before and after the course they completed in 2015/16 said they are using the skills and knowledge acquired in their job.

Among FE College leavers in employment who have stayed with the same employer since before their 2015/16 course, almost three-fifths (56.9%) said they are better at their jobs, a quarter (25.7%) said they are doing a job with more responsibilities, while 13.2% said they have been promoted - with the majority attributing their progress to the course at least to some extent.

FE College leavers in learning

Most (86.2%) FE College leavers still in learning had also been in learning before the course they had completed in 2015/16, while over four-fifths (82.6%) are now studying towards a higher level qualification.

Over two-thirds (67.7%) of leavers in learning have continued their learning in the FE sector, while over a fifth (22.2%) have started university.

Almost three-quarters (72.4%) of FE College leavers in learning have continued their learning in the same subject area as the course they completed in 2015/16.

Almost two-thirds (65.7%) of leavers in learning said they probably/definitely could not have undertaken their current learning without the course they had completed in 2015/16, while most (87.2%) said this additional qualification should help them obtain the sort of job they want.

Unemployed FE College leavers

In line with recent economic trends, the proportion of FE College leavers who classified themselves as unemployed six months after completing their course in 2015/16 (5.5%) was lower than that for the 2013/14 cohort (7.6%).

Around half (49.5%) of unemployed leavers had also been unemployed immediately before undertaking the 2015/16 course.

The full publication, along with associated tables and documents, is available at the following link:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/fe-leavers-survey-2015-16>