



# Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes in Northern Ireland from 2002/03 up to 2014/15

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This publication provides detail into the characteristics of those enrolling and performance statistics for the Essential Skills programme, since the start of the strategy in 2002/03.

**Key Points**

- From 2002/03 to 2010/11 enrolments in Essential Skills have increased year on year. However, since 2011/12, enrolments have started to decrease. Over the past academic year enrolments have decreased by 11.4% from 45,803 in 2013/14 to 40,589 in 2014/15 but still remains higher than totals in 2008/09 and earlier academic years (Table 1).
- Over the course of the strategy, 40.7% of Essential Skills enrolments were in Literacy, 39.8% in Numeracy and 19.5% in ICT (Table 8).
- Since the strategy began, in each academic year the highest proportion of Essential Skills enrolments was for those aged '16-25' ranging from 34.3% to 84.1% across various years (Table 2).
- Over the course of the strategy, those enrolments with an 'economically inactive' status have generally been increasing year on year from 12.8% in 2002/03 to 43.0% in 2014/15 (Table 3).
- Since the start of the strategy, the proportion of Essential Skills enrolments at 'Level 2' has generally been increasing from 7.0% in 2002/03 to 43.0% in 2014/15. (Table 6).
- Almost two thirds (63.9%) of Essential Skills enrolments gain a qualification. For Numeracy enrolments, the equivalent success rate was 66.7%, while for Literacy it was 66.1% and 53.7% for ICT enrolments (Table 17).

## Reader Information

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

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**Reporting Period** Academic Years 2002/03 to 2014/15

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**Statistical Quality** Information detailed in this release has been quality assured with Essential Skills data providers prior to release.

**Target audience** DEL, Directors of FE Colleges in Northern Ireland, Board members of FE Colleges, educational professionals, academics, media and members of the public interested in the FE sector.

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## **About the Statistics & Research Branch (SRB)**

Statistics & Research Branch is responsible for the collection, quality assurance, analysis and publication of timely and accurate information derived from a wide range of statistical information returns supplied by the further education colleges across Northern Ireland and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) focused on Northern Ireland Higher Educational Institutes and Northern Ireland domicile students in attendance at any UK Higher Educational Institute. Statistical information is collected routinely from a variety of electronic individual level administrative system.

The Head of the Branch is the Principal Statistician, Mrs. Laura Smyth. The Branch aims to present information in a meaningful way and provide advice on its uses to customers in the DEL Committee, Further Education Colleges, Universities, Professional Advisory Groups, policy branches within the DEL, other educational organisations, academia, private sector organisations, charity/voluntary organisations as well as the general public. The statistical information collected is used to contribute to major exercises such as reporting on the performance of the Further Education and Higher Education sectors, other comparative performance exercises, target setting and monitoring, departmental research projects, development of service frameworks as well as policy formulation and evaluation. In addition, the information is used in response to a significantly high volume of Parliamentary / Assembly questions and ad-hoc queries each year.

Information is disseminated through a number of key statistical publications, including: Essential Skills enrolments and outcomes, Further Education activity, Higher Education enrolments, Higher Education qualifications, Destinations of leavers from Higher Education to name but a few.

A detailed list of these publications is available from:

Website: <https://www.delni.gov.uk/topics/del-statistics-and-research>

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## Explanatory Notes

This statistics release is the sixth of an annual series presenting information on Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes in Northern Ireland.

The 'Technical Notes' at the end of the report provide detailed information on the methodology used to produce the statistics and the definitions of the terms used within the report.

Where tables and figures are mentioned within the commentary these are hyperlinked to their location within the document.

### Data Collection

The information presented in this bulletin derives from a series of statistical returns (listed below) provided by FE Colleges.

- Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for the years 2002/03 – 2012/13
- Consolidated Data return (CDR) for the year 2013/14 – 2014/15
- Essential Skills enrolment extract from the Client Management System (CMS) for the years 2002/03 – 2014/15
- Essential Skills Qualifications Return for the years 2002/03 – 2014/15

Enrolments within Further Education colleges, in regard to academic years 2002/03 to 2012/13, have been derived from the ESER. The CDR only came into operation for the 2013/14 academic year and is used for enrolments from FE colleges related to 2013/14 and 2014/15. The qualification statistics have all been derived from the Essential Skills Qualifications Return collected from Awarding Organisations.

Essential Skills enrolments that are part of an individual's programme of study through one of the department's training or employment programmes, such as Training for Success or Steps to Work, are recorded on the Department's Client Management System (CMS), which is installed in Job Centres/Jobs & Benefits offices throughout Northern Ireland. This is an IT system which is used to facilitate the interface with the Department's customers. The relevant data is extracted from CMS at a scheduled date during the year. This data extract contains all Essential Skills enrolments funded through any of DEL's training or employment programmes, since the strategy to the point it is extracted. In this analysis it covers the period from 2002/03 to 2014/15.

Both Essential Skills enrolment returns list the enrolment records which are assigned to a particular provider and returned to the Department. Both returns are merged and any duplicate enrolments are dealt with through a process, presented in the guidance '[Defining an Essential Skills enrolment](#)'. The resultant file is then analysed to present the total number of Essential Skills enrolments

Each of the data returns are computerised data files consisting of individual records for each enrolment and qualification recorded in a time frame specified by the extract.

Over the last number of years there has been extensive work carried out to develop a CDR, which aims to bring the five main individual Departmental returns from FE colleges, namely Funded Learning Unit, Further Education Statistical Return, ESER, Entitlement Framework and Further Education Leavers Survey, together into a single dataset.

There are significant benefits to be realised in collating all the data requirements of the Department into one single return. Streamlining the production process of data increases the efficiency of the process in generating the data. With extra information now available for each enrolment record, it also increases the potential in terms of analytical ability, whilst increasing the consistency of analysis across all FE college data by reducing the potential of using several datasets. Data quality is also enhanced with data being generated at the same point in time and a significant number of validations employed on the data through the CDR process.

This report includes data relating to the academic years 2002/03 to 2014/15. Previous statistical reports can be found at:

<https://www.delni.gov.uk/topics/del-statistics-and-research/essential-skills>

### **Supplementary Tables**

There are detailed Supplementary Tables available on the DEL web page:

<https://www.delni.gov.uk/publications/essential-skills-enrolments-publications-2015>

### **Rounding**

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

### **Data Quality**

All information presented in this bulletin has been validated and quality assured by FE Colleges prior to publication. FE Colleges are given a set period of time to submit the information to Statistics & Research Branch (SRB). Following submission, SRB perform a series of validation checks to ensure that information is consistent both within and across returns. Trend analyses are used to monitor annual variations and emerging trends. Validations are also run for training program enrolment data although the bulletin is published prior to receiving the amended data due to the time taken for the amendments to be administered within the training program dataset, as such any amendments are reflected in future publications.

For Awarding Organisations, the Essential Skills qualification data is validated at each quarterly return. Any errors are fed back to the appropriate awarding organisation for amendment. All data sent to DEL from the Open College Network NI is crosschecked against their learner registration and awards system (QUARTZ), to ensure the accuracy of their submissions. The Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) cross check all certified candidates in the period matches what is generated in the DEL report. City and Guilds conduct quality assurance checks on the data and processes. City and Guilds have both internal and external audits carried out, whereas the Open College Network NI and Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment have internal audits.

### **Main Uses of Data**

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

### **Who will be interested?**

The information presented in this statistical bulletin will be of interest to a wide variety of people. For example the statistics within and those derived from this bulletin are currently used by DEL policy officials in their role of assisting and advising the Minister for DEL to discharge his duties; by the NI Assembly and DEL committee to scrutinise the Essential Skills sector; by other government departments such as the Department of Education; by local businesses to quantify the supply of those qualifying in their business area; by prospective students to inform their choices around Essential Skills courses and by researchers and academics to try and understand the underlying trends in Essential Skills.

### **An Official Statistics Publication**

The statistics within this bulletin were compiled in accordance with Official Statistics guidelines. They aim to meet identified user needs; are accessible and explained; are produced in accordance with sound methods; and are managed impartially and objectively in the public interest.

Further information on the Code of Practice for National Statistics is available at:

<http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/>.

Further information on the DEL Statement of Compliance in relation to the 'Pre-release Access to Official Statistics Order (Northern Ireland) 2009 is available at:

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

## Essential Skills Activity Information Elsewhere in the United Kingdom

While it is our intention to direct users to Essential Skills activity information elsewhere in the UK, users should be aware that Essential Skills activity information in other administrations are not always measured in a comparable manner to those in Northern Ireland due to differing counting rules. Details of the Essential Skills activity information published elsewhere in the UK can be found as detailed below.

### England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-skills-for-life>

### Wales

<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/schools-wales-examination-performance>

<http://wales.gov.uk/statistics-and-research/learner-outcome-measures-further-education-work-based-learning-community-learning>

### Comparing levels of qualifications

Within Essential Skills for 'Literacy' and 'Numeracy' there are 5 levels that individuals can obtain qualifications at:

- Entry level 1
- Entry level 2
- Entry level 3
- Level 1
- Level 2

Essential Skills Information Communication & Technology (ICT) courses are only available at 'Level 1' and 'Level 2'. Further information on the various levels is available within the [definitions](#) section of this document. Qualifications at the same level are of a similar level of demand or difficulty.

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

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

### Feedback

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

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## Introduction

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

This statistical bulletin has been produced by DEL. The bulletin focuses on students enrolled in Essential Skills courses across Northern Ireland since the start of the strategy in 2002. It details the number of enrolments, their characteristics and numbers qualifying in Essential Skills courses.

## Structure

The bulletin is divided into three sections:

- Section A focuses on Essential Skills enrolments in NI. Within section A there are seven subsections consisting of:
  - How many are participating
  - What are the characteristics of those participating
    - Age
    - Employment status
    - Target Level
    - Gender
  - Deprivation Analysis
  - What courses are being studied
  - Subject and age
  - Subject and gender
  - Where are the courses being studied?
- Section B concentrates on Essential Skills qualifications. Within section B there are three subsections consisting of:
  - Number of qualifications
  - Achievements by subject and
  - Achievements by level.
- The final section C details the performance rates (retention, achievement and success) for Essentials Skills provision:
  - Performance by subject
  - Performance by gender
  - Performance by age band
  - Performance by target level

Please note that all Essential Skills enrolments are regarded as 'Regulated' provision and offered on a part time basis. As such, there is no mode of attendance analysis presented in this publication.

## **Policy and Operational Context**

The Minister for DEL has responsibility within the NI Executive for the NI FE colleges. He is also accountable to the NI Assembly and Assembly's Committee for Employment and Learning, which undertakes a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department for Employment and Learning and plays a key role in the consideration and development of legislation.

