

SFC Statistical publication

College Statistics 2015-16 (previously Scotland's Colleges: Baseline Report)

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Summary: This publication provides an overview of college sector statistics from 2005-06 to 2015-16.

FAO: Principals and directors of Scotland's colleges

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Microsoft Excel tables containing the background data behind all of the charts presented in this report can be found online at the SFC website¹

¹ [Report background data](#)

Executive Summary

1. This report provides an overview of college sector statistics from 2005-06 to 2015-16. The figures include measurement of student numbers presented in terms of headcounts and enrolments; additionally, a new credit based system of funding college activity was introduced in 2015-16, and this report therefore presents college activity expressed in credits for the first time, as well as learning hours and Full Time Equivalents (FTEs).
2. The key points from this report are:
 - The sector exceeded its FTE target for 2015-16, delivering 117,204 SFC funded FTE student places, 935 FTE more than the 116,269 FTE target.
 - Beyond that FTE target, the sector delivered an additional 3,980 FTEs for European Social Fund (ESF) programmes in 2015-16.
 - Colleges were asked to deliver 1,689,431 credits in 2015-16 (excluding the additional ESF activity). Colleges exceeded this target by 0.2 percentage points, delivering 1,692,841 credits.
 - The 2015-16 figures mean that the sector has exceeded its activity target in each year since 2005-06.
 - Between 2014-15 and 2015-16 the number of students increased by 339, to 227,258. The number of enrolments for these students decreased to 281,051 in 2015-16, down by 15,960 from 2014-15. This decrease follows a fall in FE enrolments, in part because fewer FE students did multiple courses, while HE enrolments increased between 2014-15 and 2015-16.
 - 74.8% of full-time SFC funded students were in the 16-24 year old age group. The percentage of learning hours delivered to this group was 68.6% in 2015-16, down from 70.3% in 2014-15, but remains higher than all years before 2011-12.
 - The gender gap on college courses has been narrowing: in 2015-16, male enrolments were 49.2% and female 50.8%.
 - In 2015-16, students with a recorded disability accounted for 11.7 million learning hours, equivalent to 16.8% of all learning hours, and an increase from 16.0% in 2014-15.

- There were 18,801 enrolments from a minority ethnic background in 2015-16, accounting for 6.7% of total enrolments. This has increased from 2014-15 where this cohort accounted for 17,144 enrolments, or 5.8% of total enrolments.
- The proportion of students on recognised qualifications continues to increase from 58.9% in 2007-08 to 77.2% in 2015-16.

Introduction

3. This report provides an overview of college sector statistics from 2005-06 to 2015-16. Student numbers in the college sector are measured by both headcount and enrolments. Headcount measures the number of students in an academic year; but as many students enrol on more than one course in the academic year, enrolments are used to measure the number of times students enrol on separate courses. This is explained in detail in Annex A.
4. The new Credit based system of funding college activity was introduced in 2015-16, so this is the first year of reporting on that basis. Previously, colleges were funded to deliver a defined number of Weighted Student Units of Measurement (WSUMs), but the simpler Credit-based system replaces WSUMs, and provides a clear separation between activity volume measures and funding. Credit targets do not include subject weights, Extended Learning Support (ELS) claims, or full-time tariffs that were all part of the previous WSUM targets. This is explained further in Annex B.
5. This report focuses on trends in student numbers and activity targets. It also covers trends in full and part-time enrolments, and the number of learning hours delivered by colleges.
6. The numbers of full-time students aged 16 to 24 is also reported on to reflect the Scottish Government priority of improving the employability of young people in that age group.
7. In addition to our analysis by age, we have also analysed enrolments and hours of learning by gender, disability and ethnic background.
8. [Excel tables containing the background data](#) to all the charts presented in this report are on the SFC website.
9. SFC's [Infact database](#) allows for more detailed analysis of provision within Scotland's colleges. More detail is in the 'Further Information' section of this report.

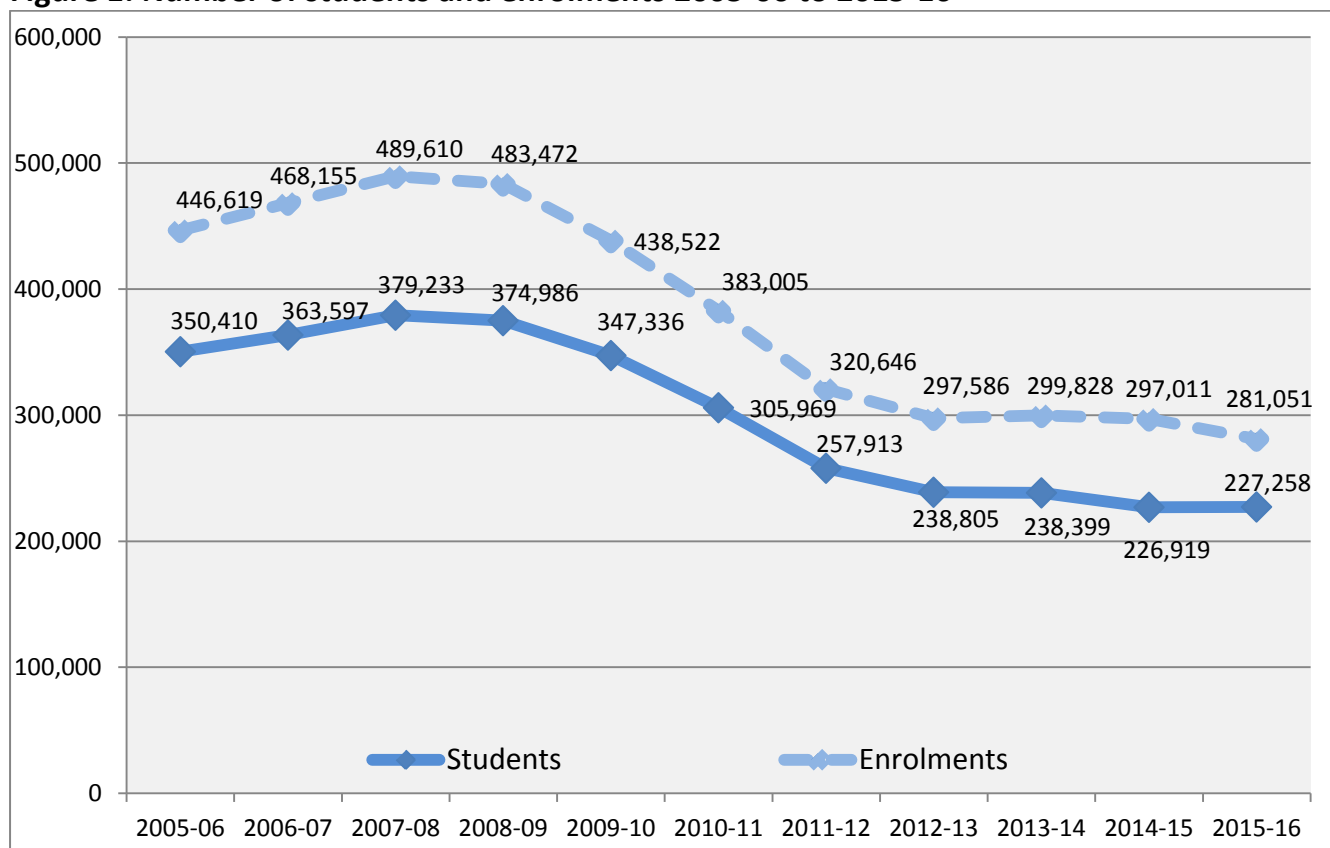
Trends in student numbers and activity

- This section focuses on trends across college provision from 2005-06 using headcount and enrolments and the volume of activity delivered at sector level.

Student numbers and enrolments

- Between 2014-15 and 2015-16, the number of students increased by 339, to 227,258. The number of enrolments from these students fell to 281,051 in 2015-16, down 15,960 from 2014-15.
- Figure 1 shows that the 2015-16 headcount figures maintain the levelling out seen in the previous three years. As we have previously noted, the fall in headcount between its peak in 2007-08 is primarily because of the policy shift away from short courses and non-recognised qualifications that did not support labour market demands (described more fully in Table F in Annex A). Instead, colleges were asked to prioritise courses designed to improve students' employment prospects.

Figure 1: Number of students and enrolments 2005-06 to 2015-16



- Students can enrol on more than one course of study in an academic year. During 2015-16, 39,159 students were enrolled on multiple courses, totalling 92,953 enrolments. Further details can be found in Annex A.

14. Table A, below, shows the percentage of students on multiple courses between 2012-13 and 2015-16. There was a decrease in students studying multiple courses between 2014-15 and 2015-16, and the percentage of students taking only one course is now at the highest it has been in the four year period.

Table A: Percentage of students enrolled on multiple courses: 2012-13 to 2015-16

Number of Courses Taken	Percentage of Students in 2012-13	Percentage of Students in 2013-14	Percentage of students in 2014-15	Percentage of students in 2015-16
1	82.4%	81.7%	77.1%	82.8%
2	13.0%	13.5%	17.5%	13.2%
3	3.1%	3.2%	3.9%	2.7%
4	1.0%	1.0%	1.0%	0.7%
5 or more	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%

Volume of activity

15. Table B below sets out the time series from 2005-06 for enrolments and headcounts (as shown in Figure 1), alongside the equivalent activity measures. Under the new Credit system for 2015-16 the relevant measures for volume of activity are Credits, Hours of Learning (excluding FT tariffs) and FTEs. Annex A gives further detail and explanation for each measure shown in Table B and provides contextual information that is relevant to trends in the table.

Table B: Student numbers and volume of activity in Scotland's colleges

Academic Year	Student Numbers		Volume of Activity ²					
	Headcount	Enrolments	SUMS (including FT tariffs)	Credits (excluding FT tariff)	Hours of Learning (including FT tariffs)	Hours of Learning (excluding FT tariffs)	FTE based on pre 2015-16 methodology	FTE based on simplified 2015-16 methodology
2005-06	350,410	446,619	1,949,942		78,002,240		116,298	
2006-07	363,597	468,155	2,025,821		81,032,840		120,808	
2007-08	379,233	489,610	2,054,446		82,177,840		122,641	
2008-09	374,986	483,472	2,056,991		82,279,640		123,031	
2009-10	347,336	438,522	2,085,760		83,432,840		124,670	
2010-11	305,969	383,005	2,069,796		82,794,180		124,650*	
2011-12	257,913	320,646	1,957,886		84,048,520		122,068*	
2012-13	238,805	297,586	1,844,145		79,403,362		119,759**	
2013-14	238,399	299,828	1,912,161		76,486,439		120,555**	
2014-15	226,919	297,011	1,908,089	1,755,601	76,323,551	70,224,040	121,962**	121,309**
2015-16	227,258	281,051		1,752,536		70,101,427		121,184**

*includes ESF FTEs

** includes SDS Employability Fund and ESF FTEs

² It is not possible to derive comparable Credit values or hours of learning based on Credits prior to 2014-15.

16. Table C, below, shows the Credit target and delivery in 2015-16. Colleges were asked to deliver 1,689,431 Credits in 2015-16, excluding the additional European Social Fund (ESF) activity which is activity jointly funded by SFC and the European Union (EU). By delivering 1,692,841 Credits, colleges exceeded this target by 0.2 percentage points.

