

# SFC Statistical publication

## College Performance Indicators 2013-14

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Summary: To inform stakeholders of the publication of the 2013-14 College Performance Indicators

FAO: Principals and Directors of Scotland's colleges

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*The UK Statistics Authority has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.*

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Promoting further and higher education

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Separate Appendices: College PIs and [Technical Appendices](#)

*\*Publication reissued February 2015 following revision of Chart 3 Students completing their FE course that did not achieve “full” success and Chart 6 Students completing their HE course that did not achieve “full” success. The initial charts had shown data for all courses instead of only those courses lasting 160 hours and more.*

## 1 Executive Summary

1. This is the twelfth annual publication of Performance Indicators (PIs) for Scotland's colleges and covers the 2013-14 academic year.
2. Full-time further education (FE)

The main results for the college sector as a whole in 2013-14 are as follows:

- For full-time SFC funded FE students enrolled on recognised qualifications the PIs demonstrate continued improvement on previous years;
- 77.4 per cent of 51,025 full-time FE students completed their studies;
- 66.0 per cent of students successfully completed their course and this is the greatest number of FE graduates of all time;
- the remaining 22.6 per cent of full-time FE students are accounted for by 7.8 per cent of students withdrawing before the funding qualifying date (colleges are not funded for these students) and a further 14.8 per cent between this point and the end of the course;
- 11.2 percentage increase in the number of full-time FE student enrolments over the last six years;
- 6.4 percentage point increase over last 6 years in the rate of successful full-time FE students;
- 6,341 additional FE graduates over the last 6 years of which 3,400 can be attributed to an improvement in success rates.

3. Full-time higher education (HE)

The main results for the college sector as a whole in 2013-14 are as follows:

- For full-time SFC funded HE students enrolled on recognised qualifications, the figures show a continued year on year improvement with a significant increase in student enrolments;

- 84.2 per cent of a total of 31,977 full-time HE students completed their studies;
  - 71.5 per cent of full-time students successfully completed their course and this is the greatest number of HE graduates of all time;
  - the remaining 15.8 per cent of full-time HE students are accounted for by 4.6 per cent of students withdrawing before the funding qualifying date and a further 11.3 per cent between this point and the end of the course;
  - 31.7 percentage increase in the number of full-time HE student enrolments over the last six years;
  - 9 percentage point increase over last 6 years in the rate of successful full-time HE students;
  - 7,685 additional HE graduates over the last 6 years of which 5,507 can be attributed to an improvement in success rates.
4. This report shows sector-level performance indicators only, for individual college-level performance indicators, use the website links to the relevant colleges, the links are found on the SFC website.
5. It is our aim to strive for continuing improvement and enhanced usability of this document. We welcome feedback from readers on matters of content and presentation. Please pass any comments to:

Des Parr

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## 2 Introduction

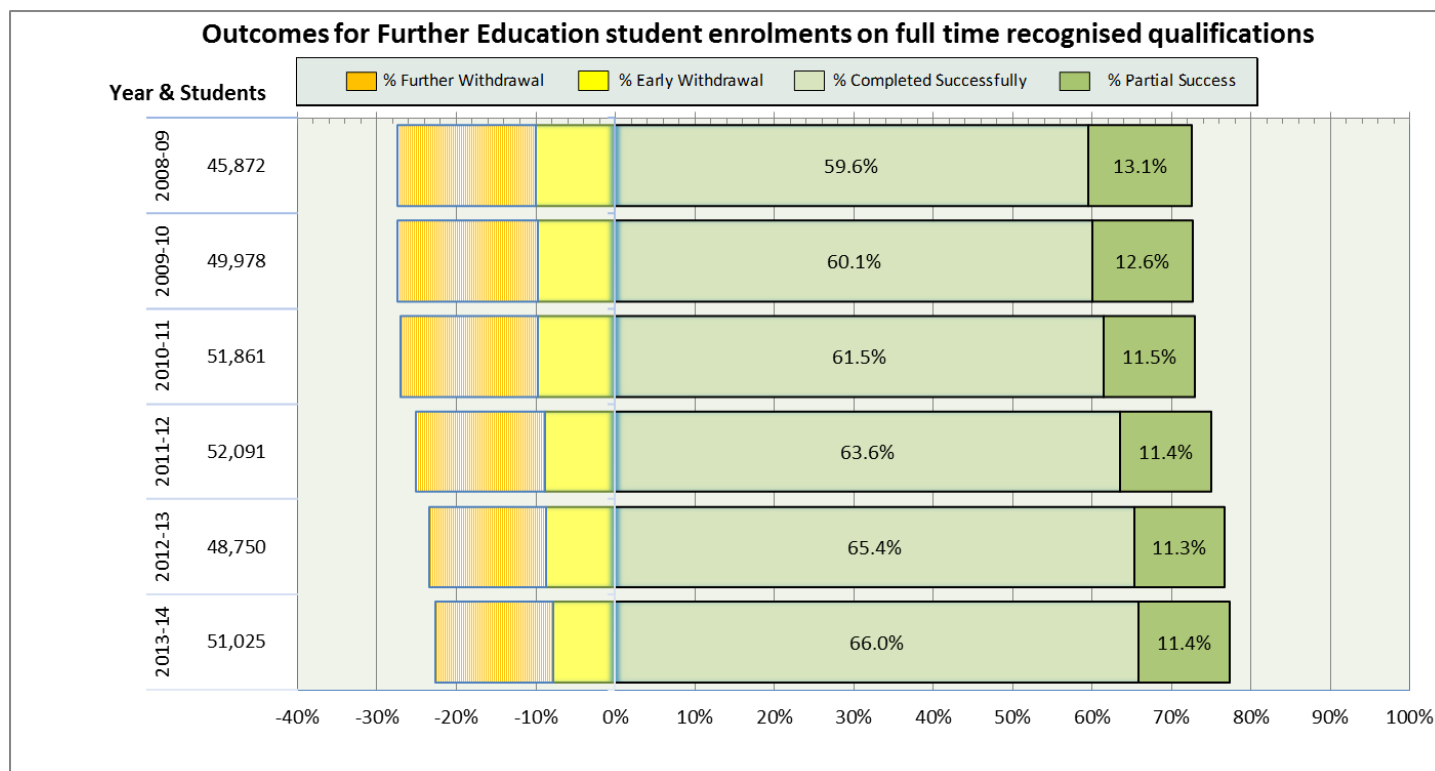
1. The SFC has published PIs on college teaching activity for the past twelve years. Links to previous publication going back to 2008-09 are available on our links page. The purpose of the indicators is to inform stakeholders about the performance of the sector. The reported PIs help colleges evaluate their own performance both over time and against other similar colleges thereby supporting a wider quality improvement agenda.
2. Students have a wide variety of personal motivations for studying at college and study across an extensive range of programmes, from literacy and numeracy courses to engineering and agriculture, with awards ranging from courses not providing a recognised qualification to higher national certificates and diplomas or degrees in partnerships with universities.
3. Our method of presentation and breakdown of PIs by subject groups, duration of study, age groups and gender gives a comprehensive view of sector-wide provision and performance, enabling an informed comparison over time.
4. The PIs are based on student records submitted via the Further Education Statistics (FES) system. This is an automated data capture and record system which encompasses built-in iterative quality checks to ensure the data is correct and credible. Only when the data has passed will the SFC permit the data to be used for PI purposes. In addition to the SFC's checks, every college Principal must also sign-off the data as a true and accurate record for their college.
5. As an additional reassurance of consistency and quality, the SFC has a contract with Education Scotland (previously HMIE) to perform external quality reviews of college performance. Education Scotland reports are available online at:  
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/reports/othersectors/collegereviews/index.asp>
6. Each of these charts contains two percentage figures; the first describes the percentage of students who **successfully completed** the course year and the second is the percentage that **completed** the course year

irrespective of their result. Both these values have been calculated as a percentage of all enrolments.

