

Scotland's Colleges: A Baseline Report

March 2010

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Scotland's Colleges: A Baseline Report

This report provides information about further and higher education in Scotland's colleges, covering aspects such as content, activity and participation. The report is an authoritative source of facts and figures on Scotland's colleges. It will be of value to policy makers, the colleges themselves, other relevant stakeholders and people and organisations with an interest in tertiary education provision. It is updated periodically, and this is the second report in the series.

Scope

The report covers all activity in Scotland's colleges funded by the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC) in detail, using the FES (Further Education Statistics) records routinely collected by the Council. These records are somewhat limited in content for activity not funded by the Council, in particular in relation to the full-cost recovery courses provided by the colleges. Together with ancillary sources of information (such as General Register Office (GRO) population estimates) as appropriate, the FES records provide the bulk of the information contained in this report, which covers academic years 2000-01 to 2008-09.

While the information that we present in this report gives an indication of trends in further education in Scotland, we would caution against drawing definite conclusions from isolated figures. The information that we present should not be over-interpreted – student numbers, for example, can fluctuate from one academic year to another, and such a change by itself is not necessarily a positive or negative indication regarding the college system as a whole.

A link to the FES data collections guidance can be found here:
<http://www.sfc.ac.uk/FESdata/>

Presentation

Throughout the report we have provided statistical notes to explain important points about methods of measurement and analysis. These notes are presented in shaded boxes to distinguish them from commentary on the figures.

Main points at a glance

- in 2008-09 there were 374,986 students undertaking courses in the 43 SFC-funded colleges in Scotland;
- 88% of students were studying Further Education courses;
- 82% of all students were studying part time;
- 94% of all activity in Scotland's colleges was for programmes leading to a recognised qualification or for students with learning difficulties;
- 6% of activity in 2008-09 was attributable to programmes that do not lead to a recognised qualification which is about 17% more than in 2005-06;
- 15% of students attending college were registered as having a disability or are group 18 (programmes designed for those with an extended learning need)/ELS (students are on mainstream programmes but also require Extended Learning Support);
- for both male and females the number of students at college showed peaks at age 17;
- activity for Further Education qualifications, special needs and non-recognised qualifications have risen over the last four years but activity for Higher Education qualifications & National Units has decreased;
- approximately 39% of working age enrolments had a direct link to business in 2008-09;
- the last figure rises to 65% when training schemes, students currently in other employment or registered unemployed are included;
- overall, females account for 55% of students at college;
- the gender gap has been narrowing for the last three years after a peak in 2004-05; however, there are still more females than males attending college;
- 5.3% of college students were from non-white ethnic groups, whilst the 2001 census showed that about 2% of the general population were from the non-white group; and
- for the last three years the most popular subject of study was 'Family Care/Personal Development/Personal Care and Development'. Students on Special Needs programs are most likely to study this subject.

Part 1: Students in Scotland's colleges

As shown in Figure 1, in 2008-09 there were 374,986 students (headcount) studying in Scotland's 43 SFC-funded colleges, and a total of 483,472 enrolments. Students may be enrolled on a number of courses in a single academic year. For example, on a short course as they take their first tentative steps back into education before enrolling on more substantial programmes of study, or on several short courses rather than a single programme of study.

Statistical note: Activity

One SUM (Student Unit Measurement) is equal to 40 hours of learning. A full time course is equivalent to 20 SUMs (800 hours of learning). SUMs are referred to as 'activity' throughout the report.

Figure 1: Number of enrolments, students and SUMs 2000-01 to 2008-09

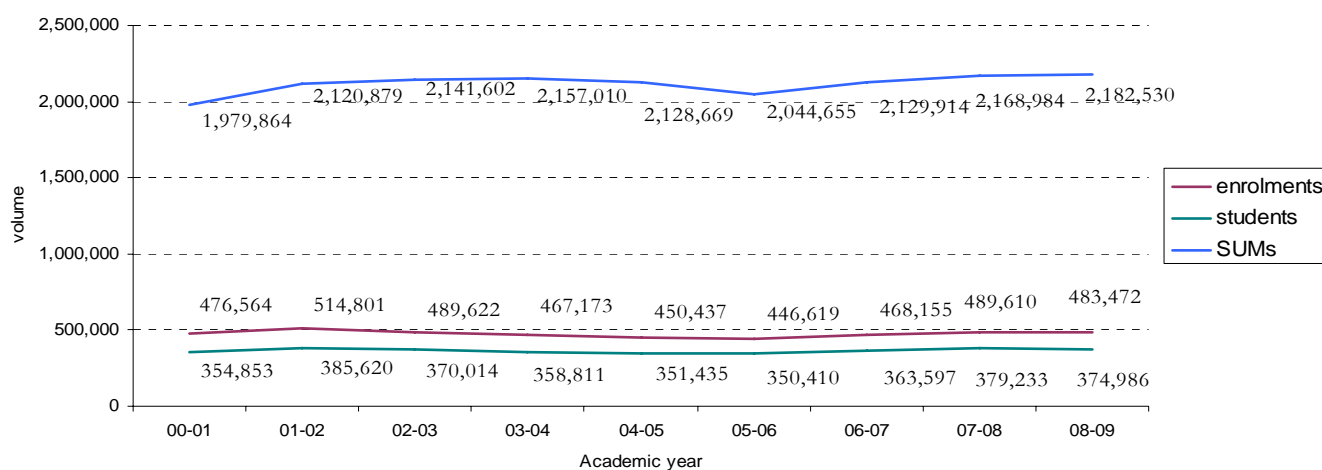


Figure 1 shows that:

- the number of students peaked at 385,620 in 2001-02, then fell each year until 2006-07. The numbers rose again in 2007-08 but then fell in 2008-09; and
- in 2008-09 there were 71,371 students enrolled on more than one programme of study. These students accounted for 174,831 enrolments; and
- due to definitional changes SUMs from 2005-06 onwards cannot be compared to previous data, but in the last four years the number of SUMs has increased.

Statistical note: Measures of activity and discontinuity

In 2005-06 the Council introduced a new method of measuring fundable activity. This has created an inevitable discontinuity in 2005-06 compared with previous years for trends in fundable activity. In 2004-05 a student who studied for as few

as 440 hours could qualify as full time and as such the college received full time tariff funding for that student at a rate equivalent to 840 hours of learning (21 SUMs). Under current rules, a student must now enrol for at least 720 hours of learning in order for the college to qualify for a reduced full time tariff rate equivalent to 800 hours of learning (20 SUMs). The change has had a substantial effect on activity measurement.

Figure 2: Students by mode of attendance and level of study, 2000-01 to 2008-09

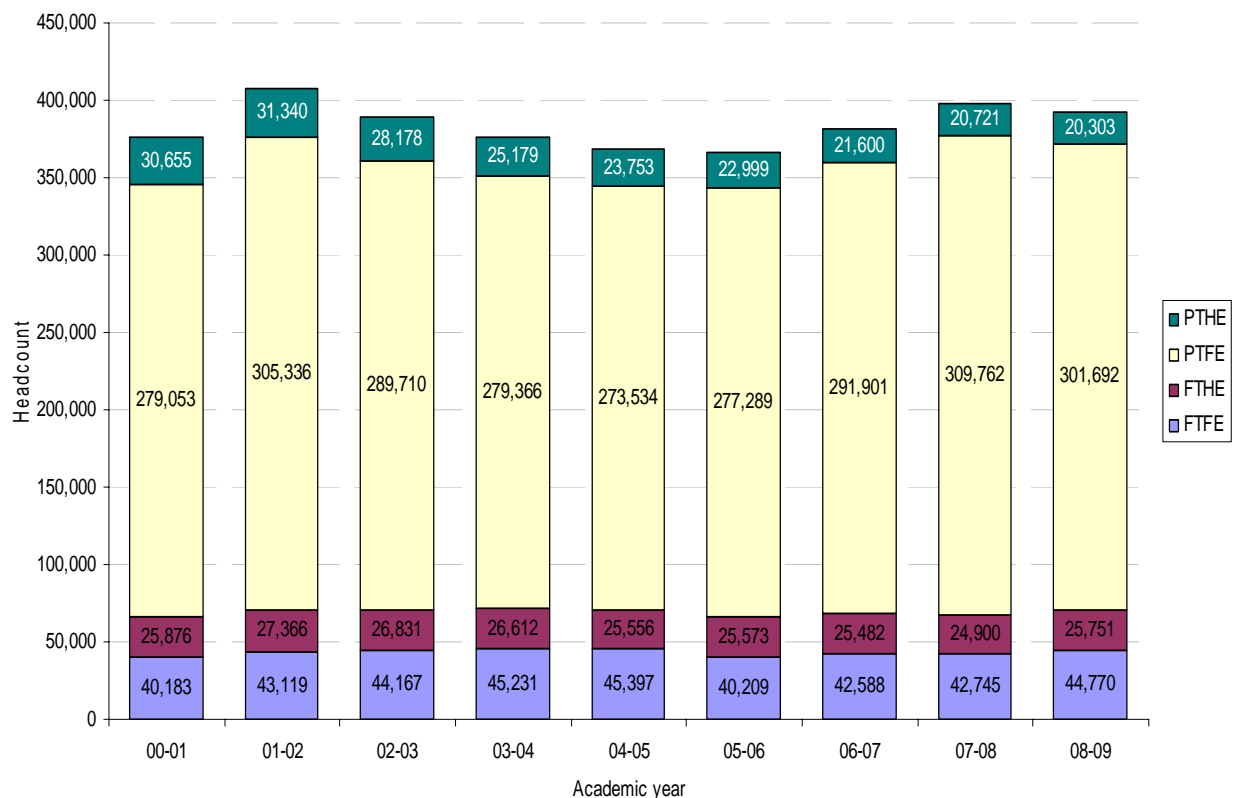


Figure 2 shows that:

- the numbers of students studying full time FE and HE courses has increased in the academic year 2008-09; and
- in 2008-09 there were 46,054 students studying on HE programmes in colleges, of whom 56% were enrolled on a full-time programme; and
- at FE-level, in the same year there were 44,770 full-time and 301,692 part-time students, with full-time accounting for 13% of all FE-level students. One of the main reasons for the high proportion of part-time learning at FE level is that many students are also in full-time paid work or have other domestic responsibilities. Such students are often enrolled on programmes with a vocational orientation.