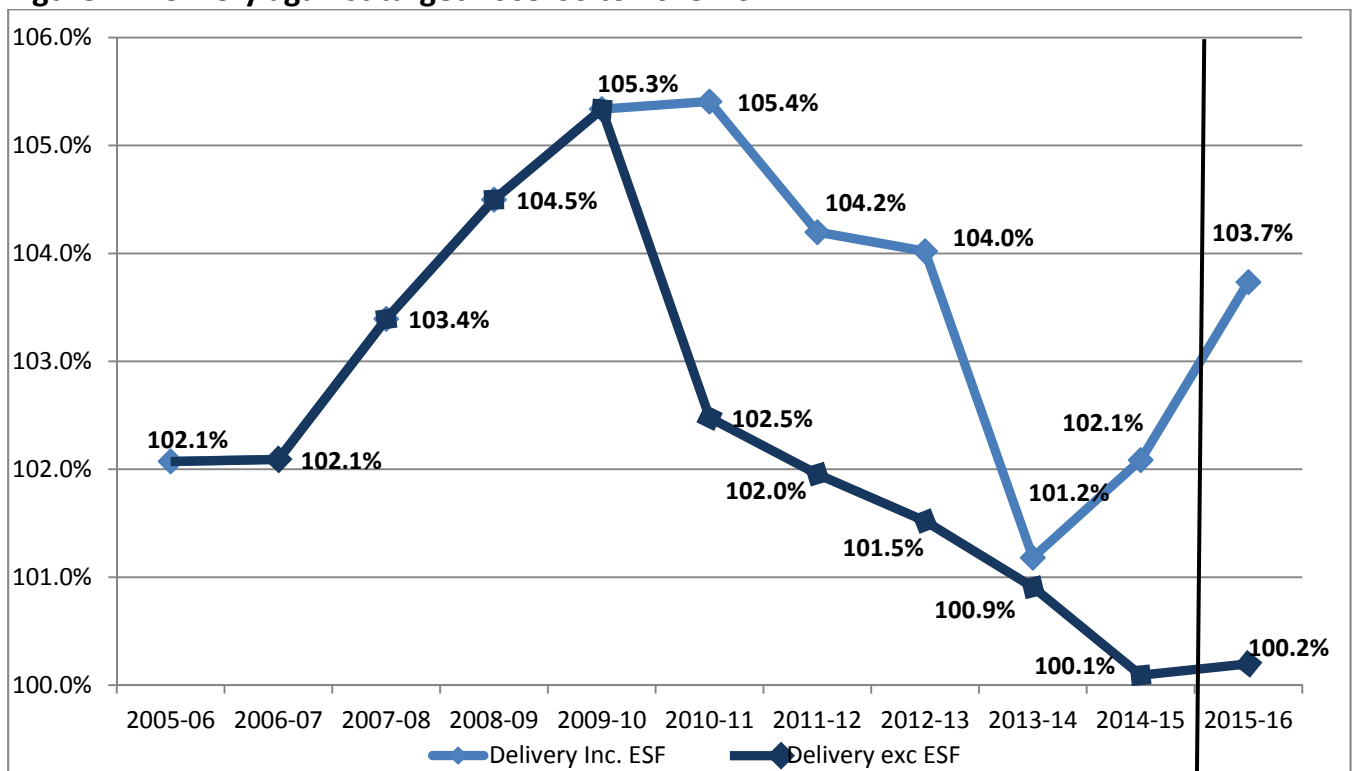
Table C: Credits delivered against target 2015-16

	Credit target	Credits delivered excluding ESF	Percentage above target
2015-16	1,689,431	1,692,841	100.2%

17. The volume of activity trend analysis is complicated by the move to Credits. In order to show a time series, delivery against target is shown in WSUMs prior to 2015-16 and shown in Credits in 2015-16.

18. Figure 2, below, shows that the sector has exceeded its activity target in each year between 2005-06 and 2015-16.

Figure 2: Delivery against target 2005-06 to 2015-16



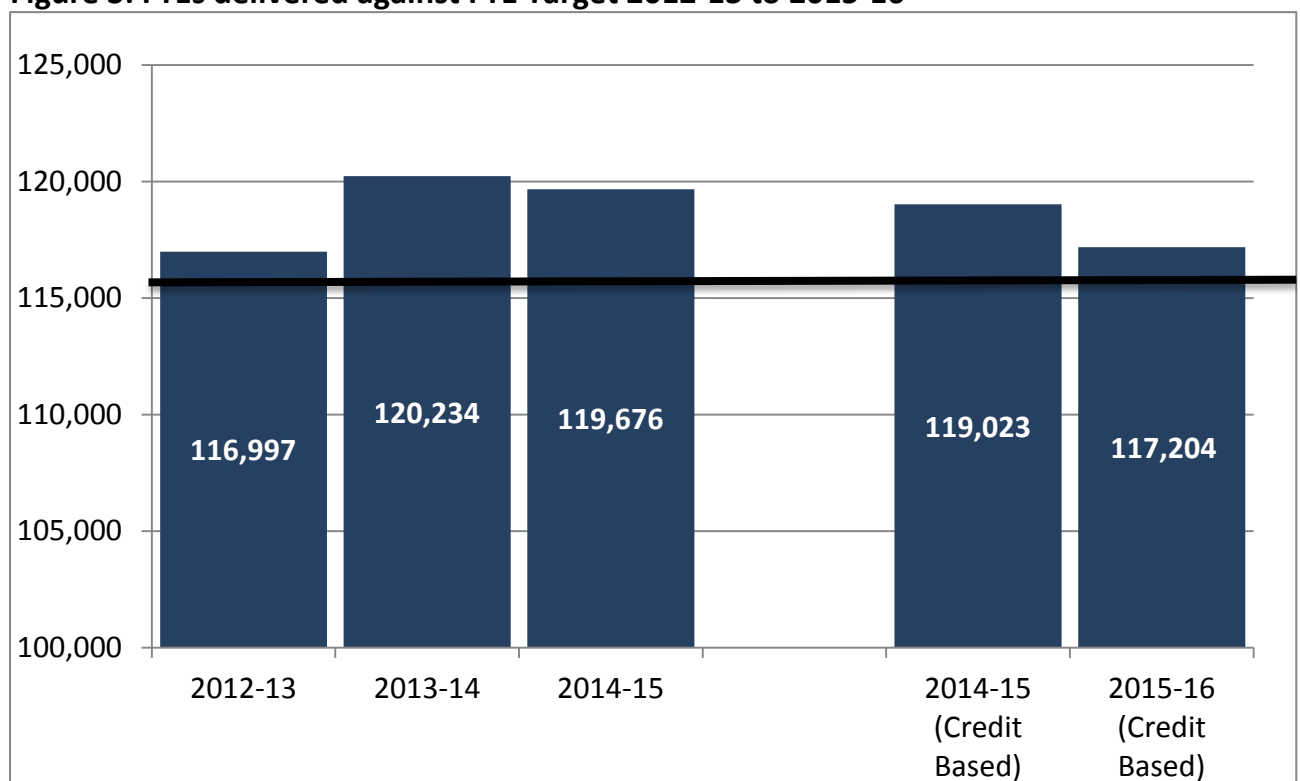
Please note that the black line indicates that in 2015-16, activity is measured in Credits. In previous years, activity is measured in WSUMs.

19. For each academic year since 2012-13, Scotland’s colleges have been targeted with delivering 116,269 FTE places, and this target remained in 2015-16. SFC funded activity and SDS Employability Fund activity are both counted towards

this target. The 598 FTE places delivered at HE level by Scotland’s Rural College (SRUC) that were moved from the college data collection from 2013-14 (see Annex A paragraph 9) are also included in the 116,269 college target in order to create a like for like comparison.

20. Not all FTE activity delivered by the college sector counts towards the 116,269 target. ESF activity, which SFC funds in conjunction with the EU’s European Social Fund, does not count towards this target. In 2015-16 colleges delivered an additional 3,980 FTEs for ESF programmes. In total, colleges delivered over 120,000 FTEs that were either wholly or partly funded by SFC, and around 130,000 FTEs if we include students that are not funded by SFC. This report focuses on SFC funded provision.
21. Figure 3, below, provides an overview of college delivery in terms of FTE places. It shows that Scotland’s colleges delivered 117,204 SFC funded FTE places in 2015-16 slightly exceeding the 116,269 target.

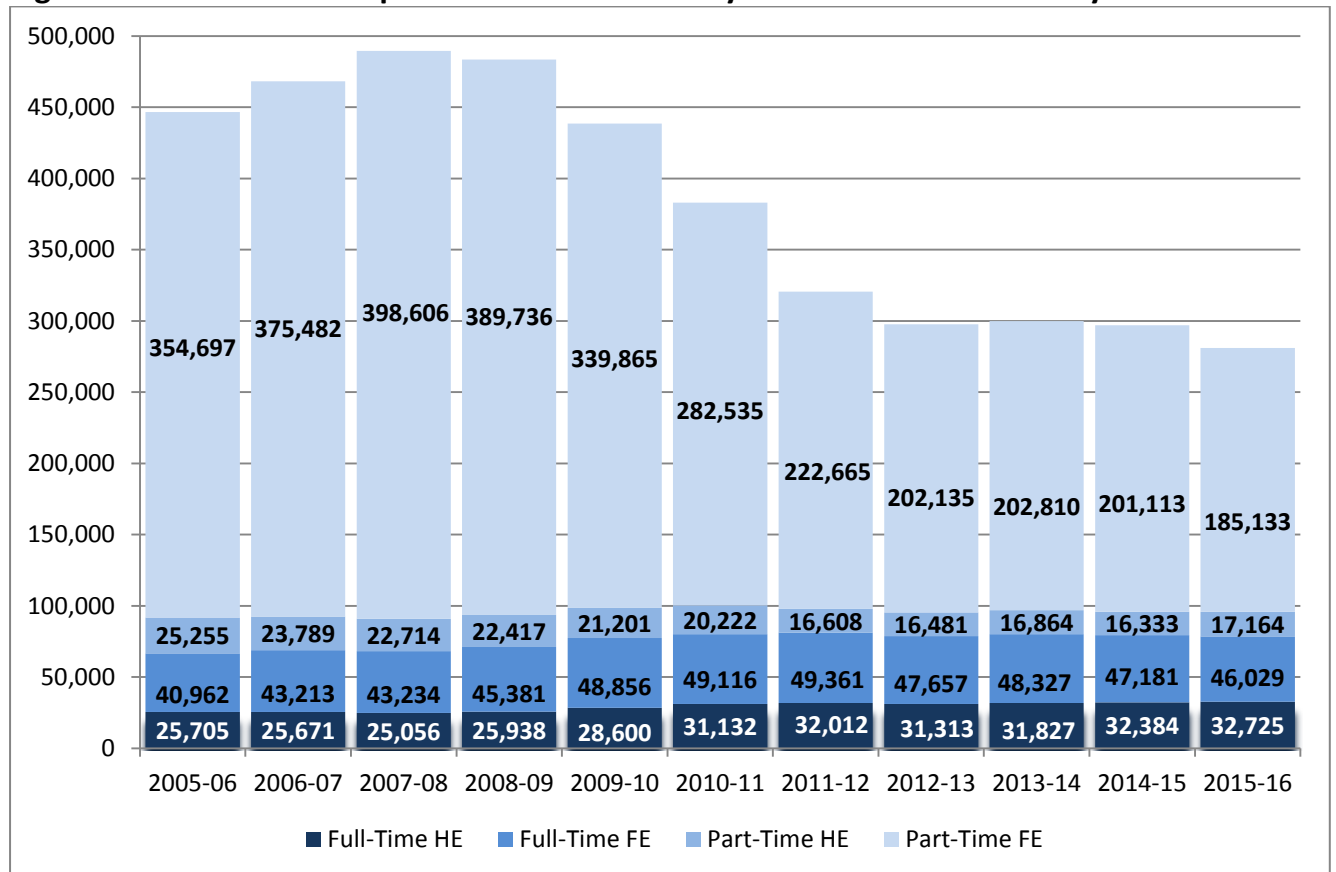
Figure 3: FTEs delivered against FTE Target 2012-13 to 2015-16



Full and part-time enrolments and learning hours

22. The type of activity delivered by colleges can vary depending on the mode and level of study. This section provides a detailed breakdown, showing the number of full and part-time enrolments for Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) courses delivered in Scotland's colleges from 2005-06 to 2015-16.
23. The majority of the sector's total enrolments are on part-time FE courses. In 2015-16, 65.9% of the sector's 281,051 enrolments were part-time FE students. Figure 4 below shows the numbers and proportions for each level and mode of study in each year from 2005-06.
24. Between 2014-15 and 2015-16, HE enrolments, both full and part-time, increased: full-time HE enrolments increased slightly by 341 (1.1%); and part-time more substantially, by 831 enrolments, or 5.1%.
25. Both full-time and part-time FE enrolments fell between 2014-15 and 2015-16. Full-time FE dropped by 1,152 enrolments (2.4%) and part-time by 15,980 enrolments, or 7.9%. The decline in part-time FE enrolments is part of a wider policy focus, as explained earlier, and the 185,133 part-time FE enrolments in 2015-16 represents a reduction of more than 50% of these types of courses since their peak in 2007-08. The implications of this shift are considered further in this section.
26. The reduction in FE enrolments outweighed the increase of HE enrolments, which caused an overall decrease in student enrolments between 2014-15 and 2015-16. Enrolments fell by 15,960, a reduction of 5.4% on 2014-15.