It is within this context that DEL has developed an [Essential Skills for Living Strategy](#) which has been designed to improve levels of Numeracy and Literacy (and ICT in 2009/10) amongst the adult population in Northern Ireland. The vision for the delivery of the Essential Skills Strategy is:

*“to provide opportunities for adults to update their Essential Skills to assist them in improving their overall quality of life, their personal development and their employment opportunities and by so doing to promote greater economic development, social inclusion and cohesion”.*

The strategy provides a high quality education for all, with equal access for all and this has had a positive effect on all groups specified in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. The Strategy contributes to the Executive's Programme for Government targets and the work it is taking forward on equality, by providing the opportunity for socially disadvantaged people and groups to improve their qualifications and Essential Skills, and help them to increase their employability.

## Section A: Enrolments

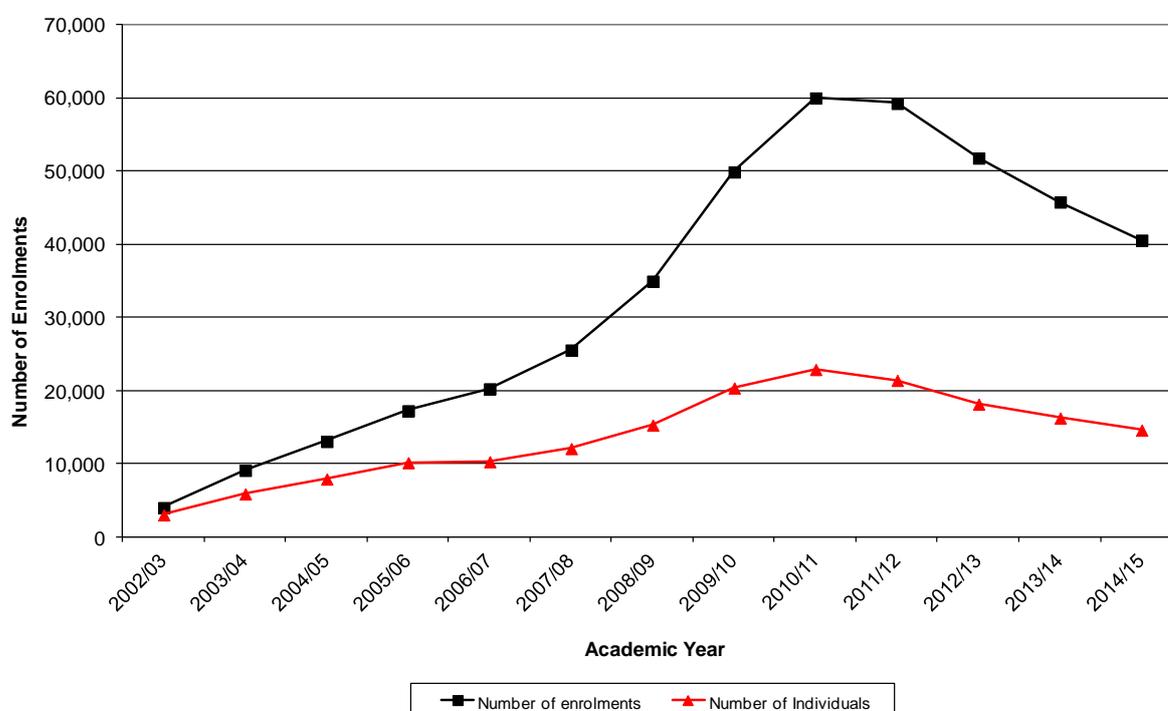
### How many are participating?

Since the commencement of the strategy in October 2002, there have been just over 431,500 enrolments in total (just under 178,500 individuals). The number of enrolments have increased year on year in Essential Skills courses across Northern Ireland and reached a peak of 60,033 in 2010/11. Since then, the number of enrolments have decreased in each of the next four academic years to a total of 40,589 in 2014/15. The numbers of individuals have followed the same pattern as enrolments peaking at 22,903 in 2010/11 and decreasing, in each subsequent year to 14,607 in 2014/15.

Essential Skills enrolments have decreased by 11.4% over the last academic year from 45,803 in 2013/14 to 40,589 in 2014/15. The number of individuals have also decreased (10.1%) from 16,254 in 2013/14 to 14,607 in 2014/15 (Figure 1 and Table 1)

Possible explanations for the decline in the number of Essential Skills enrolments are patterns from [NI School Leaver](#) data, which indicate that the number of school leavers not achieving a grade A\*-C in GCSE English and Maths has generally been decreasing over the past eight years.

**Figure 1: Essential Skills enrolments and individuals by academic year**

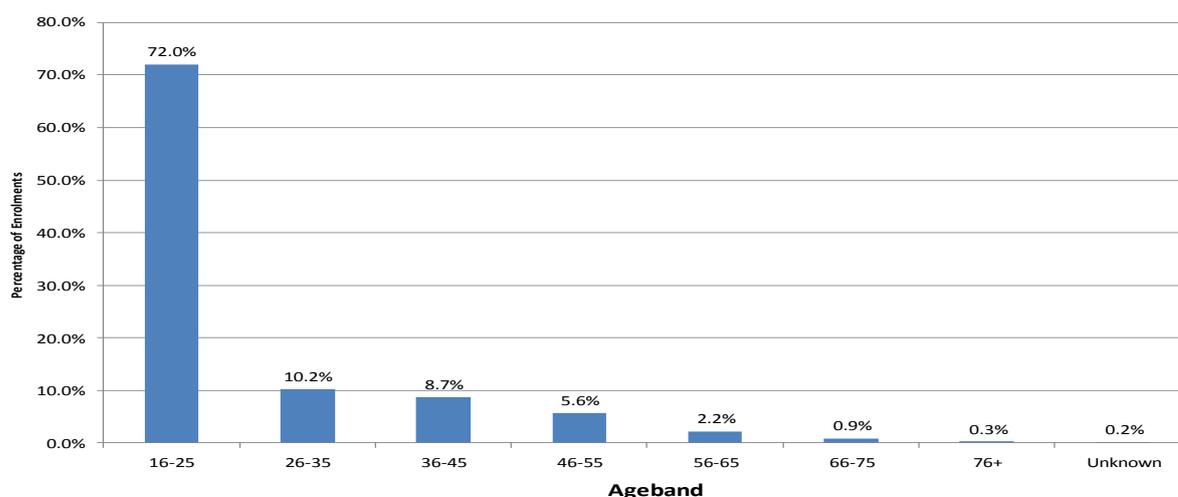


## What are the characteristics of those participating?

### Age

Over the 13 year period, almost three quarters (72.0%) of the participants in Essential Skills courses were aged '16-25' years. This cohort of participants had its highest proportion in 2007/08 (84.1%) and lowest proportion, for a full academic year, in 2004/05 (48.7%) (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Essential Skills enrolments by age band since 2002/03**



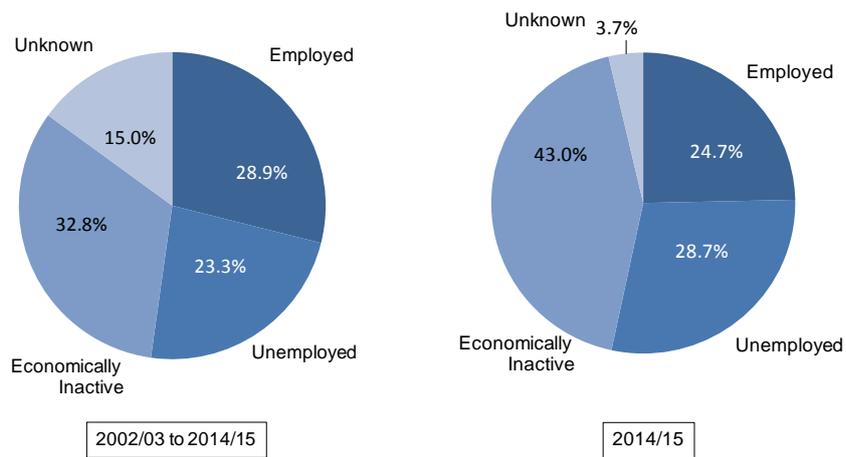
In 2014/15 the majority of enrolments (32,023, 69.9%) were in the '16-25' age band. Those aged '26-35' were the second largest age group of enrolments to Essential Skills courses, accounting for 7.1% (3,270) in 2014/15 (Table 2).

### Employment Status

Over half (56.1%) of enrolments in Essential Skills courses across Northern Ireland have the employment status of the individual reported as either 'unemployed' (23.3%) or 'economically inactive' (32.8%). Since the strategy began, there has been a gradual increase in the proportion of those who are 'economically inactive' enrolling on Essential Skills courses. The proportion has risen from 12.8% in the first year of the strategy to 43.0% in 2014/15. This is encouraging that individuals from outside the labour market and those without a job are attempting to improve their educational profile in terms of essential skills.

In 2014/15, 17,440 (43.0%) enrolments had an employment status of 'economically inactive', 11,648 (28.7%) 'unemployed' and 10,009 (24.7%) 'employed'. There were 1,492 (3.7%) enrolments where the employment status was 'unknown' (Figure 3 and Table 3).

**Figure 3: Essential Skills enrolments by employment status**

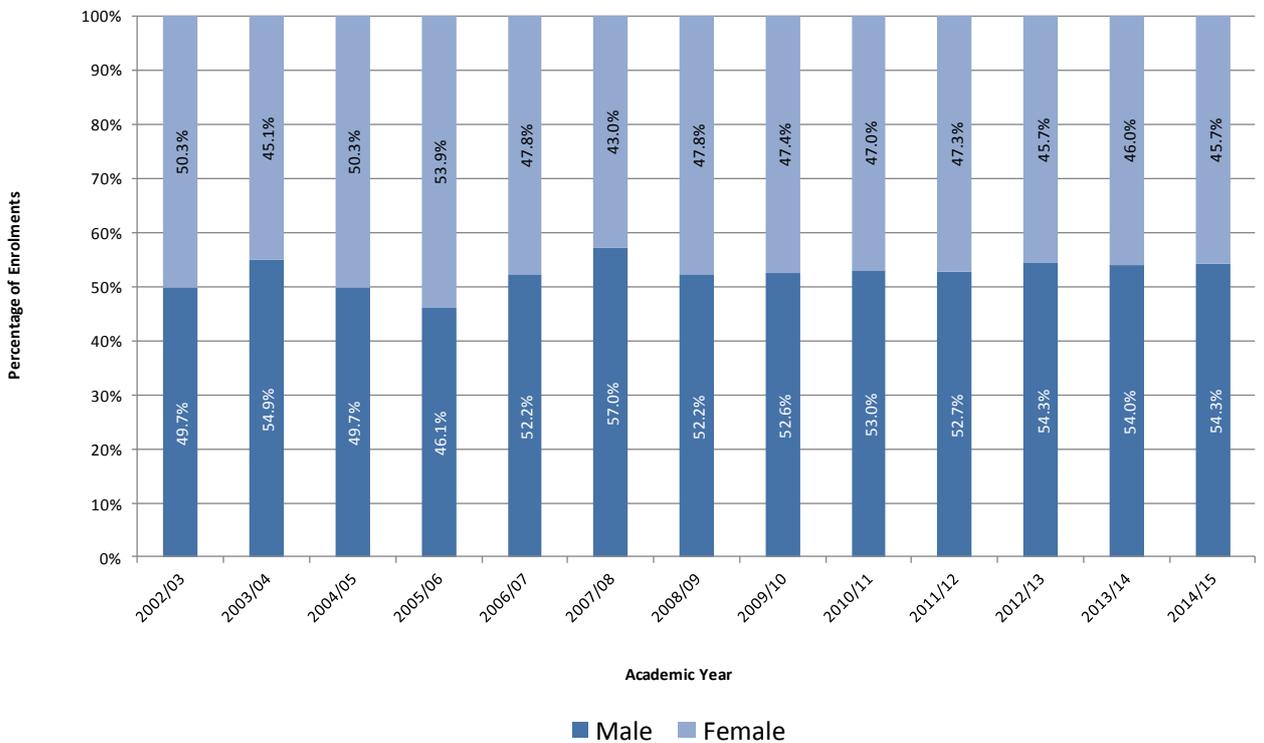


**Gender**

The general trend in the earlier part of the strategy was that more females were enrolled in Essential Skills courses. Since 2006/07 however, male enrolments have been the majority. Over the 13 year period, 53.1% of the students on Essential Skills courses have been male (Table 4).