7. When viewing individual college level PI data, where the number of enrolments is less than 50 in a category the data has been suppressed and is not shown. This avoids spurious statistical accuracy in the published pass rates and reduces the risk of incorrect conclusions being drawn from pass rates based on small numbers.
8. Links to individual College PIs and a more detailed explanation on and examples of how we calculate PIs can be found in separate Technical Appendices to this document.

### 3 How our performance indicators are presented

1. The chart below shows the actual results for full-time FE students over the period 2008-09 to 2013-14.



2. The blue line highlights the zero per cent point on the axis. Bars to the left of this line show the percentage of withdrawals before the course has ended. Bars to the right of the line show the percentage of students who have completed their course.
3. The first bar to the right of the blue line shows the percentage of students who have completed their course year successfully. This includes students who have completed a year of a multi-year duration course.
4. Colleges must choose one of 14 student outcome options from our FES guidance notes [Code list J](#) that best describes the students result. The following student outcomes are considered to have completed successfully:
  - Completed programme/course, student assessed and successful;
  - Student has progressed to next year and has achieved 70% of the credits undertaken;

- Student has achieved 70% of the credits undertaken but has chosen not to progress onto the next year;
  - Student completed first year of a Higher National Diploma (HND) but has chosen to leave with a Higher National Certificate (HNC).
5. The second bar to the right of the blue line shows the percentage of students who have completed their course year but are not considered to be fully successful. For example, the student may have failed to achieve one or more units required for the course. The following two student outcomes are considered to have completed (with partial success):
- Completed programme/course, student assessed but not successful;
  - Student has progressed to next year but did not gain 70% of the credits undertaken.
6. The combination of these two bars shows the total percentage to have completed the course. For example, the 2013-14 bar shows that 66.0% of students completed successfully and a further 11.4% irrespective of the result. Therefore 77.4% completed the course in total.
7. This leaves 22.6% of students unaccounted for. These students are shown to the left of the blue line as withdrawals. The first bar to the left of the line is shown in yellow and shows the number who withdrew before the qualifying date for funding (colleges do not receive funding for students who leave the course before 25% of the course has been delivered).
8. The second bar to the left of the blue line is coloured orange and shows the percentage of students who withdraw after attending beyond the qualifying date but before the programme ends. Colleges are fully funded for these students.
9. The number of students enrolled on these courses is shown for each academic year to the left of the bar chart.
10. Our technical annex in section 6 shows the breakdown of hours of learning and enrolments for each of the 14 possible student outcomes. These



include additional outcomes for those students who have completed their programme of study but which are excluded from our PIs.

- Those coded as **'Completed programme/course, student not assessed as programme/course not designed to be assessed'** are excluded from our outcome PIs as this code cannot be used for nationally recognised programmes. Our FES ONLINE submission tool creates errors if this code is used for recognised programmes.
- Those coded as **'Completed programme/course, student not assessed although programme/ course designed to be assessed. Studying on a flexible open learning programme'** are excluded as their result is not yet available. FES ONLINE ensures this code is only used for programmes delivered on flexible learning.

## 4 Key Performance Indicators Charts

### Outcomes for FE student enrolments on recognised qualifications

1. Chart 1 below provides an overview of success rates on full-time recognised FE programmes from 2008-09 to 2013-14. The figures allow comparisons over a longer timeframe to reduce the risk of basing an assessment of performance on a snapshot of a single year when performance may vary over time.

In 2013-14, 66.0 per cent of students on full-time programmes **completed successfully** whilst a further 11.4% completed irrespective of their final result. In total 77.4% of students completed their course.

Perhaps the most important measure is the percentage of students who complete their course year successfully. Chart 1 shows that whilst 59.6% of students completed successfully in 2008-09 this rose to 66.0% in 2013-14. This represents a 6.4 percentage point increase in the success rate over the 6 years from 2008-09. The combined effect of an improved success rate and a larger population, means that since 2008-09, an extra 6,341 students have graduated, an increase of 23.2%.

SFC has targeted colleges to further increase the success rate to **69%** by 2016-17 as part of our [outcome agreement](#) negotiations.