Figure 4: Number and Proportion of Enrolments by Mode and Level of Study



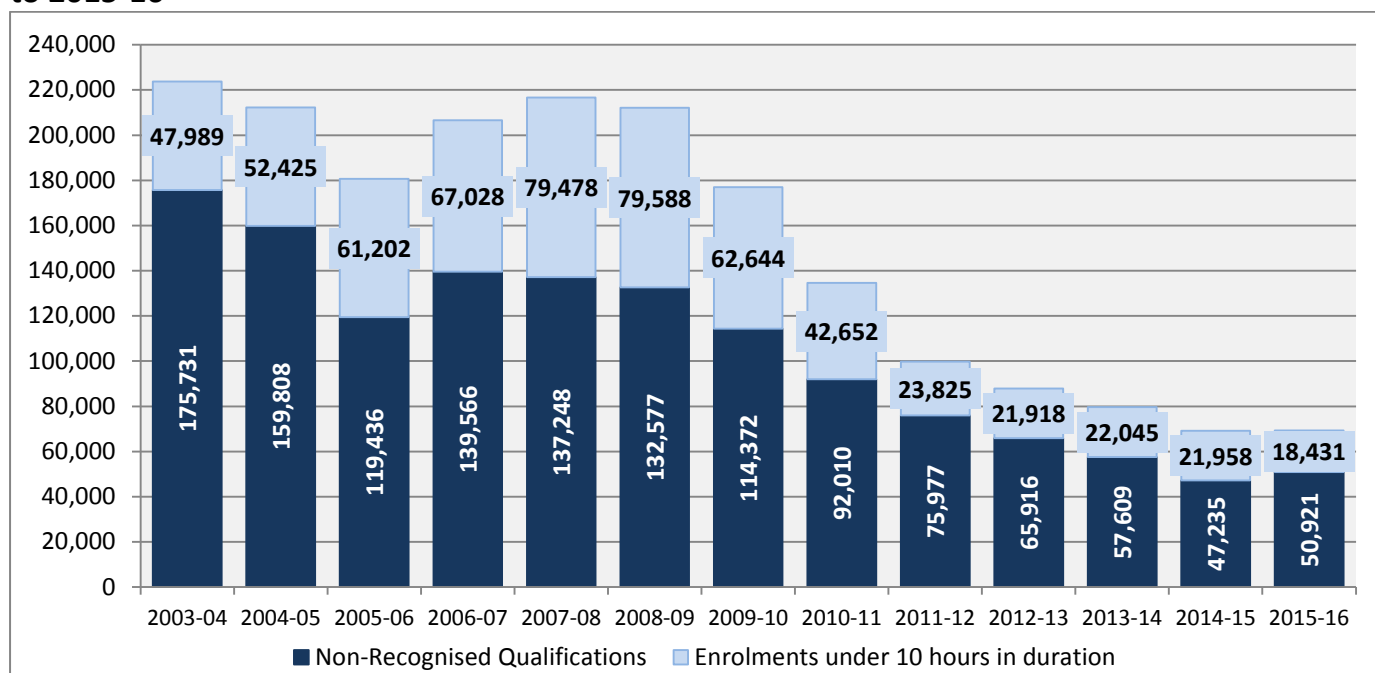
27. Looking specifically at full-time enrolments to both FE and HE, Figure 4 shows that these enrolments combined have increased from 66,667 in 2005-06 to 78,754 in 2015-16, an increase of 18.1%. The balance between FE and HE full-time numbers has been broadly consistent over the most recent five years with HE full-time activity making up around 40% of all full-time activity. In 2015-16, HE full-time activity accounted for 41.6% of all full-time activity which is the highest in all 11 years.

Non-recognised qualifications and courses lasting under 10 hours

28. The decline in part-time enrolments, particularly to FE level courses, is perhaps the most notable trend shown in Figure 4. Part-time FE enrolments include programmes that do not lead to recognised qualifications and those that last for less than 10 hours. It is a reduction in these courses that has led to the significant decrease in part-time FE enrolments. The reduction in these very short programmes / non-recognised qualifications accounted for around 147,374 (70.7%) of the total reduction of 208,559 enrolments between 2007-08 and 2015-16.

29. In 2015-16, there were 69,353 enrolments on these very short programmes and non-recognised qualifications. While this represents 24.7% of all enrolments, it accounts for 2 million learning hours, only 3% of SFC funded activity.
30. Consistent with the Scottish Government’s policy direction, SFC decided not to fund short courses lasting for less than 10 hours from 2010-11 onwards, with exceptions to this rule for courses delivered in partnerships with schools, courses designed for widening access, or those that meet the training needs of unemployed people.

Figure 5: Enrolments of under 10 hours and non-recognised qualifications 2005-06 to 2015-16



Where a student is enrolled on a course that is both a non-recognised qualification and lasts for less than 10 hours, the student is counted here only within the count for courses under 10 hours.

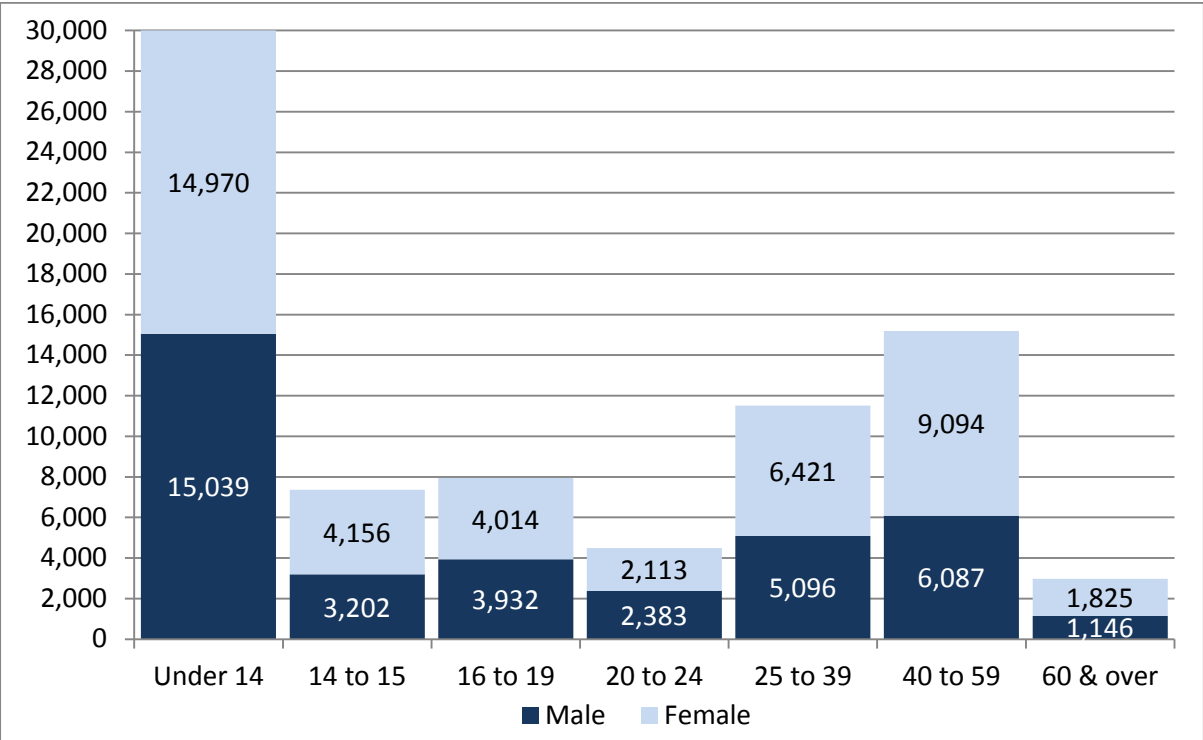
31. Based on these 2015-16 figures, and assuming that a full-time FE student takes 640 hours to complete the course, one full-time FE student is equivalent to around 111 students on these short course programmes, as it takes an average of 5.75 hours per student to complete these courses.
32. The policy direction towards a reduction in very short courses was originally signalled in SFC’s 2009-10 grant letter to colleges of 15 April 2009. This stated:

“We are in discussion with colleges about how to implement changes to eligibility of short courses under 0.25 SUMs in length. Our intention is that such provision would only be eligible for funding if it was part of a school / college link or contributes to wider access.”
33. In the 2010-11 grant letter and SUMs guidance SFC stated that these very short courses would no longer be fundable. Figure 6 below provides a breakdown of

enrolments on the targeted courses lasting for less than 10 hours in 2007-08 by age and gender. This shows the groups impacted the greatest by this change in policy.

- 34. Figure 6 shows that of the 79,478 enrolments to courses lasting less than 10 hours, 37.8% were under 14 years old, and 47.0% under the age of 16.
- 35. Of the 79,478 enrolments to courses lasting less than 10 hours in 2007-08, 46.4% were male and 53.6% were female. The proportion of males and females varies across the age groups, with males making up more of the 20 to 24 age group (53.0%) and females making up the majority of those in age groups over 25 years old (58.4%).