In the last academic year, males accounted for over half (54.3%, 22,034) of enrolments (Figure 4, Table 4).

**Figure 4: Essential Skills enrolments by gender and academic year**

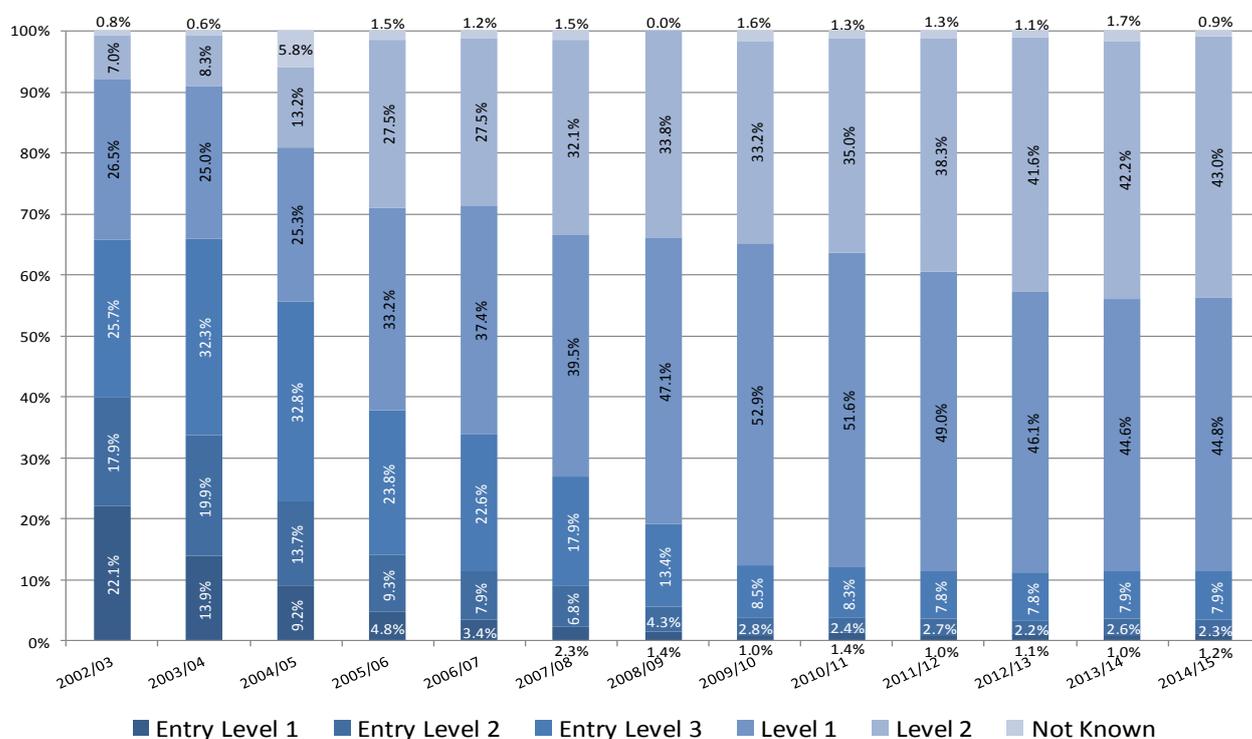


## Target Level of study

From the start of the strategy, the highest proportion (45.3%) of Essential Skills enrolments were at 'Level 1'. However, from the start of the strategy (apart from 2006/07 and 2009/10), the proportion of enrolments at 'Level 2' has been steadily increasing from 7.0% to 43.0% in 2014/15. This is encouraging as Level 2 is the equivalent to a GCSE grade A\*-C and more individuals are trying to reach this standard. This has been coupled with a recent decrease, since 2009/10, in the proportions of 'Level 1' enrolments. The only exception to this was between 2013/14 (44.6%) and 2014/15 (44.8%) which saw an increase of 0.2 percentage points.

In 2014/15, Entry level 1, 2 and 3 accounted for 1.2%, 2.3% and 7.9% of enrolments respectively (Figure 5 and Table 6).

**Figure 5: Essential Skills Enrolments by subject, target level of study and academic year**



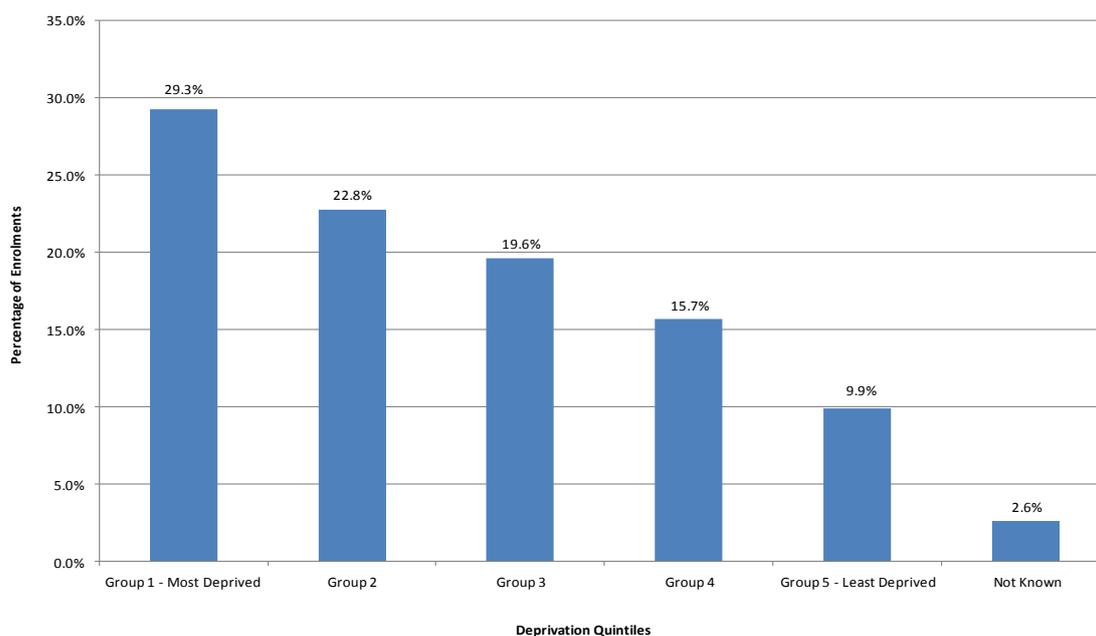
## Deprivation<sup>1</sup> Analysis

Deprivation is measured by the official Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM), which categorises geographical areas across Northern Ireland into five groups, termed 'quintiles', each accounting for 20% of the 890 Super Output Areas (SOAs). Quintile 1 is the most deprived group of areas and quintile 5 is the least deprived or most affluent group of areas.

Of the 431,699 Essential Skills enrolments since the beginning of the strategy, 29.3% are within the most deprived quintile. This is positive as the [census data](#) indicates that the highest proportion (24.8%) of those aged 16+ that have no qualification or their highest level of qualification is at level one, are from the most deprived quintile across Northern Ireland.

Over the duration of the strategy, the proportion of enrolments in each quintile has remained fairly steady. The only noticeable change is in the most deprived quintile, where there has been a decline in the proportion of enrolments from 34.1% (2006/07) to 27.2% (2014/15) (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: Essential Skills enrolments by deprivation quintiles since 2002/03**



The general trend is, the more deprived the area, the higher the number of enrolments. In the most recent academic year, 9,192 (22.6%) enrolments were from the second most deprived quintile, 8,322 (20.5%) from the middle quintile, 6,460 (15.9%) from the second least deprived quintile and 4,198 (10.3%) from the least deprived quintile (Table 7).

<sup>1</sup> Information about the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure can be found at

[http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/nimdm\\_2010.htm](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/nimdm_2010.htm)

## What subjects are being studied?

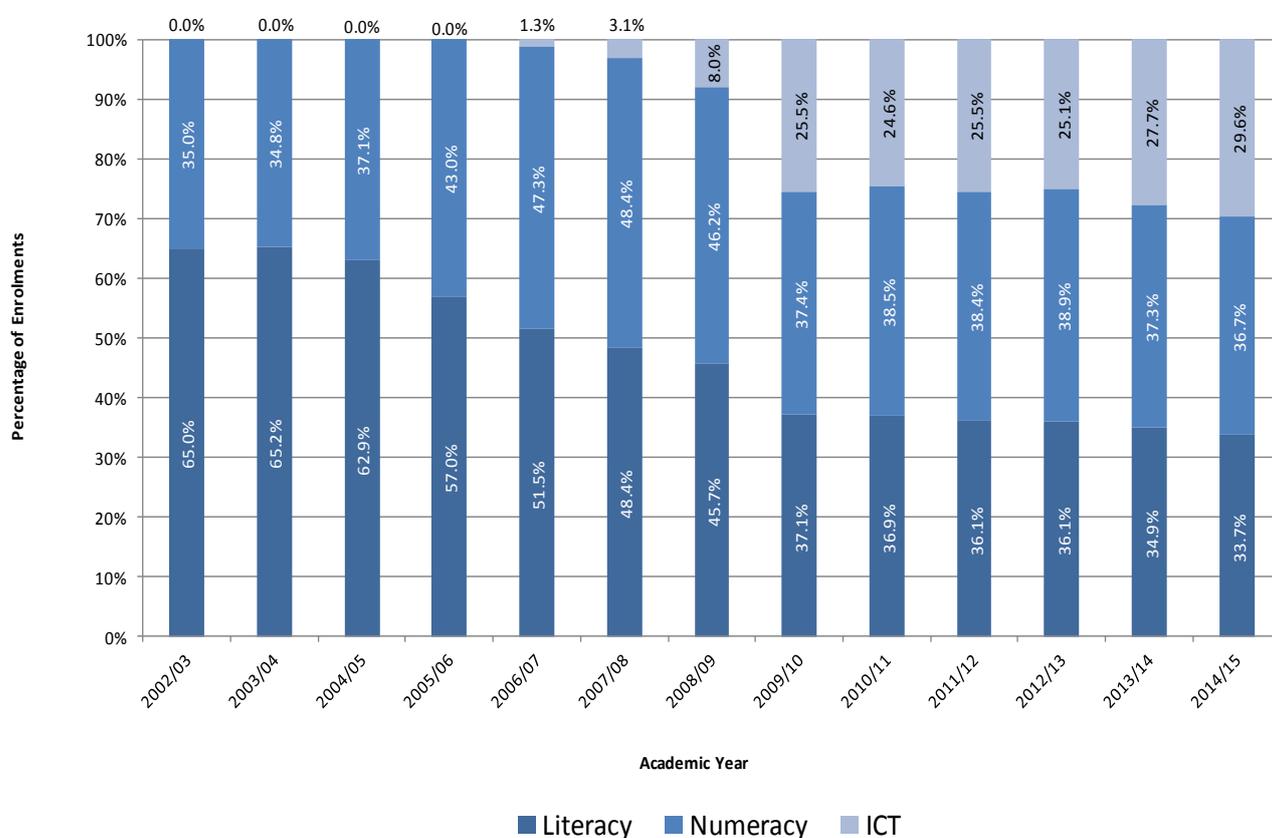
Historically, Literacy has been the most popular Essentials Skills course. However, along with the introduction of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) as a pilot programme, in 2006/07, the balance between Literacy and Numeracy began to change in 2007/08. From 2007/08 onwards, Numeracy has accounted for the largest proportion of Essential Skills enrolments. This has been coupled with a steady decline in the proportion of Literacy, year on year, from 2010/11 until present (Figure 7).

