



DEPARTMENT FOR THE ECONOMY

DRAFT AUDIT OF INEQUALITIES

and

ACTION PLAN

2022 – 2027

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Foreword

I am pleased to present the Department for the Economy's (DfE) Audit of Inequalities, for the period 2022-2027.

Section 75 guidance issued by the Equality Commission for Northern recommends that public authorities undertake an audit of inequalities to identify inequalities, across the 9 Section 75 categories, relevant to its functions and to inform the development of an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Our Audit of Inequalities and associated Action Plan provide a strategic overview of inequalities and set out the actions by which we intend to address inequality.

On behalf of DfE and staff I am pleased to support and endorse this Audit of Inequalities which has been drawn up in accordance with the Equality Commission's guidance to public authorities.



Mike Brennan
Permanent Secretary

17th August 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

Background

- 1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires public bodies, when carrying out their work, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons:
- Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
 - Between men and women generally;
 - Between persons with a disability and persons without; and
 - Between persons with dependants and persons without.
- 1.2 Section 75 also requires a public authority, in carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group. The good relations duty extends beyond the traditional religious/ political dimension of 'community relations'. This duty also requires a proactive approach.
- 1.3 In April 2010 the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) published new statutory guidance 'Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A Guide for Public Authorities' (2010)¹. In this Guide the Equality Commission recommends that public authorities undertake an audit of inequalities, by examining their functions and how these relate to the promotion of equality and good relations.

Purpose of the Audit of Inequalities

- 1.4 The purpose of carrying out an audit of inequalities is to provide a strategic picture of inequalities, rather than considering inequalities on a policy-by-policy basis, through for example, screening or equality impact assessments. Therefore, such a broad audit of inequalities may result in a strategic picture beyond the capability of a public authority to influence. However, the audit provides an opportunity to

¹ Also, 'Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998: A guide for Public Authorities - An Outline Guide', Equality Commission NI, February 2012

take stock of those social and economic inequalities contextualising the activities of the public authority. Information garnered may enable the authority or Department to intervene through policies, programmes, and services to reduce inequalities.

- 1.5 It is further recommended by the Equality Commission that public authorities use the audit of inequalities to develop and implement an action plan to address inequalities relative to its functions. This action plan is used for monitoring performance on equality measures and provides a basis for regular reporting to the Equality Commission.
- 1.6 The audit of inequalities and action plan are additional and complementary to the development of an equality scheme, through which public authorities are required to set out how they will pay due regard to the equality of opportunity duty and regard to the good relations duty under Section 75.
- 1.7 Implementation of DfE's (the Department's) statutory obligations, including monitoring and reporting on equality duties, is overseen by the Department's Corporate Governance and Equality Branch, which also has responsibility for developing the Department's Equality Scheme and Equality Action Plan. The Department has also established a Diversity Working Group to provide an internal focus on diversity principles and to champion the promotion of diversity among staff.

The Department for the Economy – Who we are and what we do

- 1.8 The Department for the Economy was established in May 2016 and combines the functions of the former Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment and the Department for Employment and Learning, except for the Employment Service which is now part of the Department for Communities. As a Department our focus is on developing and implementing agile policies and programmes which promote a competitive, sustainable and inclusive economy through investment in skills, economic infrastructure, research, innovation and business development.

- 1.9 The Department's [Vision for a 10x Economy](#) sets out a long-term ambition for Northern Ireland to be a ten times better economy with benefits and opportunities for all our people. The aim is for economic growth to mean something to all people and places in Northern Ireland, with a positive impact on wider societal and environmental wellbeing. The Vision will provide the strategic framework for the Department's activities over the next decade. Our policies and interventions will be focused on delivering an economy which is innovative, inclusive and sustainable.
- 1.10 The Department intends to adopt an integrated approach to all policy and strategic development so that the ambitions set out in the vision will be realised. Our strategic priorities will work synergistically to realise the aspirations of the 10X vision with all policies and initiatives across the Department adopting a 10X approach.

Programme for Government

- 1.11 Once a new Programme for Government Outcomes Framework is finalised, DfE will be the lead Department on the economy-focussed Outcomes and will have key contributions to make to various others. The Department will contribute to any further progress towards the development of a full Programme for Government as required in due course.

Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives

- 1.12 A vision, mission and strategic objectives have been developed for the Department and are set out below:

DfE Vision

Northern Ireland prospering through a decade of innovation which will deliver an economy that is ten times better than it is today, with benefits for all our people.

DfE Mission

To develop and implement agile policies and programmes which promote a competitive, sustainable and inclusive economy through investment in:

- skills

- economic infrastructure
- research and innovation
- business development

Strategic Objectives

- Accelerate innovation and research.
- Enhance education, skills and employability.
- Drive inclusive, sustainable growth.
- Succeed in global markets.
- Build the best economic infrastructure.
- Deliver a regulatory environment that optimises economic opportunities for business and commerce, while also protecting consumers and workers.
- Ensure the Department has effective governance, including programme and project management arrangements, and manages its resources, both financial and our people.

Structure of DfE

1.13 To deliver the mission and strategic objectives the Department has been structured into 5 business areas as follows:

1. International and Economic Relations Group;
2. Economic Strategy;
3. Management Services and Regulation Group;
4. Skills and Education Group; and
5. Energy Group.

1.14 Each business area is headed by a Deputy Secretary supported by a number of Directors with responsibility for specific areas of activity. An organisation chart showing the structure and key areas of work is included at Appendix A.

The Department has over 1,200 staff at various different grades as follows:

Grade 2 / Permanent Secretary	1

Grade 3 / Deputy Secretary	5
Grade 5	24
Grade 6	16
Grade 7	136
Deputy Principal	266
Staff Officer	239
Executive Officer 1	218
Executive Officer 2	139
Administrative Officer	153
Administrative Assistant	28
Total	1225

Our Partners

1.15 The Department's services are delivered in partnership with a range of other bodies and we will continue to work with our Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) to develop a partnership working approach and ensure alignment of ALB strategies with the overall Departmental / Ministerial strategy. Our main delivery partners and a brief synopsis of what they do is outlined at Appendix B.

Our Responsibilities

1.16 In order to achieve the vision, mission and strategic objectives outlined above, the department carries out a wide range of activities. Essential elements of its normal recurring business include:

- Leading on economic policy and strategy, working with delivery partners such as Invest NI on the programmes and projects that support business development and investment and job creation;
- Continuing to support Further Education Colleges in taking a pivotal role in generating a strong and vibrant economy through the development of world class professional and technical skills, increasingly at higher levels and by helping employers to innovate and by providing those with low or no qualifications, or who have other barriers to learning, with the skills and qualifications needed to find employment and become economically active;

- Supporting higher education institutions in their provision of higher-level skills, effecting a positive contribution to the labour market to contribute to economic recovery and improved social well-being;
- Supporting higher education institutions to fulfil their key missions of research and knowledge exchange, to maximise their achievement of excellent research and its translation into economic and societal impact;
- Supporting economic recovery by continuing to deliver Apprenticeship programmes supporting youth employment and improving the NI skills base, by expanding provision, widening access, and improving the economic relevance through working with employers to develop pathways, qualifications & curriculum;
- Supporting economic recovery by continuing to deliver and introduce reformed vocational education programmes, Youth Training and Youth Inclusion programmes providing access to vocational education training and employability skills aimed at reducing the number of young people not in employment, education or training;
- Championing economic, social and personal development by providing relevant high-quality learning, research and skills;
- Continuing to support the tourism sector in NI working with delivery partners Tourism NI and Tourism Ireland to maximise visitor numbers and associated revenue spend for the benefit of the NI economy and to support job creation;
- Supporting cross-border and all island trade and innovation through the activities of InterTradeIreland;
- Continuing to support NI Screen to maximise screen industry expenditure in NI and build the skills capacity and reputation of the local screen industry internationally;
- Setting the strategic direction for how the energy sector can contribute towards addressing climate change and supporting a green economic recovery;
- Providing regulatory services, including Health and Safety Executive NI, Trading Standards, Consumer Council and Insolvency Service as well as labour market services including Labour Relations Agency, tribunals, employment law and redundancy payments;
- Continuing to deliver careers guidance and advice in line with strategic commitments; and

- Maintain and enhance Northern Ireland’s domestic and international air connectivity.

2. INEQUALITIES

- 2.1 In line with our statutory equality duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the Equality Commission’s guidance for public authorities, the Department has mainstreamed equality considerations fully into its corporate planning process. We have undertaken an audit of inequalities to identify a range of key inequalities upon which the work of the Department may potentially impact. In doing so, we have closely considered the Department’s range of current and developing policies and programmes to highlight those priority areas where we are most likely to contribute to promoting better equality of opportunity and good relations.
- 2.2 Consistent with our remit for the economy of Northern Ireland, DfE closely monitors labour markets and employment trends. The following sections focus upon these areas and highlight priority issues for attention by the Department. We have outlined key information available on equality-related issues relating to those areas of work and provided a brief overview of relevant action already in progress, together with future plans to tackle inequality and disadvantage.

Economic and Social Context

- 2.3 The latest Northern Ireland Composite Economic Index (NICEI) shows that NI economic activity fell by 0.3% over Q3 2022 - having recorded a similar 0.3% decline in Q2, this equates to a technical recession in Northern Ireland. Q3 output was however 0.5% higher over the year and is now 4.1% above the pre-pandemic level of Q3 2019. While not produced on a fully equivalent basis, UK GDP fell by 0.3% in Q3 2022, but increased by 1.9% over the year. UK GDP is now 0.8% below pre-pandemic level of Q3 2019.
- 2.4 NI’s labour market remained solid in Q3 2022, despite the economy entering a technical recession during the same period. The number of people aged 16+ in employment during September - November 2022 was estimated at 866,000, an increase of 39,000 over the year. The overall NI employment rate (for 16–64 year

olds) was 71.3%. While this is an increase over both the quarter and year, it remains below the UK employment rate of 75.6%, and is the lowest among the 12 UK regions. Both the UK and NI employment rates remain below their pre-pandemic levels.²

Labour Market Context and Performance of Equality Groups

2.5 Data from a range of sources, including the Labour Force Survey, bespoke UUEPC analysis and the draft Programme for Government indicators has been used to look at potential inequalities in the Northern Ireland labour market and in educational outcomes for Section 75 categories and other vulnerable groups.

Religious background

2.6 According to statistics from NISRA's Labour Force Survey, the Catholic employment rate was estimated to be 71.2% in 2019, slightly lower than the employment rate estimated for Protestants (73.7%). Whilst a small gap remains, this gap has narrowed from 7 percentage points in 2009 to 2.5 percentage points currently (in 2019)³.