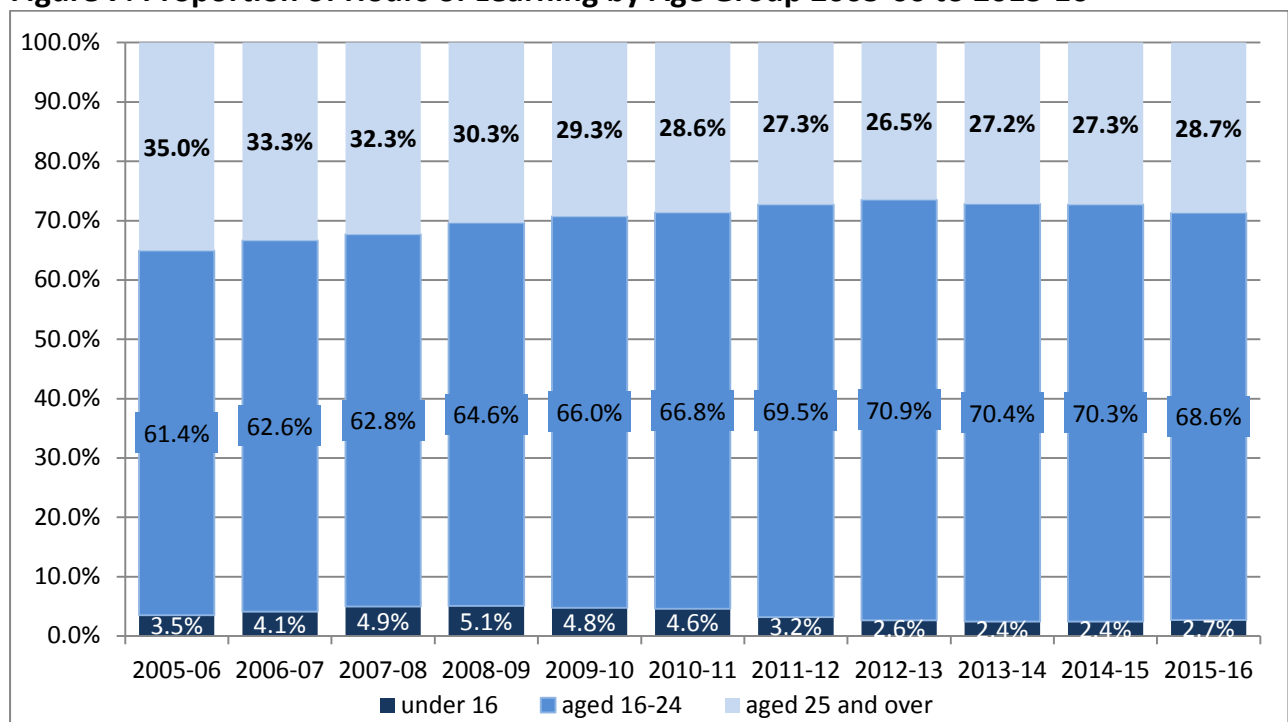
Figure 6: Student Enrolments to Courses under 10 hours 2007-08



SFC funded hours of learning

36. This section focuses on SFC-funded hours of learning. The hours of learning measure is based on SFC-funded students for whom we collect information on planned learning hours. SFC does not collect information on planned learning hours for students funded from other sources.
37. As explained in Annex B, hours of learning in 2015-16 are calculated on a different basis from hours of learning from 2005-06 to 2014-15. For this reason, many charts showing hours of learning are shown as a percentage of learning hours to enable time series comparisons. However, the change in methodology should still be noted and taken into consideration when making comparisons between years.
38. Figure 7 shows the percentage of SFC-funded hours delivered in each year since 2005-06 by age group. The 16-24 year old group have become an increasing priority for colleges and this is reflected in the general upward trend in the percentage of learning hours delivered to this group over the longer term. Although the percentage decreased between 2014-15 and 2015-16, from 70.3% of the total learning hours to 68.6% this is still higher than all years before 2011-12.

Figure 7: Proportion of Hours of Learning by Age Group 2005-06 to 2015-16



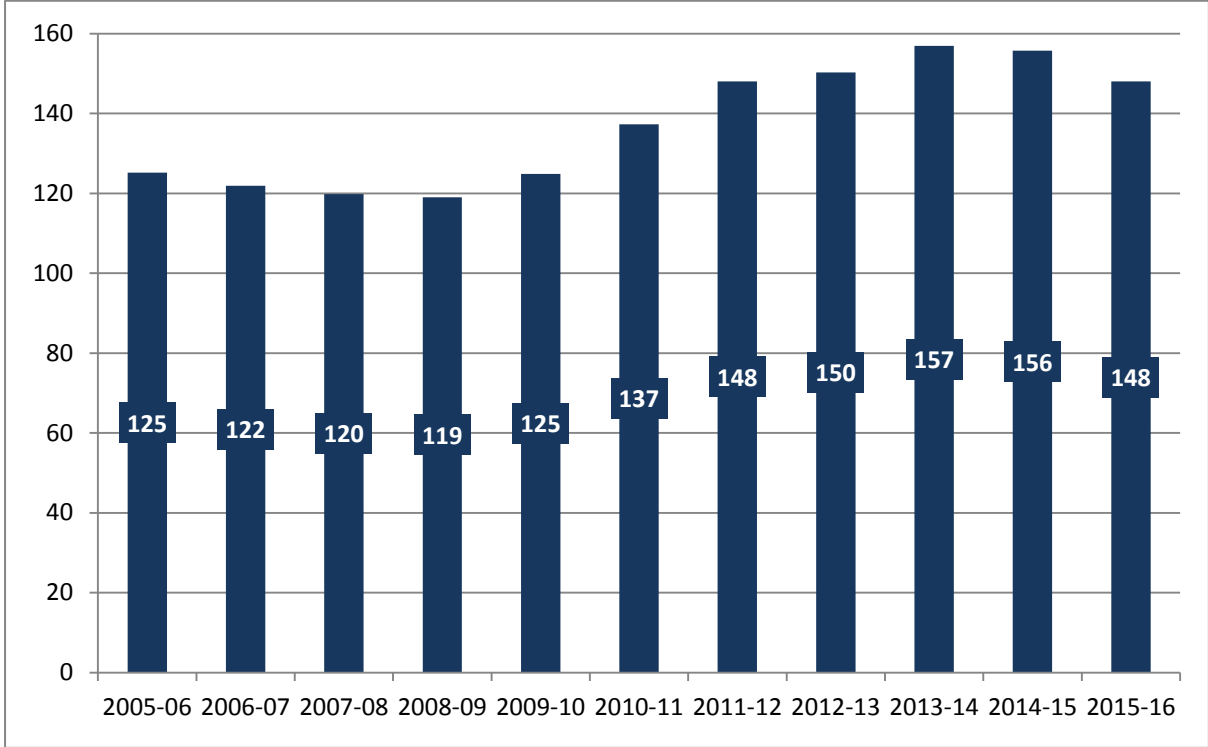
The figures for 2015-16 use the updated methodology and are for Hours of Learning based on Credits. Percentages refer to the hours of learning in Table B.

39. It was expected that the policy to prioritise funding activity that would be more likely to improve employment prospects over very short leisure programmes

would lead to a reduction in headcount. This policy was also expected to generate an increase in the average hours of learning undertaken by this reduced number of students. Figure 4 in the previous section shows how this resulted in a decline in part-time student enrolments and an increase in, particularly HE, full-time activity from 2008-09.

- 40. The change also resulted in an increase in the average learning hours for part-time students. Figure 8 below shows that learning hours for part-time students have increased from 125 in 2009-10 to 148 in 2015-16, despite a drop in the two years since 2013-14.

Figure 8: Average hours of learning - Part Time Students 2005-06 to 2015-16



Full-time students aged 16 to 24 funded by SFC

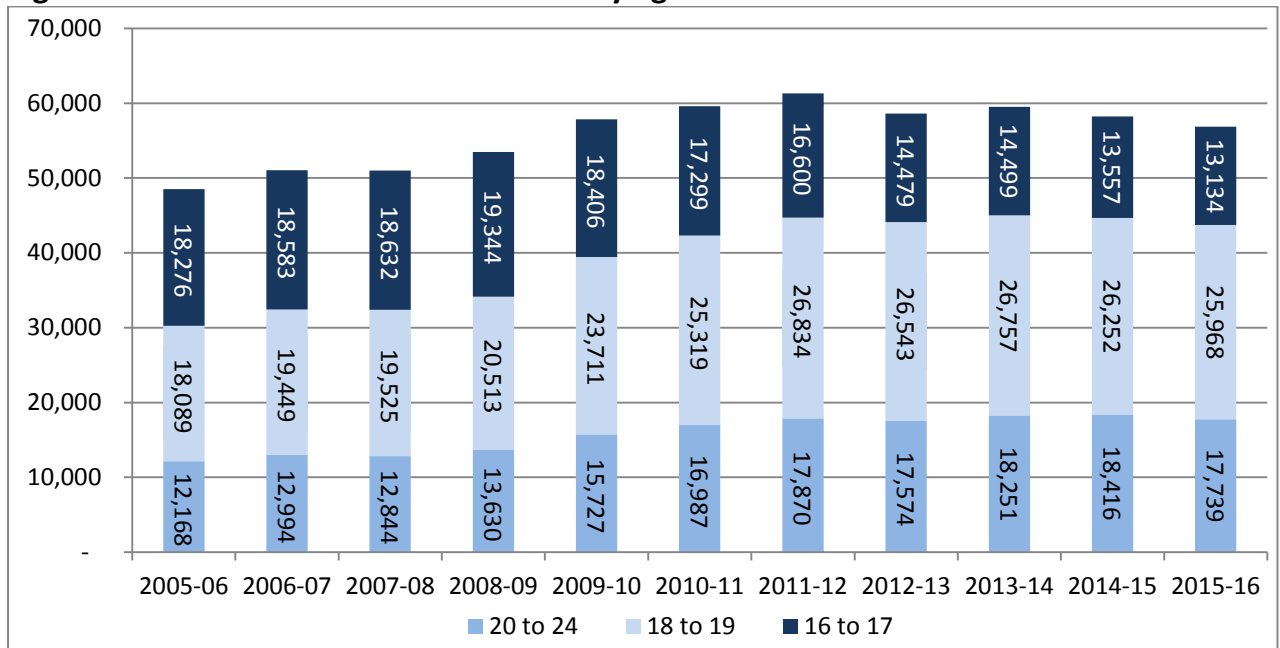
41. Consistent with Scottish Government policy, SFC has asked colleges to prioritise provision to improve the employability of young people in the 16-19 and 20-24 year-old age groups. This has led to an increase in full-time students. This section is focused on these full-time students aged 16-24.
42. Of the 78,754 full-time students enrolled at Scotland's colleges in 2015-16, 75,953 were funded by SFC with the remainder funded from other sources. This includes international students or those funded via other Government agencies such as Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and 1,514 'Associate Students'. An 'Associate Student' is a student for whom responsibility is shared by a college and a higher education institution (HEI). The HEI channels the funding for a course delivered partly by the college and partly by the HEI. Classes in the earlier years of the course tend to be delivered by the college, and the later years tend to be delivered by the HEI. In this section we look only at students funded by SFC through colleges.
43. Table D, below, shows that 56,841 (74.8%) of full-time SFC funded students were in the 16-24 year old age group.
44. Table D also shows that the number of full-time, SFC funded students in the 16-24 year old age group decreased between 2014-15 and 2015-16. However, the number of full-time, SFC funded students aged 25 and over increased by 485.

Table D: Full-time SFC-funded students by age 2015-16

	Under 16	16 to 17	18 to 19	20 to 24	25 and over
2015-16 Students	428	13,134	25,968	17,739	18,684
Difference from 2014-15	+1	-423	-284	-677	+485

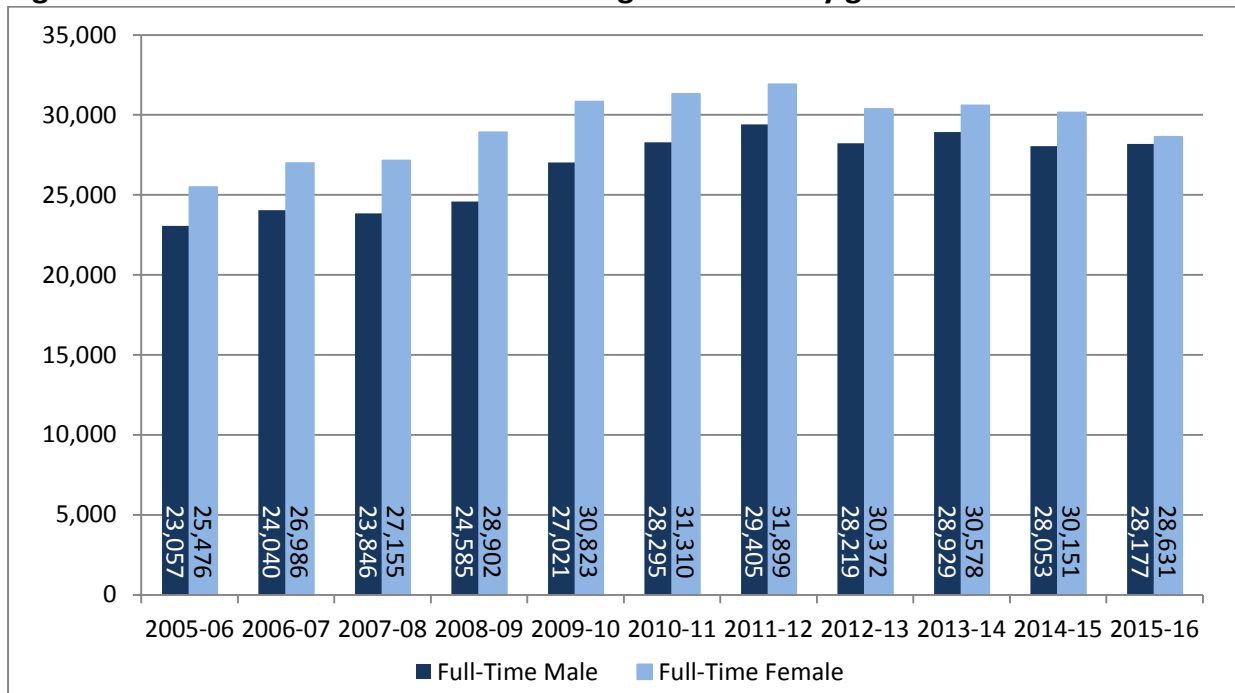
45. Figure 9, below, shows the number of full-time SFC funded 16 to 24 year old students broken down by age group from 2005-06. The number of full-time 16 to 24 year olds has declined in the two years since 2013-14 but still exceed the numbers prior to 2009-10.
46. The number of 16 to 17 year old full-time SFC funded students has decreased by 32.1% since their peak in 2008-09. This can partly be explained by increased staying on rates at school.