The [International Survey of Adult Skills, 2012](#), found that, of the working age (16-65) population 17.4% were operating at the lowest levels of proficiency in Literacy and 24.4% in Numeracy.

ICT was rolled out as a full programme in August 2009. It accounted for just over a quarter (25.5%) of enrolments in 2009/10 and each year since. The only exception to this was in 2010/11, when it was just less than a quarter (24.6%) but has been increasing in recent years.

The most recent academic year indicates that Numeracy accounts for 36.7%, Literacy for 33.7% and ICT for 29.6% of Essential Skills enrolments (Figure 7 and Table 8).

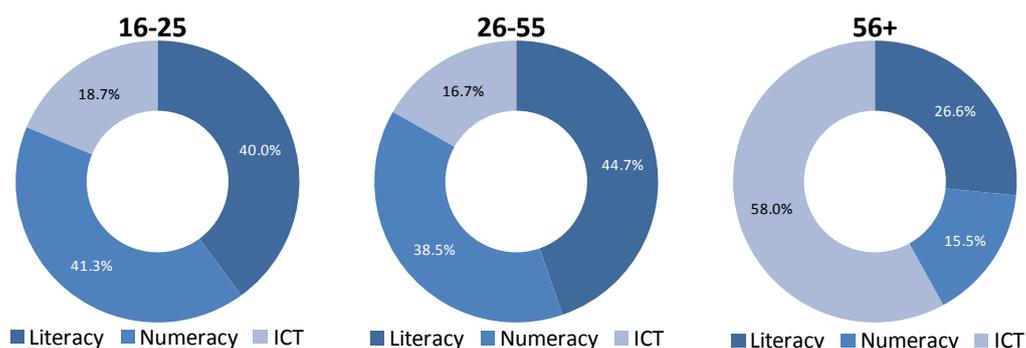
**Figure 7: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and academic year**



## Subject and Age

Over the 13 year period of the strategy, the most popular subject studied varied across age bands. For those aged '16-25' it was Numeracy which had the highest proportion of essential skills enrolments (41.3%). For those aged '26-55' the most popular subject studied was Literacy (44.7%), while the majority (58.0%) of those aged '56+' studied ICT (Figure 8 and Table 9).

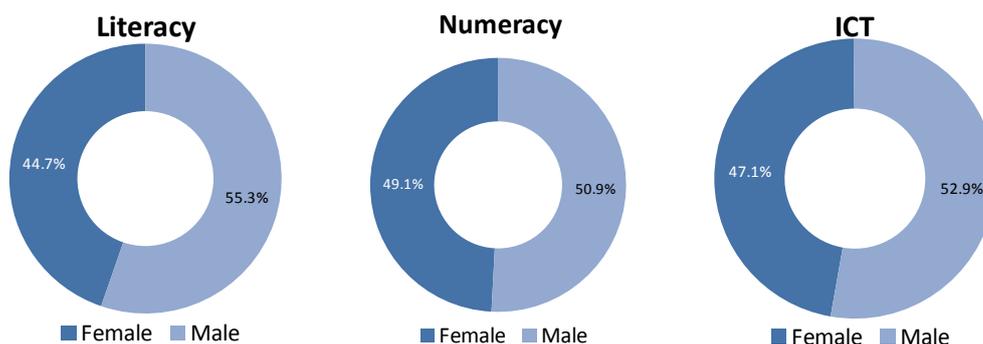
**Figure 8: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and age since 2002/03**



## Subject and Gender

As previously detailed, a higher proportion of males are enrolled in Essential Skills and this is the same across all three Essential Skills subjects: ranging from 50.9% in Numeracy to 55.3% in Literacy (Figure 9 and Table 5).

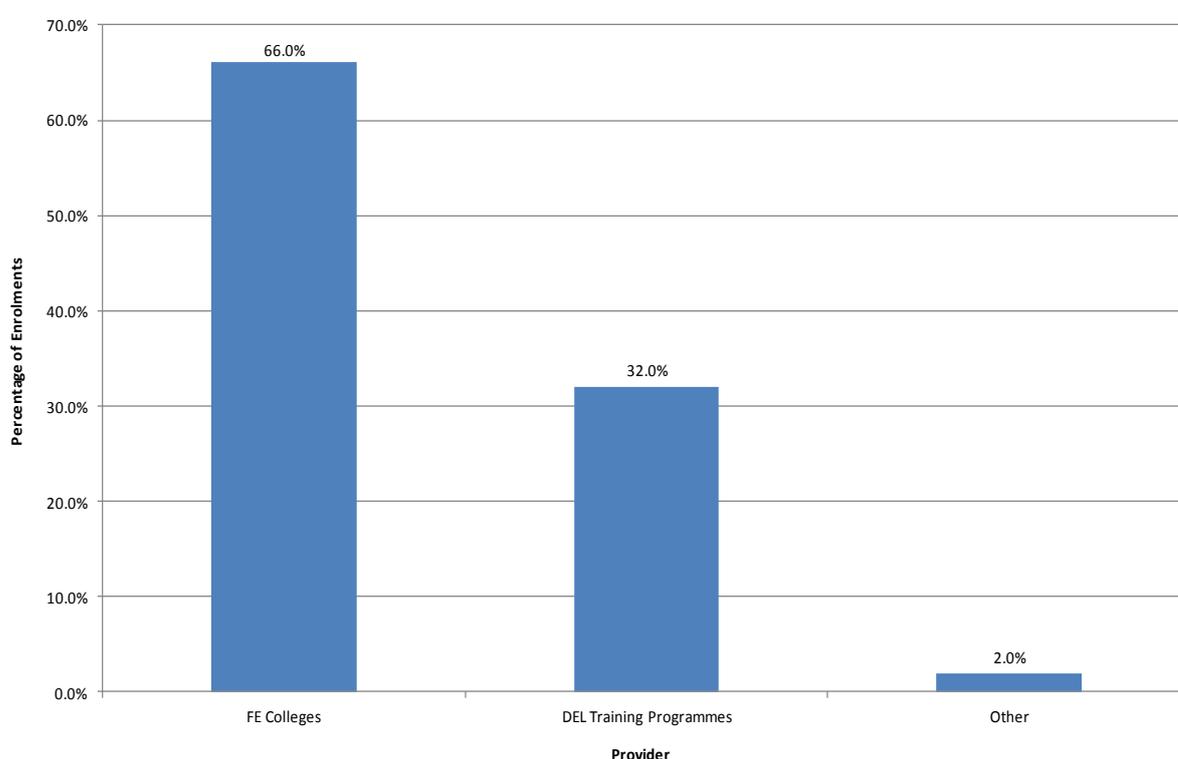
**Figure 9: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and gender since 2002/03**



### Where are the courses being studied?

The main delivery of Essential Skills courses occurs within FE Colleges, accounting for 66.0% of all enrolments since 2002. Enrolments at FE colleges have increased year on year, from 3,700 in 2002/03 and peaking in 2011/12 at 39,037 then decreasing year on year to 27,048 in 2014/15. Enrolments from DEL training or employment programme providers accounted for 32.0% over the 13 year period, while only 2.0% came from other providers. Please note that there have been no further enrolments undertaken by external training providers, outside of FE or DEL training programmes, since 2007/08 (Table 10 and Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Essential Skills enrolments by provider since 2002/03**



*The category 'Other' includes enrolments registered against Proteus, Workers Education Association, EGSA and the Ulster People's College.*

In 2014/15, the highest proportion of Essential Skills enrolments was in South Eastern Regional College (5,366, 13.2%). The college with the lowest proportion of Essential Skills enrolments came from was Northern Regional College (3,883, 9.6%). DEL Training Programmes accounted for 13,541 (33.4%) of the enrolments in 2014/15 (Table 10 and Table 11).

## Section B: Qualifications

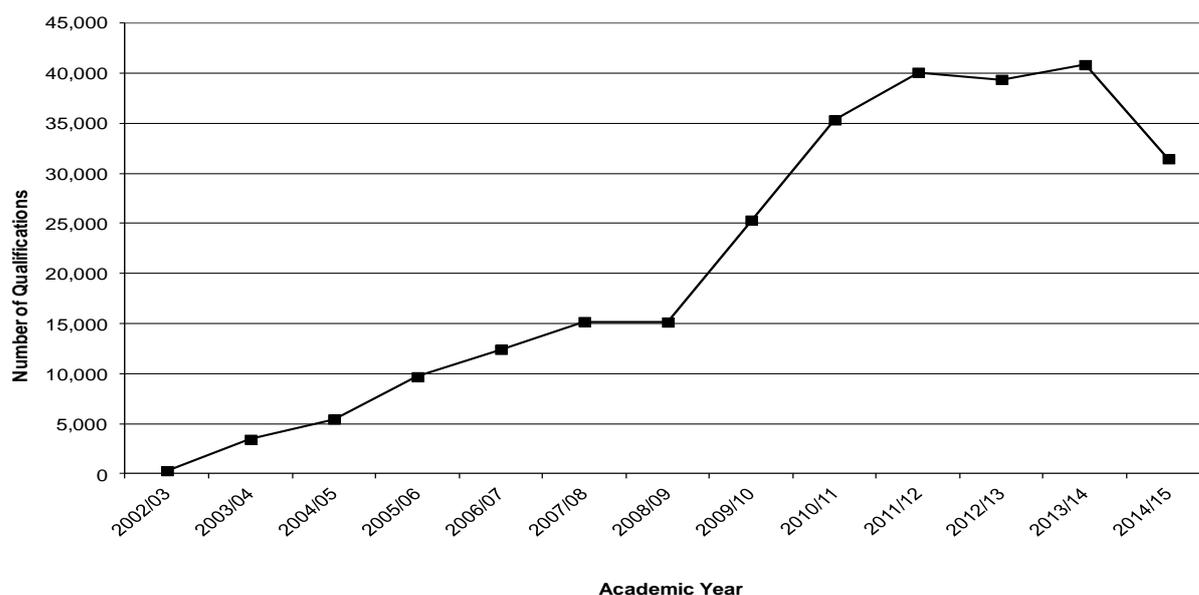
The following section focuses solely on Essential Skills qualifications issued by Awarding Organisations from the start of strategy in April 2002.