**Chart 1**

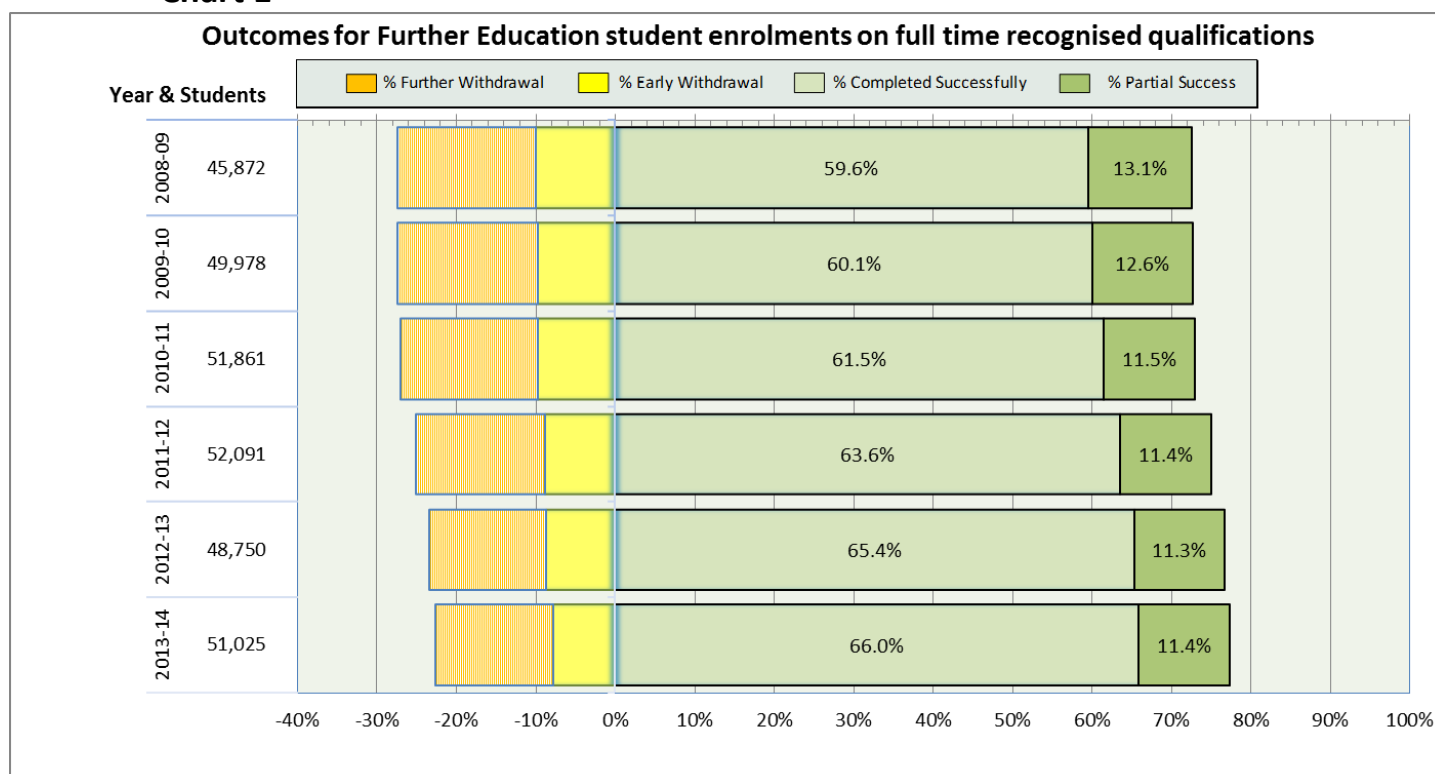


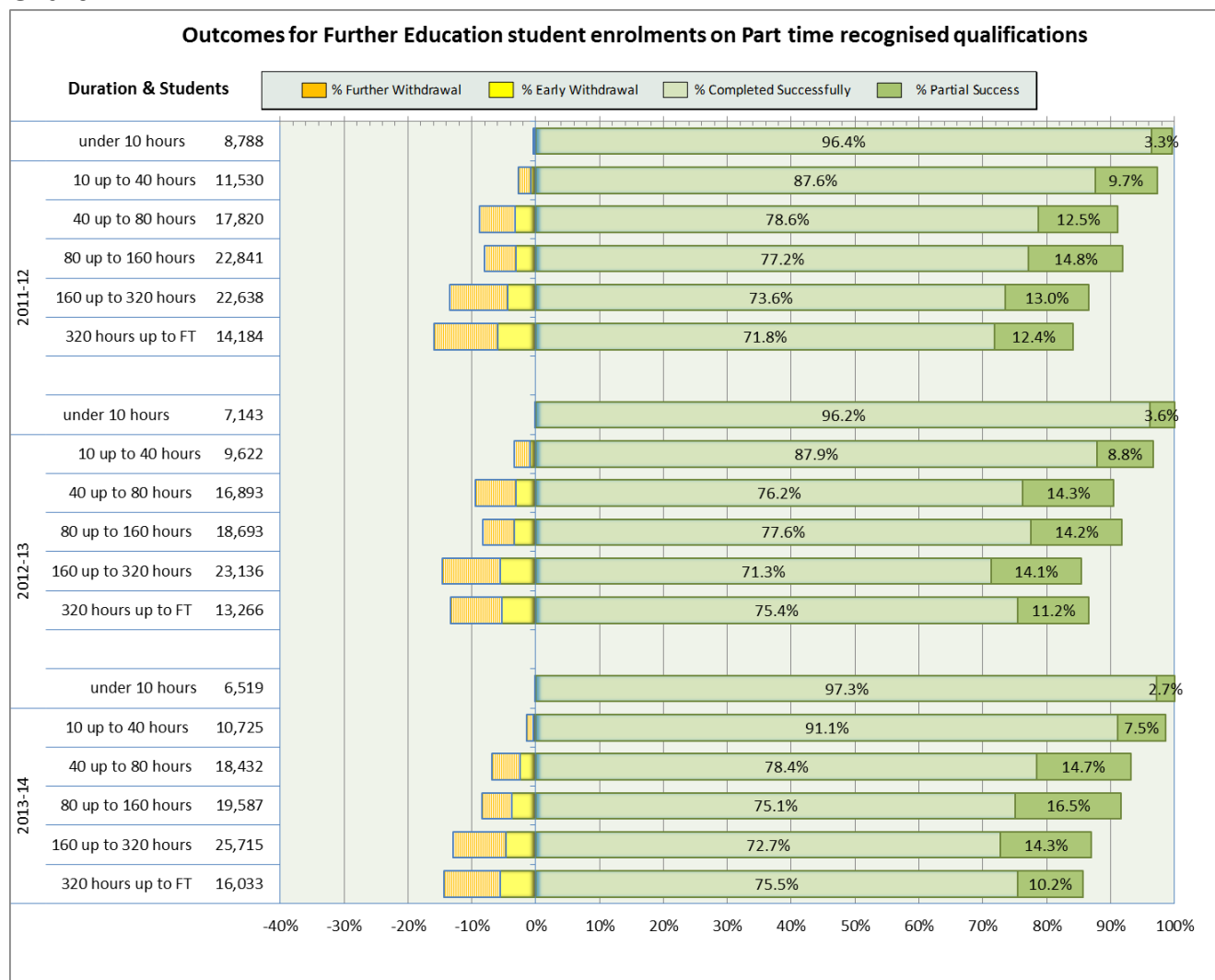
Chart 1 also shows that the withdrawal rate has reduced markedly over the period from 27.3% to 22.6% (a 4.7 percentage point improvement) at least partly as a result of the difficult economic climate over that time. Colleges often report that students withdraw from their course early to take up employment opportunities as they arise. These opportunities are more likely to occur with a buoyant job market and a return to these conditions may see an increase in withdrawal rates leading to a reduction in the percentage of students successfully completing their studies. Recent economic data suggests we may be moving into a more positive job market.

Almost 3.5 per cent (3,500) students, across all modes of delivery withdrew from their studies in 2013-14 for positive reasons such as, to study at a university or to commence employment.

- Chart 2 shows the number of FE students on part-time programmes of study have shown a slight decline from over 97,801 in 2011-12 to 97,011 in 2013-14. Pass rates across the study hour bands for part-time further education courses have shown some change but not as markedly as for full-time programmes.

The results do show that students enrolled on shorter programmes are more likely to complete their studies irrespective of the result. Intuitively this would be in line with our expectations, for example a student attending a course lasting for 2 hours over 1 study visit offers less opportunity for withdrawing before the end date than a course requiring attendance 3 afternoons per week over 36 weeks.

**Chart 2**



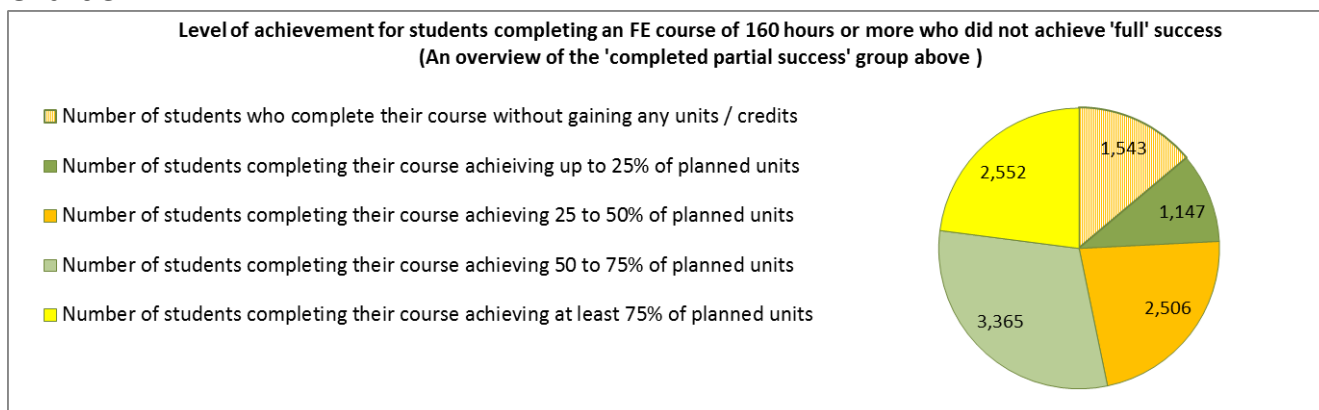
**Students completing their FE course that did not achieve “full” success**

3. Chart 3 below provides more detailed information for the students enrolled on FE programmes in 2013-14 who completed without “full” success (this includes both full-time FE and part-time students enrolled on programmes lasting for at least 160 hours) For the purpose of improving data quality, this publication now excludes, in the majority of charts presented, students with fewer than 160 hours of study which ensures that the PIs are focussed

less on short duration, recreational courses and more on longer, more vocational courses which are more likely to be assessed and accredited.

Chart 3 shows that 23 per cent (2,552) of these students gained at least 75 per cent of the units on their programme and more than 53 per cent (5,917) of those students who completed their course year but were not fully successful managed to pass over 50% of the units attempted. At the other end of the scale 14 per cent (1,543) or of these students failed to gain any of the units for which they enrolled. In session 2012-13 this was the same 14 per cent (1,432) of students. SFC plans to take a more detailed look at the achievement rates for these students who completed their course year but were not considered successful later in the year for future publication.