Gender

2.7 Employment rates for males and females in Northern Ireland are currently 62.4% and 54.4% as per NISRA's Labour Force Survey (September-November 2022). There is currently a gap of 8 percentage points between male and female employment rates. This gap had gradually reduced during the Covid pandemic to a low of 2.7 percentage points in April – June 2021 quarter due to a decrease in male employment while female employment had shown an improvement. However, as male employment returned to 2019 figures, the gap has widened again. When broken down by age bands, the gap between male and females broadly represents the overall age range, however the gap for 16-24 year olds is far less at 3.4 percentage points.⁴

² DfE Economic Commentary Winter 2022/23

³ NISRA (2022), Draft PfG/ODP Indicators, refers to 2019-2019, available here: [Draft PfG/ODP Indicators | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴ NISRA(2022) Labour Force Survey, refers to historical tables – January 2023: [Labour Market Report – January 2023 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#)

- 2.8 The sectors of employment are also very different with over half of females (52%) employed in Public Administration, Education and Health compared with 17.9% of males. A higher proportion of males are employed in Construction (13.3% of males employed in sector compared with 1.6% females); Manufacturing (11.7% of males employed in sector compared with 5.7% females); and Transport and Communication (11% of males employed in sector compared with 3.2% females).⁵
- 2.9 When considering categories of work, males have a higher percentage of self employed compared to female, 17% against 7%. There is also a larger percentage of males in full time employment with 89% of male workforce in full time employment compared to 64% of females. Females also have higher incidences of part-time working compared with males (35% vs 11%). Females also earn less than males. According to NISRA's Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings.⁶ "In 2021, considering all employees regardless of working pattern, females earned 5.7% less than males in NI i.e., for every £1 earned by men, women earned 94p."⁷
- However, it should be noted that this is because part-time workers earn less than full-time workers and more females work part-time. Female full-time workers earn more than male full-time workers and female part-time workers earn more than male part-time workers (when considering median gross hourly earnings excluding overtime).
- 2.10 The gap between male and female economic inactivity has been narrowing over time and the rates are now close. However, the reasons recorded for inactivity between both genders are different. A greater proportion of female economic inactivity is as a result of home and caring responsibilities compared with males.
- 2.11 Whilst female inactivity as a result of caring and home responsibilities has declined over the past two years, it remains higher for females than for males (25.5% of

⁵ NISRA (2022) Labour Force Survey , refers to table 2.17 – July to September 2022 [Quarterly Labour Force Survey Tables – November 2022 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#)

⁶ NISRA(2022) Labour Force Survey, refers to historical tables – January 2023: [Labour Market Report – January 2023 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#)

⁷ NISRA (2022), Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings, available here: <https://www.nisra.gov.uk/system/files/statistics/Employee-earnings-NI-2021.pdf>

female inactivity due to looking after family/home compared with 6.8% for males⁸). Conversely, male inactivity is made up of higher proportions of long-term sick (44.4%) and students (30.3%) compared with females (36.3% and 20.8% respectively).

Disability

- 2.12 Those with a disability are less than half as likely to be in employment as those without a disability, with the problem particularly evident for disabled persons with lower qualification levels⁹. In general, those with a disability are much less likely to hold any qualifications compared with those without a disability (around 27.6% of those with a disability hold no qualifications compared with 10.8% of those without a disability). Conversely, only 15.5% of those with a disability hold a degree or higher level qualification, compared with 32.8% for those without a disability¹⁰.
- 2.13 The lowest employment rate for those with a disability is found amongst 50 to 64 year olds; this cohort also has the highest incidence of disability of any age group amongst working aged adults. There are consistently lower levels of employment amongst those with a disability in Northern Ireland when compared to the whole of the UK, with a 35.5% employment rate recorded amongst those with a disability in Northern Ireland compared to 53.1% for the UK as a whole. This is in spite of a roughly equal prevalence of disability at both the NI and UK level¹¹.

Ethnic minorities/migrant workers

- 2.14 The employment rate for persons classified as 'white' was estimated to be 72.2% in Northern Ireland in 2019, much higher than the 62.3% recorded for those identifying as 'other'¹². Whilst, this is a significant difference, it should be noted that those classified as 'other' represented a relatively small population of an estimated 24,400 individuals of working age in Northern Ireland¹³.

⁸ NISRA (2022), Labour Force Survey, refers to table 2.4 Sep-Nov 2022, available here: [Labour Market Report – January 2023 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/labour-market-report-january-2023)

⁹ UUEPC (2021), Labour Force Survey, ONS and UUEPC analysis, refers to Nov 2022.

¹⁰ NISRA (2022), Labour Force Survey, refers to Q3 2022 (Quarterly Supplement), available here: [Quarterly Labour Force Survey Tables – November 2022 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/quarterly-labour-force-survey-tables-november-2022)

¹¹ UUEPC (2022), Labour Force Survey, ONS and UUEPC analysis, refers to Q3 2022.

¹² NISRA (2022), Draft PfG/ODP Indicators, refers to 2019, available here: [Draft PfG/ODP Indicators | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/draft-pfg-odp-indicators)

¹³ NOMIS (2022) Annual Population Survey, refers to Jan-Dec 2020, available here: [Nomis - Official Labour Market Statistics - Nomis - Official Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/official-labour-market-statistics)

Age

- 2.15 There is evidence that there has been a greater labour market impact on younger age groups (aged 16-24) during the pandemic in NI compared with their counterparts in the UK as a whole. For example, 16-24 year olds in NI witnessed a drop in the employment rate 8 percentage points larger than the same age group across the UK as a whole during Q3 2021¹⁴. Young people in NI also had the highest economic inactivity rate amongst 16-24 year olds of any UK region in Q3 2022. However, it should be noted that 86% of economic inactivity in this age group is caused by being a student, with Northern Ireland counting 7.5% of 16-64 year olds as economically inactive students, the highest rate of any UK region¹⁵.
- 2.16 There is also evidence that of those young people that do work, they are more likely to want to work more. 9.3% of 16-24 year olds are estimated to want to work more hours, which is 3.5 percentage points above the Northern Ireland average¹⁶.
- 2.17 In terms of qualification attainment, older persons tend to be lower qualified with 18% of 50-64 year olds possessing no qualifications compared with 8% of 25-49 year olds¹⁷.
- 2.18 Economic inactivity levels are also much higher amongst older working-age groups (50-64 year olds) in Northern Ireland compared with the UK as a whole, at 33.7% and 27.2% respectively. Just over half of economic inactivity in this age group in Northern Ireland is caused by long-term sickness¹⁸.

Persons with dependents

- 2.19 When considering the main reason for economic inactivity, caring for dependents is the second most common reason behind sick/disabled. This accounts for 20.8% of those that want to work and 17.4% of those that do not.¹⁹

¹⁴ UUEPC (2021), Labour Force Survey, ONS and UUEPC analysis, refers to Q2 2020 to Q3 2021.

¹⁵ UUEPC (2022), Labour Force Survey, ONS and UUEPC analysis, refers to Q3 2022.

¹⁶ UUEPC (2021), Labour Force Survey, ONS and UUEPC analysis, refers to Q3 2022.

¹⁷ NOMIS (2022) Annual Population Survey, refers to Jan-Dec 2021, available here: [Nomis - Official Labour Market Statistics - Nomis - Official Labour Market Statistics \(nomisweb.co.uk\)](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/OfficialLabourMarketStatistics)

¹⁸ UUEPC (2021), Labour Force Survey, ONS and UUEPC analysis, refers to Q3 2022.

¹⁹ NISRA(2022) Labour Force Survey, refers to historical tables – January 2023 - Sep-Nov 2022: [Labour Market Report – January 2023 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/LabourMarketReport-January2023)

- 2.20 There is a large variance when comparing male and female economic inactivity due to caring responsibilities. Caring for a dependant accounts for 25.5% of economically inactive females, whereas the percentage of males is much lower at 6.8%. When you split this section by those who want to work and those that do not, there is only a small variance in the male percentage. However, with economically inactive females who want to work, this increases by 8 percentage points to 33.5% ²⁰.
- 2.21 The majority of Northern Ireland's workforce does not have a dependent, of those that do, 37% are in a couple and only 7% are lone parents. The employment rate for lone parents in Northern Ireland is 57% which is 4.7 percentage points lower than UK average. This drops to 54.4% for those with a dependent.²¹
- 2.22 Those who are married are estimated to have a much higher employment rate compared with those who are married and separated; those who are divorced; widowed; and those who are single. In 2019, those who were married had an employment rate of 80.2%, compared with 65.1% for those single; 59.4% for those divorced; 57.9% for those widowed; and 59.6% for those separated²². Out of those who were employed, married people were estimated to hold a higher level of qualification than all other categories. For example, in 2019 just over 49% of those who were married and in employment were estimated to hold a degree, compared with 42% of those who were divorced; 37% of single people and 32% for those who were married but separated²³.

²⁰ NISRA(2022) Labour Force Survey, refers to historical tables – January 2023 - Sep-Nov 2022: [Labour Market Report – January 2023 | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/labour-market-report-january-2023)

²¹ UUEPC (2021), Labour Force Survey, ONS and UUEPC analysis, refers to Q3 2022.

²² NISRA (2022), Draft PfG/ODP Indicators, refers to average from 2015-2019, available here: [Draft PfG/ODP Indicators | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/draft-pfg-odp-indicators)

²³ NISRA (2022), Draft PfG/ODP Indicators, refers to average from 2015-2019, available here: [Draft PfG/ODP Indicators | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](https://www.nisra.gov.uk/draft-pfg-odp-indicators)

2.27 Of the 61,696 total students enrolled in FE colleges 2021/22, the highest proportion was in the age group '19 and under' (44.8%), followed by those aged '25 and over' (39.8%) and those aged '20 to 24' (15.4%).

Some additional points arising from the statistics show;

- **Following a period of decline, FE College enrolments increased in 2021/22....**

Following a decline of 57,978 (37.3%) between 2017/18 (155,510) and 2020/21 (97,532), including a 34,822 (26.3%) drop between 2019/20 and 2020/21, the number of FE College enrolments increased by 13,301 (13.6%) in 2021/22, to 110,833. While much of this recent increase related to part-time study and to students aged 25 and over, overall enrolments continued to be impacted by a longer-term decrease in part-time enrolments, the relatively low number of 16-19 year-olds and pandemic related GCSE and GCE grading arrangements
- **...and the regulated share of enrolments has decreased.**

Over the period 2017/18 to 2021/22, the regulated share of enrolments has decreased in net terms, from 83.0% to 82.5%.
- **The student population is becoming older....**

Since 2017/18, the aged 25 and over share of regulated enrolments has increased from 24.5% to 27.5%; conversely, the proportion of those aged 19 and under has decreased from 62.6% to 57.4%.
- **... fewer than before are on part-time courses....**

Most regulated enrolments are part-time, although this proportion has reduced from 80.5% in 2017/18 to 75.4% in 2021/22. Including a net 17.6% decrease on 2019/20 (83,653), the number of part-time regulated enrolments has decreased by a net 35,011 (33.7%) between 2017/18 (103,948) and 2021/22 (68,937).
- **...and more are studying at Level 2 or above.**

Of the 91,403 FE Sector regulated enrolments in 2021/22, over four-fifths (83.2%) were at Level 2 or above, up from 79.7% in 2017/18.

Those at Level 1 and below accounted for 16.8% (15,339); 42.4% (38,785) were at Level 2, 30.1% (27,497) were at Level 3 and 10.7% (9,782) were at Level 4 and above.

- **FE Sector regulate enrolments are fairly evenly spread across relative deprivation quintiles....
.... but considerable variation occurs at college level**

In 2021/22, while regulated enrolments were fairly evenly spread across the relative deprivation quintiles, much variation occurred at college level. For instance, over 50% of regulated enrolments at NWRC and SRC came from the two most deprived areas (Quintiles 1 and 2), whereas SERC's largest proportion (23.4%) came from the least deprived area (Quintile 5). Almost two-fifths (38.4%) of NWRC's regulated enrolments were from Quintile 1, with 3.6% from Quintile 5. BMC enrolments were quite polarised, in that 52.7% were from either Quintiles 1 or 5.

Detailed figures for enrolments in Further Education Colleges are presented in tables at Annex 1.

* From the academic year 2013/14 onwards, the term "Regulated" (to align with the definition employed by the Office of Qualifications, Assessment and Examinations (OFQUAL)) will now be used in regard to this type of provision within FE. Regulated Qualifications are regarded of higher value to Certificates of Achievement, as the certificate for a Regulated Qualification demonstrates that the learner has attained a qualification approved by both a UK Regulator and recognised Awarding Organisation.