### Number of Qualifications

Information from the awarding organisations indicates that there have been just over 274,000 qualifications issued in Essential Skills since the strategy began thirteen years ago.

The number of qualifications issued has generally increased each academic year until 2011/12 when it reached 40,095. From 2011/12, the number of qualifications has remained fairly constant. However, the number of Essential Skills qualifications has decreased by 23.0% over the last academic year, from 40,851 in 2013/14 to 31,456 in 2014/15. This decrease is also reflected within the enrolment figures represented previously (Figure 11 and Table 12).

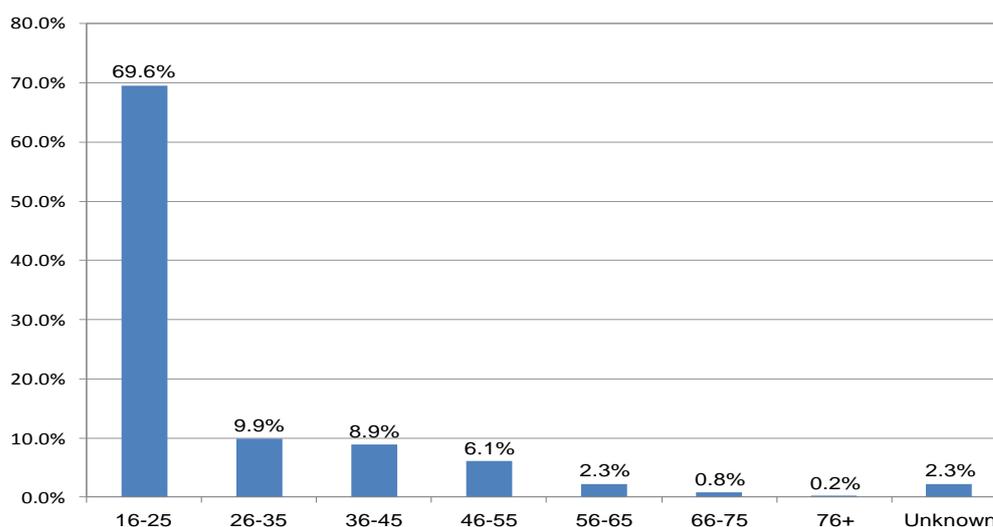
**Figure 11: Essential Skills qualifications by academic year**



### Qualifications by age band

Since the start of the strategy, similar to the pattern of Essential Skills enrolments, the majority of Essential Skills qualifications were by those in the '16-25' age band (69.6%,190,752). The second highest proportion of Essential Skills qualifications was for those aged '26-35' (9.9%) (Table 13 and Figure 12).

**Figure 12: Essential Skills qualifications by age band since 2002/03**



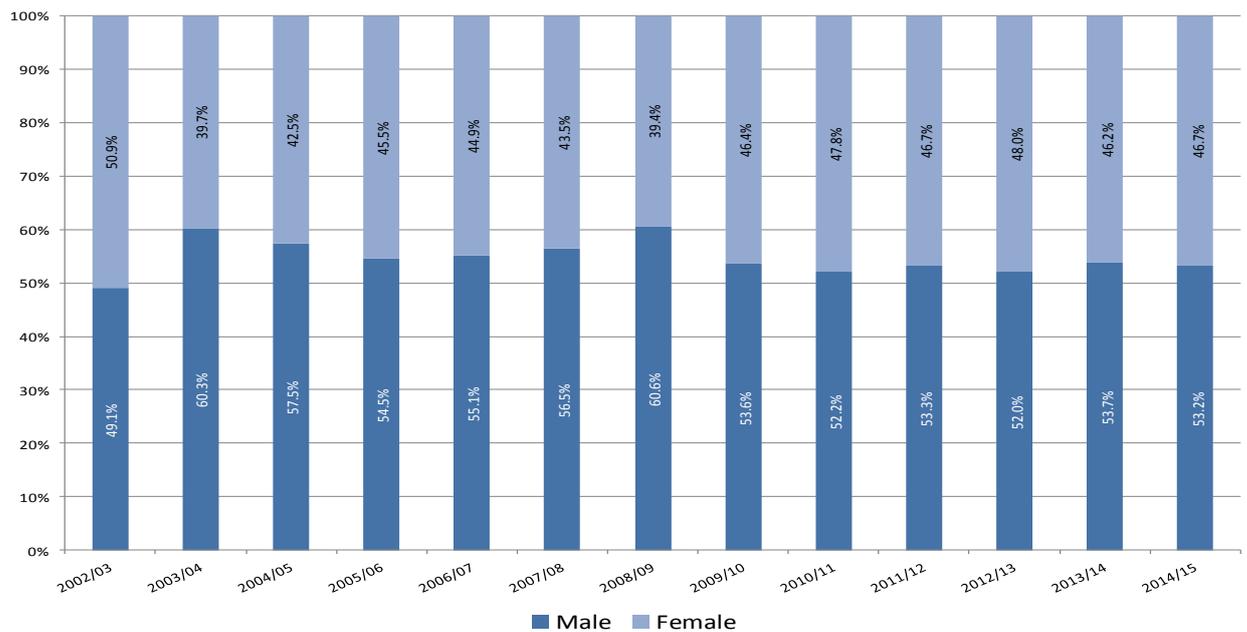
Similar to the enrolment pattern in the most recent academic year (2014/15), the majority (73.6%, 23,138) of Essential Skills qualifications was for those aged '16-25'. Those aged '26-35' had the second highest proportion (9.1%, 2,855) of Essential Skills (Table 12).

### Qualifications by gender

With the exception of 2002/03, in each academic year, males accounted for the majority of those gaining an Essential Skills qualification, ranging from 52.0% in 2012/13 to 60.6% in 2008/09.

In 2014/15 there were 16,747 (53.2%) Essential Skills qualifications gained by males, which is a decrease of 23.7% from the 2013/14 figure (21,956). Over the same period, qualifications gained by females also decreased (22.2%) going from 18,884 in 2013/14 to 14,700 in 2014/15 (Figure 13 and Table 13).

**Figure 13: Essential Skills qualifications by gender and academic year**

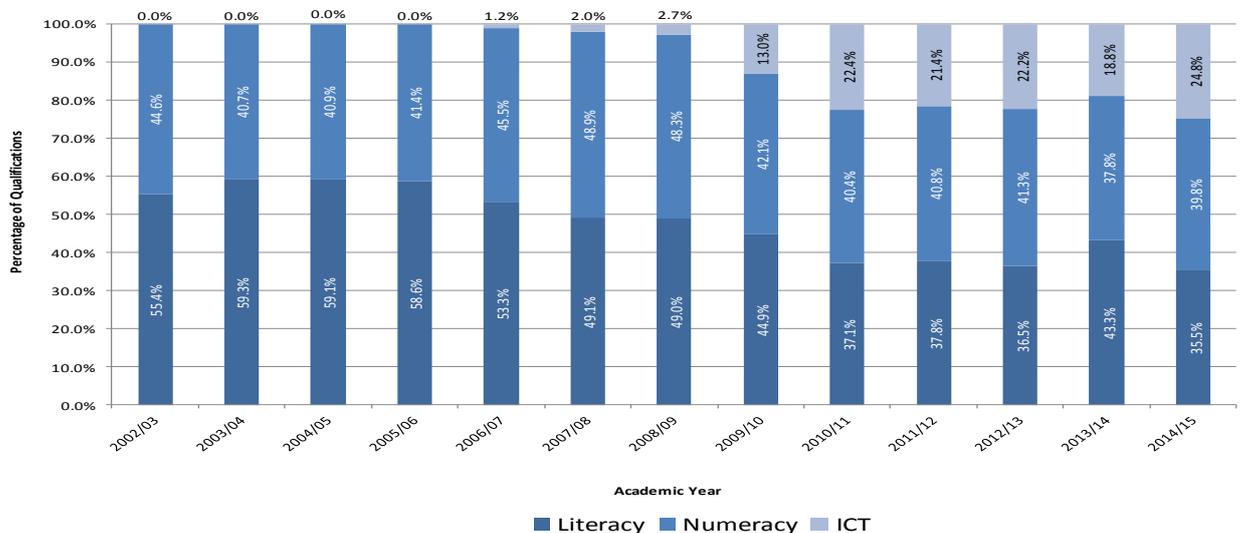


**Qualifications by subject**

Up to 2009/10 Literacy accounted for the largest proportion of Essential Skills qualifications. However since 2010/11 and with the gradual introduction of ICT the proportions have changed. From 2010/11 Numeracy has had the highest proportion of qualifications, accounting for around two fifths of qualifications in each year, with the exception of 2013/14.

In 2014/15, 'Numeracy' had the highest proportion of qualifications (39.8%). This was followed by 'Literacy' with 35.5% and ICT with 24.8% of Essential Skills qualifications issued (Figure 14 and Table 15).