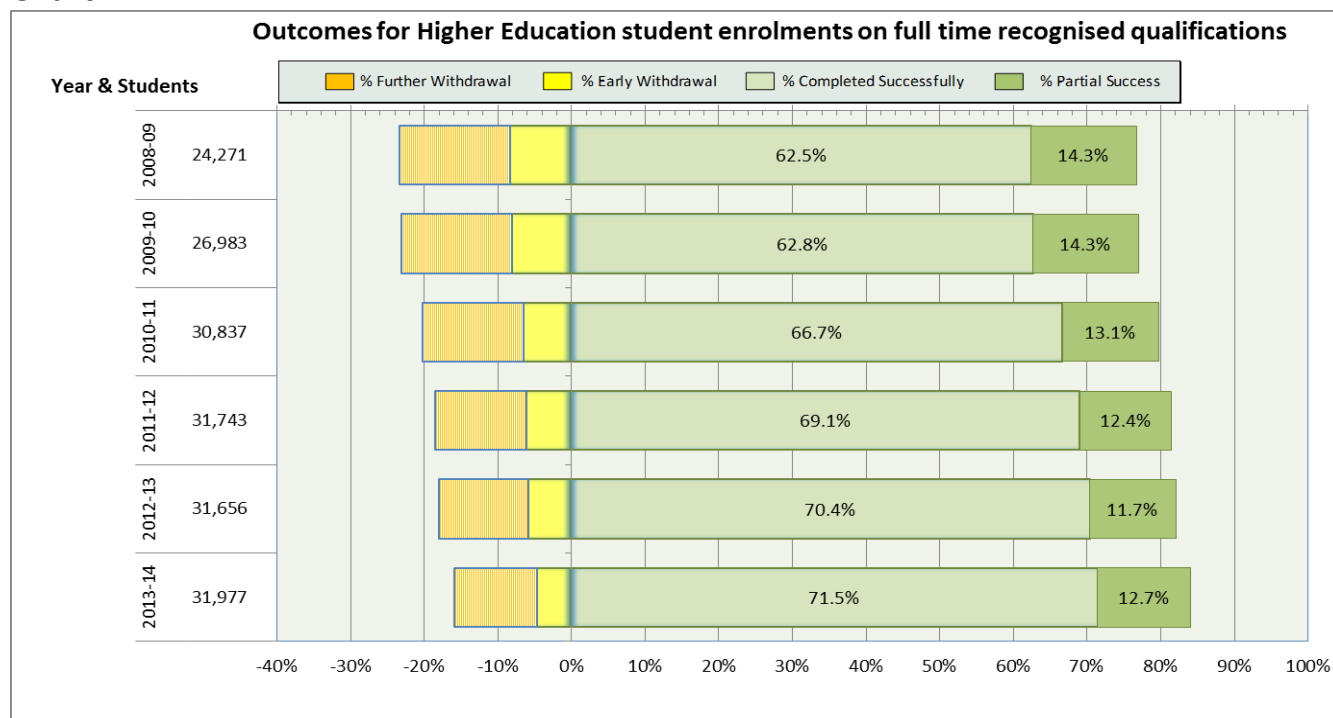
### Chart 3



## Outcomes for HE student enrolments on recognised qualifications

4. In terms of full-time recognised programmes at HE level, chart 4 below gives an overview of success rates for academic sessions 2008-09 to 2013-14.

**Chart 4**



5. The pass rates for HE programmes tend to be higher than FE programmes over the course year and this is reflected above with 71.5 per cent of students on full-time programmes **completing successfully** and a total of 84.2 per cent completing irrespective of their final result, compared with the values of 66.0 per cent and 77.4 per cent for FE programmes.

It should be noted that full-time HE programmes are more likely than FE courses to last longer than a year in duration. As a result this one year snapshot does not fully reflect the likely percentage of students who gain the qualification for which they enrol. The SFC is planning on conducting further investigation in to 2 year full-time HE courses to fully evaluate success across the 2 years.

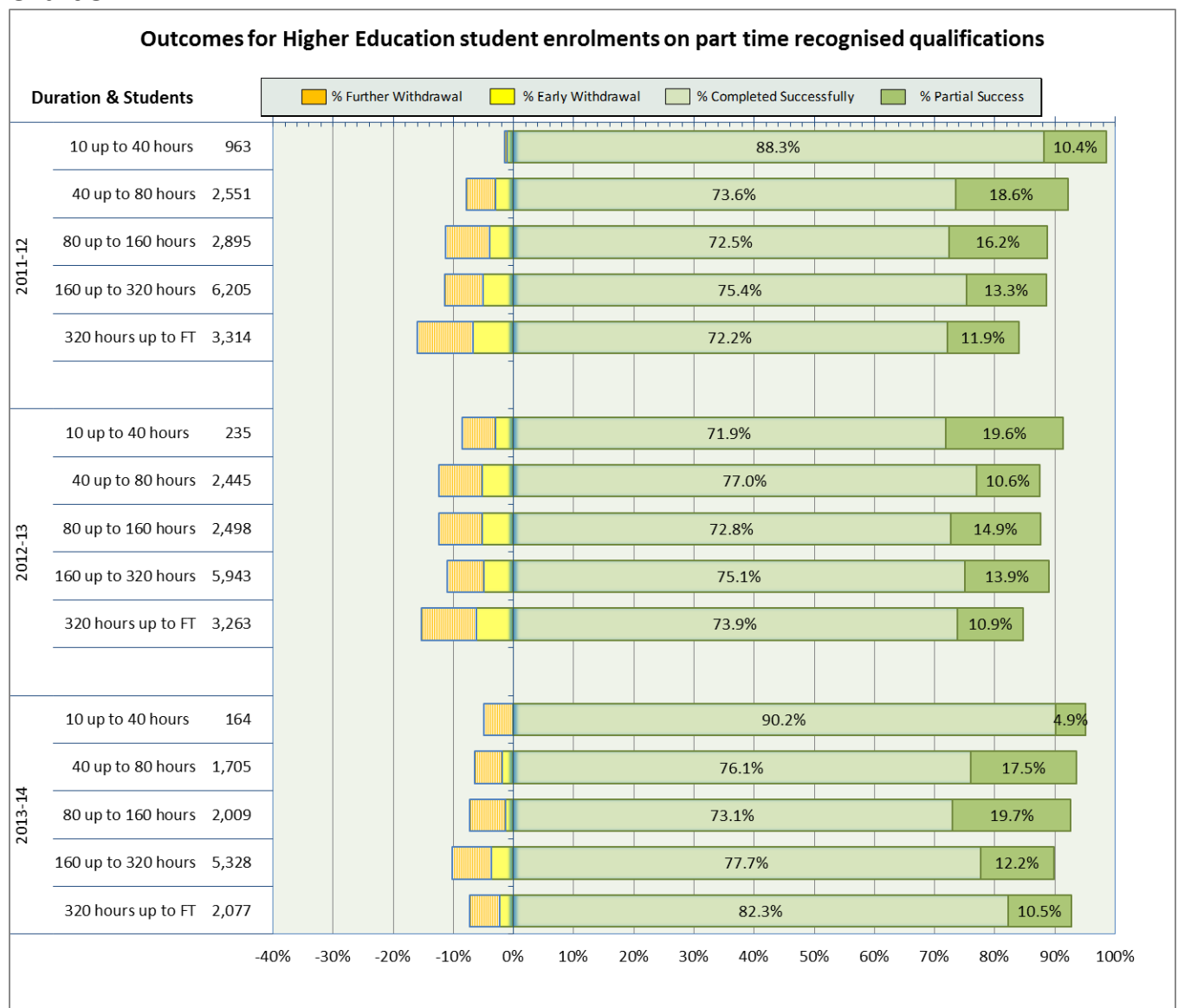
Rates of success for full-time HE students have clearly improved over the previous six years; using unrounded figures, from 62.5 percentage points to 71.5 percentage points for successful completions (+9 percentage points)

and from 76.8 percentage points to 84.2 percentage points including partially successful students (+7.4 percentage points); showing a clear improvement over time in these key indicators.

