

Key points for Further Education (FE) Activity

We have fewer enrolments.....

Over the past five academic years, the number of enrolments at FE colleges decreased by 5.7% from 186,470 in 2010/11 to 175,818 in 2014/15.

...but consistent proportions on regulated courses.

The proportion of regulated enrolments ranged from 78.4% in 2013/14 to 83.4% in 2010/11. Almost four-fifths (79.7%) of all enrolments were regulated in 2014/15.

The student population is getting younger....

Over the 5 year period between 2010/11 and 2014/15, the majority of regulated enrolments were aged '19 and under', with a year-on-year increase from 52.0% in 2010/11 to 58.4% in 2014/15.

... the vast majority are part time courses.....

In 2010/11, 18.3% of all regulated enrolments were full-time and 81.7% were part-time. This pattern of provision remained almost constant across the following 4 years, with 18.9% full-time and 81.1% part-time in 2014/15.

....and more studying at level 2.

Of the 140,137 regulated enrolments in 2014/15 those at 'Level 1 and below' accounted for 21.4% (30,053), 46.2% (64,806) at 'Level 2', 23.7% (33,207) at 'Level 3' and 8.4% (11,722) were at 'Level 4 and above'. This indicates that nearly four-fifths (78.3%) of regulated provision are at level 2 or above.

More males studying full-time than females.....

It is interesting to note that upon examining regulated enrolments by mode of attendance and gender, it illustrates that in part-time provision there is a fairly even split, while in full-time provision, males (57.8%) are in the majority in 2014/15.

....and there is variation in gender, in terms of the regulated course subject area.

In 2014/15, females accounted for the vast majority in 'Health, Public Services and Care' (85.1%) and in 'Retail and Commercial Enterprise' enrolments (77.4%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' (96.8%) and 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (93.6%).

At Northern Ireland level, deprivation is not a substantial factor. However, this differs at college level.

In 2014/15, regulated enrolments were fairly evenly spread across the five groupings of deprivation.

NWRC had over a third (33.6%) of enrolments from the most deprived areas, however only 2.4% from the least deprived areas. Over half of BMC regulated enrolments are quite polarised in that 55.5% are from either the most or least deprived grouping of areas.

The largest proportion of regulated enrolments for SERC was from the most affluent areas (25.5%). Over 50% of NWRC and SWC regulated enrolments came from the two most deprived grouping of areas.

Majority of enrolments are funded through Funded Learning Unit (FLU).

Of the 175,818 enrolments in 2014/15, over two-thirds (70.0%) were funded through the Funded Learning Unit (FLU), 13.1% were funded through government training programmes, 8.1% were cost recovery and 6.1% through the Entitlement Framework programme. There were a further 2.6% of enrolments where the funding stream was classed as 'Other'.

Higher Education enrolments have been increasing year on year.

Over the past five academic years, the number of HE enrolments at FE colleges increased by 6.5% from 11,004 in 2010/11 to 11,722 in 2014/15. There has been an increase in HE enrolments in each year over the period.

Increases in total qualifications are mainly due to increases in SERC, NRC and SWC.

Between 2010/11 and 2014/15, there were large increases in qualifications for SERC (31.6%), NRC (13.0%) and SWC (11.0%) and a smaller increase in BMC (3.2%). In NWRC there was a decrease of 7.4%, from 11,112 to 10,291 qualifications over the same period and in SRC a decrease of 6.9%, from 17,852 to 16,626 qualifications.

Performance of FE Colleges is continuously improving.

Over the period 2010/11 to 2014/15, the retention rate in FE colleges increased by 1.6 percentage points from 87.7% to 89.3%. This implies that more people are staying on and completing their course in the most recent year when compared to 2010/11.

The achievement rate of FE colleges rose by 8.6 percentage points from 80.3% to 88.9% over the period 2010/11 to 2014/15. This indicates that of those who complete their course, there are more people achieving their qualification now in 2014/15 than in 2010/11.

The success rate (i.e. the proportion of students staying on their course and achieving a qualification) increased from 70.4% in 2010/11 to 79.4% in 2014/15 (9.0 percentage points).
