

Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes in Northern Ireland from 2002/03 to 2019/20

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This publication presents a range of analysis regarding the numbers and characteristics of those enrolling and qualifying in Essential Skills since the start of the Strategy in 2002/03.

Key Points

- Since 2002/03, 233,257 individuals have participated in 585,454 Essential Skills enrolments and achieved 378,264 qualifications (Tables 1 and 12).
- For a variety of reasons, including a dip in the 16-19 year old population (the main age group taking Essential Skills) and improvements in GCSE grades, annual enrolments have been decreasing for nine years in a row, from a peak of 59,994 in 2010/11 to 26,768 in 2019/20 (Table 1).
- Both enrolments and qualifications issued decreased by around 9% in 2019/20. This can be attributed largely to the effect the COVID-19 outbreak has had on the education sector (Tables 1 and 12).
- While those aged 16-19 have accounted for 60.3% of enrolments over the full history of the Essential Skills Strategy, they made up 71.8% of enrolments in 2019/20. The historical share of those aged 45 and over is 8.9%, although this was lower (5.5%) in 2019/20 (Table 3).
- Generally, the more deprived an area is, the higher the number of Essential Skills enrolments from those living in that area. Over the 18 years of the Strategy, over half of enrolments (52.8%) have been from the two most deprived 'quintiles' (Table 6).
- Approaching two in every three (65.1%) Essential Skills enrolments result in a qualification being issued. Numeracy accounted for 37.2% of qualifications issued in the most recent academic year, while a further third (33.3%) were in Literacy and 29.5% were in ICT (Tables 16 and 18).
- Almost half (48.4%) of Essential Skills qualifications issued since 2002/03 have been at Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE grades A*-C), a further 32.4% at Level 1 and 19.2% at Entry Level (Table 13).

Reader Information

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Feedback	As we want to engage with users of our statistics, we invite you to feedback your comments on this publication to: Email: james.magill@economy-ni.gov.uk Tel: 028 9041 6783

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About Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education)

Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education) is responsible for the collection, quality assurance, analysis and publication of timely and accurate information derived from a wide range of statistical information returns supplied by the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education (FE) Colleges across Northern Ireland (NI) and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). Statistical information is collected routinely from a variety of electronic individual level administrative systems.

The Head of Branch is the Principal Statistician, Brian French. The Branch aims to present information in a meaningful way and provide advice on its uses to customers in the Committee for the Economy, FE Colleges, universities, Professional Advisory Groups, policy branches within DfE, other educational organisations, academia, private sector organisations, charity/voluntary organisations, as well as the general public.

The statistical information collected is used to contribute to major exercises such as reporting on the performance of the Higher Education (HE) and FE sectors, other comparative performance exercises, target setting and monitoring, departmental research projects, development of service frameworks, as well as policy formulation and evaluation. In addition, the information is used in response to a high volume of ad hoc queries each year.

Information is disseminated through several key statistical publications, including:

- [Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes](#);
- [Further Education Activity](#);
- [Higher Education Enrolments](#);
- [Higher Education Qualifications](#).

A detailed list of these publications is available from:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/statistics-publication-schedule>

An Official Statistics Publication

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

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

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

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

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/statement-compliance>

Storyboard for Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes in Northern Ireland from 2002/03 to 2019/20