Figure 9: Full-Time SFC Funded Students by age 2005-06 to 2015-16



47. Figure 10, below, shows the number of male and female full-time SFC funded students aged 16 to 24 from 2005-06 to 2015-16. It shows that 54.0% of full-time students aged 16 to 24 were female and 46.0% were male in 2008-09 but there has been a narrowing of the gender gap in the years since. The proportion of male full-time students aged 16 to 24 had increased to 49.6% in 2015-16.

Figure 10: Full-time SFC Funded students aged 16 to 24 by gender 2005-06 to 15-16

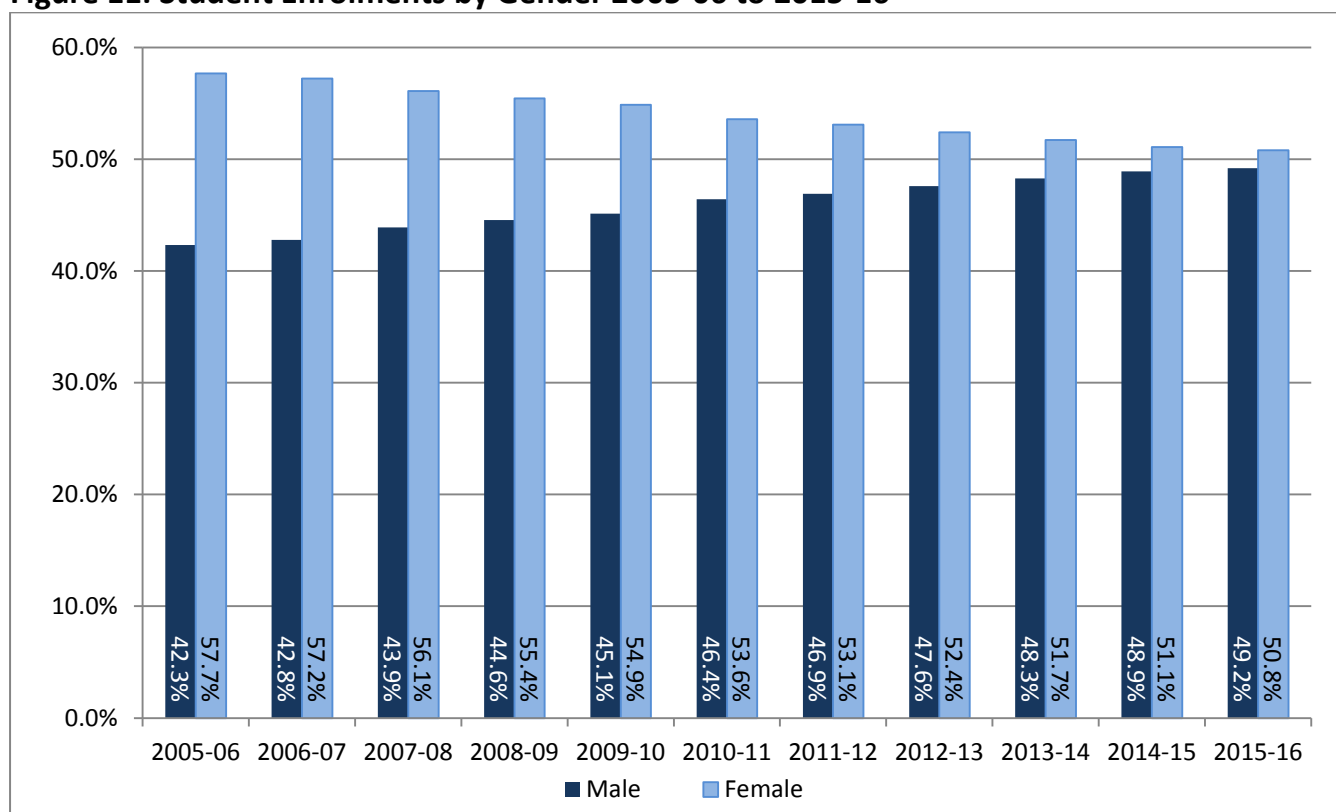


Excludes 21 enrolments in 2014-15 and 33 in 2015-16 from students for whom the gender identity was declared as 'other', or was not declared at all.

Enrolments by gender

48. This section looks in more detail at the trends in enrolments of all ages by gender. Figure 11 below shows that females have accounted for a larger proportion of college enrolments since 2005-06 but the gap has been narrowing each year. In 2015-16, only a small majority of enrolments were female (50.8%). This is equivalent to 142,738 female enrolments and 138,160 male enrolments.

Figure 11: Student Enrolments by Gender 2005-06 to 2015-16



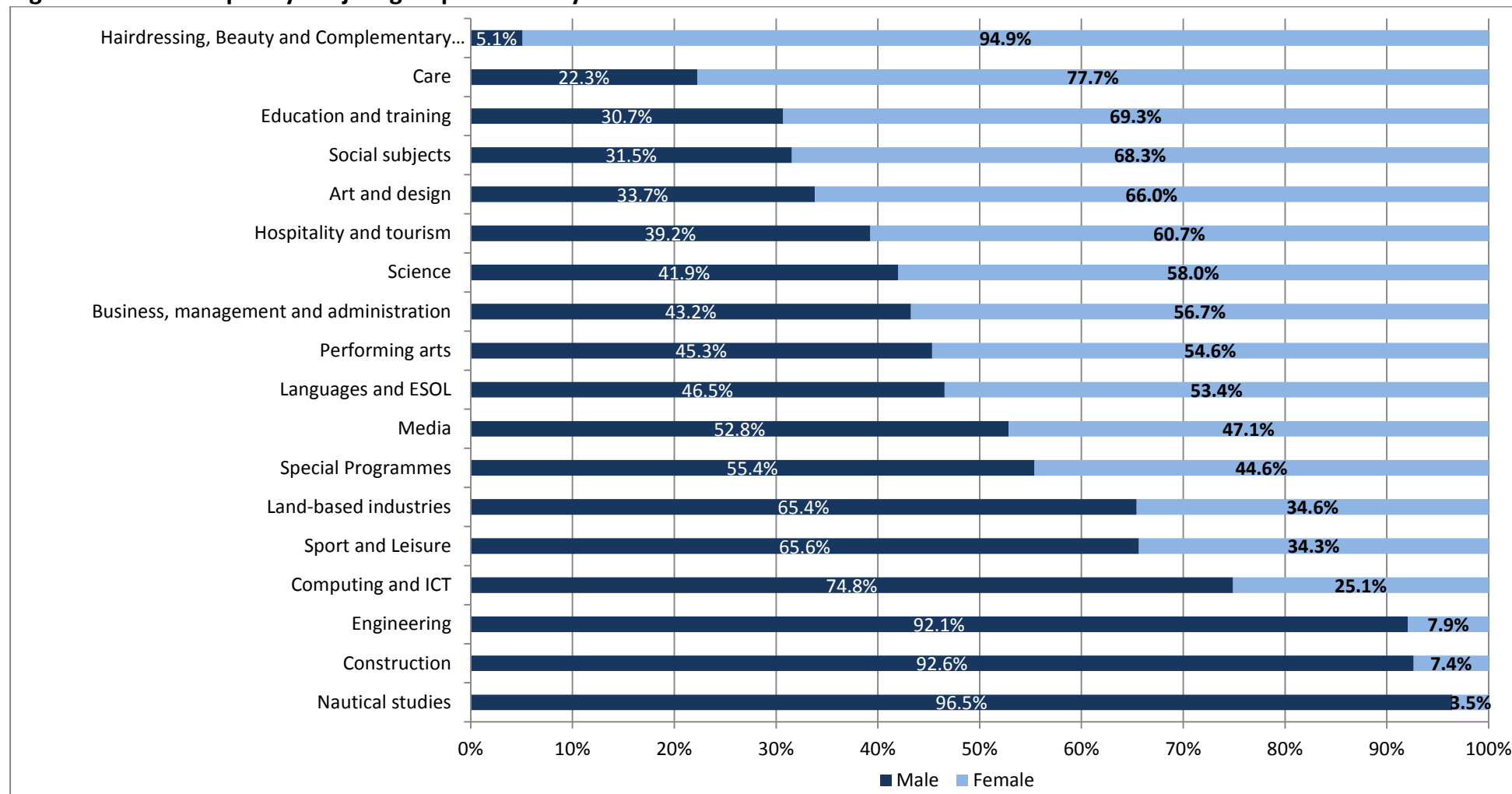
Please note that the 2014-15 and 2015-16 figures do not include 118 and 153 enrolments respectively for whom the gender identity was declared as 'other,' or was not declared at all

49. Enrolments to certain subject areas have greater gender imbalances than total sector enrolments. The SFC's Gender Action Plan produced in line with the Scottish Government's Youth Employment Strategy ('Developing the Young Workforce') will address gender imbalances in college regions, particularly at subject level³.

³ [Gender Action Plan: Interim Report](#)
[Gender Action Plan Final Report](#)

50. The Gender Action Plan focuses on the most imbalanced superclass subjects at college to address the SG Key Performance Indicator to *'Increase by five percentage points the minority gender share in each of the 10 largest and most imbalanced 'superclasses' by 2021'*.
51. The superclasses can be grouped into larger subject areas and the gender imbalance across these larger groups is shown in Figure 12, below. Figure 12 looks at all enrolments in the 16 to 24 year old age group, as this is the group of focus in the Gender Action Plan as part of Developing the Young Workforce.