Enrolments at NI Higher Education Institutions by available equality categories 2016/17 to 2020/21

2.28 The number of annual student enrolments at NI Higher Education Institutions (NI HEI) are shown in tables at Annex 2. Tables 2.1-2.7 show annual student enrolment figures at NI Higher Education Institutions by Section 75 groups, over the past five years. In 2020/21, 12.8% (8,465) of all students (66,245) enrolled at NI HEIs self-reported as having a disability. Of those NI domiciled students enrolled at NI HEIs (43,480) who were asked to provide their religion (excluding those at the Open University), 13,915 (32%) of students gave their religion as 'Protestant', while 22,960 (52.8%) of students gave their religion as 'Roman Catholic', and 6,600 (15.2%) of students fell into the 'Other' or 'Not Known'

categories. With regard to the gender of student enrolments, a majority were female 59.1% (39,140), with males accounting for 40.9% (27,105) of all enrolments (66,245). A large majority of student enrolments were classified as White (75.7 %, or 50,130), compared with all others, including 'unknown' ethnicities, accounting for 16,120 (24.3%) of enrolments.

3. CURRENT POLICIES, PROGRAMMES AND FUTURE PLANS - INEQUALITIES

Skills for a 10X Economy and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics)

3.1 Delivering 'a 10x Economy' - an economy that is 10x stronger, 10x more prosperous, 10x more resilient will require transformation in our skills system. In an economy with limited natural resource, the skills of our people are the primary driver of our success. It will mean investing in skills that will drive our key strategic clusters, boosting the research and innovation potential of our workforce and developing Northern Ireland as a global hub of knowledge through strong collaboration between government, business and our research institutions. It will mean working cohesively across our whole education system to address skills imbalances, driving increased participation in the STEM subjects that will underpin our economic success. It will mean tackling social and educational inequality, ensuring appropriate pathways are in place to enable all our citizens to reach their potential, benefitting from and contributing to a stronger, more prosperous, more resilient Northern Ireland. It is well known that women are significantly underrepresented in the engineering and technology sectors in NI. The [2018 Matrix Women in STEM report](#) provides quantitative data on the steep decline in girls' participation in those core, engineering related STEM subjects throughout the education and skills system in NI and into employment. There have been several publications since then that supports the matrix data; according to EngineeringUK, women represent only around 16% of Northern Ireland-domiciled engineering and technology students at UK universities. This underrepresentation in higher education impacts the profession – with women comprising just 16% of those working in engineering.

The Matrix report also reports on the influences and barriers that impact girls' decision to pursue further study in STEM and careers. Recent research

commissioned by the DfE Women in STEM steering group has added to this evidence base and knowledge of what interventions should be taken forward to address the imbalance; [Lessons from Experience - a review of different approaches to tackling under representation of Women in STEM](#) , and; [Influencing STEM Choices](#) . Both the matrix report and a recent policy insights paper, [Supporting Girls' and Women's STEM Choices](#) published by the DfE WiSTEM (Women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) Steering Group makes recommendations to stakeholders. All of these documents underpin the delivery of the DfE Women in STEM Action Plan, published in March 2022.

Increasing the number of women in STEM is an important part of the Department's Vision for a 10x Economy. The gender imbalance in the STEM workforce is an increasingly urgent issue, both economically and socially; not just in Northern Ireland, but across the UK and beyond. Research by Matrix and others has demonstrated that if we are to reach our full economic potential, we must create an environment that encourages women and girls to study and take up careers in science and technology. The Department's [Women in STEM Action Plan](#) brings forward proposals and sets out plans for action. It is informed by and builds on the work already done by the Matrix panel, which originally identified particular issues around gender imbalance in the manufacturing and engineering workforce. The Action Plan takes the 10x Vision and sets out what is specifically required to address the under-representation of women in STEM and how this will contribute to this economic vision. Encouraging more girls and women to choose In Demand STEM subjects – and developing the skills pipeline to support them – is essential to achieving the 10x ambition.

All Age Apprenticeships

- 3.2 The Department plans to introduce All Age Apprenticeships in 2023. The planned introduction of All Age Apprenticeships means that the Department will fully fund the off the job training element of an apprenticeship under the ApprenticeshipNI programme regardless of age or sector, thus removing current age eligibility requirements. All Age Apprenticeships are recognised by the Department as a key enabler towards creating a culture of lifelong learning in Northern Ireland and will offer greater opportunities to older workers to develop important skills.

Transforming Careers Support for Young People and Adults in Northern Ireland

3.3 In March 2022 the Department announced the publication of the Independent Review of Careers Guidance. The Review provides an up-to-date assessment on the current delivery of careers guidance, recommendations for improvement and international exemplars. The report is based on evidence received from over 4,000 individuals following an intensive period of consultation with stakeholders from across Northern Ireland including school principals/teachers, pupils, parents, employers, local Councils and Trade Union representatives.

Recommendations

The review makes 15 recommendations which broadly fall within 3 key themes – services to young people, service to adults, and digitalisation.

Young People

- Primary school children, parents, and teachers – the need to ensure that careers related learning starts much earlier; is informed by the future needs of the economy and encourages children to broaden their career ideas and to raise aspiration.
- Careers guidance in post-primary schools – recognising that schools and Area Learning Communities are well- placed to decide what works best for their pupils, allowing more flexibility and accountability to deliver against an agreed set of common standards, principles and pupil outcomes, informed by international best practice.

Adults

- Significant opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of skills development over a lifetime – through better regional and local collaboration, combining place-based and e-enabled approaches, maximising existing resources available through HE, FE, community/third sector providers, City Deals and local Labour Market Partnerships.

Digitalisation

- World-class digital and blended approaches to careers support services – a much greater focus on providing better resources and cutting age self-help tools online, allowing for better targeting of those, of all ages, who need more intensive face to face support.

Next Steps

It is important to state that this is an independent report, and, at this stage, no policy or operational decisions have been made with regard to the report's recommendations, some of which are cross cutting. Policy and operational decisions that directly result from the review must await a new Executive.

You can view the full report, Executive Summary and International Exemplars at:

- [Transforming careers support for young people and adults in Northern Ireland](#)

Further Education Means Success - Further Education Strategy

3.4 Further Education Means Success outlines the vital contribution the further education sector makes in widening participation, increasing diversity, and promoting social inclusion, to help people with barriers to participation to engage in learning. FE Means Success committed to further widening access to provision for those with low skills or other barriers including those students with learning difficulties and disabilities (SLDD), those with caring responsibilities, those from a care background, migrants, and those with criminal records. This commitment is addressed through the 'Social Inclusion' project which has identified the barriers that inhibit different groups of learners from participating in further education provision and makes a series of recommendations which will develop the sector's capacity and expertise in targeting, engaging and retaining students with a variety of needs.

Measures to widen participation in Higher Education

3.5 Widening participation in higher education facilitates and increases the participation of those groups which are currently underrepresented in HE, in particular students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with learning difficulties and disabilities. The Department's earlier stated vision was that by 2020 any appropriately qualified individual in Northern Ireland should be able to gain access to higher education that is right for them, irrespective of their personal or social background or location of study. Learners should be able to progress to a level which fulfils their potential and to get proper recognition and respect for their

achievements from employers, educationalists and the wider community. Efforts should be focused on ensuring that the people who are most able but least likely to participate are given every encouragement and support to achieve the necessary qualifications to apply to, and to benefit from, the higher education that is right for them. The Department has made significant progress toward the realisation of the 2020 vision and has introduced many measures to widen participation in HE.

3.6 Since 2000 the Department has been addressing the issue of widening participation in higher education through a number of broad policy directions and a number of specific actions. These actions have included:

- an increase in HE provision in universities and in higher education provision delivered in the Further Education Colleges (includes anything at level 4 and above e.g., HND, HNC and Foundation Degrees);
- the introduction of Foundation Degrees;
- a widening participation premium paid to HE Institutions in respect of students from disadvantaged backgrounds;
- a widening access premium paid to HE Institutions in respect of students with disabilities;
- special initiative funding to develop partnerships between the universities and schools, colleges and local communities in areas of high deprivation and with traditionally low levels of participation in HE;
- capital funding to assist the universities improve access for disabled students;
- a wide range of Student Support measures including means-tested maintenance grants, loans and allowances. Disabled Students Allowances (DSA) covers the extra costs of any support a student may require throughout their course as a direct result of their disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty. DSA can be available to provide

specialist equipment, non-medical helpers support and reasonable extra travel costs incurred by the student to attend the university or college course as a result of a disability; and

- the introduction of a requirement upon higher education providers who wish to charge tuition fees above the standard level to have a Widening Access and Participation Plan in place which includes the provision of; bursaries for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and “outreach” activities to promote / support widening participation in higher education.

3.7 The higher education providers have demonstrated a significant commitment to widening participation. As a result, Northern Ireland’s record of participation in higher education has increased steadily and compares very favourably to other areas of the United Kingdom – with participation rates for young people at almost 50%.

3.8 Northern Ireland has also been very successful in achieving its objectives of raising motivation, aspirations and attainment of students who otherwise may not have considered going to higher education. In academic year 2020/21 around 35% of our higher education students came from the two most-deprived Multiple Deprivation Quintiles of Northern Ireland.

3.9 However, despite the above success certain parts of the Northern Ireland community continue to be under-represented in higher education. The Department recognises that addressing disadvantage and social exclusion will require coordinated action and consequently it is leading on the delivery of Access to Success, an integrated Regional Strategy for Widening Participation in Higher Education. It is being supported in this by other government departments, the Higher Education Institutions, the Further Education Colleges and other relevant stakeholders. Access to Success also provides a particular focus on the creation of a more accessible sector in which the people who are most able but least likely

to participate are given every encouragement and support to apply to, and to benefit from, higher education.

3.10 Significant progress has been made on a range of measures in the strategy. These include:

- the launch in March 2014 of “Reach Higher” a single, centralised and coordinated higher education awareness and aspiration-raising campaign to better communicate the benefits of higher education to under-represented sections of the community;
- the introduction of Widening Access and Participation Plans—which include a summary of an institution’s widening participation strategy, a review of its past achievement against relevant benchmarks and a detailed programme of anticipated progress each year towards its own targets;
- the development of additional support measures for students to sustain continuing participation; and
- an expansion in employer demand led Foundation Degrees in the workplace.

Help for disabled students in Higher Education and Further Education

3.11 The following support is available for students with a disability who wish to enter higher education:

Disabled Students’ Allowances (DSAs) help some student to meet extra costs of their studies that arise from their disability, mental health condition or specific learning difficulty. The allowances can help with the cost of a non-medical personal helper, items of specialist equipment, travel and other course related costs. Students can apply at any time before or during their course, and how much they can get does not depend on their income or that of their family and they will not have to repay this help.

3.12 From academic year 2022/23, all eligible full-time undergraduate, part-time undergraduate and postgraduate higher education students will be able to avail of up to £25,000 in DSA support annually. Additional support may be available towards approved travel expenses if required.