The combined effect of an improved success rate and a larger population, means that since 2008-09, an extra 7,685 students have graduated, an increase of 51%.

- Numbers of HE part-time students have, as with FE, tended to decline; from nearly 16,000 in 2010-11 to 11,200 in 2013-14. Success rates in most categories have tended to improve, see Chart 5 below.

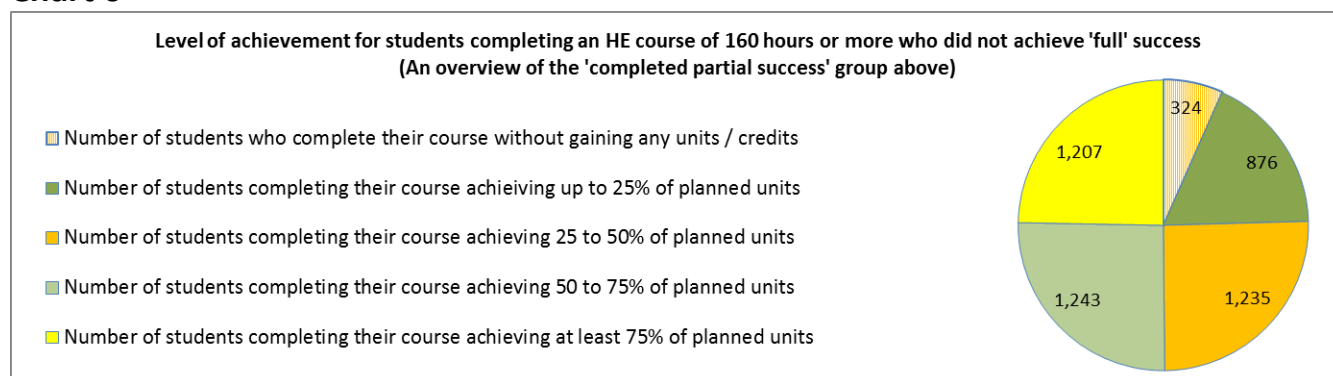
**Chart 5**



## Students completing their HE course that did not achieve “full” success

7. Chart 6 provides more detailed information for the 4,885 students enrolled on HE programmes in 2013-14 who completed without “full” success (as shown in the previous charts). It excludes students with fewer than 160 hours of study. It shows that 50% (2,450) of these students gained at least 50 per cent of the units they enrolled on, while around 24% (1,207) of these students gained at least 75 per cent of the units on their programme. At the other end of the scale 7% (324) of the students failed to gain any of the units for which they enrolled. In session 2012-13 this was 9% (410) of students. The SFC intends to investigate this group in more detail to determine what other factors may be relevant to, or affecting the partial success outcome.

**Chart 6**

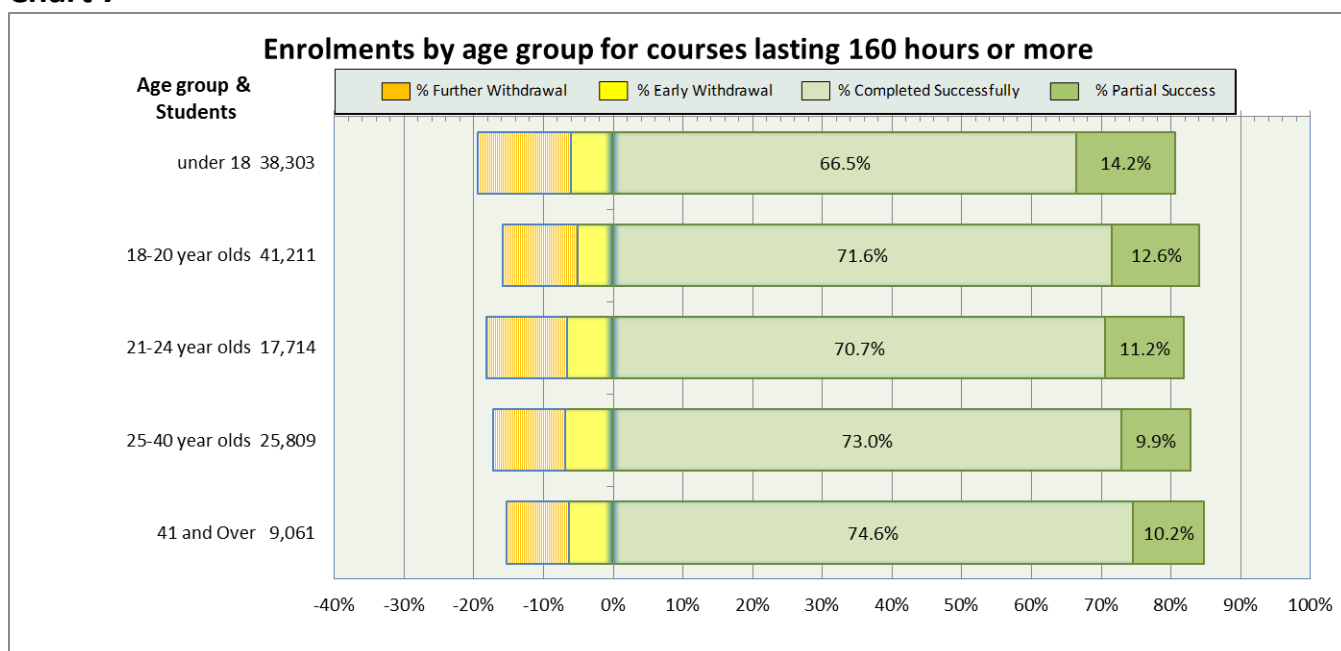


## Outcomes by age group

8. Chart 7 below shows that students in the younger age groups are less likely to complete successfully than those in the older age groups; for example 66.5% of those under 18 compared to 74.6% of those aged 41 and over complete successfully, and similarly, 80.7% and 84.8% including those with partial success. Younger students are more likely to enrol on full-time programmes which have a lower pass rate in comparison to part-time programmes. The chart allows for a more informed comparison of college activity, but should nevertheless take account of the specific environment in which each college operates.