Statistical Note:

Figure 2 shows an estimated headcount of 392,517 in 2008-09 whilst Figure 1 states that there were only 374,732 students in that year. We have already stated that there were 71,339 students enrolled on more than one programme of study. Figure 1 counts these students once but Figure 2 will count these students once for each of the modes and levels of study that they participated in. So if a student was enrolled on a full-time HE and an additional part-time FE programme then in Figure 2 they will be counted once in each of these categories.

This method of counting is necessary to avoid under representing particular categories. A reader may have a particular interest in part-time FE programmes and would want to know the actual number of students participating at this level, whilst another reader will have a particular interest in full-time HE and wants to know the actual number of students participating at that level. This method is used throughout the report when looking at student numbers and can inflate the apparent total number of 'students' depending on the categories used.

Figure 3: SUMs by mode of attendance and level of study 2005-06 to 2008-09

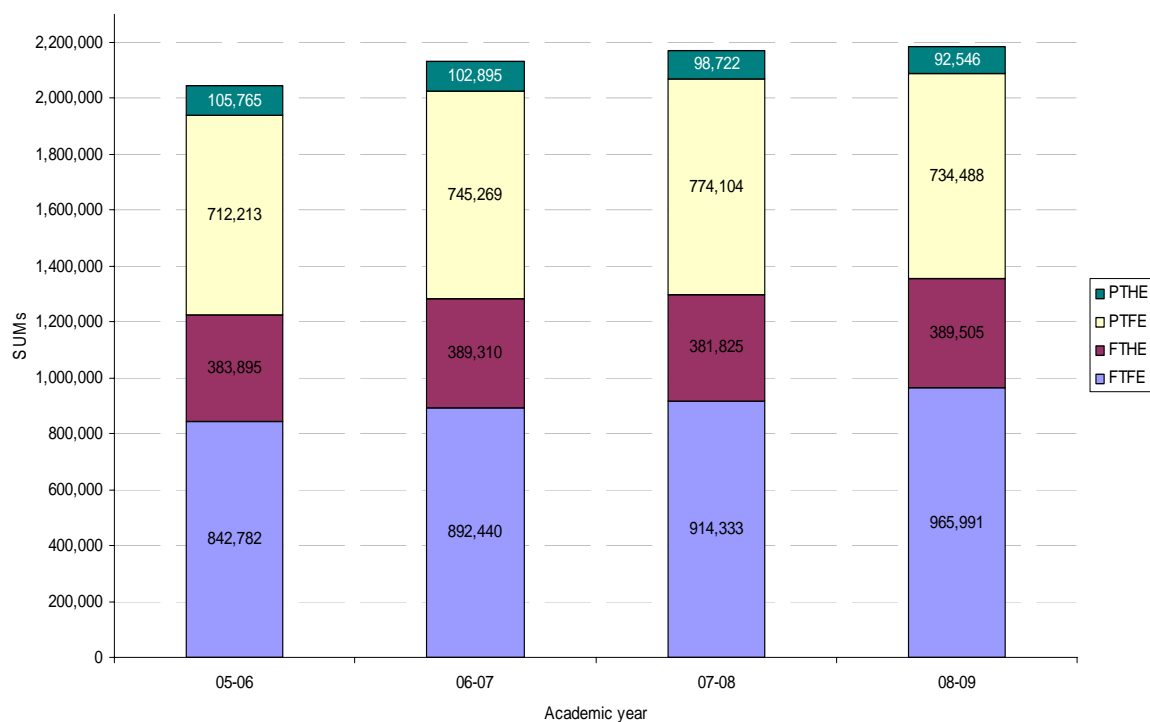


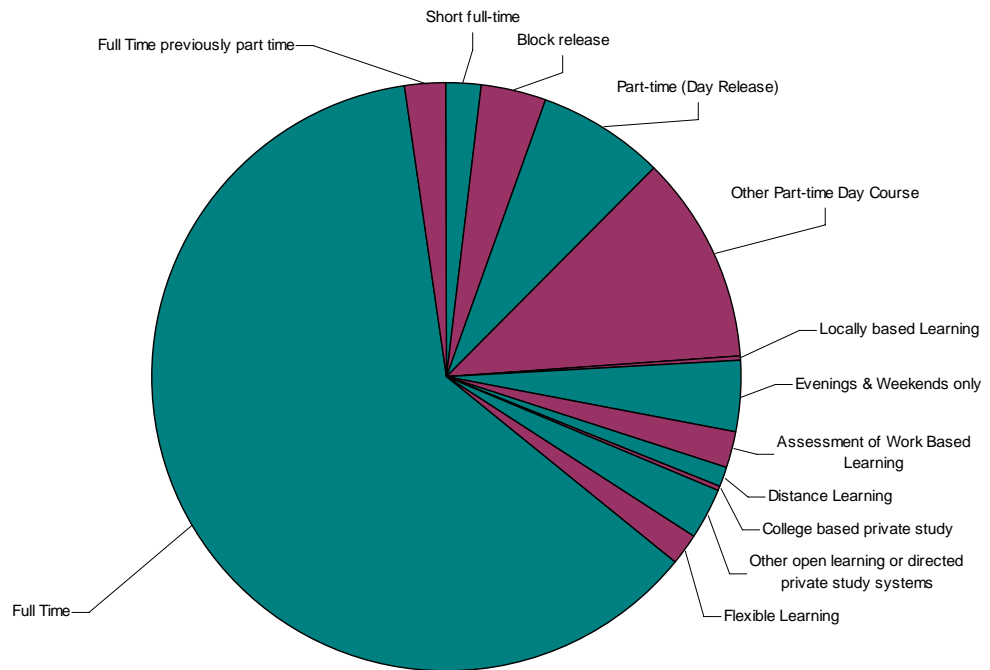
Figure 3 shows that:

- activity has continued to increase over the last three years; and

- Further Education courses account for most of the activity.

We often draw a simple distinction, as above, between full-time and part-time students, but FES records contain finer detail than this. Figure 4 shows information on enrolments by the detailed mode of attendance for academic year 2008-09.

Figure 4: Student activity by detailed mode of study, 2008-09



We can see from Figure 4 that full-time study accounts for 62 per cent of all student activity with other part-time day being the second most popular mode of study.

Figure 5 provides a breakdown of students by gender over the period 2000-01 to 2008-09.

Figure 5: Students by gender, 2000-01 to 2008-09

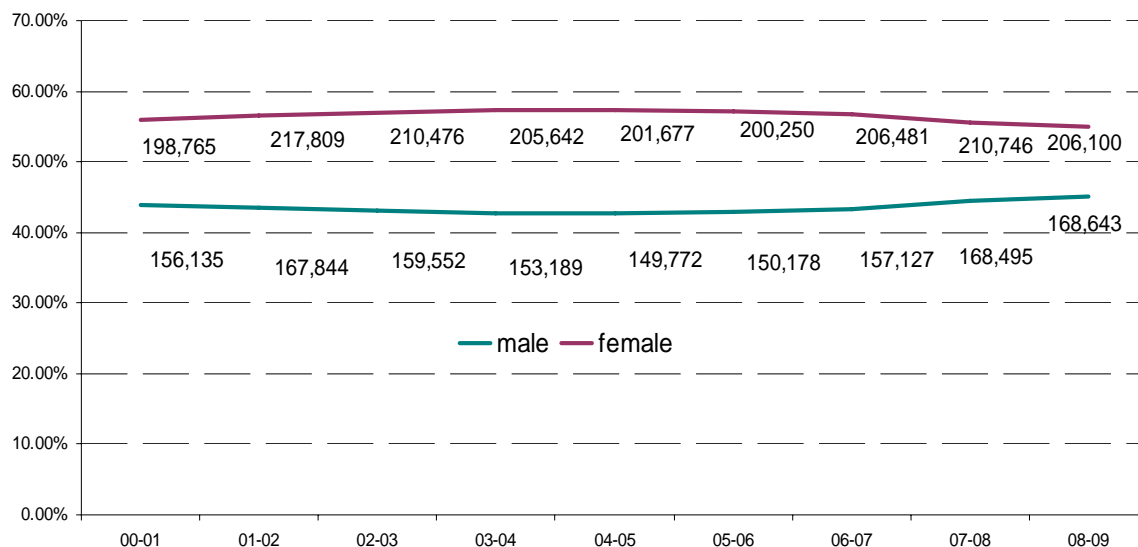


Figure 5 shows that:

- in 2008-09 the female to male gender split in student headcount terms was 55% to 45%; and
- over the last eight years, the number of males and females attending college had increased by 8% and 4% respectively; and
- the gender gap is smaller now than at any time since 2000-01.

Scotland’s colleges enrol large numbers of disabled students and students with additional support needs. Figure 6 shows that 15 per cent of all students (headcount) have a disability or receive additional support in one form or another. This equates to 25 per cent of all activity.

Figure 6: Students with a disclosed disability or receiving additional support, 2008-09

	Students	SUMs
Students with a declared disability	37,965	337,907
Students enrolled on special programmes for students with learning disabilities	14,367	91,647
Students enrolled on mainstream programmes but requiring extended learning support	3,852	130,326
Total students listed above	56,184	559,881
Total in FE colleges 2008/09	374,732	2,182,530
Percentage of students with a disability	15%	25%

Statistical note:

Students have been allocated to the categories in Figure 6 hierarchically, so that a student is counted only once. Students with a declared disability appear only in the first (top) category and so on.

These figures are subject to an element of under-reporting as many students decline to provide information on their disability status or the required data is not collected. In 2008-09 we did not have recorded disability details for about 30,445 students (about 20,000 of whom were enrolled on full-cost recovery courses for which these details are not collected) but some of these have been included in the above statistics in cases where the student was recorded as having additional support needs.

It is estimated that 20 per cent of Scotland’s population have a disability with higher incidence in the older age groups. The majority of students enrolled in Scotland’s colleges are in the younger age groups and therefore the figures above suggest that those with a disability or requiring additional learning support are well represented at Scotland’s colleges.