3.13 Part of the funding provided to the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) each year consists of an allocation for widening access and improving provision for disabled students. The HEIs receive this allocation in recognition of the additional costs of recruiting and supporting students with disabilities. The amount received by each institution is related to the number of students it has in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance. (The Disabled Students' Allowance is an allowance to assist students who can show that they have a disability or medical condition that affects their ability to study). The amounts paid to the HEIs for the current academic year (August 2021 to July 2022) is as follows:

Queen's University	£156,183
University of Ulster	£274,503
St Mary's	£ 22,727
Stranmillis	£ 10,000
Open University	£ 33,130

Almost 2800 students with learning difficulties and / or disabilities were given additional support in college to enable them to participate in Further Education in 2020/21. The additional support delivered by colleges is facilitated by the Department through the Additional Support Fund which provides £4.5m across the sector for technical support (e.g. specialised enabling equipment, such as brailers, Reading Edge equipment, IT adaptations, specialist software) and personal support (e.g. specialist tutors/advisers, such as hearing or visual impairment tutors, interpreters for students with a hearing impairment, support workers/classroom assistants and note-takers).

Public appointments

3.14 All public appointments by the Department will be made, as far as practicable, in accordance with the Code of Practice for Ministerial appointments to Public Bodies, published by the Commissioner for Public Appointments (Northern Ireland).

3.15 DfE has responsibility for appointments to a range of public life positions, as follows:

- Members of the Board of Governors of St Mary's University College

- Chairperson and members of the Governing Body of Stranmillis University College
- Governing Bodies of Further Education Colleges
- Chairperson and members of the Board of the Labour Relations Agency
- Members of the Fair Employment Tribunal and Industrial Tribunals
- All appointments to the Industrial Court (NI)
- Board of CITBNI - Construction SkillsNI
- Chairperson and Board members of InvestNI
- Chairperson and Board members of NI Screen
- Chairperson and Board members of Tourism Northern Ireland
- Chairperson and Board members of Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
- Chairperson and Board members of Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland
- Board of Matrix
- Board of Northern Ireland Co-operation Overseas (NI-CO)
- Appointment of Certification Officer
- Board of Reinstatement Committee for Reserve Forces in Civil Employment
- Board of The Office of Communications (OFCOM)
- DfE Non-Executive Board Members

3.16 The Department will continue to take a number of steps to promote diversity among applicants. These include using social media to publicise recruitment competitions, engaging with stakeholder and diversity bodies, and streamlining the application process. Officials will continue to liaise internally and with colleagues across other Departments with a view to increasing diversity and to identify new ways to broaden interest in public appointments.

3.17 Selection panels are reminded that when determining an applicant's merit, cognizance must be taken of non-traditional career-paths and lifestyles, to ensure individuals are not discriminated against either directly or indirectly.

The Department also operates the Guaranteed Interview Scheme, applicants with a disability who meet all of the essential criteria will not be subjected to any short-listing process and are guaranteed an interview.

Our Public Appointments Unit will continue to facilitate participation in the Strictly Boardroom's "Boardroom Apprentice" programme, which seeks to ensure that there is a diverse and sustainable pool of capable board-ready candidates for public appointment which is more reflective of our society.

DfE Diversity Group

- 3.18 DfE established a Departmental Diversity Group in 2016, which meets quarterly to discuss key diversity issues, including disability, and acts as a focal point for diversity practices and activities within the Department. The Diversity Group produces an annual Action Plan encompassing a broad range of diversity-related activities, including the establishment of Diversity Calendar identifying key local/national/international events, which the Group intends to promote as a means of raising awareness. These events include, for example: International Autism Day; World Sight Day and World Blindness Month; and International Day for People with Disabilities, amongst others.

Membership of the DfE Diversity Group is representative of job roles directly related to equality and diversity, Trade Union Side plus volunteers who express an interest in diversity. Meetings of the Group are also attended by DfEs Diversity Champion and Racial Equality Champion who, along with other senior officials from the Policy Champions Network, consider how the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) can advance awareness, knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity issues.

The Policy Champions Network is a group of senior civil servants, whose role is to build capability in policy making across the NICS. Every department, including DfE, has a dedicated Policy Champion responsible for leading the work to grow policy capability and capacity across the NICS. The group provides a forum to consider all aspects of policy development, including the needs of Section 75 groups, and communicating best practice.

4. DfE AUDIT OF INEQUALITIES – EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2022-2027

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
<p>Further Education Division</p> <p>Lack of Essential Skills is a barrier to employment and a richer quality of life.</p>	<p>Essential Skills is available free of charge to all adults within all DfE training, employment and further education programmes, such as Training for Success and, Apprenticeships (where this is appropriate).</p>	<p>The number of Level 2 qualifications achieved: - number achieved in 2021/22 academic year was 6746.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The delivery of Essential Skills provision across age band, employment status, gender, deprivation quintiles, disability, ethnicity, religion and sexual orientation are closely monitored and can be accessed here</p>

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>As part of the College Development Planning Process, the Department requests Colleges set out expected Essential Skills enrolments for the year ahead. Essential Skills are currently under review to examine the continued value of ES qualifications, and their delivery</p>	<p>Performance is measured across the key indicators of Achievement and Success. Annual improvements are targeted.</p> <p>Since 2017/18, commencement, the overall success rate for Essential Skills qualifications is 60.9% (Entry Level through to Level 2).</p>	Ongoing	As above
<p>People with a disability have greater difficulty in accessing further and higher education.</p>	<p>DfE provides £4.5 million, per year funding to FE colleges through the Additional Support Fund (ASF) to support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (SLDD).</p>	<p>Increasing FE enrolments by students with disabilities.</p>	<p>Funding stream provided annually.</p>	<p>Routine annual monitoring. The Department is currently undertaking a review of all Student Support within Further Education which, among other things, will benchmark and suggest improvements where applicable to ensure the ASF support provided is appropriately sufficient and targeted to student needs.</p>

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>£2.5 million per annum is provided to help meet the cost of additional technical and personal support for SLDD and £2 million per annum to help meet the extra costs associated with offering discrete courses for those for whom mainstream provision is not suitable.</p>			
<p>Youth Training Delivery & Performance</p> <p>Disengagement and lack of social mobility among young people.,</p>	<p>As part of a strategy for youth, the NI Traineeship programme launched in September 2021, is a new full-time level 2 vocational education programme, delivered in Further Education</p>	<p>The introduction of the Level 2 Traineeship programme and the development of the Level 3 Advanced</p>	<p>2021 -2028</p> <p>The programme launched in September 2021 and is</p>	<p>Regular monitoring of enrolments, funding and outcomes supported by independent evaluation.</p>

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>colleges throughout NI and available to young people over 16 who are not yet in employment. The Department is also working with FE colleges to develop a new Advanced Technical Award at Level 3. The Award will build on the Department's Traineeship model and assist to provide an alternative pathway for those learners who wish to pursue a vocational route to higher skills, education or employment. The youth training system will provide young people with a solid foundation of skills, experience and qualifications as the basis from which they can access future opportunities for employment or further study at a higher level.</p>	<p>Technical Award will put in place measures to help promote economic, social and personal development through high quality learning, research and skills training that will progress participants into higher level learning or employment. The programmes are open to all young people who require training at level 2 or level 3, inclusive of students from all backgrounds regardless of religious belief, political opinion, racial group,</p>	<p>scheduled to run / has DoF Business Case approval until 2028.</p>	

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
		<p>marital status, sexual orientation, disability; whether they have dependants or not and whether they are men or women.</p>		
<p>Apprenticeships Careers and Vocational Education Division</p>	<p>Introduction of All Age Apprenticeships</p>	<p>Under All Age Apprenticeships the Department will fully fund the off the job training element of an apprenticeship under the ApprenticeshipNI programme regardless of age or sector, thus removing current age eligibility requirements.</p>	<p>Scheduled for 2023</p>	<p>Regular monitoring of enrolments, funding and outcomes supported by independent evaluation.</p>
<p>Higher Education Division and Tertiary Education and Post 16 Reform Division</p>				

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
<p>Under representation of disadvantaged groups in Higher Education This includes people with a disability who have greater difficulty in accessing and achieving higher education.</p>	<p>Widening participation in higher education is a key priority for the Department. Our aim is to increase the participation of those groups which are currently underrepresented in HE in particular students from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with learning difficulties and disabilities.</p> <p>A widening participation premium and disability premium is allocated to HE institutions on an annual basis. In academic year 2022/23,</p>	<p>The Department’s vision is that any appropriately qualified individual in Northern Ireland should be able to gain access to higher education that is right for them, irrespective of their personal or social background or location of study.</p> <p>Access and participation rates in higher education of target groups will be the performance indicator.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The Department will monitor activities by institutions to widen access and participation and their progress towards increased access and participation rates of the target groups through their annual Widening Access & Participation Plans</p>

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>the Department allocated £1.73 million as follows: £1.23 million for a widening participation premium and £0.5 million for a disability widening access premium.</p> <p>In the region of 2,600 students are supported through the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) annually, receiving in the region of £4m. Funding is provided to Northern Ireland universities and FE colleges to meet the administration costs of providing a Register of Support Providers to disabled students. The Register of Support Providers is a unique service which provides one to one personal support to disabled</p>	<p>DSA participation rates</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Participation levels monitored and assessed annually.</p>

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>students registered on recognised higher education courses at any of the colleges or universities. During academic year 2021/22 more than 1,880 students at universities and colleges in NI availed of one-to-one support through the Register of Support Providers</p> <p>Funding has been made available to carry out a two-year pilot to expand the Open University's Community Partnership Programme which offers participants the opportunity to study a HE access module. The programme will work with a more diverse range of partners and extend its geographical reach to enable access to HE</p>			

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	learning regardless of background.			
Young Women in Higher Education with inadequate access to period products	<p>During the Academic Year 21/22 DfE funded a pilot scheme in the NI Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to provide free period products to all who need them in these settings. This has been done to ensure equality of opportunity for all, by removing barriers caused by lack of means to purchase products or the lack of access to products in emergency situations. The pilot has now been extended into the 2022/23 academic year.</p> <p>The NI Executive has also passed the Period Products (Free Provision)</p>	Adequate supply (HEIs having stock and not running out) of funded period products being made available to those who need them within the Higher Education sector.	Ongoing	The Department monitors monthly usage returns from the HEIs. The Department had forecast potential uptake based upon UK wide shared learning in the delivery of such schemes and continues to work with colleagues UK wide in the ongoing delivery and overcoming of barriers in this area

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>Bill, which will place a requirement on the Department to ensure the availability of free period products in public buildings within 2 years of the Bill receiving Royal Assent.</p>			
<p>Equality screening and monitoring for applicants to Post Graduate Awards (PGA) scheme.</p>	<p>Ensure HEIs provide S 75 data based on HESA categories for PGA scheme.</p>	<p>NI universities to provide S75 data in respect of both applications and awards.</p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Data provided by HEIs continues to be monitored by the Department on an ongoing basis.</p>
<p>Economic Social Inclusion Branch</p> <p>Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) as measured by the Labour Force Survey.</p>	<p>DfE set up a cross departmental group which addresses at a strategic level the issue of young people not in employment, education or training This work will continue under the</p>	<p>The proportion of young people in the NEET category as measured by the Labour Force Survey.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Economic Social Inclusion Branch will continue to monitor the NEETS figures provided by the Labour Force Survey and consider how these are impacted by recent policy developments within DfE, including the Skills Strategy and the interim Skills for Life and Work programme, as well as other initiatives outside DfE such as Job Start, Labour Market Partnerships, the 14-</p>