**Figure 14: Essential Skills qualifications by subject and academic year**

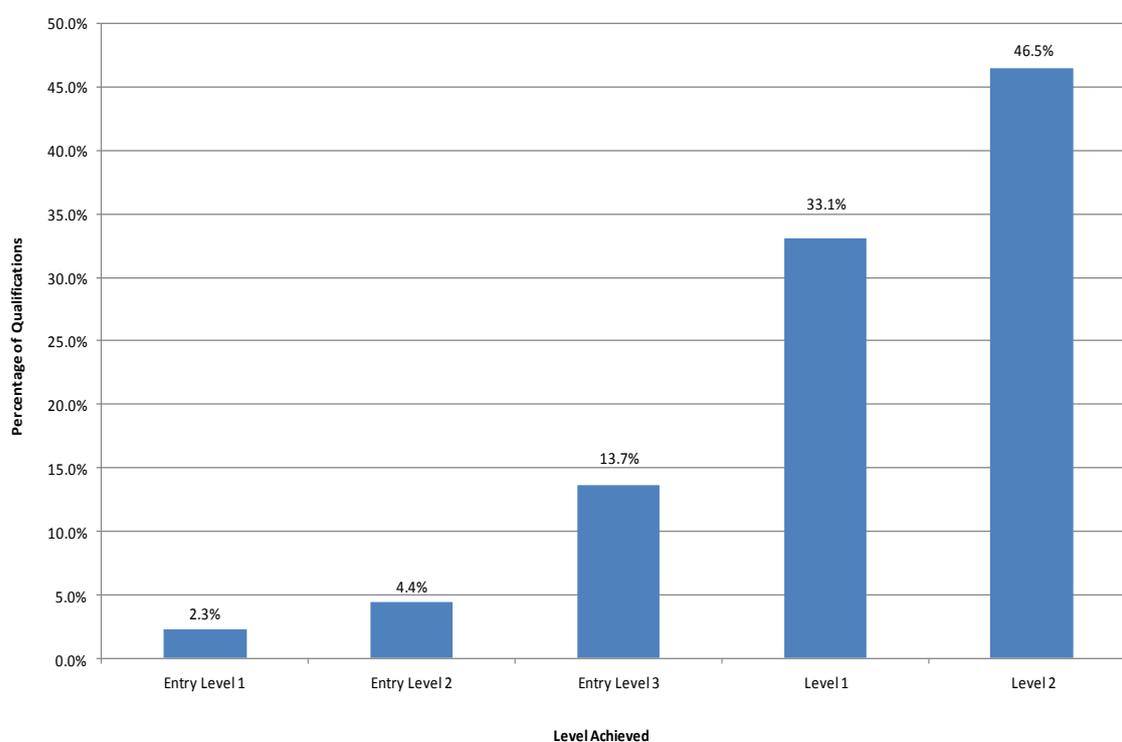


## Qualifications by level

Over the 13 year period, the highest proportion of qualifications (127,521) issued were at 'Level 2', accounting for 46.5% of all qualifications.

Since 2004/05, there has been a year on year increase in the number of 'Level 2' qualifications, reaching a peak of 24,923 (61.0%) in 2013/14. In 2014/15 the number of level 2 qualifications decreased to 18,909 (60.1%), a reduction of 24.1%. It is interesting to note, since the start of the strategy, that although 'Level 1' had the highest number of enrolments, 'Level 2' had the highest number of qualifications (Table 16 and Figure 15).

**Figure 15: Essential Skills qualifications by level since 2002/03**



In 2014/15 the highest number of qualifications were at 'Level 2' (18,909, 60.1%) followed by 'Level 1' (8,742, 27.8%). Entry Level 1 was the only level which saw an increase (28, 6.1%) between 2013/14 and 2014/15, while entry Level 3 had the biggest decrease (36.4%) from 3,922 in 2013/14 to 2,495 in 2014/15 (Table 16).

## Section C: Performance

Essential Skills courses are typically not longer than a year, so when calculating performance rates, all enrolments are treated as in their final year. All enrolments and qualifications since the start of the strategy are included in the performance rate analysis. Please refer to technical note 11 for further information on why no individual academic year figures are presented within performance analysis.

Performance can be measured across three indicators:

- **Retention rate** is defined as the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete, to the number of enrolments.
- **Achievement rate** relates to the percentage of the number of enrolments who complete their study and achieve their qualification, to the number of enrolments who complete their study.
- **Success rate** is the overall measure of performance, which is the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their study and achieve their qualification, to the number of enrolments.

### Performance of Essential Skills

Over the course of the strategy the retention rate within Essential Skills courses is 88.9%. The achievement rate within Essential Skills courses is 71.9%, while the success rate is 63.9%. This indicates that over three fifths of those enrolling in Essential Skills courses achieve a qualification (Table A and Table 17).

### Performance by subject

The retention rate ranged from 86.8% in ICT to 89.7% in Numeracy. There was a larger range in the achievement rate, with the lowest in ICT (61.9%) and the highest in Numeracy (74.3%). The success rates for Literacy (66.1%) and Numeracy (66.7%) were similar, while ICT had a lower success rate of 53.7% (Table A and Table 17).

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

Subject	Performance Indicator		
	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
Literacy	89.2%	74.1%	66.1%
Numeracy	89.7%	74.3%	66.7%
ICT	86.8%	61.9%	53.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>88.9%</b>	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>

Further details into how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated are available in Definitions.

### Performance by gender

While males have a higher retention rate (90.6%) compared to females (87.0%), females have a higher achievement rate (72.1% compared with 71.7%). Males had a higher success rate (64.9%) compared to females (62.8%). This means that males are more likely to stay on the course and to gain a qualification (Table B and Table 18).

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

Gender	Performance Indicator		
	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
Male	90.6%	71.7%	64.9%
Female	87.0%	72.1%	62.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>88.9%</b>	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>

### Performance by age band

The retention rate decreases as people get older with those aged '16-25' having the highest retention rate (90.1%) and those aged '76+' having the lowest (74.9%). This means that those aged '16-25' are most likely to stay on the course. The achievement rate ranged from 60.4% for those aged '76+' to 80.1% for those aged '56-65'. Similar to the retention and achievement rates, those aged '76+' had the lowest success rate (45.2%). Those aged '46-55' had the highest success rate of 68.9% meaning those enrolments aged '46-55' have the highest proportion of any age band to get a qualification. These variations in retention and achievement rates across the age bands impact on their corresponding success rates. Interestingly the 16-25 age band has the highest retention rate but it has the second lowest achievement rate, resulting in the third lowest success rate out of the seven age bands (Table C and Table 19).

**Table C: Essential Skills performance indicators by age band since 2002/03**

Age Band	Performance Indicator		
	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
16-25	90.1%	68.6%	61.8%
26-35	86.8%	71.7%	62.2%
36-45	86.7%	75.3%	65.3%
46-55	86.5%	79.7%	68.9%
56-65	82.4%	80.1%	66.0%
66-75	77.3%	77.6%	60.0%
76+	74.9%	60.4%	45.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>88.9%</b>	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>

### Performance by target level of study

Across the five levels of the study, the retention rate ranged from 87.5% in 'Entry Level 1' to 90.3% in 'Level 1'. Although those studying at 'Level 1' stay on and complete the course more so than other levels, those enrolled in this level find it harder to achieve the qualification, given it has the lowest achievement (51.7%) and success rates (46.6%). It is encouraging that those studying a 'Level 2' course seem to find it easier to achieve their qualification, with the highest achievement (95.2%) and success rates (84.5%) across the levels (Table D and Table 20).

**Table D: Essential Skills performance indicators by target level of study since 2002/03**

Target Level	Performance Indicator		
	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
Entry Level 1	87.5%	78.0%	68.2%
Entry Level 2	89.5%	73.4%	65.7%
Entry Level 3	89.3%	82.9%	74.1%
Level 1	90.3%	51.7%	46.6%
Level 2	88.8%	95.2%	84.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>88.9%</b>	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>

# ANNEXES

## Annex 1: Tables

**Table 1: Essential Skills enrolments by academic year**

Academic Year	Number of enrolments	Number of Individuals
Up to 31 July 2003	4,009	3,023
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	9,108	5,886
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	13,061	7,919
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	17,258	10,160
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	20,262	10,290
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	25,563	12,085
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	34,983	15,297
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	49,918	20,373
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	60,033	22,903
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	59,294	21,415
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	51,818	18,155
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	45,803	16,254
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	40,589	14,607
<b>Total</b>	<b>431,699</b>	<b>178,367</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15

Notes: Figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.  
Individuals have been determined using name and date of birth and allocated to a particular academic year based on the start date of their first registration.  
Individuals can enrol in more than one course.

**Table 2: Essential Skills enrolments by age band and academic year**

Academic Year	Ageband								Number of enrolments
	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	76+	Unknown	
Up to 31 July 2003	1,374	975	800	384	130	44	241	61	<b>4,009</b>
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	4,715	1,691	1,398	690	341	106	31	136	<b>9,108</b>
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	6,361	2,365	2,292	1,251	507	123	15	147	<b>13,061</b>
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	11,035	2,150	2,241	1,166	513	112	11	30	<b>17,258</b>
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	15,755	1,668	1,584	823	321	55	13	43	<b>20,262</b>
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	21,498	1,525	1,431	733	287	49	6	34	<b>25,563</b>
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	25,557	3,602	3,260	1,878	552	98	27	9	<b>34,983</b>
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	35,343	4,704	4,571	3,042	1,403	628	156	71	<b>49,918</b>
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	41,274	6,762	5,476	3,889	1,548	843	183	58	<b>60,033</b>
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	41,225	6,520	5,417	3,764	1,374	755	194	45	<b>59,294</b>
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	38,598	5,021	3,689	2,822	1,049	446	120	73	<b>51,818</b>
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	35,850	3,729	2,882	2,143	746	353	76	24	<b>45,803</b>
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	32,023	3,270	2,437	1,765	709	278	64	43	<b>40,589</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15

Notes: Figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.  
Age is calculated based on date of birth and start date of the enrolment.

**Table 3: Essential Skills enrolments by employment status and academic year**

Academic Year	Employment Status				Number of enrolments
	Employed	Unemployed	Economically Inactive	Unknown	
Up to 31 July 2003	1,349	972	514	1,174	<b>4,009</b>
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	2,053	2,281	967	3,807	<b>9,108</b>
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	2,934	3,079	1,469	5,579	<b>13,061</b>
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	3,977	4,072	3,199	6,010	<b>17,258</b>
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	3,410	5,333	3,062	8,457	<b>20,262</b>
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	5,948	6,408	5,126	8,081	<b>25,563</b>
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	11,354	7,918	9,647	6,064	<b>34,983</b>
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	15,403	10,523	17,935	6,057	<b>49,918</b>
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	21,106	12,027	21,080	5,820	<b>60,033</b>
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	19,467	12,954	22,494	4,379	<b>59,294</b>
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	16,052	11,686	19,570	4,510	<b>51,818</b>
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	11,738	11,753	19,012	3,300	<b>45,803</b>
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	10,009	11,648	17,440	1,492	<b>40,589</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15

Notes: Figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.

**Table 4: Essential Skills enrolments by gender and academic year**

Academic Year	Gender		Number of enrolments
	Male	Female	
Up to 31 July 2003	1,992	2,017	<b>4,009</b>
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	4,996	4,112	<b>9,108</b>
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	6,493	6,568	<b>13,061</b>
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	7,957	9,301	<b>17,258</b>
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	10,574	9,688	<b>20,262</b>
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	14,578	10,985	<b>25,563</b>
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	18,265	16,718	<b>34,983</b>
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	26,248	23,670	<b>49,918</b>
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	31,825	28,208	<b>60,033</b>
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	31,223	28,071	<b>59,294</b>
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	28,144	23,674	<b>51,818</b>
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	24,749	21,054	<b>45,803</b>
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	22,034	18,555	<b>40,589</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15

Notes: Figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.