Figure 7: Number of students with a disability by age, 2008-09

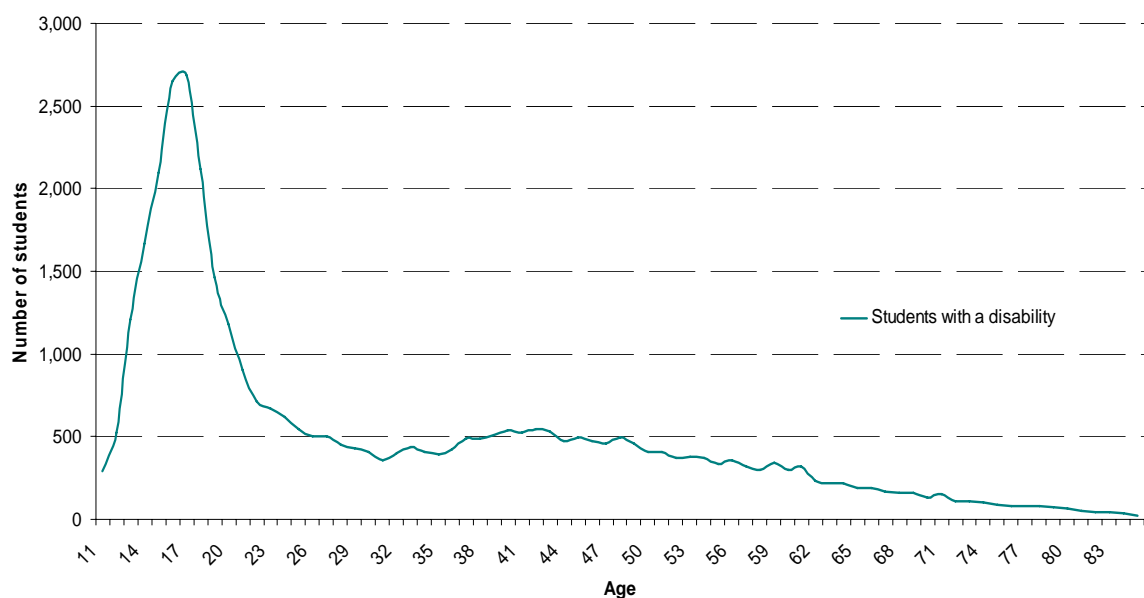


Figure 7 shows:

- students of all ages with disabilities attend college; and
- the number of disabled students peaks at age 17 at 2,700.

Figure 8: Students by breakdown of recorded disabilities, 2008-09

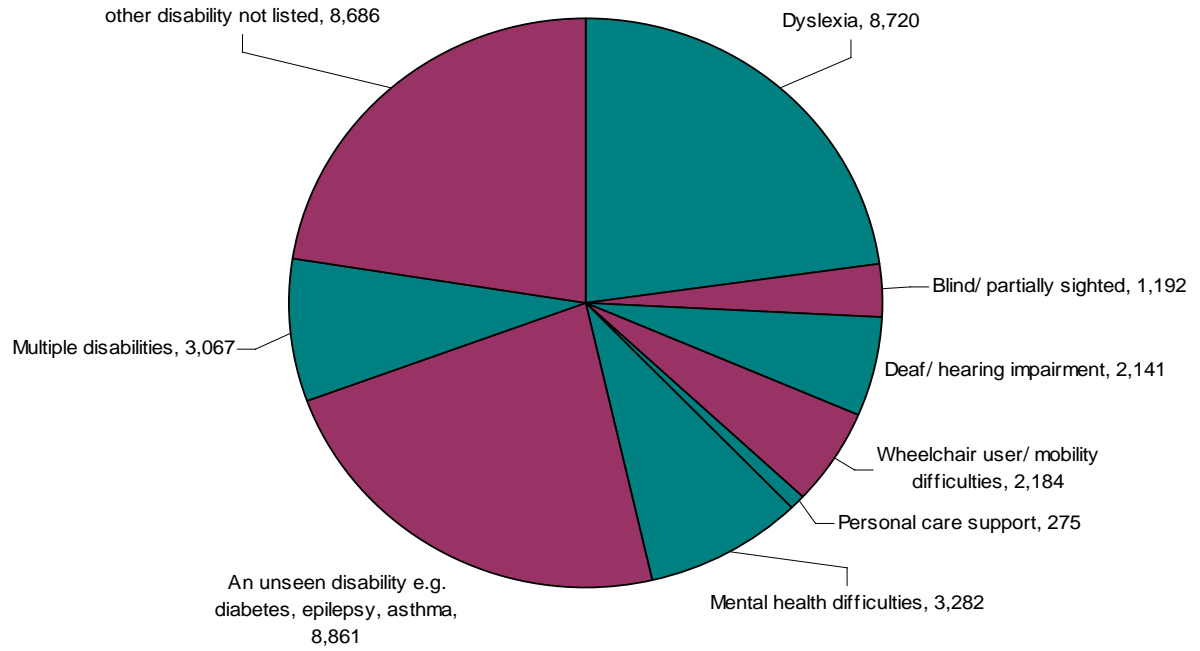


Figure 9: Disability by Qualification Aim Summary, 2008-09

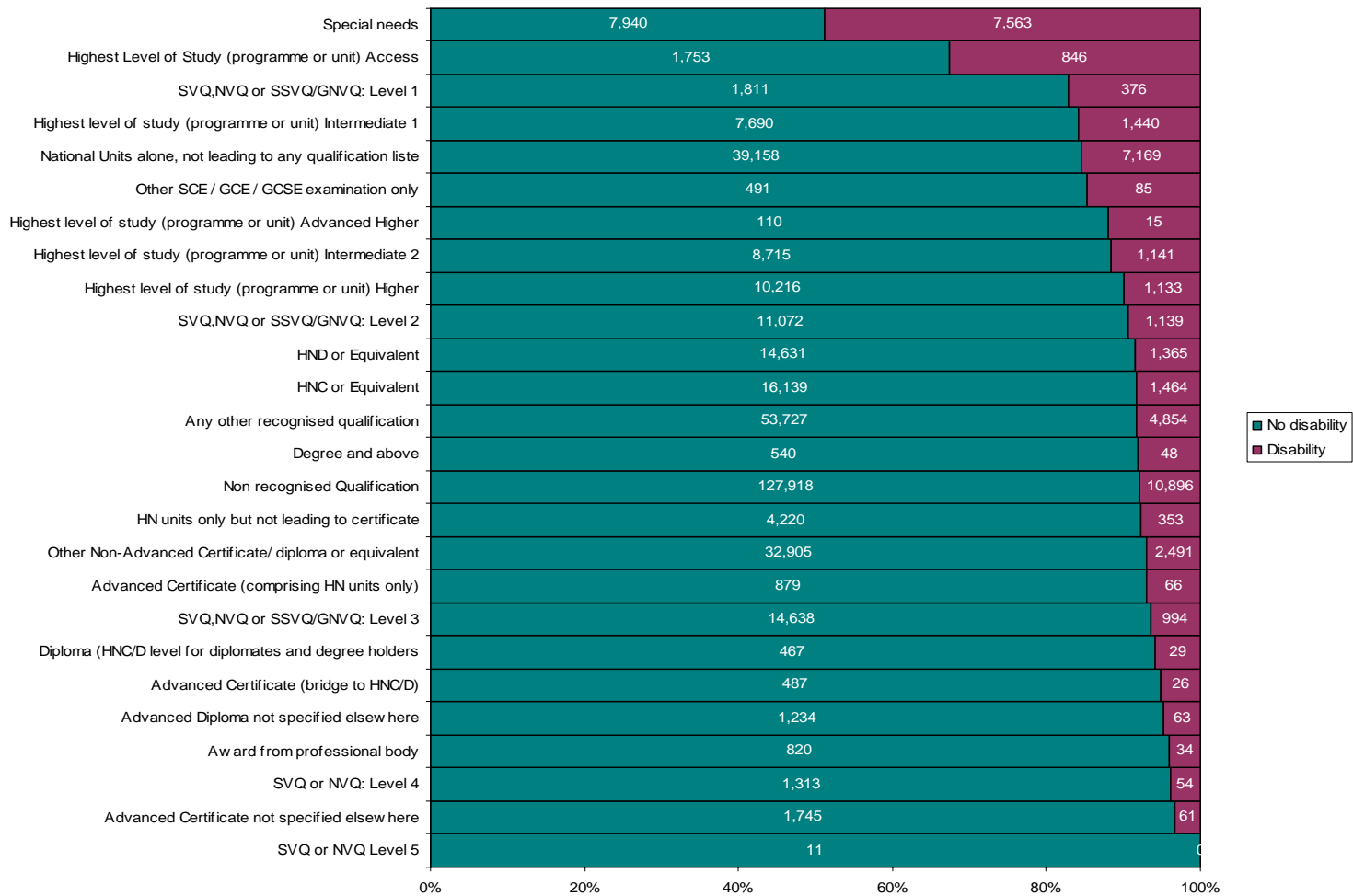


Figure 9 shows that:

- almost 50% of students on Special Needs programmes have a disability; and
- the majority of disabled students are studying towards a non-recognised qualification.

Figure 10 describes the ethnicity of students by ethnic groups other than white in Scotland’s colleges for academic year 2008-09. Students from ethnic backgrounds other than white totalled 20,148 about 5.3 per cent of all students, and far higher than the two per cent of Scotland’s population recorded in these groups in the 2001 census.