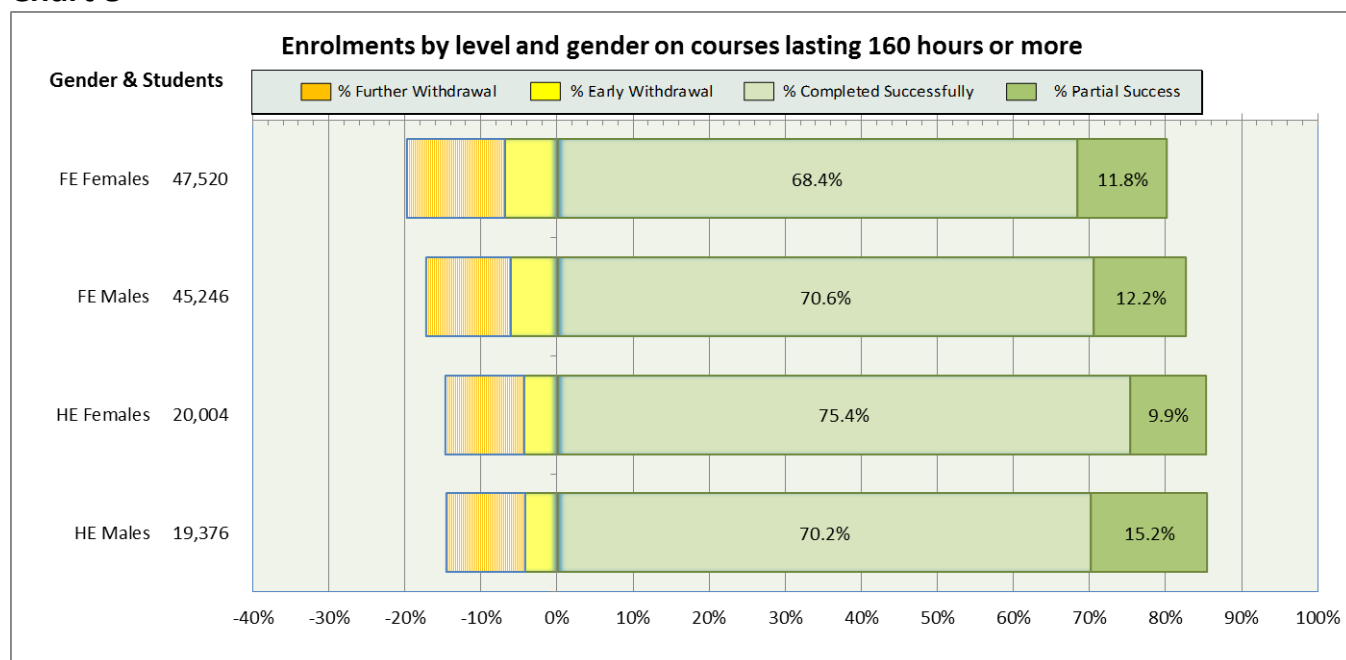
**Chart 7**



**Outcomes by gender and level**

9. Chart 8 below shows that in 2013-14, more than two thirds of enrolments relate to students studying FE level programmes. The success rates are different across these groups and provide a more rounded picture of college performance. The chart below suggests that male students are 2% more likely to successfully complete their FE programmes than female students, while the situation is substantially reversed for HE programmes with a 5% difference. Subjects and modes of study are associated with different pass rates and the ‘mix’ of these may differ across genders and individual colleges.

**Chart 8**

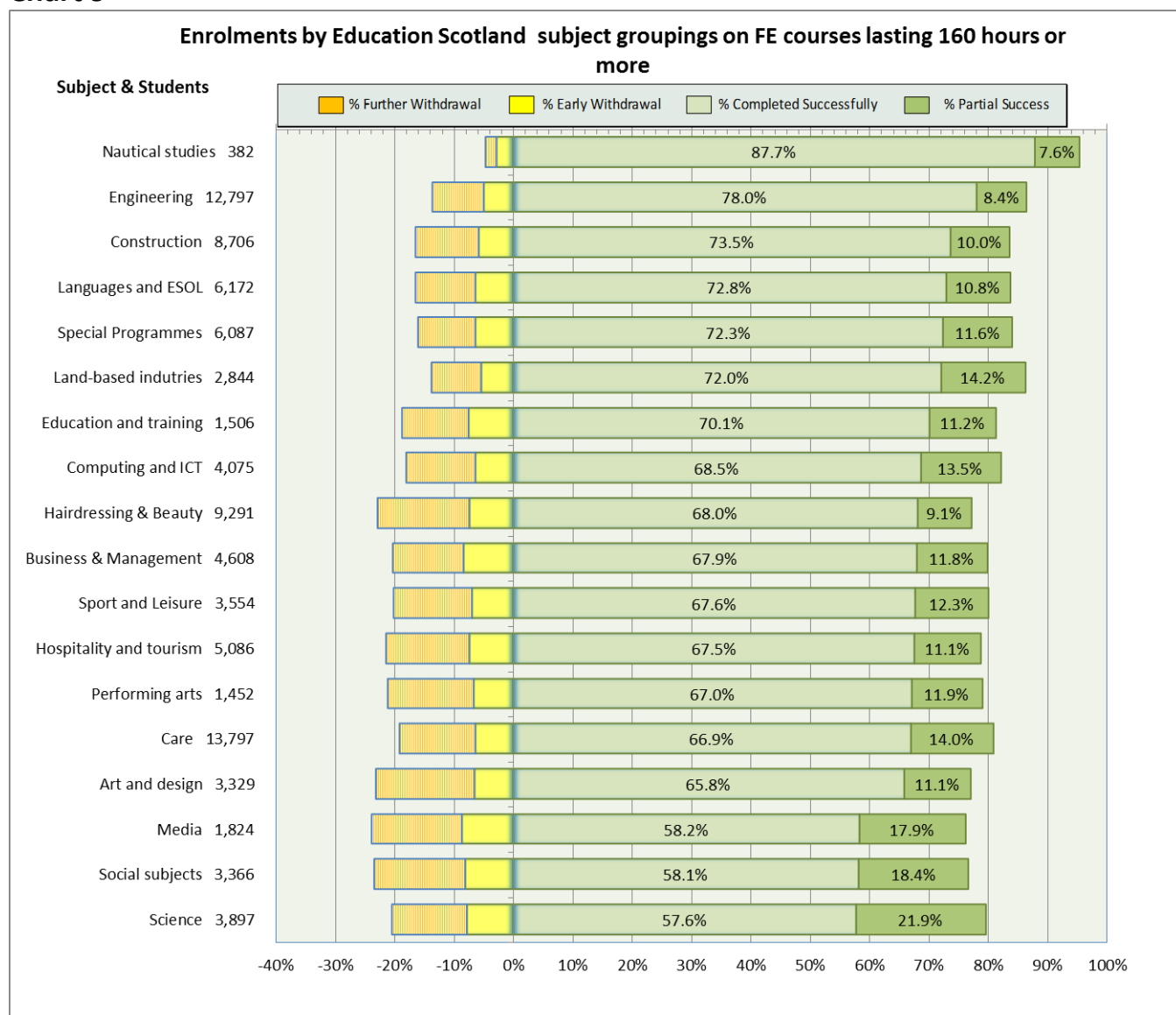


**Outcomes by subject groupings on FE courses**

10. The subject groupings are based on the subject classification for the course aggregated into areas considered similar by Education Scotland. A subject mapping can be found in a separate technical appendix. There are two charts, one for FE level programmes and one for HE level programmes. Colleges offer a very wide ranging portfolio of courses and subject areas of study to potential students.

11. Chart 9 below for FE programmes clearly shows that some subjects have lower success rates than others. Science, for example, shows a 57.6% success rate whilst engineering stands at 78.0%. Programmes of Highers are also more likely to fall into the science group, these pass rates can be influenced by changing priorities amongst students, for example, initially enrolling for four Highers but only completing two as this is sufficient to gain entry to university.