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>Economic Social Inclusion Branch within the Department for the Economy.</p> <p>The work was temporarily paused in 2020 due to a redeployment as a result of the Covid pandemic.</p>			<p>19 Project and relevant UK Shared Prosperity Funded projects.</p>
<p>Barriers to access and participation in FE/HE education, training and skills by under-represented groups</p>	<p>The Skills Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Sub-Committee (SEDI) is a sub-committee of the NI Skills Council. It was established to identify, address, and create more equitable access to education (FE & HE), training and skills for those in under-represented groups. In turn helping towards the goal of employment and progression in employment for those who may not have had the</p>	<p>The future work of the Skills Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Sub-Committee links in with recommendations 18, 29, 33, 44 and 48 of the Skills for a 10X economy. These will be progressed through the work of the sub-committee, the Skills Council and others as required.</p>	<p>The SEDI Sub-committee work will be led by the Skills Strategy Implementation Plan - 2, 5 and 10 year implementation plans will be developed in due course.</p>	<p>Ongoing research is being sourced to establish an accurate baseline on which we can prioritise and progress the future work of the Sub-Committee. This will provide a more structured and accurate approach in determining the most effective way to prioritise the assistance to under-represented groups.</p>

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>opportunity to do so previously. The work of the SEDI Sub-committee has effectively superseded that of the Economic Social Inclusion Framework.</p>			
<p>Data Collection - to enable improved S. 75 equality monitoring</p>	<p>Examine current data collection within the Department across Section 75 groups.</p>	<p>NI universities to provide improved S75 data at enrolment & FE colleges to provide improved S75 data at enrolment.</p>	<p>Ongoing basis. QUB and UU provided improved disability data from 2018, with further development planned. Work is also ongoing with the Open University to do likewise.</p>	<p>Working with NI universities on standardisation of selected data to remove some inconsistencies. DfE is also working with FE colleges to improve collection of S75 data at enrolment.</p>

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>FE and HE providers requested to submitted monitoring information accessed through Consolidated Data Returns reporting.</p>	<p>Review of monitoring information provided by FE & HE providers</p>	<p>2021-2024</p>	<p>Annual evaluations of Skill Up programme, review of course evaluations submitted by FE and HE providers following each course completion</p>
<p>Careers Service</p> <p>Under representation of people with disabilities in the workforce</p>	<p>The Careers Service actively caseloads young people aged 16 and 17 who are not in a positive destination to assess their specific needs and signpost them to appropriate provision.</p> <p>The Careers Service provides services to adults who are economically inactive through partnership working with Department for Communities which includes attendance at Job Fairs, Employer</p>	<p>Each Careers Adviser reviews their NEET caseload on a monthly basis.</p> <p>Number of Careers Guidance Interventions provided to clients with a disability.</p>	<p>Monthly review of caseloads.</p> <p>Annual Statistics</p>	<p>Annual monitoring of Careers Services provided to unemployed clients and clients with a disability including attendance at Transition Planning meetings and Annual reviews.</p>

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	recruitment initiatives and Redundancy clinics.			
	<p>The Careers Service will maintain effective Partnership working arrangements with key stakeholders and organisations who act as advocates for young people with varying barriers. This includes having Partnership Agreements in place with 100% of publicly funded post -primary schools, the 5 HSC Trusts, Training for Success and Skills for Life & Work Contractors and Further Education Colleges.</p>	<p>Number of Partnership Agreements in place with post primary schools, HSC Trusts, Training Suppliers and FE Colleges.</p> <p>Number of Training Credits (TCs) issued by Careers Service for young people considering Skills for Life and Work, including those TCs with Careers Adviser discretion.</p>	<p>Target for school, Training Supplier and FE College PAs to be in place by the 31st of October each year.</p>	

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>The Careers Service is committed to provide impartial careers information, advice and guidance for all young people and adults, with special attention being given to those with barriers to employment.</p>	<p>Number of transition planning meetings and annual reviews attended by DfE's Careers Service.</p>	<p>These statistics are collated for each academic year and are available in the September of the following year.</p>	<p>Annual academic year statistic monitoring</p>
	<p>The Careers Service will continue to work closely with schools and DfC Employment to provide a seamless service for people with disabilities to ensure they are fully supported in the transition from school to adult provision and work.</p> <p>The Careers Service will maintain effective referral</p>	<p>Number of Careers Guidance Interventions with young people and adults with a disability.</p> <p>Number of Partnership Agreements in place with post primary schools, HSC Trusts,</p>	<p>Statistics on services provided to all clients (young people and adults) with a disability are collated each business year.</p>	

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>processes with Disability Action Job Match Employment Support Officers, to help with the career planning needs of adults with a significant disability.</p>	<p>Training Suppliers and FE Colleges.</p>	<p>Target for school, Training Supplier and FE College PAs to be in place by the 31st of October each year.</p>	
	<p>Careers Service will develop a new Section 75 monitoring form for clients aged 16 and over.</p>	<p>Monitoring form finalised and automated system live.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The form will be automatically issued by email to a client (aged 16 and over) 10 days after the first intervention/contact is recorded on the new Client Information Management System</p>
<p>Public Appointments Under-representation of women, people with a</p>	<p>Continue to make improvements in outreach and process to attract the</p>	<p>Increase in applications from minority ethnic groups.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Monitored by DfE/Central Appointments Unit.</p>

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
<p>disability, people from minority ethnic groups and young people on Departmental (DfE) Boards</p>	<p>best possible spread of applicants.</p> <p>(through the further action measures outlined below)</p>	<p>Increase in the number of applications from women and people with a disability.</p>		<p>Six competitions were completed during the year 2022/23 and two reserve lists were used. In total, 32 appointments were made – 20 male (63%) and 12 females (37%). One appointee had applied under GIS. (3%).</p> <p>Applicants’ information is independently analysed the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) – their Public Appointments Report for March 2023 showed that disability status was known for 76% of all applications in 2019/20, 77% in 2020/21 and 78% in 2021/22. Where disability is known, the proportion of applicants who considered themselves to have a disability were 6% in 2019/20, 7% in 2020/21 and 9% in 2021/22.</p>
	<p>Maintain and update an extensive database of individuals and civil society bodies which may be interested in forthcoming competitions.</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>	
	<p>Use social media to publicise competitions, through DfE and TEO websites, DfE Twitter</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>	

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	Account, NI Direct and LinkedIn.			
	<p>Advanced notification provided to S75 representative groups including disability groups to enable them to target advertisement of upcoming public appointment competitions among their distribution lists and to advertise on their websites</p> <p>- Provide the NICS Disability Champion with advance notification of competition launches and obtain his input and assistance with promotion and outreach.</p>		Ongoing	

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	Engage with diversity bodies, clarify and stream the application process.		Ongoing	
	Raise awareness at relevant conferences, events and Ministerial speeches to highlight the public appointment process.		Ongoing	
	Participate in relevant Commission for Public Appointments in Northern Ireland workshops, as required.		Ongoing	
Under-representation of women, people with disabilities and people from minority ethnic groups on the Departmental Board.	Take on one Board Apprentice per year from an under-represented group.	Appropriate appointment to Board	Ongoing, annually	DfE Central Management Branch will monitor on an annual basis.
Employment Relations Policy & Legislation				

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>work to deal with an unexpected or sudden emergency concerning a dependant.</p> <p>Parental leave - Parental leave allows working parents the right to take unpaid time off work to look after a child or make arrangements for their welfare. Each parent can take 18 weeks' parental leave for each child up to their 18th birthday.</p> <p>Parental Bereavement Leave and Pay - Parental bereavement leave and pay gives employees the right to take up to two weeks paid bereavement leave following a stillbirth or the death of a child under the age of eighteen.</p>	<p>(children and/or adults) availing of the provisions enabling flexibility in the workplace.</p>		

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>Shared parental leave and pay. If you have a baby (including through a surrogacy arrangement, where you are a 'Parental Order Parent') or adopt a child, you and your partner might be entitled to Shared Parental Leave (SPL) during your child's first year. Parents and adopters might also be eligible for Shared Parental Pay (ShPP).</p> <p>Statutory Adoption Leave - If you adopt a child, you might be eligible for 52 weeks' Statutory Adoption Leave. You have employment rights and responsibilities when you return to work after Statutory Adoption Leave.</p>			

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>Paternity leave - If your partner is pregnant, adopting a child or having a baby through a surrogate mother, you might be eligible for Paternity Leave. You could also qualify for Statutory Paternity Pay.</p>			
<p>SPD 10x Innovation Workstream</p>	<p>The 10x Innovation Workstream, will be aimed at improving the economy for the benefit of all our people across Northern Ireland and therefore may have an indirect positive impact on equality groups, specific actions will be developed as part of the work and these actions may either indirectly or</p>	<p>Specific performance measures will be defined as underpinning programmes are developed and implemented.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>To be developed</p>

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	directly address equality groups			
<p>Under representation of women in “In Demand STEM Skills” – those science and technology skills which underpin the Vision for a 10x Economy</p>	<p>The Women in STEM Action Plan has four key areas of action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strand 1: Deepening our understanding of the women in STEM Ecosystem; • Strand 2: Widening dialogue and sharing knowledge; • Strand 3; Leading change; and • Strand 4; Bridging the talent gap. <p>NI Engineering Education Programme Pilot Project.</p>	<p>As details are developed with partners for each action in the STEM Action Plan, targets will be agreed and assigned to align with the indicators being developed for DfE’s Vision for a 10x Economy.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Late 2022</p>	<p>DfE’s Vision for a 10x Economy sets out our ambition to make a generational change to our economy and to our ways of living. That new ambition needs to be matched by a new approach to how we measure the progress we are making. DfE is consequently developing a core set of metrics which it will use to assess our progress towards achieving 10x. These will identify how we compare to the best-in-class economies globally and how our performance is improving against those exacting benchmarks. The Women in STEM Steering Group will draw on this approach and link progress to 10x. As details under each action (in the WiSTEM Action Plan) are developed with delivery partners, targets will be agreed and assigned to align with those indicators being developed for DfE’s Vision for a 10x Economy.</p>

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	<p>In line with the Women in STEM Action Plan, the pilot project has numerous aims including: the creation centres of excellence in STEM teaching and learning and opportunities for social mobility through progression into STEM careers; to raise the aspiration of young people in STEM education and careers; to encourage increased participation in the demand skills pipeline that will underpin the achievement of the DfE’s vision for a 10X economy; address the barriers and challenges that impact under-representation of girls and women in STEM; and to inform the development of the skills pipeline to better support young people (and girls in</p>	<p>Identification of effective models for increasing greater uptake of STEM subjects by young people, and girls in particular.</p>		<p>The Royal Academy of Engineering will deliver the Pilot project on behalf of the Department, in collaboration with other stakeholders, including the DE. The project will be subject to mid-term and end-term evaluation, and participants will be part of that process, including follow-up to assess their career progression in Engineering (or related disciplines).</p>

Inequality	Action Measures	Performance Indicator	Timescale	Associated Research/Monitoring
	particular) to fulfil their STEM potential.			