Figure 10: The ethnic background of minority student groups, 2008-09

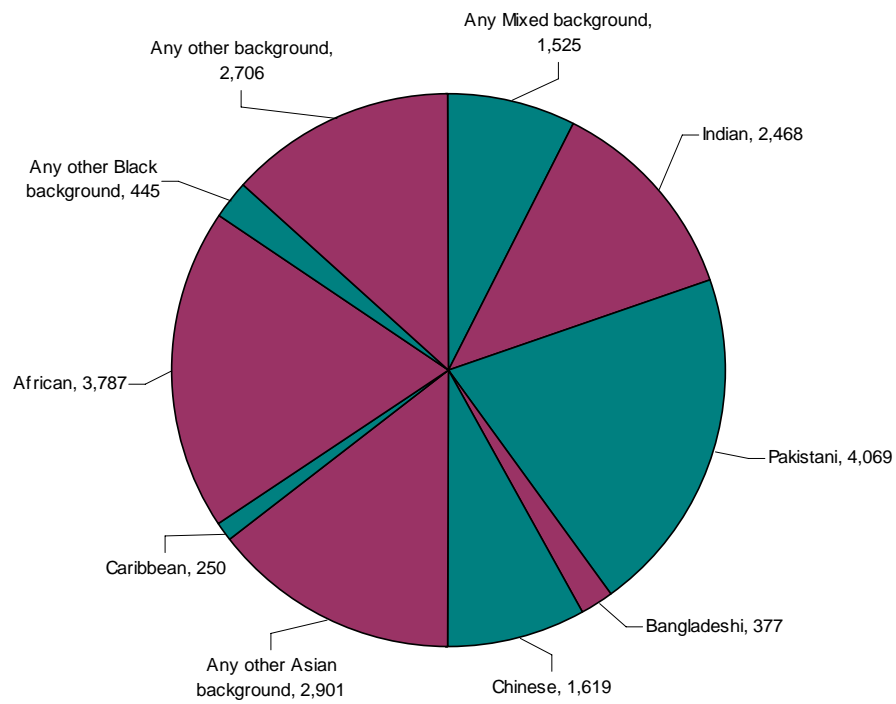


Figure 11: Students by gender and ethnic group, 2008-09

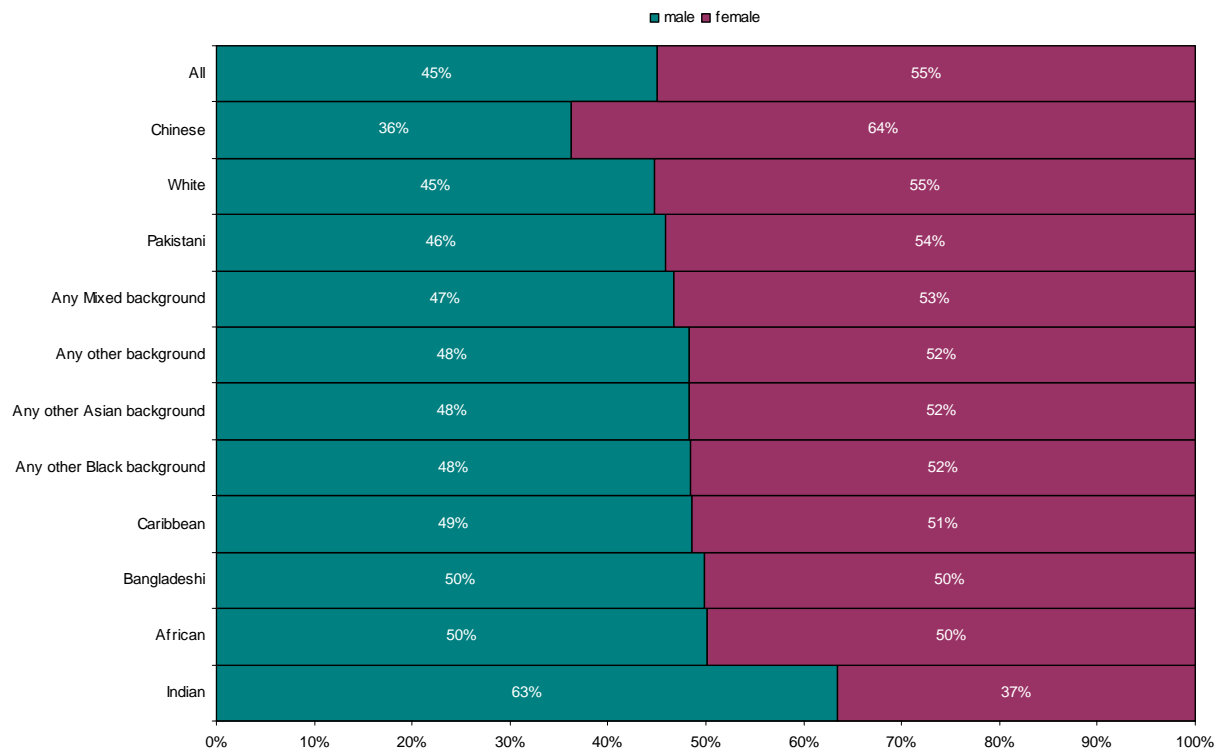


Figure 11 shows the gender balance among students from each ethnic group. The overall gender balance is in favour of females, except for the Indian group where only 37 per cent of students in that category are female. Volatility due to small numbers in some groups may lead to large percentage changes between years.

Figure 12: Ethnic/ white by subject, 2008-09

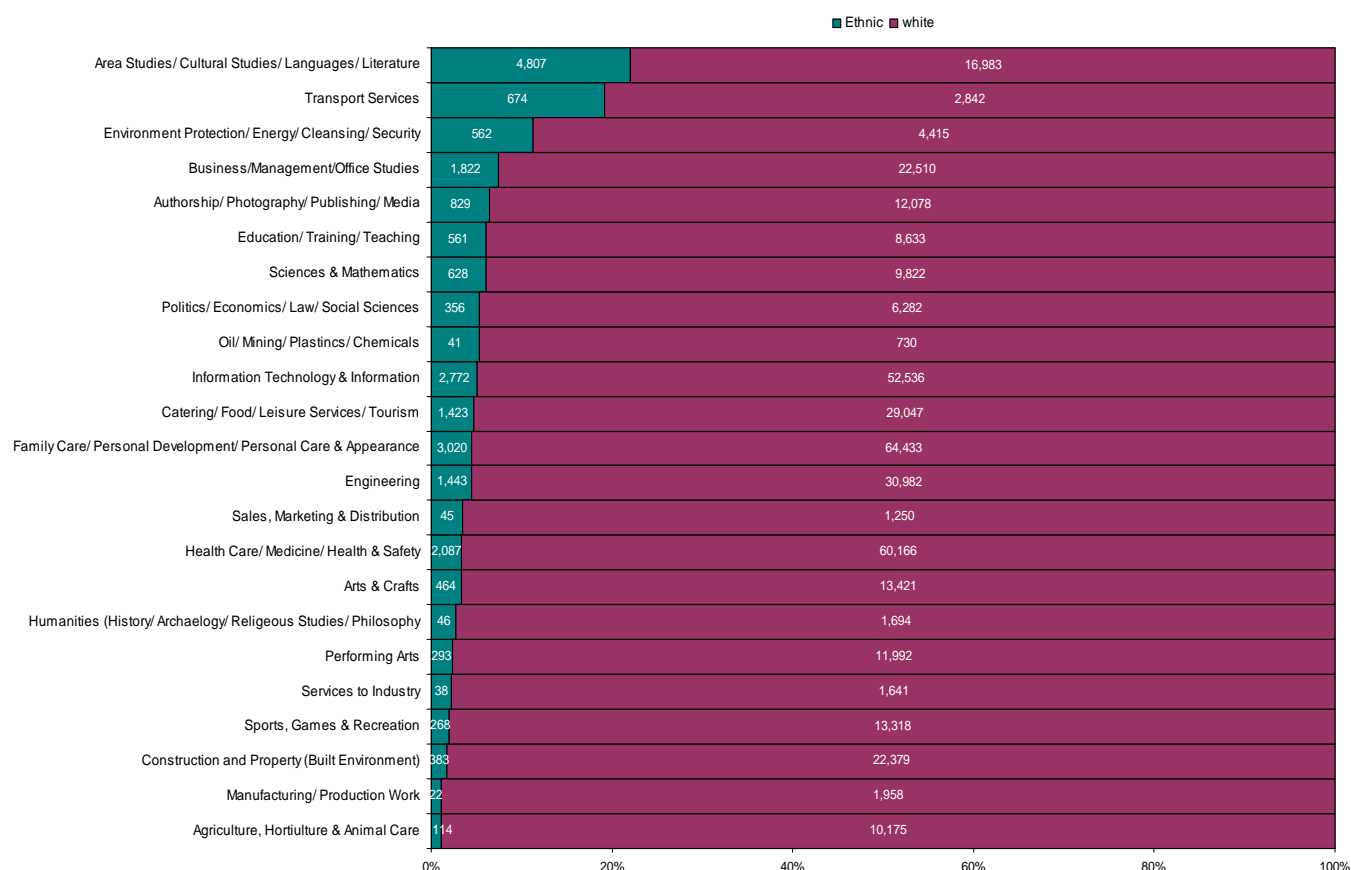
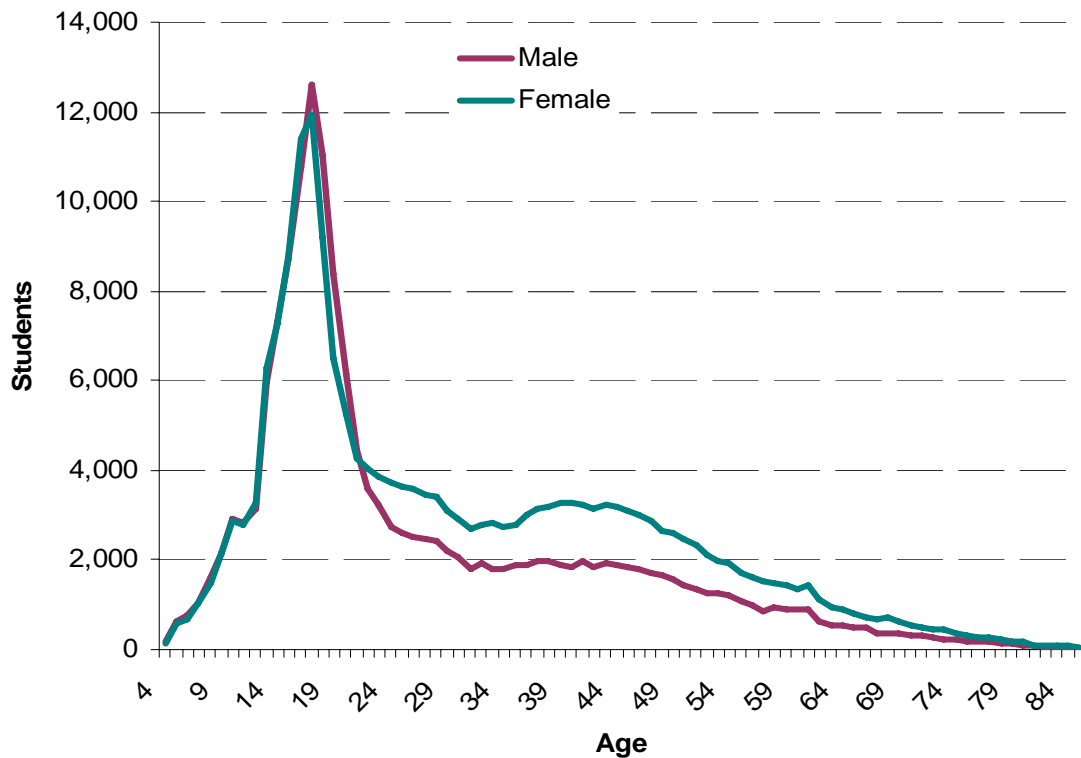


Figure 12 shows that:

- the most popular subject area for non-white students is ‘Area Studies/Languages/Literature’, and 22% of all students in this group are from an ethnic background. Approximately 50% of these students are studying ‘ESOL’;
- the second most popular subject area for students from an ethnic background is ‘Family Care/Personal Development/Personal Care and Appearance’ but this is the most popular subject area in general; and
- the least popular subject area for students of an ethnic background to study is ‘Agriculture, Horticulture & Animal Care’.