**Chart 9**

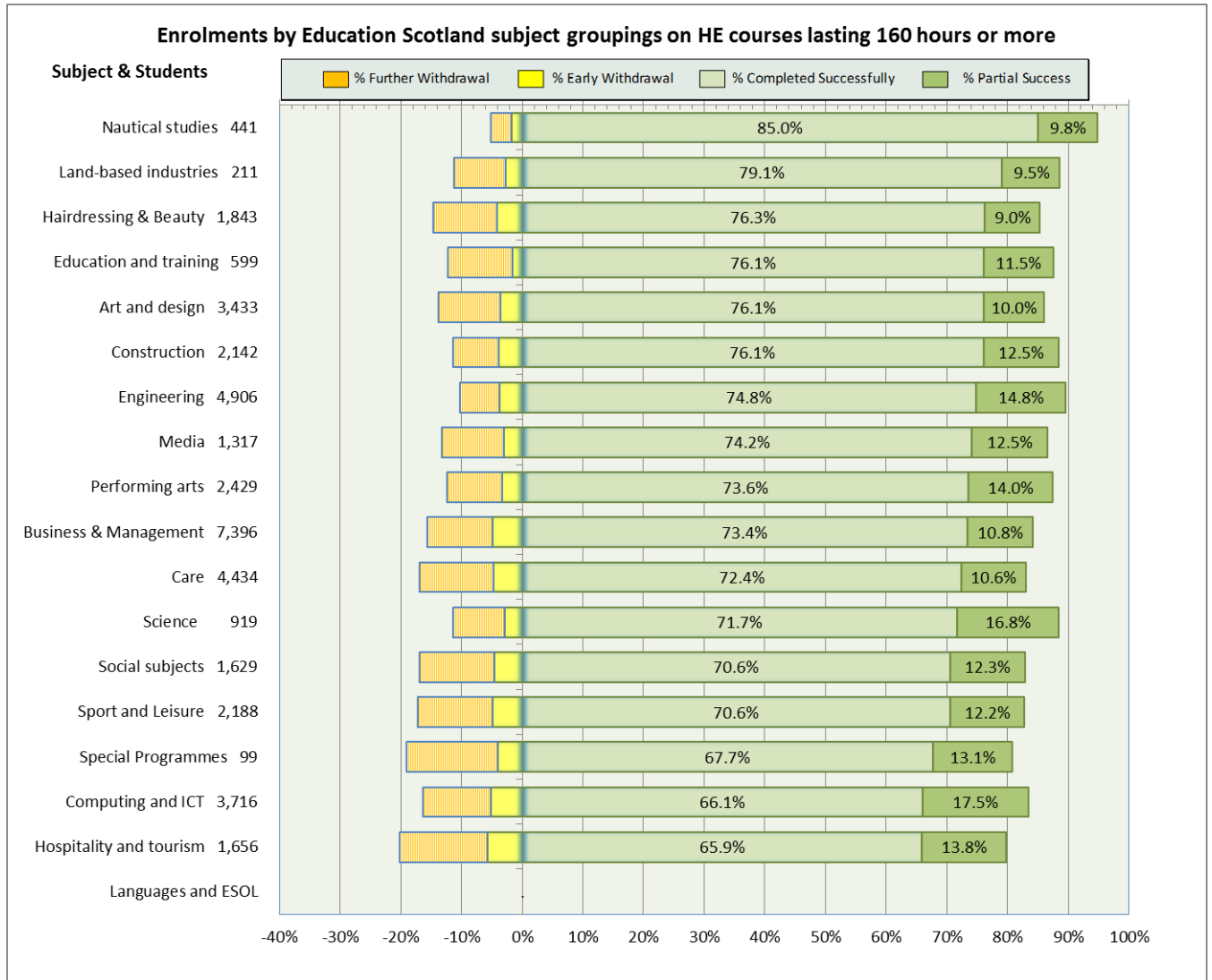


**Outcomes by subject groupings on HE courses**

12. Chart 10 below shows that similar issues exist for HE programmes with some subjects being more likely to be made up of students studying on day release from their employer, in which case the student may have extra motivation to do well. Similarly, some of these courses will have a greater mix of full-time programmes or students from younger age groups. The SFC has performed some analysis of the outcomes of HE students and has found that; Nautical studies, Engineering and Construction subjects have a much higher proportion of students who have their fees paid by their employers, this appears to have a bearing on their relatively high success rates. Note

that the figures do not include HE activity from 2013-14 from Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC). This has resulted in a reduction in the number of student enrolments in the Land-based industries subject area from 612 enrolments in 2012-13 to 211 enrolments in 2013-14.

**Chart 10**

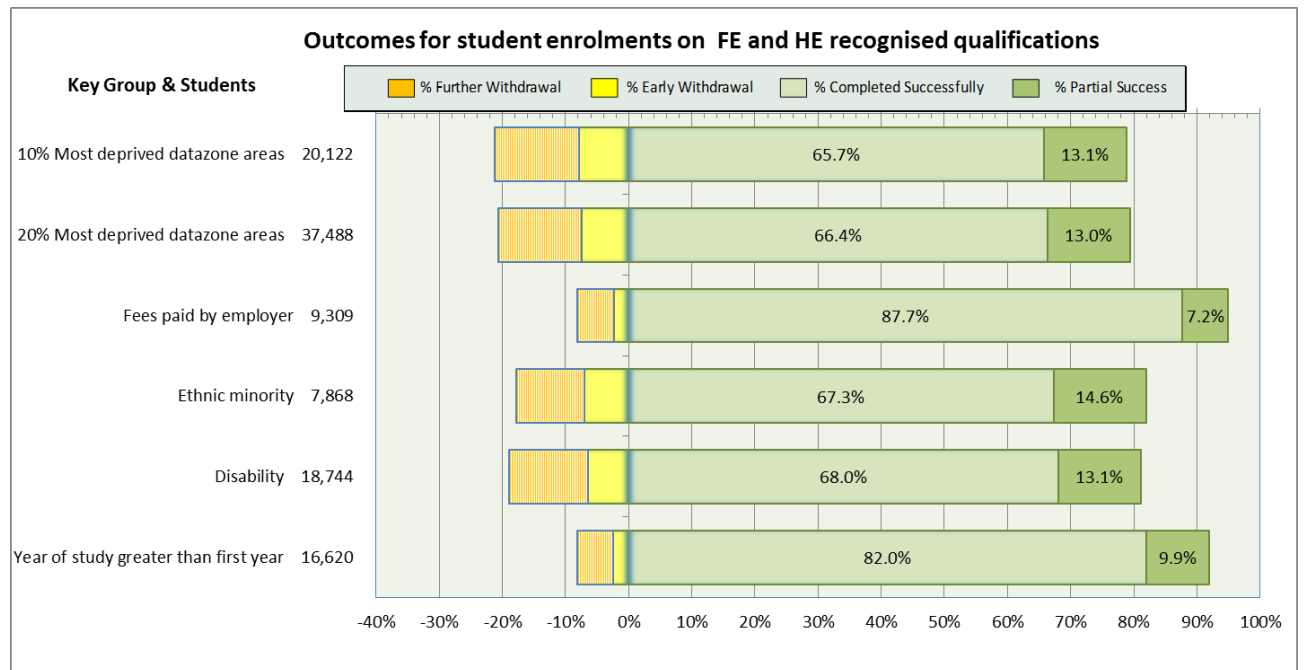


**Outcomes by key groups**

13. Chart 11 below highlights groups of interest to various stakeholders and helps identify factors that may affect the success rates for an individual college. For example, a college with a high proportion of students on day release from their employer or supported by their employer in some other way is likely to have a high pass rate for these students and this may be enough to affect overall pass rates. Similarly, students who receive student

support are more likely to be successful than those who do not and this may also have an effect on pass rates.

**Chart 11**

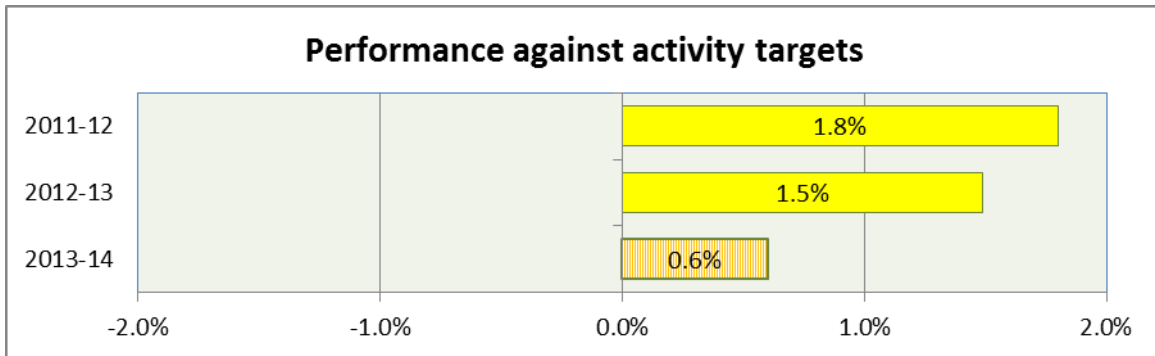


**Performance against activity targets**

14. Colleges receive funding from the SFC to deliver a target number of hours of learning (WSUMs). These hours of learning are weighted by the cost of teaching in different subject areas. For example, engineering courses tend to require specialist equipment and therefore have a higher weight than business courses that are more likely to be classroom based.