The Equality Unit
Department for the Economy
Corporate Governance, Panning and Equality Branch
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39/49 Adelaide Street
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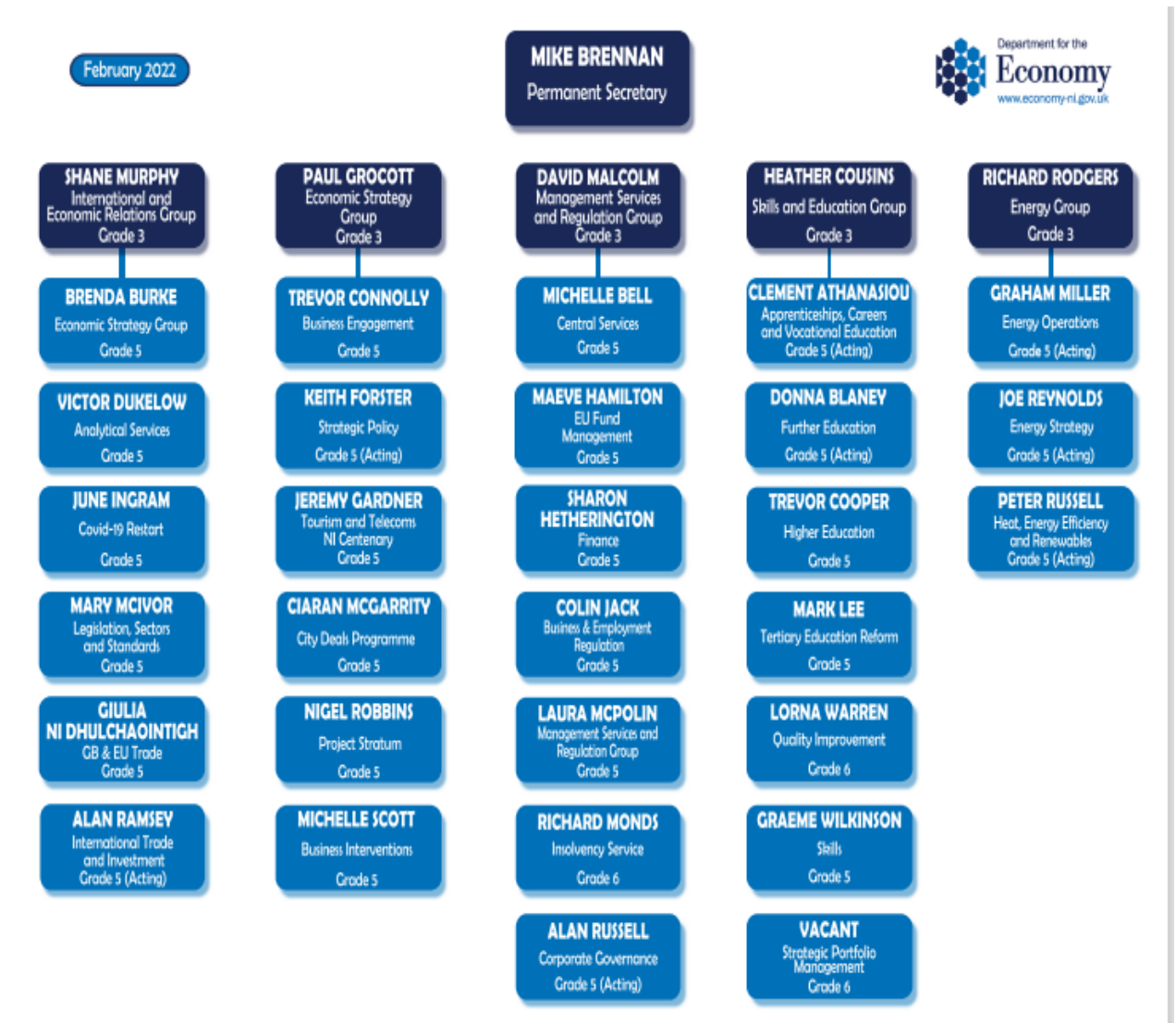
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Appendix A Department for Economy organisational structure and key functions



APPENDIX B - DfE FAMILY OF BUSINESSES & BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF FUNCTIONS



Partnership Bodies	Role of the Body
<i>Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs)</i>	
Invest Northern Ireland (Invest NI);	Grow the local economy by helping new and existing businesses to compete internationally, and by attracting new investment to Northern Ireland.
Northern Ireland Screen (NIS);	Accelerate the development of a dynamic and sustainable screen industry and culture in Northern Ireland.
Construction and Industry Training Board–Northern Ireland (CITB-NI);	Encourages the adequate training of those employed or intending to be employed in the construction industry and to improve the skills and productivity of the industry in Northern Ireland.
Tourism Northern Ireland (Tourism NI);	Responsible for the development of tourism and the marketing of Northern Ireland as a tourist destination to domestic tourists, from within Northern Ireland, and to visitors from the Republic of Ireland.
Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI)	Promotes and enforces health and safety at work standards in Northern Ireland.
Consumer Council for Northern Ireland (CCNI)	Provides free, independent support and advice for all consumers and businesses in Northern Ireland. They also have powers to investigate complaints about energy, water, transport and postal services and undertake research to understand local consumer issues.
Labour Relations Agency (LRA)	Promote the improvement of employment relations in Northern Ireland.
Stranmillis University College	Identify, educate, and place highly qualified education professionals in schools and related professional settings. It also offers pre-service and in-service courses, undergraduate and postgraduate.
Further Education (FE) colleges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC); - Northern Regional College (NRC); - Southern Regional College (SRC); - South West College (SWC); - South Eastern Regional College (SERC); - North West Regional College (NWRC). 	<p>The FE colleges are the main providers of vocational and technical education and training in NI and play a central role in raising levels of literacy and numeracy and in up-skilling and re-skilling through a broad range of courses.</p> <p>The colleges offer programmes which include foundation degrees, higher national diplomas, skills qualifications and level 3 diploma and certificates in a wide range of areas. They take a partnership approach in linking with employers and stakeholders. The six individual colleges develop their own links in their geographical area right across Northern Ireland.</p>
<i>Autonomous Higher Education Institutions</i>	

Partnership Bodies	Role of the Body
Ulster University	A university with a national and international reputation for excellence, innovation and regional engagement, making a major contribution to the economic, social and cultural development of Northern Ireland. Their core business activities are teaching and learning, widening access to education, research and innovation and technology and knowledge transfer.
Queen's University Belfast	It is one of the leading universities in the UK and Ireland with a distinguished heritage and history. It conducts leading edge education and research focused on the needs of society. They are globally connected and networked with strategic partnerships across the world.
St Mary's University College	Provides degree programmes in teacher education – with the option to learn through Irish as well as English – and in Liberal Arts.
The Open University	Creates higher educational opportunities with no barriers to entry. Provides flexible, innovative teaching and understands the needs of part-time students. Their innovative, award-winning distance teaching credentials have seen over 2 million students receive an education, otherwise denied to them at campus-based universities.
North/South Bodies	
InterTrade Ireland	Helps small businesses in Ireland and Northern Ireland explore new cross-border markets, develop new products, processes and services and become investor ready.
Tourism Ireland	Responsible for marketing the island of Ireland overseas as a holiday and business tourism destination.
Other Bodies	
Office of Industrial Tribunal and Fair Employment Tribunal (OITFET)	Industrial Tribunals and the Fair Employment Tribunal are independent judicial bodies in Northern Ireland. The Industrial Tribunals, hear and determine claims to do with employment matters. The Fair Employment Tribunal hears and determines complaints of discrimination on the grounds of religious belief or political opinion.

Enrolments at NI Further Education Colleges 2017/18 – 2021/22

Table 1: All enrolments by religion brought up in and FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

FE College	Religion Brought Up In	Academic Year				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Belfast Metropolitan College	Catholic	9,933	8,266	7,514	5,976	6,311
	Protestant	9,150	7,305	7,561	5,544	6,047
	Other Christian	995	1,043	878	852	1,042
	Other Religion	1,002	1,022	629	379	569
	None	5,750	5,153	4,911	3,628	4,426
	Not Stated/Unknown	2,898	3,698	3,207	4,601	4,060
	Total	29,728	26,487	24,700	20,980	22,455
Northern Regional College	Catholic	4,662	4,424	3,709	2,603	3,246
	Protestant	8,727	7,985	6,167	4,685	5,834
	Other Christian	743	875	616	399	662
	Other Religion	152	170	176	85	142
	None	3,343	2,837	2,856	1,985	2,647
	Not Stated/Unknown	4,210	5,609	5,099	3,012	2,238
	Total	21,837	21,900	18,623	12,769	14,769
North West Regional College	Catholic	10,511	9,905	8,185	7,078	7,363
	Protestant	2,893	2,795	2,373	1,830	2,105
	Other Christian	262	234	219	354	372
	Other Religion	124	47	82	97	116
	None	1,272	1,515	1,326	1,006	1,167
	Not Stated/Unknown	3,287	4,023	3,417	1,154	1,677
	Total	18,349	18,519	15,602	11,519	12,800
South Eastern Regional College	Catholic	7,858	8,013	6,248	4,343	4,098
	Protestant	12,402	11,932	11,079	7,396	6,959
	Other Christian	1,712	1,445	1,357	787	826
	Other Religion	469	707	498	275	307
	None	7,235	6,350	5,464	3,539	3,566
	Not Stated/Unknown	511	1,975	2,372	3,611	4,053
	Total	30,187	30,422	27,018	19,951	19,809
Southern Regional College	Catholic	13,628	10,856	10,095	6,288	8,264
	Protestant	7,360	5,882	5,453	3,217	4,733
	Other Christian	740	607	553	438	747
	Other Religion	293	267	295	119	182
	None	2,641	2,091	2,059	1,438	2,077
	Not Stated/Unknown	6,665	6,301	5,877	5,461	6,234
	Total	31,327	26,004	24,332	16,961	22,237
South West College	Catholic	11,066	10,988	9,052	6,314	6,712
	Protestant	4,554	4,294	3,560	2,449	2,733
	Other Christian	334	299	323	415	473
	Other Religion	73	126	186	101	134

	None	1,440	1,686	1,311	1,341	1,380
	Not Stated/Unknown	6,615	7,277	7,647	4,732	7,331
	Total	24,082	24,670	22,079	15,352	18,763
FE Sector Total	Catholic	57,658	52,452	44,803	32,602	35,994
	Protestant	45,086	40,193	36,193	25,121	28,411
	Other Christian	4,786	4,503	3,946	3,245	4,122
	Other Religion	2,113	2,339	1,866	1,056	1,450
	None	21,681	19,632	17,927	12,937	15,263
	Not Stated/Unknown	24,186	28,883	27,619	22,571	25,593
	Total	155,510	148,002	132,354	97,532	110,833

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Notes:

For further details on definitions please refer to the metadata.

Table 2: All enrolments by religion stated and FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

FE College	Religion Stated	Academic Year				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Belfast Metropolitan College	Catholic	8,260	6,986	6,150	4,357	6,311
	Protestant	4,636	3,749	3,444	2,138	6,047
	Other Christian	1,478	1,295	1,272	1,364	1,042
	Other Religion	1,832	2,039	1,889	1,277	569
	None	10,191	8,848	8,576	7,151	4,426
	Unknown	3,331	3570	3369	4693	4,060
	Total	29,728	26,487	24,700	20,980	22,455
Northern Regional College	Catholic	4,259	4,086	3,396	2,351	3,246
	Protestant	5,201	4,798	3,620	2,664	5,834
	Other Christian	1,398	1,472	1,103	943	662
	Other Religion	608	740	617	306	142
	None	10,371	10,804	9,853	4,497	2,647
	Unknown	0	0	34	2008	2,238
	Total	21,837	21,900	18,623	12,769	14,769
North West Regional College	Catholic	9,407	8,779	6,957	6,220	7,363
	Protestant	2,018	1,950	1,672	1,486	2,105
	Other Christian	317	300	226	409	372
	Other Religion	508	528	387	217	116
	None	3,329	3343	2382	2012	1,167
	Unknown	2,770	3,619	3,978	1,175	1,677
	Total	18,349	18,519	15,602	11,519	12,800
South Eastern Regional College	Catholic	6,743	7,029	5,263	3,766	4,098
	Protestant	6,861	6,845	5,556	3,809	6,959
	Other Christian	2,242	2,254	2,158	1,396	826
	Other Religion	1,302	1,709	1,380	709	307

	None	12,178	10,600	9,297	6,592	3,566
	Unknown	861	1,985	3,364	3,679	4,053
	Total	30,187	30,422	27,018	19,951	19,809
Southern Regional College	Catholic	13,628	10,856	10,095	6,288	8,264
	Protestant	7,360	5,882	5,453	3,217	4,733
	Other Christian	740	607	553	438	747
	Other Religion	293	267	295	119	182
	None	2,641	2,091	2,059	1,438	2,077
	Unknown	6,665	6,301	5,877	5,461	6,234
	Total	31,327	26,004	24,332	16,961	22,237
South West College	Catholic	11,066	10,988	9,052	6,314	6,712
	Protestant	4,554	4,294	3,560	2,449	2,733
	Other Christian	334	299	323	415	473
	Other Religion	73	126	186	101	134
	None	1,440	1,686	1,311	1,341	1,380
	Unknown	6,615	7,277	7,647	4,732	7,331
	Total	24,082	24,670	22,079	15,352	18,763
FE Sector Total	Catholic	57,658	52,452	44,803	32,602	35,994
	Protestant	45,086	40,193	36,193	25,121	28,411
	Other Christian	4,786	4,503	3,946	3,245	4,122
	Other Religion	2,113	2,339	1,866	1,056	1,450
	None	21,681	19,632	17,927	12,937	15,263
	Unknown	24,186	28,883	27,619	22,571	25,593
	Total	155,510	148,002	132,354	97,532	110,833

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Notes:

For further details on definitions please refer to the metadata.