Figure 13a: Students by age and gender, 2008-09

Scotland's colleges attract students of all ages from compulsory school age to senior citizens. Figure 13a shows the age pattern in Scotland's colleges by gender in 2008-09.



It can be seen that:

- males slightly outnumber females in the younger age groups;
- females considerably outnumber the number of males in the older age groups; and
- there are substantial numbers of students across the working age population, which gives an indication of the lifelong learning contribution by colleges.

Figure 13b: Cumulative frequency of students by age and gender, 2008-09

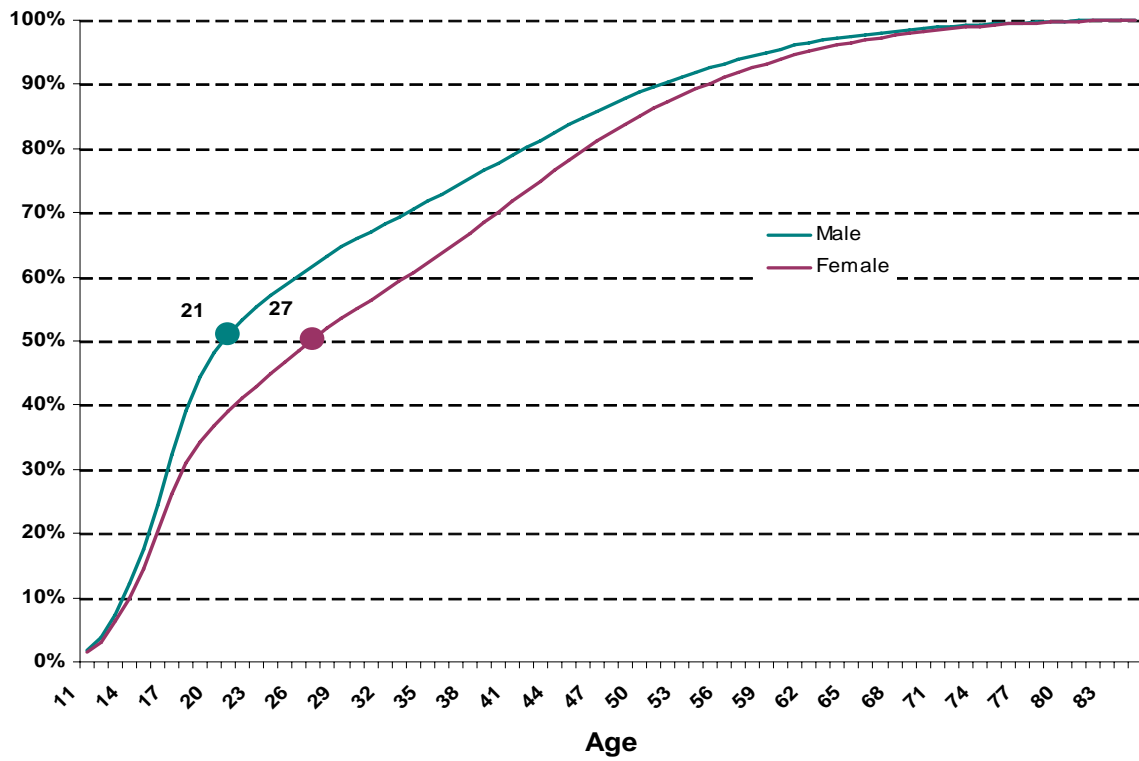


Figure 13b shows that:

- the median age for males is 21; and
- the median age for females is 27.

Figure 14: Students by age and mode of study, 2008-09

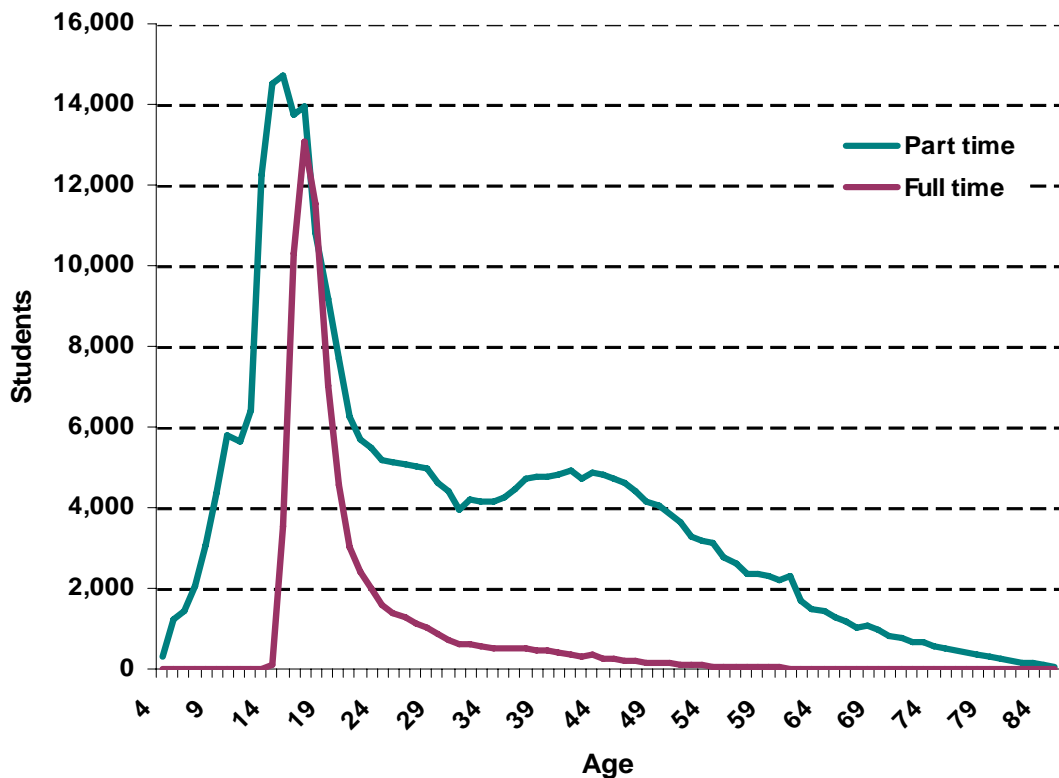


Figure 14 shows the age pattern by broad mode of study. It shows that while student numbers drop sharply after the age of 21 for both full-time and part-time study, there are considerable numbers of students who study at college part-time from older age groups.

There are a small number of full-time students aged under 16 but these students are enrolled in collaboration with their secondary schools, or are winter school leavers or school students who've been excluded.

Scotland's colleges contribute significantly to the training of the Scottish workforce. This can be through providing the qualifications required for the job, running courses to a company's specification, day release programmes for individuals continuing professional development, or reskilling for those looking to re-enter employment.

Figure 15 below provides an estimate of the number of working age students (aged 18 and over) enrolled on programmes that have a direct link with business.

Figure 15: Working age enrolments with a direct link to business, numbers and as a percentage of all WA enrolments, 2000-01 to 2008-09

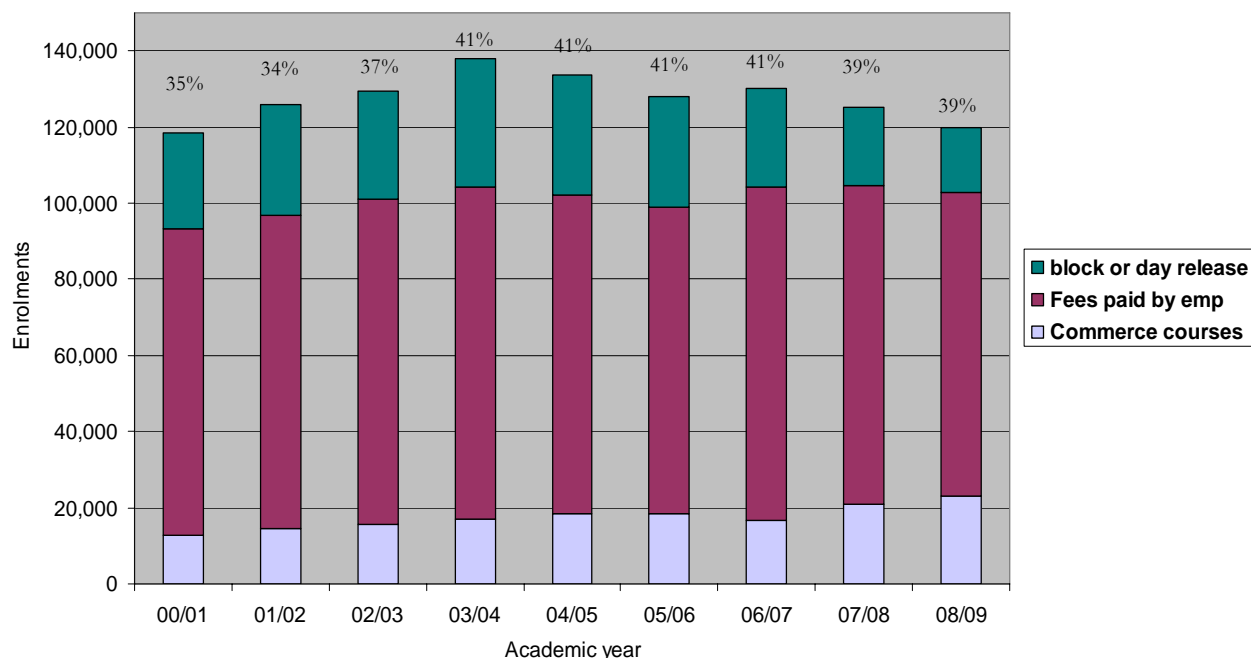


Figure 15 shows that:

- 39% of enrolments, for those of working age, at Scotland's colleges had a direct link to business for academic year 2008-09; and
- for the last six years this ratio has remained relatively constant.