While there have been over half a million enrolments in the 18 years of the Strategy...	Since 2002/03, 233,257 individuals have participated in 585,454 Essential Skills enrolments and achieved 378,264 qualifications (Tables 1 and 12).
...there has been a decrease in the annual number of enrolments in each of the past 9 years.	For a variety of reasons, including a dip in the 16-19 year old population (the main age group taking Essential Skills) and improvements in GCSE grades, annual enrolments have been decreasing for nine years in a row, from a peak of 59,994 in 2010/11 to 26,768 in 2019/20 (Table 1).
The annual number of qualifications issued has decreased for the sixth consecutive year.	The number of Essential Skills qualifications issued has decreased for the fifth consecutive year, from 40,851 in 2013/14 to 15,926 in 2019/20. This 61.0% decrease in qualifications is greater than the 41.2% decrease in enrolments over the same period. A refresh of curriculum standards in 2016/17 is likely to have been an important factor (Tables 1 and 12).
The coronavirus outbreak meant fewer students were able to participate in 2019/20.	Both enrolments and qualifications issued decreased by around 9% in 2019/20. This can be attributed largely to the effect the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has had on the education sector (Tables 1 and 12).
More than 7 in 10 enrolments in 2019/20 were from those aged 16-19.	While those aged 16-19 have accounted for 60.3% of enrolments over the full history of the Essential Skills Strategy, they made up 71.8% of enrolments in 2019/20. The historical share of those aged 45 and over is 8.9%, although this was lower (5.5%) in 2019/20 (Table 3).
A majority of enrolments have been from the unemployed or economically inactive...	Over half (55.6%) of enrolments in the past 18 years have been from individuals who reported as either 'unemployed' (21.4%) or 'economically inactive' (34.2%). In 2019/20, the total share of these two groups was similar at 57.0%; however, the split between 'unemployed' and 'economically inactive' had shifted to 7.6% and 49.4% respectively (Table 4).
...and a higher proportion of enrolments are from the most deprived areas.	Generally, the more deprived an area is, the higher the number of Essential Skills enrolments from those living in that area. Over the 18 years of the Strategy, over half of enrolments (52.8%) have been from the two most deprived 'quintiles'. In 2019/20, 7,314 (27.8%) enrolments were from the most deprived quintile, while 2,712 (10.3%) were from the least deprived quintile (Table 6).
The most popular subject choice has varied across age groups.	From 2002/03 to 2019/20, Numeracy has been the most popular subject choice among those aged 16-19 (39.7%), while Literacy has been most popular among 20-44 year olds (43.9%). For those aged 45+, the most common subject studied has been ICT (38.7%) (Table 9).
Almost two-thirds of enrolments result in a qualification being issued...	Approaching two in every three (65.1%) Essential Skills enrolments result in a qualification being issued. Numeracy accounted for 37.2% of qualifications issued in the most recent academic year, while a further third (33.3%) were in Literacy and 29.5% were in ICT (Tables 16 and 18).
...with almost half of these being at Level 2.	Almost half (48.4%) of Essential Skills qualifications issued since 2002/03 have been at Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE grades A*-C), a further 32.4% at Level 1 and 19.2% at Entry Level (Table 13).

Introduction

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

This statistical bulletin, produced by DfE's Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education), analyses enrolments, qualifications and performance rates for Essential Skills over the 18 years of the Strategy.

Structure

The bulletin is divided into three sections:

- Section A details Essential Skills enrolments;
- Section B focuses on Essential Skills qualifications;
- Section C details the performance rates (retention, achievement and success) for Essential Skills provision.

Policy and Operational Context

The Minister for the Economy has responsibility within the NI Executive for FE Colleges. The minister is also accountable to the Committee for the Economy, which undertakes a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role, and plays a key role in the consideration and development of legislation.

It is within this context that the [Essential Skills for Living Strategy](#) has been designed to improve levels of Numeracy, Literacy and ICT in Northern Ireland. The vision for the delivery of the Essential Skills Strategy is:

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

The curriculum standards for the Essential Skills of Application of Number (Numeracy) and Communication (Literacy) were refreshed and published in 2016, for first teaching from September 2016. The purpose of the refresh was to update the standards and to make them more suitable for a wider cohort of learners. The assessment methodology was also reviewed and developed to include an external end point assessment model for Literacy and Numeracy at levels 1 and 2. The purpose of this change was to increase the rigour of the assessment methodology in the light of Northern Ireland's position in international studies of literacy and numeracy.

Explanatory Notes

This statistical release is the eleventh in an annual series presenting information on Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes in Northern Ireland.

Definitions of the terms used within the report, as well as more information on the methodology used to produce the statistics, can be found in the Annexes.

Data Collection

The information presented in this bulletin derives from a series of statistical returns listed below:

- Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for the years 2002/03 – 2012/13;
- Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for the years 2013/14 – 2019/20;
- Essential Skills enrolment extract from the Client Management System (CMS) for the years 2002/03 – 2019/20;
- Essential Skills Qualifications Return for the years 2002/03 – 2019/20.

The enrolment data returns are merged and a process is in place to deal with any duplicate enrolments. The resultant file is then analysed to present the total number of enrolments.