Figure 12: Gender split by subject group for 16-24 year old enrolments 2015-16

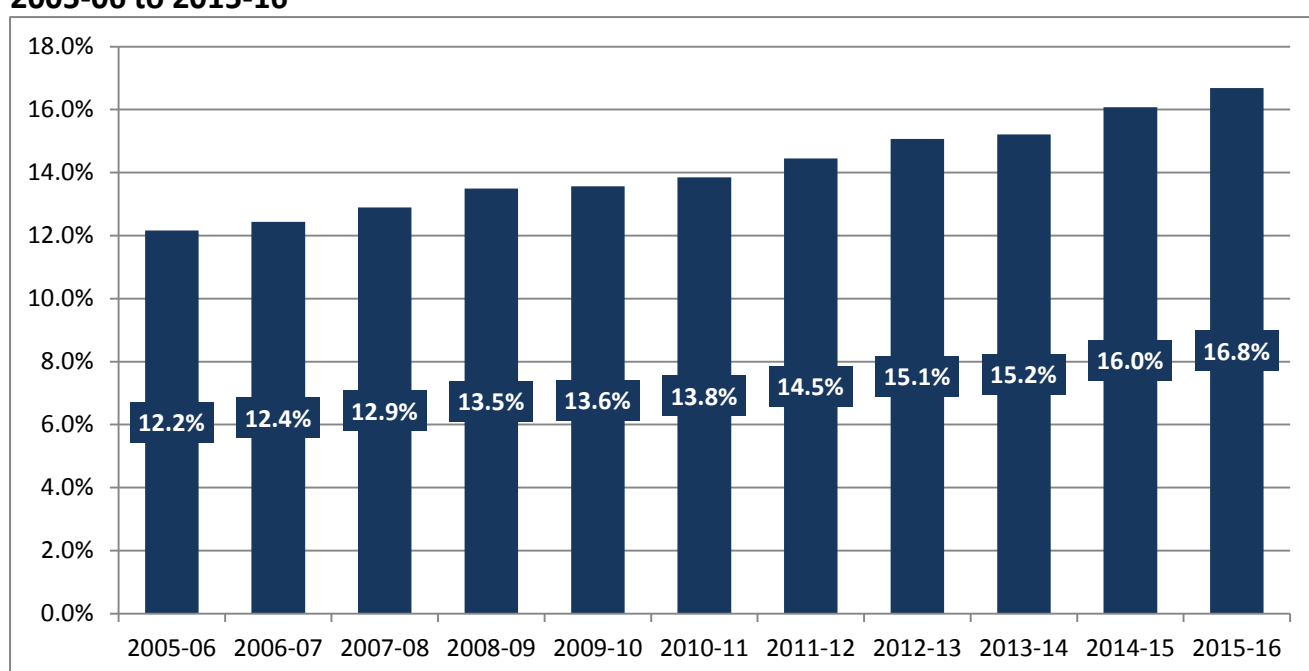


This table does not display the percentage of enrolments from students for whom the gender identity was declared as 'other', or was not declared at all. Percentage figures displayed are rounded and may not therefore total 100%.

Students with a Disability

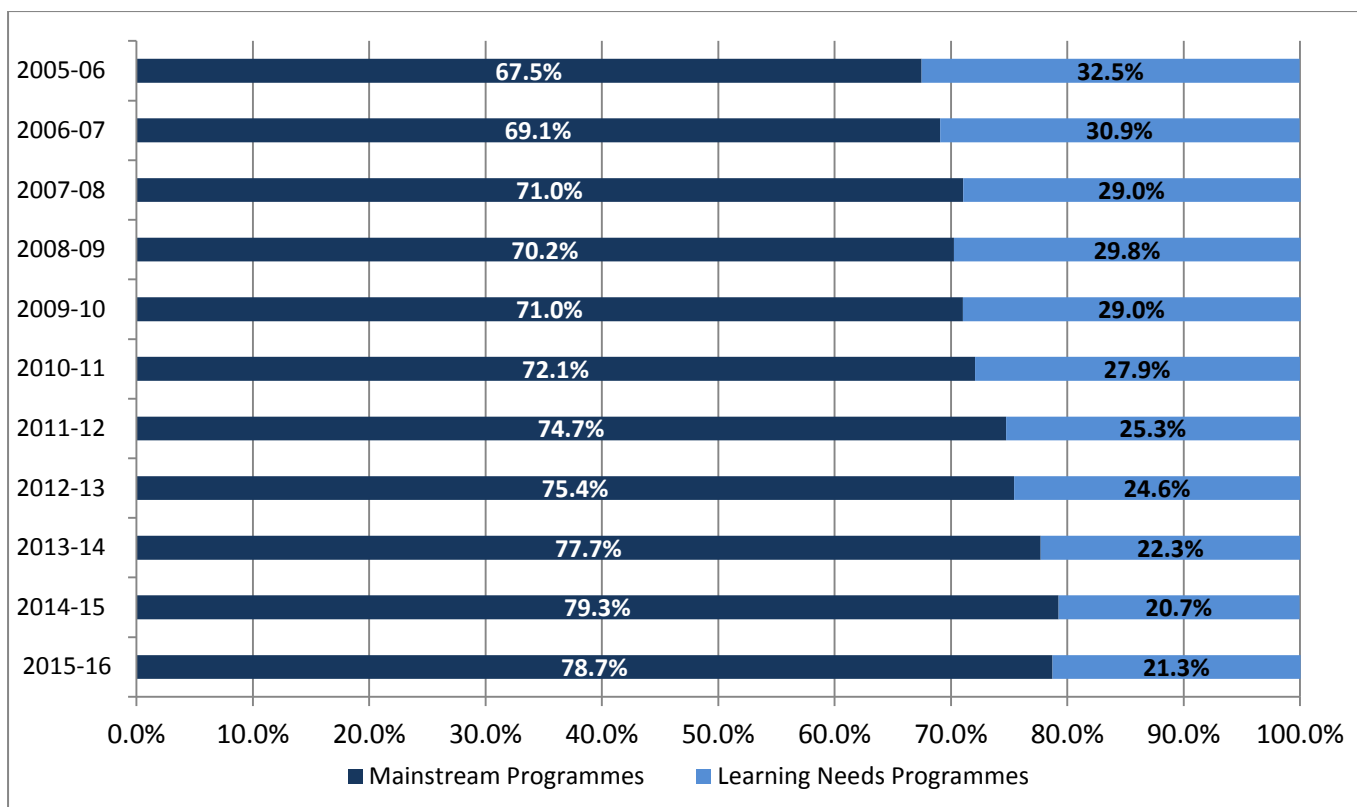
52. Figure 13 shows the trend in the percentage of learning hours delivered to students with a recorded disability. In 2015-16, these students accounted for 11.7 million learning hours, equivalent to 16.8% of all learning hours.
53. In order to allow time series comparison, the percentage of learning hours delivered to students with a recorded disability is shown in Figure 13, below. The percentage of learning hours delivered to students with a recorded disability has increased in each year between 2005-06 and 2015-16.

Figure 13: Percentage of Learning Hours delivered to students with a disability 2005-06 to 2015-16



54. Colleges offer specialist programmes for students requiring any additional support, available to those with or without a reported disability. Figure 14, below, shows the proportion of learning hours delivered to students with a reported disability on mainstream programmes or on a specialist learning needs programme.

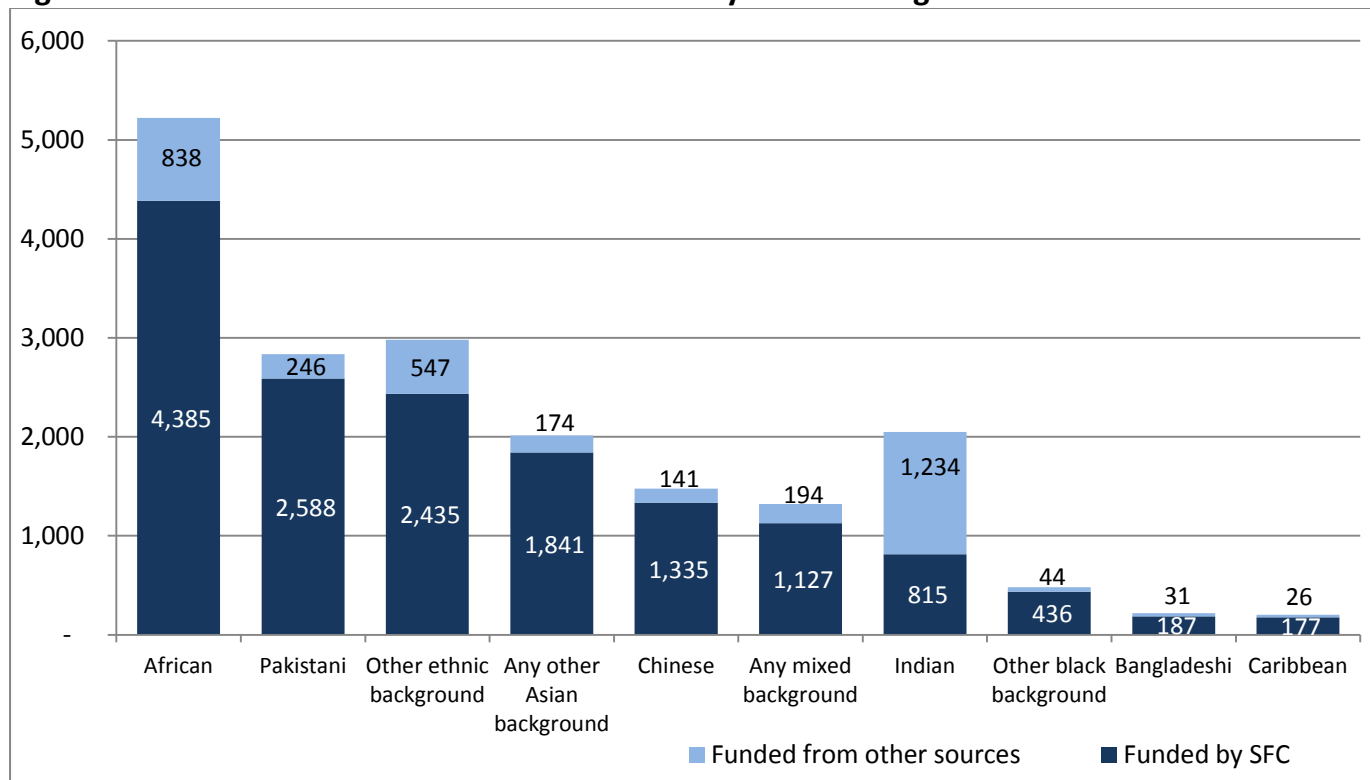
Figure 14: Percentage of Learning Hours to students with a disability by Programme Type



55. In 2015-16, 9.2 million learning hours were delivered to students with a declared disability on mainstream programmes in colleges and 2.5 million learning hours were delivered to students with a declared disability on Learning Needs programmes. There were an additional 1.9 million learning hours delivered on Learning Needs programmes to students without a declared disability. Combined, this represents 19.4% of all learning hours in 2015-16.