Figure 15 generally covers students in employment aged 18 and over who attend college and therefore will underestimate the number of students who attend college to improve their employment prospects.

Figure 16 provides a fuller overview of student categories with a link to employment for academic year 2008-09.

Figure 16: Working age enrolments with a link to employment, 2008-09

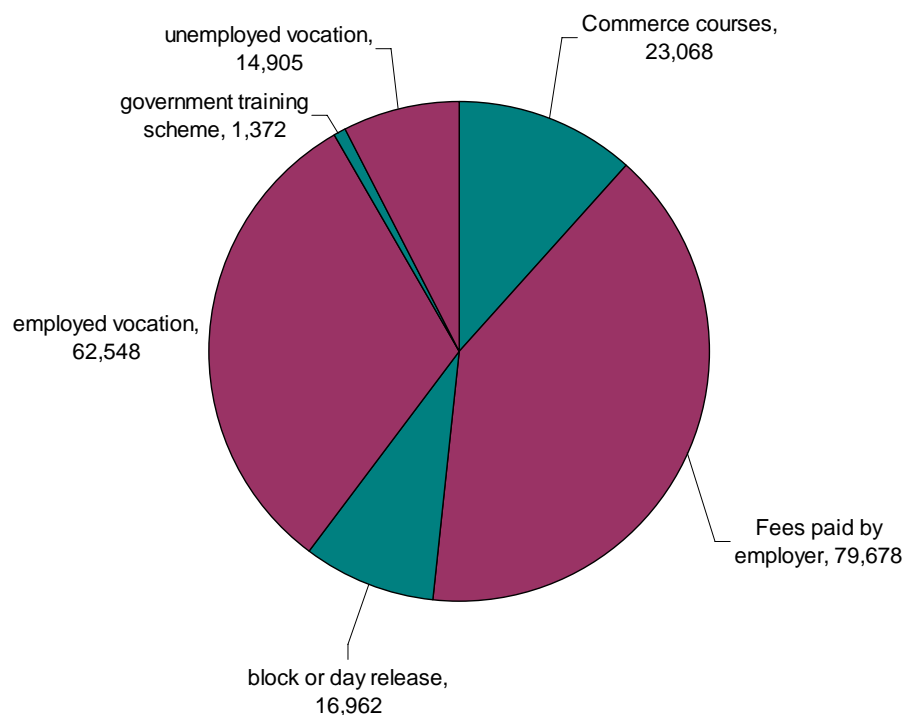


Figure 16 shows that:

- 198,533 enrolments (65% of working age enrolments) are linked to employment; and
- 96,640 enrolments are at least partly financed by the employer.

As well as providing lifelong learning opportunities for those already in employment Scotland's colleges open the pathways to employment for those from under-privileged backgrounds who may have traditionally encountered barriers to improving their employment prospects through education. Colleges undertake this role in many ways, offering taster or access courses, and reaching out to students who underachieved in their previous studies or wish to update their skills.

In addition colleges offer financial assistance (from bursary funds) to students to support their studies. This can include assistance with living costs or childcare arrangements as well as support for travel and study materials.

About 97 per cent of all students receiving a bursary in 2007-08 were full-time further education students. Figure 17 outlines the number of students receiving a bursary in 2007-08 and the total amount paid to these students in terms of the various types of allowance available.

Figure 17: Students assisted from the bursary fund, 2007-08

	Students assisted	Expenditure	Average award per student
Maintenance allowances	17,818	£38,031,069	£2,134
Residence costs	355	£580,029	£1,634
Dependants allowance	18	£27,141	£1,508
Study allowance	32,304	£5,519,277	£171
Travel expenses	29,977	£11,035,978	£368
Alternative travel expenses	3,126	£2,185,784	£699
Special educational needs allowances	2,145	£2,996,911	£1,397
Total	41,513	£60,376,189	£1,454

Figure 17 shows that:

- 63% of bursary funds are used to pay maintenance allowances, and
- 21% of all students receiving a bursary receive a maintenance allowance.

Other analyses show that most students receiving bursary support were under 25 and full time. In addition we know that 60 per cent of students receiving bursary funds were female and 40 per cent male.

Part 2: Qualifications and subject provision

Scotland's colleges had 483,186 enrolments from 374,732 students during academic year 2008-09. These 374,732 students were enrolled across 36,256 individual programmes leading to a range of qualifications.

Statistical note:

Details of most of the qualifications referred to in this chapter can be obtained from the website of the Scottish Qualifications Agency www.sqa.org.uk. Other (specifically vocational) qualifications include City and Guilds (C&G) and Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) awards.

Figure 18 below provides a detailed breakdown of activity for academic year 2008-09 by the qualification aim of the student.

Figure 18: Enrolments, activity and achievements by qualification aim, 2008-09

	Enrolments	Achievements	SUMs
Recognised qualification at HE level			
Degree and above	779	326	5,419
Award from professional body	1,018	491	4,438
SVQ or NVQ Level 5	12	6	59
Diploma (HNC/D level for diploma and degree holders)	562	228	2,668
HND or Equivalent	16,194	6,016	227,611
HNC or Equivalent	18,113	9,182	204,060
SVQ or NVQ: Level 4	1,456	765	5,803
Advanced Certificate (bridge to HNC/D)	521	366	3,580
Advanced Certificate not specified elsewhere	1,944	1,041	5,641
Advanced Diploma not specified elsewhere	1,424	827	6,191
Advanced Certificate (comprising HN units only)	988	535	3,797
HN units only but not leading to certificate	5,284	3,160	12,783
Recognised qualification at FE level			
SVQ,NVQ or SSVQ/GNVQ: Level 3	16,556	7,446	147,009
SVQ,NVQ or SSVQ/GNVQ: Level 2	12,617	6,285	140,436
SVQ,NVQ or SSVQ/GNVQ: Level 1	2,334	1,395	33,251
Highest level of study (programme or unit) Advanced Higher	128	93	1,832
Highest level of study (programme or unit) Higher	11,887	6,516	144,323
Highest level of study (programme or unit) Intermediate 2	10,118	5,796	112,648
Highest level of study (programme or unit) Intermediate 1	9,588	4,127	51,420
Highest Level of Study (programme or unit) Access	2,814	1,834	20,969
Other Non-Advanced Certificate/ diploma or equivalent	40,205	21,371	202,822
Any other recognised qualification	71,379	44,362	166,910
Other SCE/GCE/GCSE examination only	595	340	6,982
National Units			
National Units alone, not leading to any qualification listed above	57,510	32,067	468,605
Special needs			
Special educational needs programme	20,941	2,554	68,437
Non-recognised qualification			
courses not leading to a recognised qualification	178,219	15,711	134,835
Scotland Total	483,186	172,840	2,182,530

As you would expect the numbers achieving qualifications are smaller than those studying for qualifications as many students will not receive their results within the academic year or may require to resit some examinations. Other courses run

for more than one year and therefore no qualification will be awarded until the end of the final year.

An achievement in the table above refers to students being assessed and being successful. However, not all courses/programmes are designed to be assessed, 77 per cent of enrolments in Special needs programmes were not assessed as the courses were not designed to be assessed but the students on those courses had completed the programme. Likewise, 85 per cent of enrolments in non-recognised qualification courses/programmes were not designed to be assessed but the students on those courses still completed them.

Recognised qualifications in this context are national group awards mainly accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority. These include awards ranging from National Certificate or Diplomas at the FE level to Higher National Certificates and Diplomas at the HE level. There is also some overlap with the school sector with students studying for 'Highers' at access to advanced levels.

National Units themselves are recognised qualifications but those listed in Figure 18 do not lead to a group award. In many instances a programme consisting of National Units, but not leading to a group award, will be designed for a particular student or group of students to meet the individual needs of the student and/or their employer.

Special educational needs programmes are designed for students with learning difficulties.

Non-recognised qualifications generally fall into two categories, leisure programmes or locally designed programmes. For example students may attend college to learn a foreign language in preparation for an overseas holiday, while employees might attend locally designed health and safety programmes or specific 'training for work' programmes.

Figure 18 shows that:

- courses leading to a recognised qualification or for students with special educational needs account for 94% of all activity (SUMs);
- SVQs account for 7% of enrolments and 15% of activity;
- HNCs account for the highest number of enrolments at the HE level but HNDs account for more of the activity (SUMs). This is because 91% of enrolments on HND courses are full time whereas only 58% of HNC course enrolments are full time;

- courses not leading to a recognised qualification account for 37% of enrolments but only 6% of activity. One reason is that many of these programmes are of short duration;
- 22,943 students gained an HE level qualification in 2008-09; and
- 99,565 students gained a recognised FE level qualification in 2008-09.

Figure 19 below provides a summary of the volume of activity by qualification aim over the period 2005-06 to 2008-09. We have chosen to show Figure 19 by activity (SUMs) rather than enrolments or number of students, as this measure best reflects the resources committed to students achieving these qualifications.

Figure 19: Qualification of study by activity levels (SUMs), 2005-06 to 2008-09

	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	% change since 2005-06
Recognised qualification at FE level	903,203	957,170	1,011,247	1,028,602	14%
Recognised qualification at HE level	489,660	492,205	481,967	482,051	-2%
Special needs	58,391	66,583	70,172	68,437	17%
National Units	478,023	450,098	451,235	468,605	-2%
Non-recognised qualification	115,378	163,858	149,082	134,835	17%

Figure 19 shows that:

- the main growth areas has been for non-recognised qualifications;
- recognised qualifications at FE level activity have also increased over the past four years by 14%;
- special needs activity has remained constant at 3% of overall activity; and
- HE level & National Units have decreased over the four years.

Figure 20 below shows the gender balance by qualification level for academic year 2008-09. It shows that the gender balance is almost 50/50 for students enrolled on special educational needs programmes whilst it is at its widest (in favour of females) for National Units.