15. The WSUMs activity targets are those as published by the SFC and include additional targets associated with European Social Fund (ESF). As a result the WSUMs target will differ to the WSUMs target within the Baseline report for academic year 2013-14 as that only includes core activity targets as referred in the October 2013 Letter of Guidance from the Cabinet Secretary. Note that the figures do not include HE activity from 2013-14 from Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC). The overall effect is that the sector is shown as exceeding their target by 0.6 per cent in 2013-14.

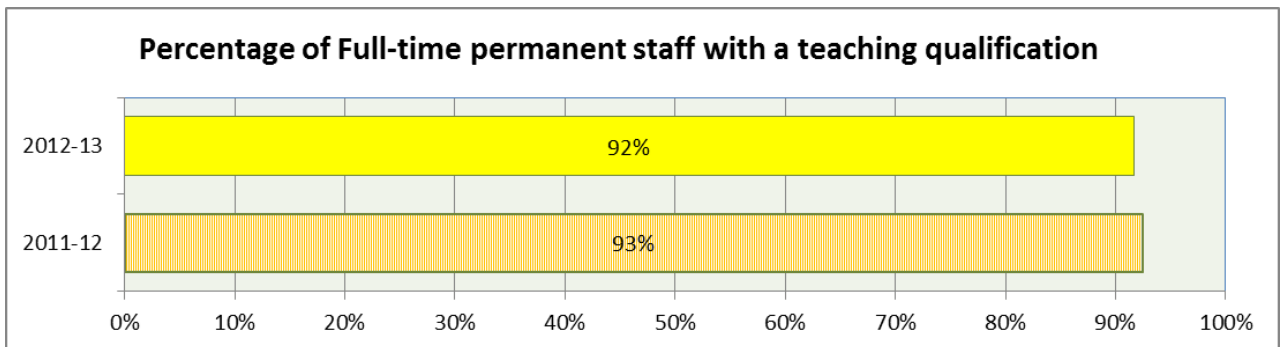
**Chart 12**



**Staff in Scotland's colleges**

This chart measures the percentage of full-time teaching staff with a teaching qualification recognised by the General Teaching Council.

**Chart 13**



## 5 Further information

1. The performance indicators are of primary importance to Ministers, College Principals, Governing Boards and Scottish Government officials.
2. In order to bring the performance indicators to the widest possible audience of employers, staff, students and parents, the format has been improved for this publication; the individual college PIs are now hosted by each college on their own website, thereby raising the profile of the figures and making them more useable.  
Further information from the SFC on Scotland's colleges is available here:  
<http://www.sfc.ac.uk/reportspublications/reportspublications.aspx>
3. Student numbers may differ across these publications as the reports are prepared for different purposes. For example, the PI report excludes students who begin courses in January and finish in December of the same year, as results will not be available for these students until the course ends. However, activity related to these students will be included in another SFC publication; the Baseline report for academic year 2013-14.
4. Full copies of Education Scotland subject and college reviews, and overviews of provision are available from this website:  
<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/index.asp>
5. Additional information regarding student enrolments and courses is available via the SFC INFACT interactive database. INFACT is on the SFC website:  
[www.sfc.ac.uk/statistics/further\\_education\\_statistics/infact\\_database/infact\\_database.aspx](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/statistics/further_education_statistics/infact_database/infact_database.aspx)
6. The INFACT database, available on the SFC website, allows for more detailed analysis of provision within Scotland's colleges. Please note that figures on INFACT may differ from those presented here. INFACT includes figures for students not funded by SFC. These students are not counted in the Performance Indicator Report.  
[http://www.sfc.ac.uk/statistics/further\\_education\\_statistics/infact\\_database/infact\\_database.aspx](http://www.sfc.ac.uk/statistics/further_education_statistics/infact_database/infact_database.aspx)

## 6 Technical Annex

Our performance indicators are primarily based on our [further education statistics \(FES\) returns](#) which include the course/exam result for each student funded by SFC. [Code list J](#) from our 2013-14 FES return outlines the 14 different options to record the result for the student for the academic year period. This includes options for student withdrawals, transfers, success and failures and continuation to the next stage of the course.

Student Outcome	Hours	Enrolments
Not provided	35,345	121
Withdrawn from programme/course and commenced employment	1,482,203	3,254
Withdrawn from programme/course and now studying in an HEI	26,252	113
Withdrawn from programme/course and destination unknown	7,831,585	22,244
Transferred to another programme/course within the college	117,740	1,172
Completed programme/course, student assessed but not successful	8,725,830	22,310
Completed programme/course, student assessed and successful	46,104,934	124,124
Withdrawn from programme/course and now studying elsewhere (not HEI)	91,653	388
Completed programme/course, student not assessed as programme/course not designed to be assessed	35,451	451
Student has progressed to next year but did not gain 70% of the credits undertaken	550,908	1,341
Student has progressed to next year and has achieved 70% of the credits undertaken	7,241,581	15,398
Student has achieved 70% of the credits undertaken but has chosen no to progress onto the next year	140,069	298
Student completed first year of an HND but has chosen to leave with an HNC	341,400	569
Spanning programme	45,631	127
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,770,580</b>	<b>191,910</b>

We collect a student record for each individual funded by SFC. Of the 191,910 course enrolments included within our report only 3 records have been returned without a date of birth although there will be some inaccurate dates in the remaining records. The gender of the student has been returned for all records. The ethnic background is unavailable for around 900 enrolments and the disability status is not recorded for around 700 enrolments.

Colleges submit their returns via our FES ONLINE web tool which performs around 150 separate validations on each record. These validations are



updated on an annual basis based on feedback from our statistical advisory and performance indicator groups.

As well as performing data validation, our FES ONLINE system provides colleges with management reports which include performance indicators. These reports include the published Performance Indicators for the college which we ask the college to confirm as accurate.

Other reports include performance indicators for each course run by the college which enables colleges to evaluate the national PI values by confirming those at course level which are more closely managed by the relevant course teams. Colleges are able to submit files to FES ONLINE as part of an iterative process until they are happy with their data quality and performance indicators. This enables course teams to examine the management reports and update the student records appropriately until they are happy that the results reflect the success rates for their course.

SFC has worked with our statistical advisory groups and with the 'College Development Network' to develop a set of [performance indicator guidance notes](#). These help ensure student results are coded consistently across the sector. These guidance notes have not changed for a number of years which help ensure our Performance Indicators are comparable over the published time series.

In addition to our FES and PI guidance notes SFC also provides the performance indicator and student outcome datasets to Education Scotland for use within their college reviews. This helps ensure the accuracy of our data and provides a richer context in which the results can be reviewed. The Education Scotland reports on college inspection can be found [here](#).

SFC allocates approximately £530m per year to colleges to deliver learning activity and provide financial student support. As a result colleges undergo significant audit of their student records to ensure these funds are being spent in line with guidance. These audits include checking that student withdrawals are being properly managed and recorded and that the correct SUMs are being claimed for students. Our PIs are based on these same records and therefore the robust audit process for the £530m college funding helps ensure the accuracy of our student records.

SFC plans to carry out visits to each college before the 2014-15 performance indicators are finalised. These visits will check the accuracy of the 2013-14 and 2014-15 student records and ensure our performance indicators continue to be based on accurate data.