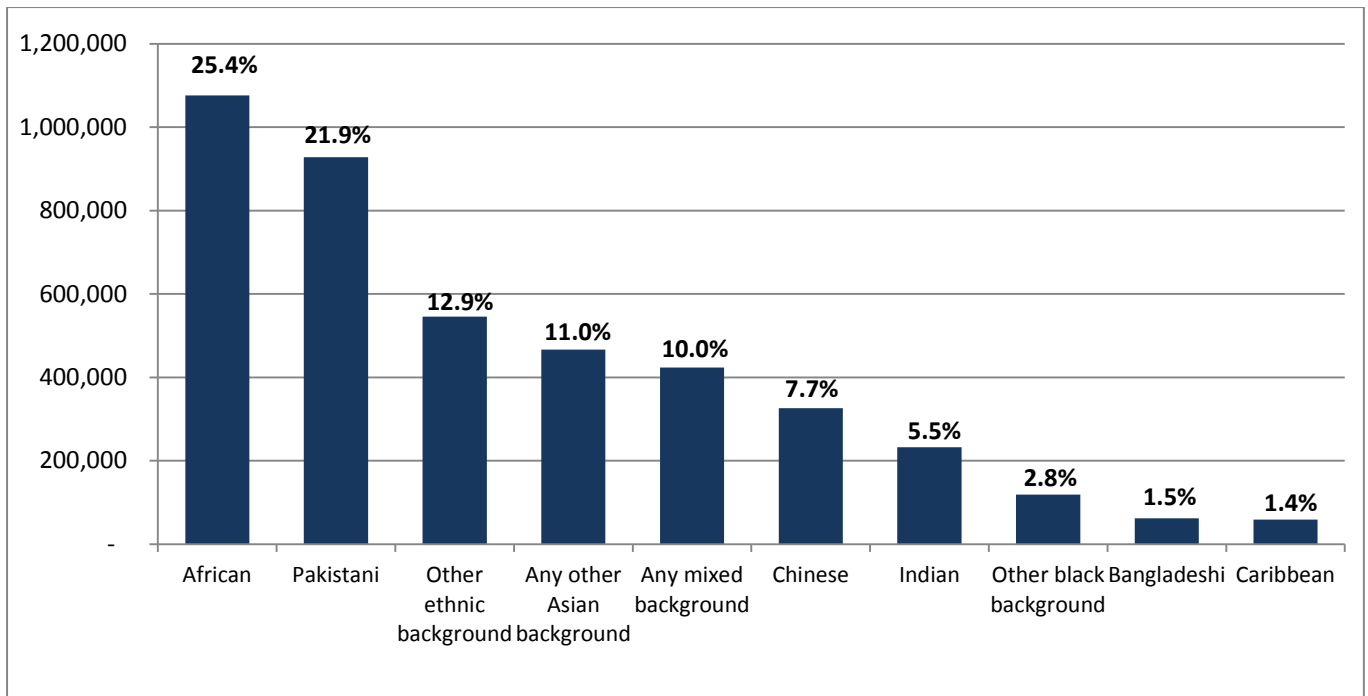
Students from a black and minority ethnic (BME) background

Figure 15: Enrolments for students from a minority ethnic background 2015-16



56. There were 18,801 enrolments from students with a minority ethnic background in 2015-16, accounting for 6.7% of total enrolments. This has increased from 2014-15 where this cohort accounted for 17,144 enrolments, or 5.8% of total enrolments. Of the 2015-16 enrolments from a minority ethnic background, 5,223 were from an African background whilst 2,834 were from a Pakistani background.
57. Figure 16, below, looks at the hours of learning for SFC-funded students from a minority ethnic background. Overall, 15,326 enrolments of the 18,801 enrolments from students from a minority ethnic background were funded by SFC, as displayed in Figure 15. Students who travel from countries outwith the European Union to study a college course are not eligible for SFC funding.

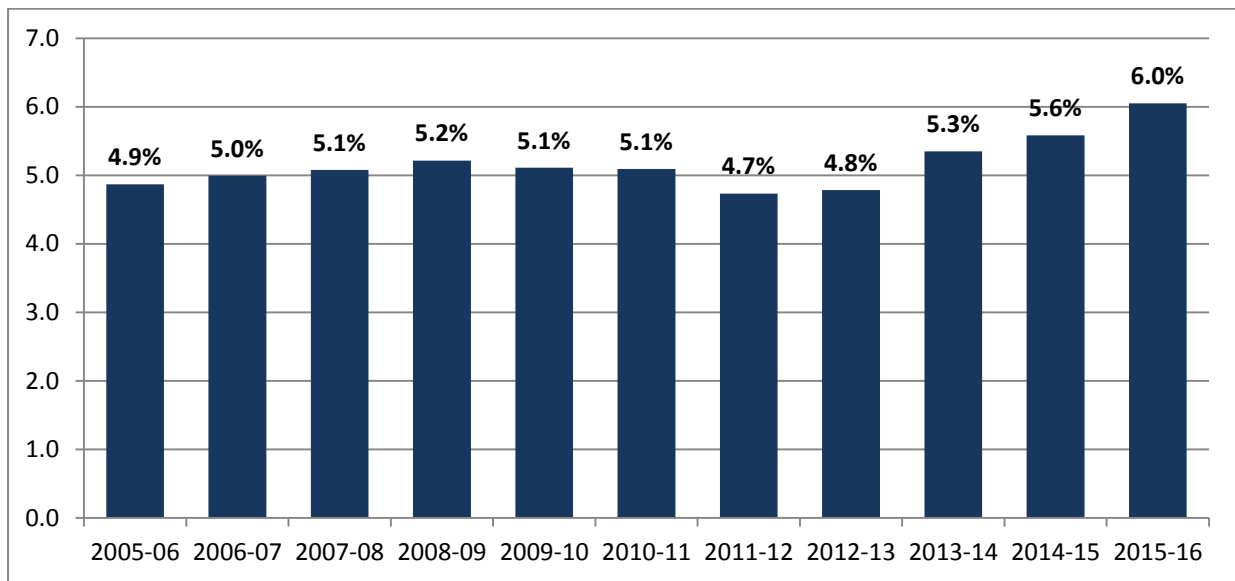
Figure 16: Hours of learning- students from a minority ethnic background 2015-16



Percentages relate to total hours of learning by SFC funded students from a minority ethnic background

58. Figure 17, below, provides a breakdown of hours of learning for SFC-funded students from a BME background over the period 2005-06 to 2015-16. The figure also shows what these learning hours represent as a percentage of the total student learning hours.
59. Those from a minority ethnic background received 4.24 million hours of learning in 2015-16. This is not comparable with earlier year figures due to the change in methodology for 2015-16 explained earlier. This 4.24 million hours of learning represented 6.0% of the sector's total hours of learning. This figure can be compared with 2014-15 where 5.6% of total hours of learning were delivered to students from a minority ethnic background. This is shown in Figure 17 overleaf.

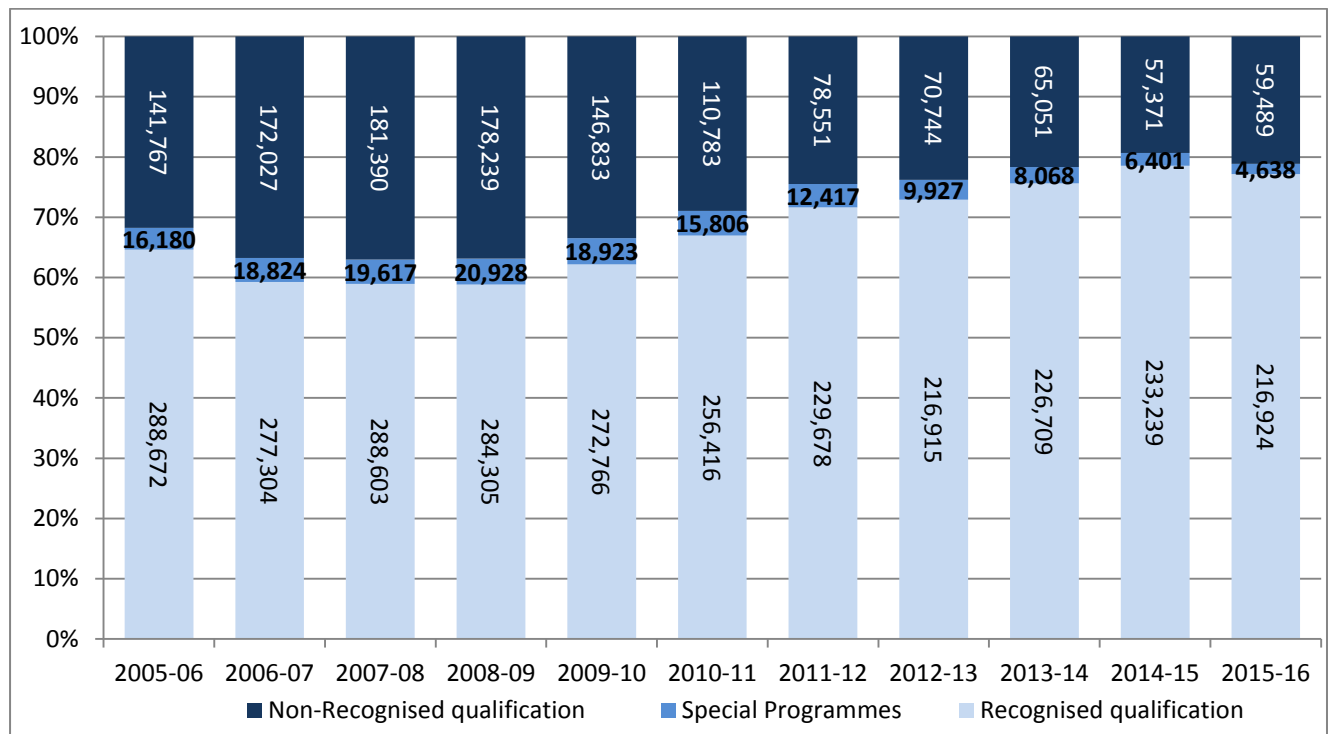
Figure 17: BME student learning hours as percentage of total learning hours, 2005-06 to 2015-16



Recognised qualifications and additional support needs

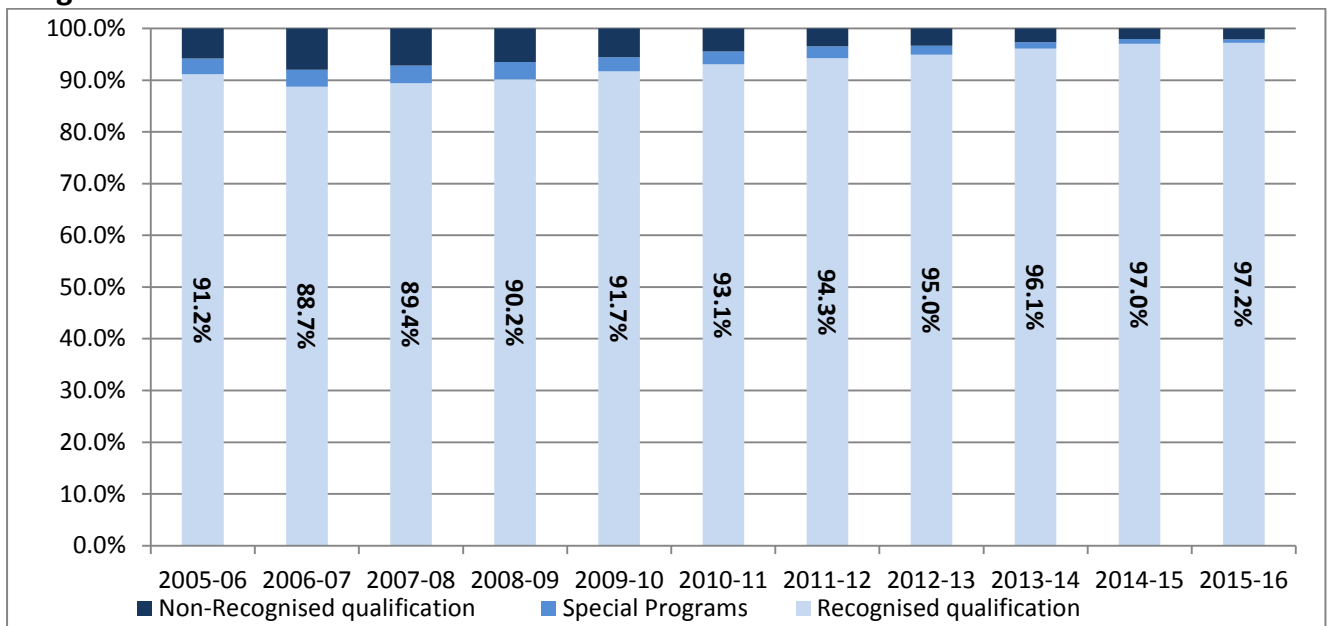
60. Figure 18 shows the number of student enrolments on courses which lead to recognised qualifications (including courses for students with additional support needs). Programmes that do not lead to a recognised qualification for students who require additional support are shown separately, as are courses not leading to a recognised qualification for students who require no additional support. Additional support courses (referred to as 'Special Programmes' in Figures 18 and 19, below) are courses which facilitate learning for those with learning difficulties separate to mainstream courses.
61. As noted earlier, the focus on prioritising more substantial programmes that improve employment prospects has had an effect on the number of enrolments to non-recognised qualifications. Enrolment on non-recognised qualifications decreased by 67.2% between 2007-08 and 2015-16.
62. Whilst the absolute number of enrolments on recognised qualifications has also fallen from the peak figure in 2007-08, enrolments on these courses have increased from 58.9% of total enrolments in 2007-08 to 77.2% of total enrolments in 2015-16. The highest percentage of enrolments to recognised qualifications was in 2014-15 at 78.5% meaning there was a 1.3 percentage point decrease between 2014-15 and 2015-16.