Figure 20: Gender balance by qualification level, 2008-09

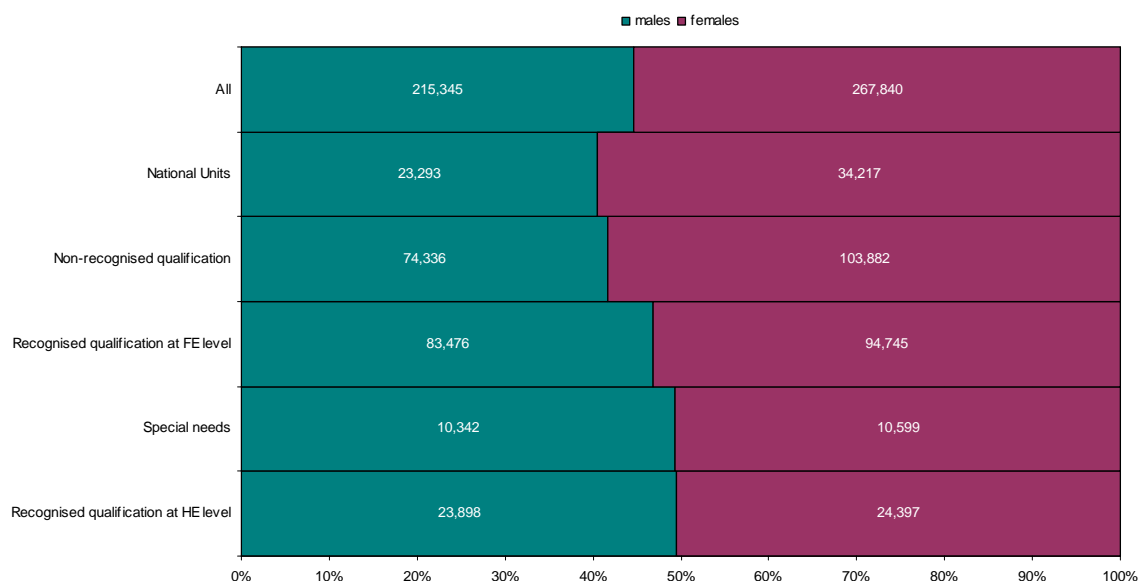


Figure 21 below provides a summary of activity by subject group and shows that:

- there has been change across some subject areas over the period 2005-06 to 2008-09;
- there are patterns of growth in areas such as ‘Politics/Economics/Law/Social Sciences’, ‘Engineering’, ‘Family Care/Personal Development/Personal Care and Appearance’ and ‘Area Studies/Cultural Studies/Languages & Literature’; and
- other areas such as ‘teacher training’ and ‘information technology’ show a decline in activity levels.

The subject groups in Figure 21 are based on the subject groups applied to individual programmes of study. This can, however, lead to some subject areas being under-reported as they are more commonly included in programmes as a minor subject. For example, it is common for a mathematics unit to be included in a business or engineering programme.

Figure 22 compares subjects at the programme and unit level and shows that in 2008-09:

- ‘Science and Mathematics’ had activity levels of about 53,000 SUMs at the programme level but 106,000 at the unit level. This is mainly caused by mathematics units supporting programmes from other subject areas;

- similarly activity from the ‘Services to Industry’, ‘Education/Training & Teaching’ and ‘Sales, Marketing and Distribution’ subject areas are twice as high at the unit level than at the programme level; and
- ‘Oil, mining, plastics, chemicals’ and ‘Politics/Law/Economics/Social sciences’ activity is over-reported at the programme level compared to the unit level.