Table 3: All enrolments by ethnicity and FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

FE College	Ethnicity	Academic Year				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Belfast Metropolitan College	White	25,927	22,525	20,063	14,854	16,052
	Black Caribbean	45	23	42	24	23
	Black African	794	937	880	526	769
	Black Other	62	73	48	44	69
	Indian	107	97	94	110	137
	Pakistani	42	27	37	37	61
	Bangladeshi	39	18	30	4	8
	Chinese	270	235	189	72	113
	Asian Other	0	0	54	191	358
	Irish Traveller	27	12	5	9	9
	Mixed Other	437	291	375	259	344
	Other	804	948	674	563	753
	Unknown	1,174	1,301	2,209	4,287	3,759

	Total	29,728	26,487	24,700	20,980	22,455
Northern Regional College	White	18,683	19,375	14,422	9,835	12,225
	Black Caribbean	21	8	7	6	0
	Black African	42	43	40	23	77
	Black Other	4	12	17	4	11
	Indian	40	29	35	23	18
	Pakistani	9	8	9	29	35
	Bangladeshi	8	9	10	23	15
	Chinese	62	34	29	15	16
	Asian Other	0	0	13	26	57
	Irish Traveller	19	28	18	8	14
	Mixed Other	103	136	100	74	107
	Other	190	290	378	85	101
	Unknown	2,656	1,928	3,545	2,618	2,093
	Total	21,837	21,900	18,623	12,769	14,769
North West Regional College	White	17,031	17,185	14,545	10,411	11,090
	Black Caribbean	12	6	4	9	5
	Black African	34	18	26	23	36
	Black Other	26	9	10	18	15
	Indian	27	29	29	25	22
	Pakistani	13	20	15	13	11
	Bangladeshi	2	3	0	3	2
	Chinese	16	21	20	8	8
	Asian Other	0	0	12	77	42
	Irish Traveller	20	16	10	19	20
	Mixed Other	92	96	71	88	100
	Other	78	76	50	72	55
	Unknown	998	1,040	810	753	1,394
	Total	18,349	18,519	15,602	11,519	12,800
South Eastern Regional College	White	28,794	27,743	23,287	18,966	17,269
	Black Caribbean	2	21	23	13	11
	Black African	60	56	57	50	73
	Black Other	24	43	22	29	38
	Indian	33	32	46	43	68
	Pakistani	28	36	23	6	16
	Bangladeshi	23	43	28	14	13
	Chinese	68	63	41	25	27
	Asian Other	0	0	78	34	97
	Irish Traveller	64	40	54	30	14
	Mixed Other	288	301	190	167	184
	Other	676	923	557	277	1,857
	Unknown	127	1,121	2,612	297	142
	Total	30,187	30,422	27,018	19,951	19,809
Southern Regional College	White	25,832	20,787	19,234	11,326	15,634
	Black Caribbean	72	38	72	20	6

	Black African	281	189	181	92	172
	Black Other	91	54	76	31	36
	Indian	13	14	15	18	27
	Pakistani	17	38	37	34	63
	Bangladeshi	17	1	0	1	13
	Chinese	49	31	48	17	20
	Asian Other	0	0	34	65	50
	Irish Traveller	28	19	11	9	12
	Mixed Other	151	180	216	92	122
	Other	436	422	374	154	149
	Unknown	4,340	4,231	4,034	5,102	5,933
	Total	31,327	26,004	24,332	16,961	22,237
South West College	White	19,459	21,852	16,194	10,127	15,103
	Black Caribbean	25	31	26	5	6
	Black African	114	144	132	68	57
	Black Other	95	171	91	51	76
	Indian	5	6	9	27	28
	Pakistani	5	2	15	20	36
	Bangladeshi	2	2	7	6	0
	Chinese	32	33	36	7	20
	Asian Other	0	0	88	100	151
	Irish Traveller	31	39	26	32	40
	Mixed Other	112	142	112	99	108
	Other	145	222	268	186	172
	Unknown	4,057	2,026	5,075	4,624	2,966
	Total	24,082	24,670	22,079	15,352	18,763
FE Sector Total	White	135,726	129,467	107,745	75,519	87,373
	Black Caribbean	177	127	174	77	51
	Black African	1,325	1,387	1,316	782	1,184
	Black Other	302	362	264	177	245
	Indian	225	207	228	246	300
	Pakistani	114	131	136	139	222
	Bangladeshi	91	76	75	51	51
	Chinese	497	417	363	144	204
	Asian Other	0	0	279	493	755
	Irish Traveller	189	154	124	107	109
	Mixed Other	1,183	1,146	1,064	779	965
	Other	2,329	2,881	2,301	1,337	3,087
	Unknown	13,352	11,647	18,285	17,681	16,287
	Total	155,510	148,002	132,354	97,532	110,833

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Notes:

For further details on definitions please refer to the metadata.

Table 4: All enrolments by age band and FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

FE College	Age Band	Academic Year				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Belfast Metropolitan College	19 and under	15,747	13,112	12,699	10,306	9,889
	20-24	5,048	4,578	4,374	4,409	4,578
	25 and over	8,933	8,797	7,627	6,264	7,988
	Unknown	0	0	0	1	0
	Total	29,728	26,487	24,700	20,980	22,455
Northern Regional College	19 and under	13,594	13,089	11,233	7,632	8,841
	20-24	2,209	1,999	1,880	1,624	1,939
	25 and over	5,894	6,092	5,271	3,447	3,975
	Unknown	140	720	239	66	14
	Total	21,837	21,900	18,623	12,769	14,769
North West Regional College	19 and under	8,315	8,389	7,263	5,921	5,447
	20-24	2,269	2,508	2,003	1,725	1,815
	25 and over	7,751	7,621	6,335	3,873	5,538
	Unknown	14	1	1	0	0
	Total	18,349	18,519	15,602	11,519	12,800
South Eastern Regional College	19 and under	18,752	18,106	16,322	11,539	9,871
	20-24	3,589	3,400	3,171	2,728	2,912
	25 and over	7,846	8,916	7,523	5,684	7,026
	Unknown	0	0	2	0	0
	Total	30,187	30,422	27,018	19,951	19,809
Southern Regional College	19 and under	19,620	15,649	15,460	10,698	14,394
	20-24	3,105	2,369	2,160	1,804	2,082
	25 and over	8,601	7,986	6,712	4,459	5,761
	Unknown	1	0	0	0	0
	Total	31,327	26,004	24,332	16,961	22,237
South West College	19 and under	15,186	15,873	14,837	10,408	12,408
	20-24	2,403	2,483	2,262	2,093	2,416
	25 and over	6,486	6,309	4,977	2,828	3,928
	Unknown	7	5	3	23	11
	Total	24,082	24,670	22,079	15,352	18,763
FE Sector Total	19 and under	91,214	84,218	77,814	56,504	60,850
	20-24	18,623	17,337	15,850	14,383	15,742
	25 and over	45,511	45,721	38,445	26,555	34,216
	Unknown	162	726	245	90	25
	Total	155,510	148,002	132,354	97,532	110,833

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Notes:

For further details on definitions please refer to the metadata.

Table 5: All enrolments by marital status and FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

FE College	Marital Status	Academic Year				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Belfast Metropolitan College	Single	23,575	19,623	18,707	14,188	15,127
	Married/Civil partnership	3,117	3,183	2,655	1,514	2,614
	Separated/Divorced/Dissolved	614	566	513	337	442
	Widowed/Surviving civil partner	114	120	110	34	91
	Unknown	2,308	2,995	2,715	4,907	4,181
	Total	29,728	26,487	24,700	20,980	22,455
Northern Regional College	Single	14,140	13,107	10,868	8,906	11,653
	Married/Civil partnership	2,390	2,255	1,637	1,280	1,746
	Separated/Divorced/Dissolved	485	414	331	289	318
	Widowed/Surviving civil partner	92	85	88	26	45
	Unknown	4,730	6,039	5,699	2,268	1,007
	Total	21,837	21,900	18,623	12,769	14,769
North West Regional College	Single	12,776	12,686	10,692	9,238	9,239
	Married/Civil partnership	2,194	2,081	1,597	1,219	1,613
	Separated/Divorced/Dissolved	478	407	334	263	390
	Widowed/Surviving civil partner	114	118	116	56	124
	Unknown	2,787	3,227	2,863	743	1,434
	Total	18,349	18,519	15,602	11,519	12,800
South Eastern Regional College	Single	23,641	21,966	19,870	14,941	13,658
	Married/Civil partnership	4,253	4,798	3,677	2,274	2,642
	Separated/Divorced/Dissolved	799	837	668	359	416
	Widowed/Surviving civil partner	147	162	139	74	95
	Unknown	1,347	2,659	2,664	2,303	2,998
	Total	30,187	30,422	27,018	19,951	19,809
Southern Regional College	Single	24,261	19,404	18,531	11,578	15,863
	Married/Civil partnership	3,248	2,818	2,216	1,517	2,170
	Separated/Divorced/Dissolved	426	396	301	257	292
	Widowed/Surviving civil partner	177	109	114	51	83
	Unknown	3,215	3,277	3,170	3,558	3,829
	Total	31,327	26,004	24,332	16,961	22,237
South West College	Single	16,245	15,661	13,301	9,791	10,306
	Married/Civil partnership	2,025	1,988	1,544	808	1,051
	Separated/Divorced/Dissolved	270	319	215	159	242

	Widowed/Surviving civil partner	150	180	81	32	35
	Unknown	5,392	6,522	6,938	4,562	7,129
	Total	24,082	24,670	22,079	15,352	18,763
FE Sector Total	Single	114,638	102,447	91,969	68,642	75,846
	Married/Civil partnership	17,227	17,123	13,326	8,612	11,836
	Separated/Divorced / Dissolved	3,072	2,939	2,362	1,664	2,100
	Widowed/Surviving civil partner	794	774	648	273	473
	Unknown	19,779	24,719	24,049	18,341	20,578
	Total	155,510	148,002	132,354	97,532	110,833

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Notes:

For further details on definitions please refer to the metadata.