Figure 18: Recognised Qualifications and Special Programmes by percentage of enrolments 2005-06 to 2015-16



63. Figure 19 shows the hours of learning on courses which lead to recognised qualifications, special programs and non-recognised qualifications. In 2007-08 the percentage of learning hours leading to a recognised qualification was 89.4%. In 2015-16, it had increased to 97.2%.
64. This means that in 2007-08, 10.6% of learning hours were delivered on courses that did not lead to a recognised qualification but this figure now stands at 2.8% in 2015-16. The reduction is due to a drop in both non-recognised courses and special programmes as there has been a reduction in the volume and percentage of learning hours delivered to both.
65. Despite an increase in enrolments to non-recognised qualifications between 2014-15 and 2015-16 shown in Figure 18 above, there has still been an increase in that year in the percentage of learning hours delivered on recognised qualifications as shown in Figure 19 below. The percentage of learning hours delivered on recognised qualifications has increased year on year from 2006-07.

Figure 19: Percentage of Learning Hours by Recognised Qualifications and Special Programmes 2005-06 to 2015-16



Further information

66. The Infact database⁴ allows for more detailed analysis of provision within Scotland's colleges. Please note that figures on Infact may differ from those presented here. FTE figures may differ as Infact also includes FTE figures for students not funded by SFC. These students are not counted in this report. Please also note that headcount figures may differ, as this report will count a student once irrespective of how many colleges they attended, whereas Infact will count them at each college.
67. All charts and data shown in this report are available in an Excel spreadsheet on the SFC website⁵.
68. A publication detailing College Performance Indicators for 2015-16 can also be found on the SFC website⁶. Student numbers presented in this report may differ from those contained in other publications, as the reports are prepared for different purposes. For example, the College Performance Indicators publication 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 in this report, activity relating to these students is counted.
69. The SFC publication Learning for All: Measures of Success⁷ presents statistics on widening access in the College and University sectors.

⁴ [Infact database](#)

⁵ [Report background data](#)

⁶ [College Performance Indicators 2015-16](#)

⁷ [Learning for All: Measures of Success 2016](#)

Annex A: Measuring student numbers, volume of activity and changes in policy

70. There are two ways to count student numbers in the college sector: headcount and enrolments. Headcounts count the number of students, and enrolments count the number of times the students that make up the headcount total enrol on separate courses. A student can often enrol on multiple courses in one academic year so we expect the number of enrolments to be greater than the headcount total.
71. Table E below shows how the number of students corresponds to the number of enrolments in 2015-16.

Table E: Students to Enrolments 2015-16

Number of students (headcount)	Number of courses taken	Enrolments
188,098	1	188,098
29,942	2	59,884
6,233	3	18,699
1,665	4	6,660
1,319	5 or more	7,710
227,258		281,051

72. The volume of activity delivered to these students can also be measured in a number of ways, which are covered in this report.
73. Historically the volume of student activity was linked to the funding methodology for colleges, but this changed in 2015-16 when SFC began to fund on the basis of credits rather than WSUMs. The move to credits simplified the measurement of the volume of activity delivered to students by separating it from funding considerations, explained further in Annex B.
74. Table B from the 'Trends in student numbers and activity' section shows the number of SUMs delivered from 2005-06 to 2014-15. The SUMs measure (where one SUM is equivalent to 40 hours of learning) was designed to measure volume and inform funding decisions. As a result it was not a pure volume measure and included a full time tariff in all years. In 2014-15 FE students studying for 16 SUMs or more (640 hours of learning) qualified for a full time tariff of 20 SUMs. Students on HE programmes who studied for 12 SUMs or more qualified for a full time tariff of 15 SUMs.

75. The Credit measure replaces SUMs from 2015-16. Each Credit is also worth 40 hours of learning but there is no longer a full time tariff as described above. The removal of the full time tariff is the only difference between SUMs and Credits.
76. The 'Hours of Learning' measure was calculated by multiplying the number of SUMs by 40. As the SUMs measure included a full time tariff the reported hours of learning was also higher than the actual hours of learning. From 2015-16 'Hours of Learning' is based on the Credit measure and therefore more reflective of actual hours of learning.
77. We have also changed our FTE (Full-time Equivalent) methodology but the reported levels of FTEs are very similar under both systems. Table B shows that the number of FTEs is 0.5% lower under the new Credit system compared to the old system for 2014-15.
78. Table B also includes updated FTE numbers for 2012-13, 2013-14 and 2014-15. In 2012-13 the Scottish Government announced that the college sector would be asked to deliver 116,269 FTEs each year. Also in 2012-13, after the FTE target was announced, 598 FTEs that were previously delivered by the three agricultural colleges were transferred to SRUC and were subsequently reported via the Higher Education Statistics Agency rather than the Further Education Statistical return. These 598 FTEs have been added to the total FTE count to enable us to show a more complete, like for like, picture of delivery against the 116,269 FTE target. It should be noted that the 116,269 FTEs were exceeded in each year since 2012-13 before taking these 598 FTEs into account.
79. Throughout the time period shown in Table B there has been a number of significant changes to policy that have affected trends in student numbers and the volume of activity delivered by colleges. Table F below describes these main changes and it is important to be aware of these changes when looking at trends and fluctuations in the figures in Table B.

Table F: Significant changes in external factors affecting the college sector

Date	Change	Impact on the trends presented in this report
2008-09	Colleges directed to prioritise more substantial courses designed to improve employment prospects	Reduction in number of students enrolled on very short programmes of study unlikely to lead to employment or higher level of study.
2011-12	Decision to focus school / college courses towards the senior phase of high school	Reduction in college activity targets of 5%, but students affected continue to have a full-time place at school.
2012-13	Introduction of College Outcome Agreements Transfer of funded learning hours from SFC to SDS	Reduction in SFC funded learning hours delivered to those aged 16 to 24, with this activity being commissioned by the SDS Employability Fund ⁸ .
2015-16	WSUMs replaced with Credits and removal of full-time tariffs	Hours of learning reduce under the Credit system as a result of improvements that removed funding considerations and created a more pure measure of activity

⁸ Equivalent to 750 FTEs in 2015-16.

Annex B: Methodology - WSUMs to Credits

80. Colleges have been funded to deliver a WSUM target for over 20 years. The WSUM was however not widely known or understood outwith the college sector, and did little to inform our stakeholders of the value colleges deliver for Scotland. To aid transparency and to improve the planning process, WSUM targets were replaced with much simpler Credit targets from 2015-16.
81. The new Credit based system means that there is now a clear separation between our volume measures and funding considerations. Credit targets no longer include subject weights, Extended Learning Support claims, or full-time tariffs that were all part of the previous WSUM targets.
82. As credits are based on planned activity, reported learning hours better reflect the course content that the student enrolled to undertake rather than actual hours of learning. If a student enrolls on a course that requires 720 hours of learning then this will be the value used in our reporting even if the student later withdraws, but importantly, only if the student continues to actively participate in their course beyond the funding qualifying date (1 November for full time courses and after 25% of course days have passed for part time courses).
83. Where students withdraw after this date the college will still claim for the 720 hours, since classroom space, staff and other college resources have been committed for the student and substitution for another student cannot happen at this late stage.
84. Colleges are unable to claim Credits for students who withdraw prior to the funding qualifying date. As a result no learning hours are reported for these students at all. The college will still have committed staff and college resources for these students but will receive no funding from SFC.
85. **Full-time Tariffs** – Under the previous methodology, colleges could have delivered 16 SUMs to a full-time FE student and qualified for a full-time tariff for that student. The Credit measure is now a closer measure of activity separated from funding considerations.
86. The full-time tariff has meant that previously full-time students have been funded at a higher rate than part-time students in terms of price per SUM delivered, but this is no longer the case.
87. **Extended Learning Support (ELS)** - The WSUM methodology also included an uplift for students enrolled on mainstream courses who required additional learning support. Where a typical full-time student would count towards around 20 WSUMs, students who required additional support would count toward 50 WSUMs (2.5 times as many). The additional 30 WSUMs helped fund

the expensive additional support necessary, that colleges provided, often on a one to one basis. Colleges will continue to deliver this support, with funding now specified separately in each region's outcome agreement, but it will no longer count towards their Credit targets.

88. More information on changes to the ELS can be found on our website⁹.
89. **Subject Weights** – subject weightings were incorporated into WSUM values to account for subjects that are more expensive for colleges to deliver. For example, a student studying for 10 SUMs (400 hours) could be counted as 7.4 WSUMs if they enrolled on a social studies course which costs less to deliver, or they could be counted as 12.6 WSUMs on an engineering course as these are more expensive courses to deliver.

Implications for time-series

90. SUMs measure was not a pure measure of college activity and instead a hybrid measure that included both volume and price. A Credit target will be lower than the equivalent WSUM target as a result of removing the full-time tariffs, ELS volume and subject weights. Despite the change in methodology, the Credit target and the WSUMs target allow for the same number of student places in each region.
91. The implications for measures of activity are more notable. The simplified Credits system introduces a simplified and more easily understood measure of the level of FTEs delivered by colleges. Under this system 1 FTE is equal to 15 core credits irrespective of the level of study or mode of delivery. We continue to recognise the additional learning for students requiring extended support to keep up with their peer groups. Although there is a small drop in the FTE figure for 2014-15 when it is calculated based on Credits as opposed to WSUMs, as shown in Table B above, the impact is slight. Colleges were still given, and exceeded, the same FTE target for 2015-16 as they were given under the previous methodology.
92. **Hours of learning** – the hours of learning measure is more affected by the move to Credits and the removal of the full-time tariffs. Hours of learning under the different methodologies are not comparable, as can be seen in Table B where the two figures are shown for 2014-15. The drop in hours of learning under the Credit system is a result of improvement of the measure by removing funding considerations and creating a more pure measure of activity.

⁹ [ELS Review – full report](#)

93. In later sections of this report in order to look at time series comparisons using hours of learning, the percentage of learning hours delivered to particular groups is used.

Annex C: College Outcome Agreements

94. As part of the Outcome Agreement process, SFC introduced a National Performance Framework to be used to help measure and assess the impact of the Outcome Agreements across a range of key priority areas.
95. The table below shows the 2014-15 to 2015-16 figures for some of the measures, expressed in SUMs:

Table G: Selected national performance measures 2014-15 to 2015-16

SFC Priority	Measure	2014-15	2015-16
Right learning in the right place	Credits delivered	1,755,601	1,752,536
	Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 16-19	47.7%	46.9%
	Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 20-24	22.2%	21.8%
	Proportion of full-time Credits delivered to learners aged 16-19	52.3%	51.7%
	Proportion of full-time Credits delivered to learners aged 20-24	23.7%	23.1%
Access for people from the widest range of backgrounds	Proportion of Credits delivered to learners from the 10% most deprived areas	16.7%	16.9%
	Proportion of Credits to learners from a care experienced background	0.29%	1.0%
	Female	51.4%	51.7%
	Male	48.6%	48.3%
	BME	5.7%	6.0%
	Disabled	16.0%	16.8%

96. Further information and a summary of the progress of the College sector can be found on the SFC website¹⁰.

¹⁰ [Information on Outcome Agreements and a summary of progress made](#)