**Table 5: Essential Skills enrolments by gender, subject and academic year**

Academic Year	Literacy			Numeracy			ICT		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Up to 31 July 2003	1,282	1,325	<b>2,607</b>	710	692	<b>1,402</b>	-	-	-
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	3,262	2,676	<b>5,938</b>	1,734	1,436	<b>3,170</b>	-	-	-
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	4,059	4,155	<b>8,214</b>	2,434	2,413	<b>4,847</b>	-	-	-
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	4,638	5,195	<b>9,833</b>	3,319	4,106	<b>7,425</b>	-	-	-
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	5,605	4,822	<b>10,427</b>	4,810	4,764	<b>9,574</b>	159	102	<b>261</b>
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	7,306	5,070	<b>12,376</b>	6,757	5,625	<b>12,382</b>	515	290	<b>805</b>
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	8,738	7,258	<b>15,996</b>	7,944	8,227	<b>16,171</b>	1,583	1,233	<b>2,816</b>
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	10,251	8,253	<b>18,504</b>	9,432	9,238	<b>18,670</b>	6,565	6,179	<b>12,744</b>
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	12,336	9,818	<b>22,154</b>	11,811	11,321	<b>23,132</b>	7,678	7,069	<b>14,747</b>
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	11,886	9,543	<b>21,429</b>	11,397	11,349	<b>22,746</b>	7,940	7,179	<b>15,119</b>
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	10,669	8,019	<b>18,688</b>	10,405	9,742	<b>20,147</b>	7,070	5,913	<b>12,983</b>
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	9,200	6,806	<b>16,006</b>	8,834	8,267	<b>17,101</b>	6,715	5,981	<b>12,696</b>
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	7,972	5,702	<b>13,674</b>	7,729	7,174	<b>14,903</b>	6,333	5,679	<b>12,012</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15

Notes: Figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.

**Table 6: Essential Skills enrolments by target level of study and Academic year**

Academic Year	Target Level						Number of enrolments
	Entry Level 1	Entry Level 2	Entry Level 3	Level 1	Level 2	Not Known	
Up to 31 July 2003	885	719	1,030	1,062	282	31	<b>4,009</b>
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	1,262	1,808	2,943	2,280	759	56	<b>9,108</b>
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	1,196	1,791	4,286	3,300	1,724	764	<b>13,061</b>
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	829	1,597	4,102	5,724	4,752	254	<b>17,258</b>
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	688	1,610	4,582	7,570	5,566	246	<b>20,262</b>
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	577	1,727	4,581	10,097	8,194	387	<b>25,563</b>
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	499	1,488	4,695	16,463	11,838	-	<b>34,983</b>
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	506	1,421	4,258	26,382	16,549	802	<b>49,918</b>
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	824	1,470	4,999	30,949	21,024	767	<b>60,033</b>
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	594	1,577	4,627	29,027	22,720	749	<b>59,294</b>
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	564	1,161	4,062	23,884	21,558	589	<b>51,818</b>
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	471	1,181	3,609	20,446	19,318	778	<b>45,803</b>
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	478	931	3,207	18,190	17,436	347	<b>40,589</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15

Notes: Figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.

**Table 7: Essential Skills enrolments by deprivation quintiles and academic year**

Academic Year	SOA MDM Quintile						Number of enrolments
	Group 1 - Most Deprived	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5 - Least Deprived	Not Known	
Up to 31 July 2003	1,187	806	624	582	301	509	<b>4,009</b>
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	2,670	1,996	1,812	1,311	828	491	<b>9,108</b>
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	4,177	2,875	2,583	1,724	1,165	537	<b>13,061</b>
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	5,223	3,925	3,326	2,555	1,607	622	<b>17,258</b>
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	6,912	4,570	3,717	2,841	1,876	346	<b>20,262</b>
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	8,273	5,544	5,073	3,906	2,358	409	<b>25,563</b>
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	10,740	7,914	6,892	5,409	3,513	515	<b>34,983</b>
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	14,591	11,186	9,766	7,987	5,258	1,130	<b>49,918</b>
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	17,088	13,764	11,405	10,110	6,173	1,493	<b>60,033</b>
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	16,730	13,977	11,878	9,203	6,061	1,445	<b>59,294</b>
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	14,776	12,046	10,408	8,349	5,073	1,166	<b>51,818</b>
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	13,148	10,596	8,993	7,260	4,421	1,385	<b>45,803</b>
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	11,038	9,192	8,322	6,460	4,198	1,379	<b>40,589</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15

Notes: Figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.

The group 1 quintile is the most deprived, while the group 5 quintile is the least deprived group of areas across NI.

**Table 8: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and academic year**

Academic Year	Subject			Number of enrolments
	Literacy	Numeracy	ICT	
Up to 31 July 2003	2,607	1,402	-	<b>4,009</b>
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	5,938	3,170	-	<b>9,108</b>
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	8,214	4,847	-	<b>13,061</b>
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	9,833	7,425	-	<b>17,258</b>
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	10,427	9,574	261	<b>20,262</b>
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	12,376	12,382	805	<b>25,563</b>
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	15,996	16,171	2,816	<b>34,983</b>
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	18,504	18,670	12,744	<b>49,918</b>
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	22,154	23,132	14,747	<b>60,033</b>
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	21,429	22,746	15,119	<b>59,294</b>
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	18,688	20,147	12,983	<b>51,818</b>
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	16,006	17,101	12,696	<b>45,803</b>
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	13,674	14,903	12,012	<b>40,589</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15

Notes: Figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.

**Table 9: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and age**

Subject	Ageband				Number of Enrolments
	16-25	26-55	56+	Unknown	
Literacy	124,223	47,317	3,856	450	<b>175,846</b>
Numeracy	128,416	40,788	2,243	223	<b>171,670</b>
ICT	57,969	17,705	8,408	101	<b>84,183</b>
<b>Number of Enrolments</b>	<b>310,608</b>	<b>105,810</b>	<b>14,507</b>	<b>774</b>	<b>431,699</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15

Notes: Figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.

**Table 10: Essential Skills enrolments by provider and academic year**

Academic Year	Provider			Number of enrolments
	FE Colleges	DEL Training Programmes	Other	
Up to 31 July 2003	3,700	53	256	<b>4,009</b>
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	6,207	1,784	1,117	<b>9,108</b>
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	8,473	2,099	2,489	<b>13,061</b>
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	11,851	2,941	2,466	<b>17,258</b>
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	13,439	5,655	1,168	<b>20,262</b>
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	17,153	7,399	1,011	<b>25,563</b>
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	22,188	12,795	-	<b>34,983</b>
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	33,768	16,150	-	<b>49,918</b>
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	38,201	21,832	-	<b>60,033</b>
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	39,037	20,257	-	<b>59,294</b>
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	33,950	17,868	-	<b>51,818</b>
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	30,094	15,709	-	<b>45,803</b>
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	27,048	13,541	-	<b>40,589</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15

Notes: Figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.

The category 'Other' includes enrolments registered against Proteus, Workers Education Association, Educational Guidance Service for Adults and the Ulster People's College.

**Table 11: Essential Skills enrolments by college and academic year**

Academic Year	College							Number of Enrolments
	Belfast Metropolitan	Northern	North West	South Eastern	Southern	Sout West	Non-Regional College	
Up to 31 July 2003	965	533	985	195	529	493	309	4,009
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	1,382	1,237	991	747	998	852	2,901	9,108
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	1,875	1,787	1,094	1,068	1,408	1,241	4,588	13,061
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	2,049	2,255	1,547	2,270	2,392	1,338	5,407	17,258
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	2,524	2,245	1,739	2,921	2,302	1,708	6,823	20,262
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	3,207	3,027	2,696	3,196	2,788	2,239	8,410	25,563
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	4,142	3,809	3,536	4,225	3,509	2,967	12,795	34,983
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	5,241	5,335	4,871	6,778	7,045	4,498	16,150	49,918
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	5,419	5,251	4,912	7,903	8,995	5,721	21,832	60,033
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	5,725	5,123	5,172	7,246	9,275	6,496	20,257	59,294
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	5,133	4,711	4,316	6,761	7,031	5,998	17,868	51,818
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	5,251	4,080	4,267	5,352	5,480	5,664	15,709	45,803
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	4,790	3,883	4,079	5,366	4,010	4,920	13,541	40,589

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15

Notes: Figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.

Non-regional college includes enrolment registered against DEL training providers Proteus, Workers Education Association, Educational Guidance Service for Adults and the Ulster People's College.

**Table 12: Essential Skills qualifications by academic year**

Academic Year	Number of qualifications
Up to 31 July 2003	316
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	3,443
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	5,465
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	9,691
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	12,427
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	15,197
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	15,153
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	25,333
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	35,337
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	40,095
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	39,383
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	40,851
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	31,456
<b>Total</b>	<b>274,147</b>

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2015.

**Table 13: Essential Skills qualifications by age band and academic year**

Academic Year	Age Band								Number of Qualifications
	16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	56-65	66-75	76+	Unknown	
Up to 31 July 2003	145	76	56	31	4	2	-	2	316
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	1,812	693	509	226	110	20	7	66	3,443
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	3,202	710	711	404	180	64	10	184	5,465
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	5,854	1,270	1,364	733	316	63	11	80	9,691
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	8,976	1,226	1,204	640	230	51	12	88	12,427
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	11,566	1,230	1,225	634	266	50	12	214	15,197
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	12,015	1,005	920	528	167	22	4	492	15,153
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	17,652	2,291	2,340	1,565	617	257	62	549	25,333
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	23,983	3,268	3,288	2,552	1,040	521	104	581	35,337
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	26,684	4,215	3,744	2,819	1,023	453	93	1,064	40,095
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	26,755	4,115	3,435	2,705	908	372	90	1,003	39,383
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	28,970	4,261	3,282	2,317	722	257	61	981	40,851
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	23,138	2,855	2,247	1,517	607	178	43	871	31,456

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2015.

**Table 14: Essential Skills qualifications by gender and academic year**

Academic Year	Gender			Number of Qualifications
	Male	Female	Unknown	
Up to 31 July 2003	155	161	-	316
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	2,077	1,366	-	3,443
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	3,140	2,325	-	5,465
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	5,284	4,407	-	9,691
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	6,850	5,577	-	12,427
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	8,582	6,615	-	15,197
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	9,187	5,966	-	15,153
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	13,570	11,763	-	25,333
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	18,430	16,907	-	35,337
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	21,364	18,721	10	40,095
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	20,484	18,889	10	39,383
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	21,956	18,884	11	40,851
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	16,747	14,700	9	31,456

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2015.

**Table 15: Essential Skills qualifications by subject and academic year**

Academic Year	Subject			Number of qualifications
	Literacy	Numeracy	ICT	
Up to 31 July 2003	175	141	-	316
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	2,040	1,403	-	3,443
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	3,231	2,234	-	5,465
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	5,680	4,011	-	9,691
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	6,626	5,656	145	12,427
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	7,464	7,428	305	15,197
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	7,429	7,319	405	15,153
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	11,376	10,661	3,296	25,333
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	13,125	14,293	7,919	35,337
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	15,143	16,357	8,595	40,095
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	14,375	16,269	8,739	39,383
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	17,694	15,461	7,696	40,851
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	11,158	12,511	7,787	31,456

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2015.