Figure 21: Activity by subject area, 2005-06 to 2008-09

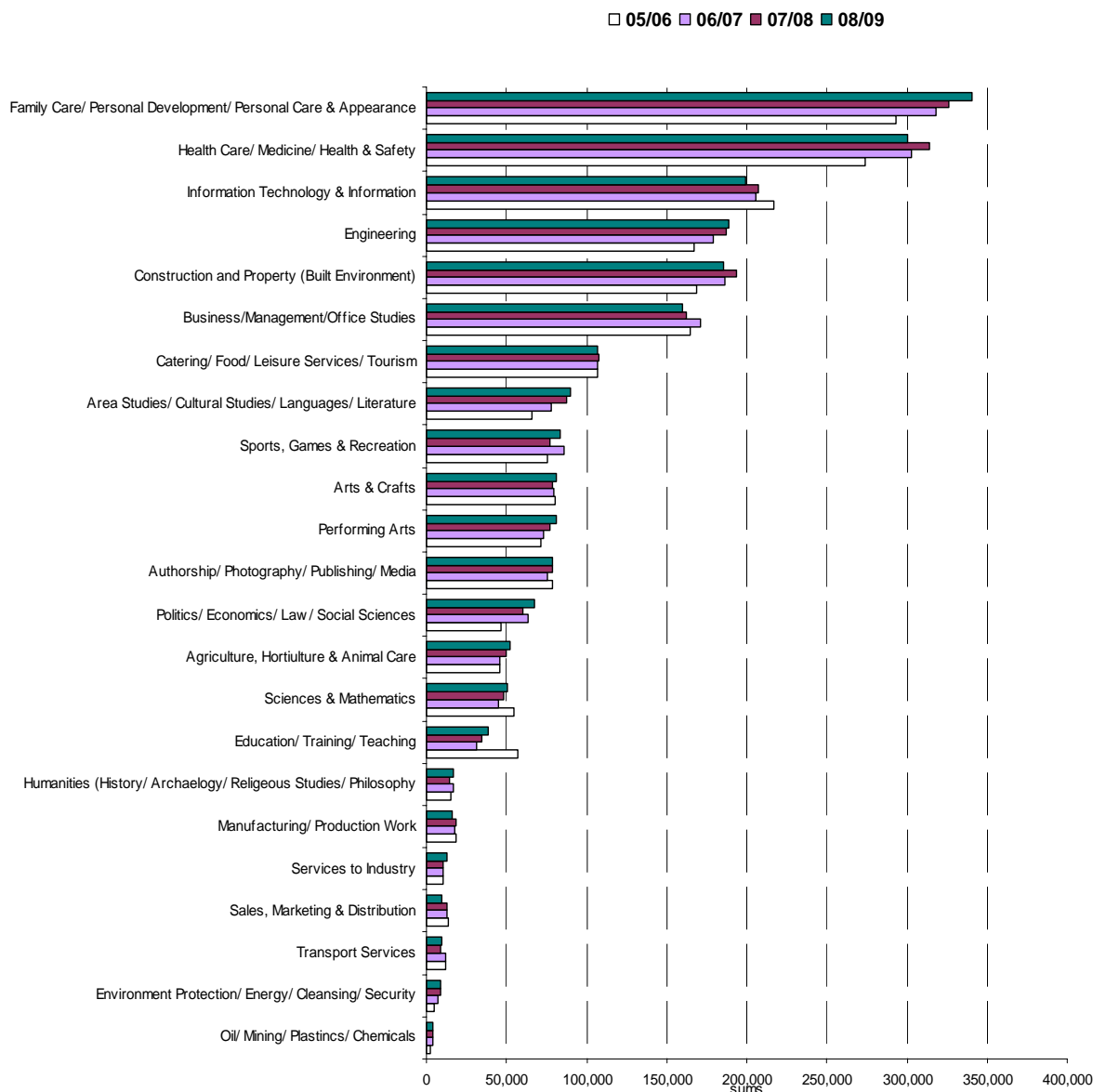


Figure 22: A comparison of subject areas at the course and unit level, 2008-09

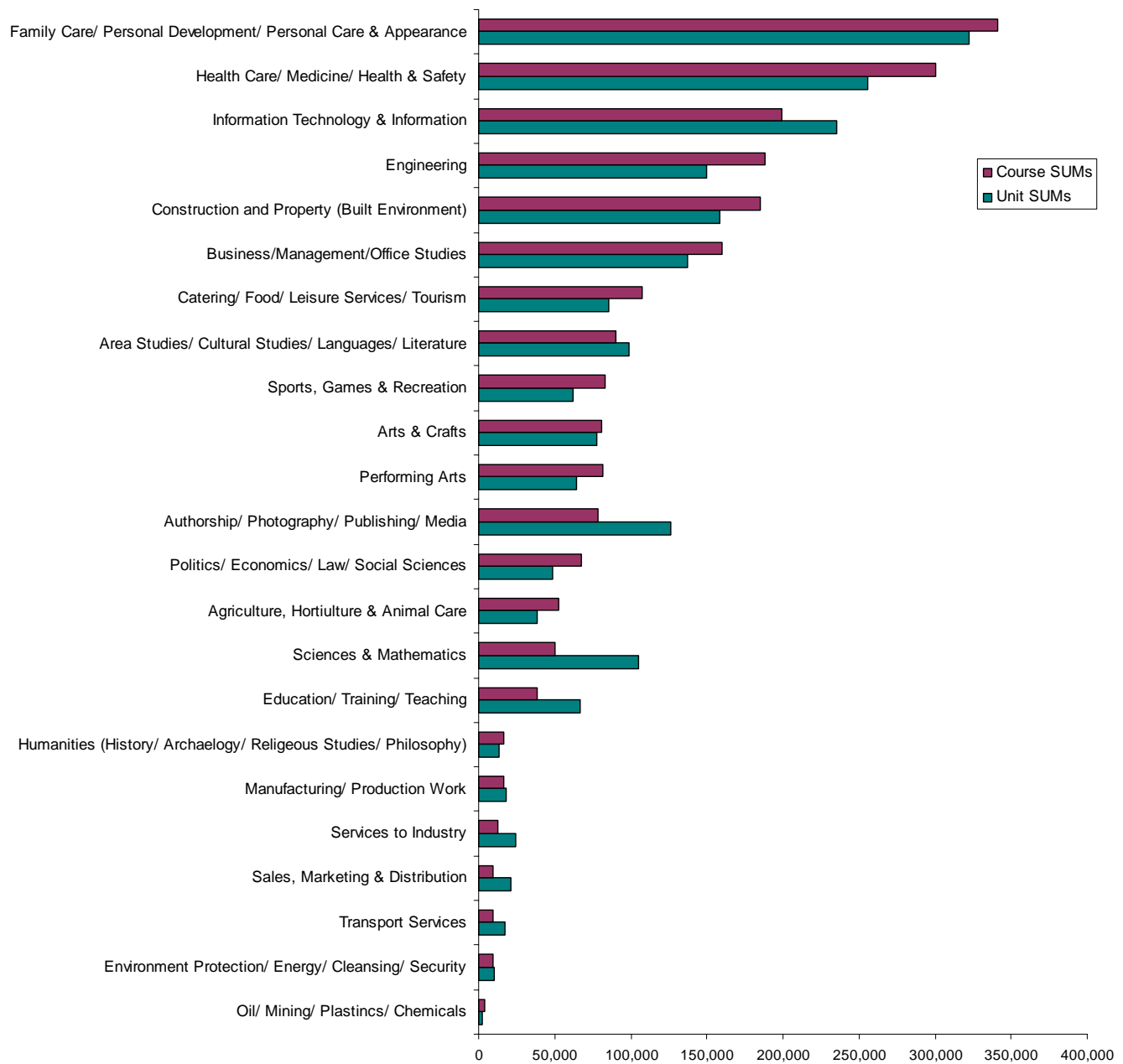


Figure 23: Course subject areas by qualification aim, 2008-09

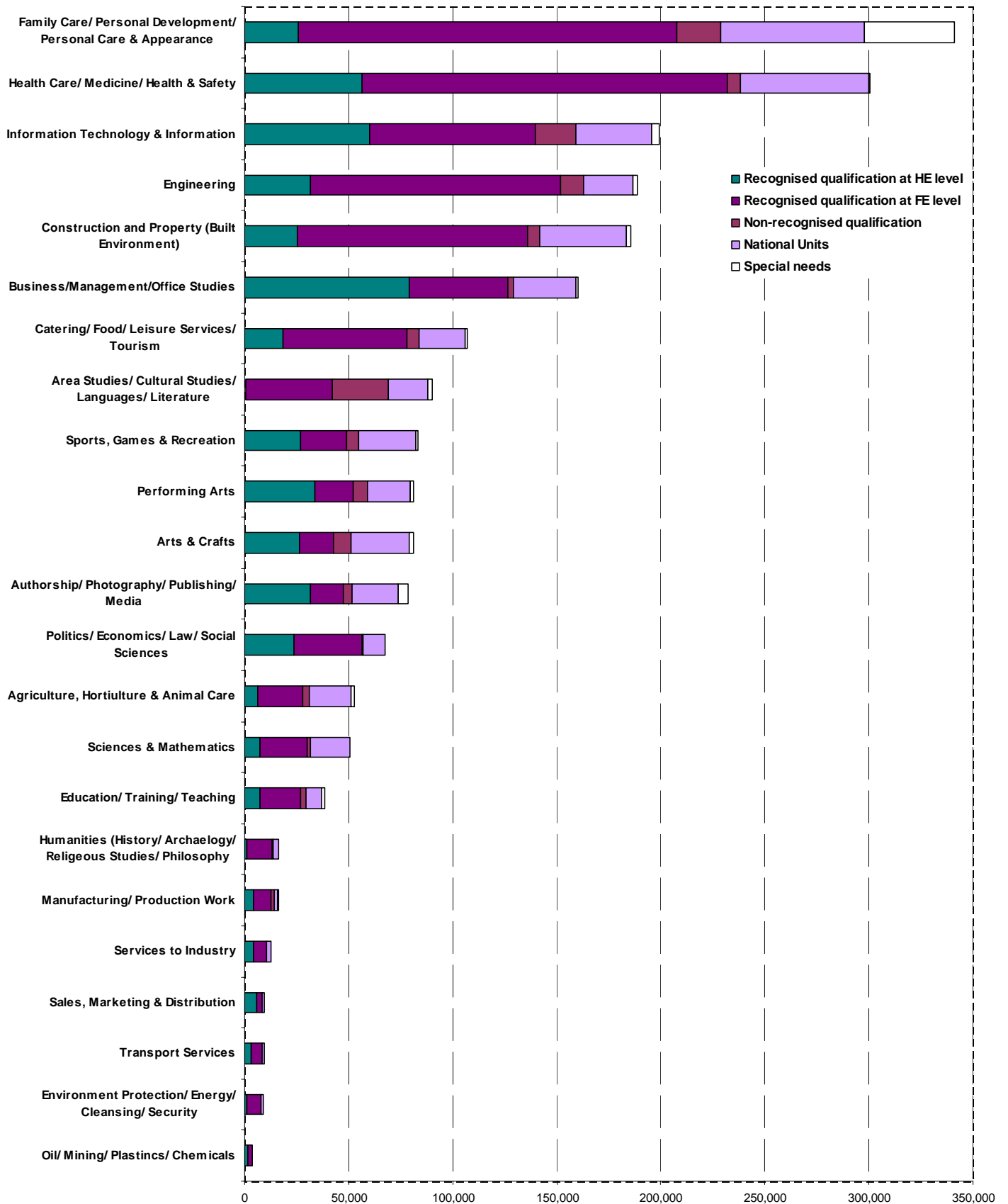


Figure 23 shows that:

- most activity related to the top 5 most popular subjects, is at FE level;
- approximately 50% of activity within the 'Business Management/ Office Studies' subject groups relates to HE programmes;
- students with special educational needs are more likely to be enrolled on a course within the 'Family Care/Personal Development/ Personal Care and Appearance' subject area. 13% of students within this group are enrolled on special educational needs programmes;
- the subject accounting for most activity in the non-recognised qualification group is 'Area Studies/Cultural Studies/Languages/ Literature' and
- the subject for most activity in the National Units qualification group is 'Family Care/Personal Development/Personal Care and Appearance'.

Figure 24 describes the gender balance by subject area for academic year 2008-09. It shows the percentage of male and female students and the total number of students for each subject area.

Figure 24: Gender balance by subject area, 2008-09

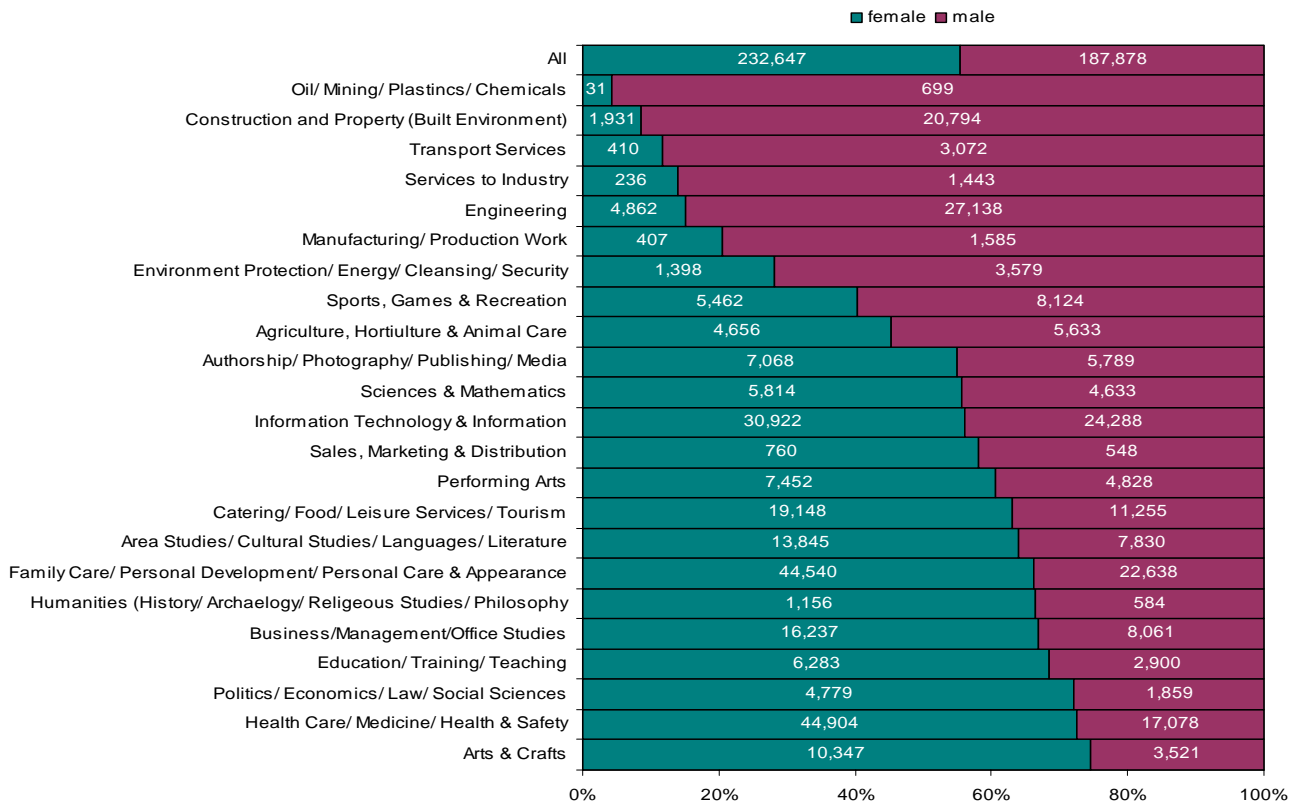


Figure 24 shows that:

- engineering, transport, construction, manufacturing, oil and services to industry subjects are heavily dominated by males (who account for over 80% of activity in these areas); and
- females dominate in arts & crafts, politics and health care subjects (accounting for over 70% of enrolments in all these areas).

Figure 25 describes the qualifications held by teaching staff in academic year 2008-09.

Figure 25: Teaching qualifications (TQ) of college payroll teaching staff, 2008-09

	Permanent and Temporary		
	Full-time	Part-time	Total
TQ(FE) or other equivalent	3,622	2,841	6,463
Certificate: Introduction to Teaching Further Education	128	379	507
Advanced Certificate: Teaching in Further Education	107	132	239
Diploma: Teaching in Further Education	11	41	52
TQ Other	285	776	1,061
All teaching Qualifications	4,153	4,169	8,322
Qualified but not Teacher Trained	502	3,075	3,577
Unqualified	13	212	225
Total	4,668	7,456	12,124

Figure 25 shows that:

- 89% of full-time teaching staff are teacher trained;
- 99.7% of full-time teaching staff are either teacher trained or qualified;
- 56% of part-time teaching staff are teacher trained; and
- 97% of part time teaching staff are either teacher trained or qualified.

In addition, other analyses show that 58 per cent of teaching staff FTEs are female, and that 41 per cent of teaching staff are 50 and over, with nine per cent 60 or over.