Table 6: All enrolments by sexual orientation and FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

FE College	Sexual Orientation	Academic Year				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Belfast Metropolitan College	Heterosexual	22,064	18,892	17,406	12,908	14,087
	Bisexual	748	714	791	856	980
	Gay	395	325	311	313	342
	Lesbian	182	217	196	181	208
	Other	0	0	2	177	283
	Not Stated/Unknown	6,339	6,339	5,994	6,545	6,555
	Total	29,728	26,487	24,700	20,980	22,455
Northern Regional College	Heterosexual	13,038	11,520	9,990	8,502	10,729
	Bisexual	269	298	286	226	357
	Gay	85	95	98	84	106
	Lesbian	100	67	65	42	67
	Other	0	0	2	73	139
	Not Stated/Unknown	8,345	9,920	8,182	3,842	3,371
	Total	21,837	21,900	18,623	12,769	14,769
North West Regional College	Heterosexual	12,736	12,246	9,699	7,927	8,484
	Bisexual	178	345	274	316	391
	Gay	117	169	130	124	143
	Lesbian	98	117	66	57	91
	Other	0	0	11	106	165
	Not Stated/Unknown	5,220	5,642	5,422	2,989	3,526
	Total	18,349	18,519	15,602	11,519	12,800
South Eastern Regional College	Heterosexual	19,965	19,714	18,448	13,494	13,131
	Bisexual	470	457	556	517	486
	Gay	170	189	204	147	178

	Lesbian	84	132	115	127	137
	Other	0	0	9	158	206
	Not Stated/Unknown	9,498	9,930	7,686	5,508	5,671
	Total	30,187	30,422	27,018	19,951	19,809
Southern Regional College	Heterosexual	20,960	16,783	16,037	10,302	14,049
	Bisexual	581	412	400	241	500
	Gay	140	105	104	71	129
	Lesbian	186	152	67	58	87
	Other	0	0	130	145	237
	Not Stated/Unknown	9,460	8,552	7,594	6,144	7,235
	Total	31,327	26,004	24,332	16,961	22,237
South West College	Heterosexual	13,863	14,437	11,872	9,260	9,952
	Bisexual	193	239	204	189	185
	Gay	50	58	63	52	67
	Lesbian	191	214	273	72	42
	Other	0	0	32	123	134
	Not Stated/Unknown	9,785	9,722	9,635	5,656	8,383
	Total	24,082	24,670	22,079	15,352	18,763
FE Sector Total	Heterosexual	102,626	93,592	83,452	62,393	70,432
	Bisexual	2,439	2,465	2,511	2,345	2,899
	Gay	957	941	910	791	965
	Lesbian	841	899	782	537	632
	Other	0	0	186	782	1,164
	Not Stated/Unknown	48,647	50,105	44,513	30,684	34,741
	Total	155,510	148,002	132,354	97,532	110,833

Source: Consolidated Data
Return (CDR)

Notes:

For further details on definitions please refer to the metadata.

Table 7: All enrolments by sex and FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

FE College	Sex	Academic Year				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Belfast Metropolitan College	Female	14,933	13,098	12,367	10,268	10,878
	Male	14,795	13,389	12,333	10,712	11,577
	Total	29,728	26,487	24,700	20,980	22,455
Northern Regional College	Female	10,073	10,168	8,699	5,832	6,941
	Male	11,764	11,732	9,924	6,937	7,828
	Total	21,837	21,900	18,623	12,769	14,769
North West Regional College	Female	9,621	9,637	8,354	6,068	6,567
	Male	8,728	8,882	7,248	5,451	6,233
	Total	18,349	18,519	15,602	11,519	12,800
South Eastern Regional College	Female	12,509	12,997	11,145	8,028	8,331
	Male	17,678	17,425	15,873	11,923	11,478
	Total	30,187	30,422	27,018	19,951	19,809
Southern Regional College	Female	15,488	12,178	11,170	7,490	10,796
	Male	15,839	13,826	13,162	9,471	11,441
	Total	31,327	26,004	24,332	16,961	22,237
South West College	Female	10,391	10,541	9,129	5,523	7,367
	Male	13,691	14,129	12,950	9,829	11,396
	Total	24,082	24,670	22,079	15,352	18,763
FE Sector Total	Female	73,015	68,619	60,864	43,209	50,880
	Male	82,495	79,383	71,490	54,323	59,953
	Total	155,510	148,002	132,354	97,532	110,833

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Notes:

For further details on definitions please refer to the metadata.

Table 8: All enrolments by disability and FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

FE College	Disability	Academic Year				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Belfast Metropolitan College	No	26,350	22,622	20,419	18,216	19,081
	Yes	3,378	3,865	4,281	2,764	3,374
	Total	29,728	26,487	24,700	20,980	22,455
Northern Regional College	No	15,844	15,707	13,524	11,131	11,418
	Yes	5,993	6,193	5,099	1,638	3,351
	Total	21,837	21,900	18,623	12,769	14,769
North West Regional College	No	14,914	14,808	12,243	9,804	10,826
	Yes	3,435	3,711	3,359	1,715	1,974
	Total	18,349	18,519	15,602	11,519	12,800
South Eastern Regional College	No	25,346	25,094	22,612	16,785	16,540
	Yes	4,841	5,328	4,406	3,166	3,269
	Total	30,187	30,422	27,018	19,951	19,809
Southern Regional College	No	26,518	22,495	21,380	15,184	19,343
	Yes	4,809	3,509	2,952	1,777	2,894
	Total	31,327	26,004	24,332	16,961	22,237
South West College	No	20,361	20,988	19,102	14,073	17,252
	Yes	3,721	3,682	2,977	1,279	1,511
	Total	24,082	24,670	22,079	15,352	18,763
FE Sector Total	No	129,333	121,714	109,280	85,193	94,460
	Yes	26,177	26,288	23,074	12,339	16,373
	Total	155,510	148,002	132,354	97,532	110,833

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Notes:

For further details on definitions please refer to the metadata.

Table 9: All enrolments by dependants and FE College (2017/18 to 2021/22)

FE College	Dependants	Academic Year				
		2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Belfast Metropolitan College	No	26,811	23,428	21,653	19,168	19,899
	Yes	2,917	3,059	3,047	1,812	2,556
	Total	29,728	26,487	24,700	20,980	22,455
Northern Regional College	No	19,650	19,971	17,141	11,435	12,822
	Yes	2,187	1,929	1,482	1,334	1,947
	Total	21,837	21,900	18,623	12,769	14,769
North West Regional College	No	16,893	17,942	14,535	9,827	10,805
	Yes	1,456	577	1,067	1,692	1,995
	Total	18,349	18,519	15,602	11,519	12,800
South Eastern Regional College	No	26,331	25,840	23,463	17,076	16,905
	Yes	3,856	4,582	3,555	2,875	2,904
	Total	30,187	30,422	27,018	19,951	19,809
Southern Regional College	No	30,770	25,478	23,896	15,617	20,379
	Yes	557	526	436	1,344	1,858
	Total	31,327	26,004	24,332	16,961	22,237
South West College	No	23,436	24,239	21,807	14,184	17,410
	Yes	646	431	272	1,168	1,353
	Total	24,082	24,670	22,079	15,352	18,763
FE Sector Total	No	143,891	136,898	122,495	87,307	98,220
	Yes	11,619	11,104	9,859	10,225	12,613
	Total	155,510	148,002	132,354	97,532	110,833

Source: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Notes:

For further details on definitions please refer to the metadata.

Enrolments at NI Higher Education Institutions 2016/17 – 2020/21

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Table 2.1: Enrolments at NI HEIs by disability – (2016/17 to 2020/21)

Disability status	Academic Year				
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Known disability	5,220	5,610	6,195	7,215	8,465
No known disability	48,975	48,410	49,120	51,860	57,780
Total	54,195	54,020	55,290	59,075	66,245

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Table 2.2: Enrolments at NI HEIs by religion – (2016/17 to 2020/21)

Religion	Academic Year				
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Protestant	12,810	12,525	12,960	13,145	13,915
Roman Catholic	20,340	20,210	20,640	21,180	22,960
Other	3,570	2,190	1,105	510	400
Not known	3,670	3,605	3,355	2,910	1,840
No Religion	1,745	2,800	3,650	4,010	4,360
Total	42,140	41,325	41,705	41,755	43,480

Table 2.3: Enrolments at NI HEIs by age group – (2016/17 to 2020/21)

Age group	Academic Year				
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
20 and under	19,125	18,875	18,810	19,135	20,745
21 to 24 inclusive	15,305	15,745	16,280	16,840	18,795
25 and over	19,765	19,405	20,195	23,100	26,705
Unknown	0	0	0	5	0
Total	54,195	54,020	55,290	59,075	66,245

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Table 2.4: Enrolments at NI HEIs by ethnicity – (2016/17 to 2020/21)

Ethnicity	Academic Year				
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
White	48,260	47,610	48,250	47,390	50,130
Irish Traveller	15	10	15	10	5
Black	370	340	430	435	475
Indian	295	275	355	480	695
Pakistani	185	150	180	185	250
Bangladeshi	115	55	60	50	90
Chinese	355	370	375	345	275
Other Asian	300	280	340	375	445
Mixed	375	405	440	460	545
Other	235	200	235	265	275
Unknown/Information refused	3,690	4,325	4,615	9,080	13,065
Total	54,195	54,020	55,290	59,075	66,245

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Table 2.5: Enrolments at NI HEIs by sex – (2016/17 to 2020/21)

Sex	Academic Year				
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Male	23,440	23,085	23,160	24,350	27,105
Female	30,750	30,935	32,130	34,725	39,140
Total	54,195	54,020	55,290	59,075	66,245

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Table 2.6: Enrolments at NI HEIs by marital status –(2016/17 to 2020/21)

Marital status	Academic Year				
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Single (never married or never in civil partnership)	35,580	34,160	34,460	34,490	37,085
Married or in civil partnership	4,095	3,850	4,065	4,350	4,505
Separated (but still legally married or in civil partnership)	245	230	240	270	260
Divorced or civil partnership dissolved	225	215	220	260	275
Widowed	45	40	40	80	45
Co-habiting	680	650	710	875	1,080
Unknown	1,265	2,180	1,975	1,430	240
Total	42,140	41,325	41,705	41,755	43,480

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Table 2.7: Enrolments at NI HEIs by dependency status – (2016/17 to 2020/21)

Dependants	Academic Year				
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Young people/children (YP/C)	4,100	3,930	4,095	4,185	4,560
Other relative/friends (OR/F)	285	280	290	340	305
Both YP/C & OR/F	400	370	400	450	475
No dependants	36,010	35,365	35,605	34,935	37,460
Unknown	1,345	1,380	1,310	1,840	590
Total	42,140	41,325	41,705	41,755	43,480

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes:

1. Information on disability and ethnicity is collected on the basis of a student's self assessment.
2. Information on religion, marital status and dependants is only collected for NI domiciled students studying at NI HE institutions.
3. Religious affiliation is not a mandatory question and therefore can have a high non-response rate.
4. A new coding framework has been added to the HESA data collection for the Religion question in 2016/17, which includes an additional category for 'No Religion'. More information can be found at: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c16051/n/religion>
5. Enrolments at the OU (where the national centre is located in NI) have been removed from the figures for religion, marital status and dependants due to high levels of unknowns.
7. To avoid a duplication of foundation year figures across HE institutions and Further Education Colleges, Queen's University Belfast and Stranmillis University College changed their return to HESA during 2019/20 and no longer report on foundation degrees that are offered as part of a validated collaborative arrangement with Further Education Colleges. Historical figures in this fact sheet have been backdated to reflect this change.
6. To prevent the identification of individuals, figures in the attached table are rounded to the nearest 5, with 0, 1 and 2 rounded to 0. Due to rounding, the sum of numbers in each row or column may not match the total shown.
7. Percentages are based on unrounded figures.