**Table 16: Essential Skills qualifications by level achieved and academic year**

Academic Year	Level Achieved					Number of qualifications
	Entry Level 1	Entry Level 2	Entry Level 3	Level 1	Level 2	
Up to 31 July 2003	-	-	-	238	78	316
1 August 2003 - 31 July 2004	380	455	833	1,484	291	3,443
1 August 2004 - 31 July 2005	740	987	2,850	689	199	5,465
1 August 2005 - 31 July 2006	773	1,336	3,623	2,633	1,326	9,691
1 August 2006 - 31 July 2007	655	1,164	3,433	4,231	2,944	12,427
1 August 2007 - 31 July 2008	598	1,244	3,658	5,012	4,685	15,197
1 August 2008 - 31 July 2009	306	928	3,116	5,374	5,429	15,153
1 August 2009 - 31 July 2010	394	906	3,138	10,534	10,361	25,333
1 August 2010 - 31 July 2011	472	1,025	3,444	14,089	16,307	35,337
1 August 2011 - 31 July 2012	517	1,088	3,634	14,273	20,583	40,095
1 August 2012 - 31 July 2013	579	1,103	3,353	12,862	21,486	39,383
1 August 2013 - 31 July 2014	460	1,016	3,922	10,530	24,923	40,851
1 August 2014 - 31 July 2015	488	822	2,495	8,742	18,909	31,456

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

**Table 17: Essential Skills performance analysis by subject since 2002/03**

Subject	Enrolments (Enrolments Dataset)	Completers (Enrolments Dataset)	Retention Rate	Qualifications (awarding organisation dataset)	Achievement Rate	Success Rate
Literacy	174,760	155,816	89.2%	115,516	74.1%	66.1%
Numeracy	170,499	153,007	89.7%	113,744	74.3%	66.7%
ICT	83,601	72,537	86.8%	44,887	61.9%	53.7%
<b>All Subjects</b>	<b>428,860</b>	<b>381,360</b>	<b>88.9%</b>	<b>274,147</b>	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15; Awarding Organisations

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.

Qualifications figures are correct as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

Further details into how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated are available in Annex 1.

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

Gender	Enrolments (Enrolments Dataset)	Completers (Enrolments Dataset)	Retention Rate	Qualifications (awarding organisation dataset)	Achievement Rate	Success Rate
Male	227,620	206,286	90.6%	147,826	71.7%	64.9%
Female	201,240	175,074	87.0%	126,281	72.1%	62.8%
Unknown	-	-	N/A	40	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>428,860</b>	<b>381,360</b>	<b>88.9%</b>	<b>274,147</b>	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15; Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.

Qualifications figures are correct as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

Further details into how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated are available in Annex 1.

**Table 19: Essential Skills performance analysis by age band since 2002/03**

Age Band	Enrolments (Enrolments Dataset)	Completers (Enrolments Dataset)	Retention Rate	Qualifications (awarding organisation dataset)	Achievment Rate	Success Rate
16-25	308,561	277,973	90.1%	190,752	68.6%	61.8%
26-35	43,737	37,970	86.8%	27,215	71.7%	62.2%
36-45	37,246	32,303	86.7%	24,325	75.3%	65.3%
46-55	24,190	20,927	86.5%	16,671	79.7%	68.9%
56-65	9,375	7,727	82.4%	6,190	80.1%	66.0%
66-75	3,852	2,978	77.3%	2,310	77.6%	60.0%
76+	1,126	843	74.9%	509	60.4%	45.2%
Unknown	773	639	N/A	6,175	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>428,860</b>	<b>381,360</b>	<b>88.9%</b>	<b>274,147</b>	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15; Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.

Qualifications figures are correct as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

Further details into how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated are available in Annex 1.

**Table 20: Essential Skills performance analysis by target level since 2002/03**

Target Level	Enrolments (Enrolments Dataset)	Completers (Enrolments Dataset)	Retention Rate	Qualifications (awarding organisation dataset)	Achievment Rate	Success Rate
Entry Level 1	9,323	8,154	87.5%	6,362	78.0%	68.2%
Entry Level 2	18,381	16,450	89.5%	12,074	73.4%	65.7%
Entry Level 3	50,623	45,217	89.3%	37,499	82.9%	74.1%
Level 1	194,413	175,535	90.3%	90,691	51.7%	46.6%
Level 2	150,872	133,947	88.8%	127,521	95.2%	84.5%
Not Known	5,248	2,057	N/A	0	N/A	N/A
<b>Total</b>	<b>428,860</b>	<b>381,360</b>	<b>88.9%</b>	<b>274,147</b>	<b>71.9%</b>	<b>63.9%</b>

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2014/15; Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 16th October 2015.

Qualifications figures are correct as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2015.

Further details into how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated are available in Annex 1.

## **Annex 2: Definitions**

### **Academic Year**

An academic year is defined as 1<sup>st</sup> August 20XX to 31<sup>st</sup> July 20XX+1.

### **Achieved level**

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

### **Achievement rate**

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

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

### **Age**

For enrolments, age is calculated at 1<sup>st</sup> July of the previous academic year, based on the start date of the course. For qualifications, age is calculated at the certification date.

### **Deprivation**

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

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

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

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

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

[http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/nimdm\\_2010.htm](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/nimdm_2010.htm)

## **Enrolments**

The enrolment returns are merged and any duplicate enrolments are dealt with through a process, presented in the guidance 'Defining an Essential Skills enrolment'. The resultant file is then analysed to present the total number of Essential Skills enrolments.

## **Individual**

The number of individuals for each academic year has been determined (using Forename, Surname and Date of Birth) within the specific academic year period. The total number of individuals calculated over the entire time period therefore does not equal the number of enrolments due to the fact an individual may be enrolled in a number of Essential Skills courses.

## **Qualifications**

Total qualifications are taken to be the sum of all records within the Essential Skills Qualifications Return.

## **Regulated**

From academic year 2013/14, only those courses which appear on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ) or the Department's Prescribed List of Approved Non NQF/QCF Qualification (PLAQ) list (for level 3 and below) or are Higher Education (HE) in FE courses (level 4 and above), will be deemed as 'regulated' by the Department. Anything which falls outside this definition is not considered, in Departmental terms, as 'regulated' regardless of whether it is considered to produce "outcomes" e.g. internal college certification.

In the publication for 2013/14 and indeed all future releases, the term 'Regulated', will now be used in regard to this type of provision within FE. This cohort of FE provision is comparable with the previous figures for Professional and Technical.

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

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

## **Retention rate**

Retention rate is defined as the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study to the number of final year enrolments.

Number of non-withdrawals – These include any enrolments which have not been classified as a withdrawal, namely those options within Course Status - 'Continuing', 'Completed' or the status is unknown.

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

### **Target Level**

When an individual enrolls on an Essential Skills course they are assessed over a 6-8 week period to establish what level they are currently functioning at. They are then normally targeted at a level higher than their assessed level. 'Literacy and 'Numeracy' courses are available for all five levels, whereas ICT is only available for 'Level 1' and 'Level 2'. The ability typically demonstrated at each level is detailed below:

- **Entry Level 1** is the national school curriculum equivalent for attainment at age 5-7. Adults below Entry Level 1 may not be able to write short messages to family or select floor numbers in lifts. Adults with ICT Entry Level 1 skills are able to get information from an ICT-based source and follow recommended safe practices.
- **Entry Level 2** is the national school curriculum equivalent for attainment at age 7-9. Adults with below Entry Level 2 may not be able to describe a child's symptoms to a doctor or use a cash point to withdraw cash. Adults with ICT Entry Level 2 skills are able to use ICT to communicate, as well as enter and edit small amounts of information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience.
- **Entry Level 3** is the national school curriculum equivalent for attainment at age 9-11. Adults with skills below Entry Level 3 may not be able to understand price labels on pre-packaged food or pay household bills. Adults with ICT Entry Level 3 skills are able to interact with and use an ICT system to meet needs, as well as present information in ways that are fit for purpose and audience.
- **Level 1** is equivalent to GCSE grades D-G. Adults with skills below Level 1 may not be able to read bus or train timetables or check the pay and deductions on a wage slip. Adults with ICT Level 1 skills are able to select and use a variety of appropriate sources of information, as well as enter, organise, develop format and bring together information to suit content and purpose.
- **Level 2** is equivalent to GCSE grades A\*-C. Adults with skills below Level 2 may not be able to compare products and services for the best buy, or work out a household budget. Adults with ICT Level 2 skills are able to use a variety of appropriate sources of information and evaluate its fitness for purpose, as well as evaluate and use different methods of organising and presenting information, taking into account fitness for purpose and audience.

### Success rate

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

$$\text{Success rate} = \frac{\text{Number of achievements}}{\text{Number of Enrolments}} \quad \text{OR} \quad \text{Retention rate} \times \text{Achievement rate}$$

## Annex 3: Technical Notes

1. The source of the enrolment information for FE colleges is the Essential Skills enrolment return for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and the Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for the academic years 2013/14 to 2014/15. For DEL's training and employment programmes the source is the Essential Skills extract from the Client Management System (CMS).
2. Both Essential Skills enrolment returns list the enrolment records which are assigned to a particular provider and returned to the Department. Both returns are merged and any duplicate enrolments are dealt with through a process, presented in the guidance 'Defining an Essential Skills enrolment'. The resultant file is then analysed to present the total number of Essential Skills enrolments.
3. Further Education colleges have indicated that there a number of Essential Skills enrolments which were collated on a paper basis and registered with Awarding Organisations but would never have been recorded on a computerised enrolment management system during the academic year 2002/03. Consequently these enrolments are not available and not included in this analysis.
4. The enrolment information is correct as at 16<sup>th</sup> October 2015. A small number of erroneous records are excluded from the Essential Skills enrolment database. Therefore figures are provisional and are therefore subject to change.
5. The source of the qualification information is the quarterly data provided by the awarding organisations.
6. Qualification figures are correct as at 30th September 2015. However figures may be subject to change due to any amendments in the qualification data supplied later by the awarding organisations.
7. Any enrolment records that have been recorded as transfers should have an accompanying second enrolment record (the one they have transferred onto). Through the guidance of the 'Defining an Essential Skills enrolment', if applicable these will be accounted for and only one record will remain for analysis.
8. In terms of outcome, the original enrolment recorded as a transfer will not have any outcome recorded against it and therefore the transferred enrolment cannot be measured in terms of performance. Consequently, any enrolment recorded as transfers are excluded from performance analysis and are not included in final year enrolment counts.
9. Performance analysis is determined over the life of strategy from 2002/03 to 2014/15. No individual academic year's retention, achievement or success rates are calculated as two separate datasets are utilised to produce the performance rates. One dataset is used to

determine enrolments and one for qualifications. An individual can enrol in one academic year but the qualification may not be issued until the next academic year. Consequently, individual year performance analysis may be skewed due to this scenario and therefore is not calculated within this publication.

## Further Enquiries

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

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