Supplementary Tables

Detailed Supplementary Tables are available on the DfE web page:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/essential-skills-enrolments-and-outcomes>

Rounding

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

Data Quality

All information presented in this bulletin in respect of the CDR has been validated and quality assured by FE Colleges prior to publication. Following submission, this Branch performs a series of validation checks, with any issues being presented to the FE Colleges for clarification or amendment as necessary. Validations are also run for training programme enrolment data, although, due to the time taken for the amendments to be administered within the training programme dataset, the bulletin is published prior to receiving the amended data. As such, any amendments are reflected in future publications.

While awarding organisations conduct internal audits and quality assurance checks on the data, data are also checked and validated by this Branch at

each quarterly return. Any errors are fed back to the appropriate awarding organisation for amendment.

Main Uses of Data

The main uses of these data are: to monitor Essential Skills activity; to help assess Essential Skills performance; to facilitate corporate monitoring; to inform and monitor related Essential Skills policy; and to respond to NI Assembly questions and ad hoc queries from the public.

Who will be interested?

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

Essential Skills statistics published elsewhere

Essential Skills qualifications statistics are also published by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA). These quarterly bulletins can be found at: <https://ccea.org.uk/regulation/reports-statistics/technical-and-professional-qualification-bulletins>. Due to differences in the way qualifications are reported to and classified by Ofqual, the statistics reported by CCEA may not be comparable with the figures in this publication.

Comparing levels of qualifications

Within Essential Skills for 'Literacy' and 'Numeracy', individuals can obtain qualifications at 5 different levels: Entry Level 1, Entry Level 2, Entry Level 3, Level 1 and Level 2. Essential Skills Information Communication and Technology (ICT) courses are only available at Level 1 and Level 2. For further information on comparing qualifications across the UK, Ireland and overseas, please see: <https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean>.

Section A: Enrolments

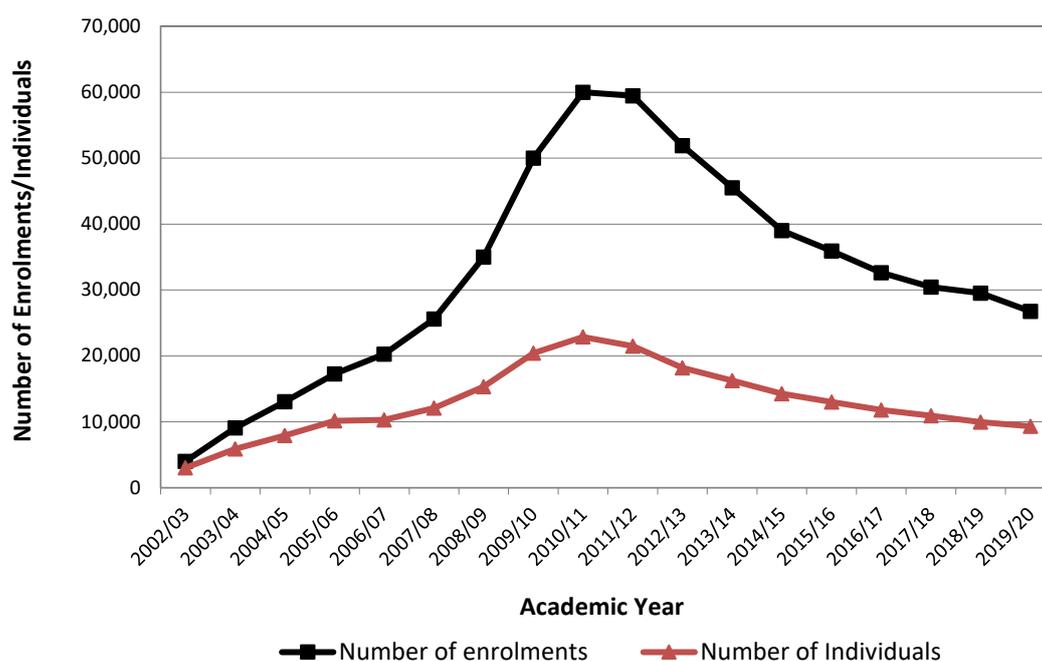
Enrolments and participants

Since 2002/03, 233,257 individuals have participated in 585,454 Essential Skills enrolments. Between 2002/03 and 2010/11, the annual number of enrolments increased year on year, reaching a peak of 59,994. Since then, the annual number of enrolments has decreased each year to a total of 26,768 in 2019/20. The number of individuals enrolling has followed a similar pattern, peaking at 22,869 in 2010/11, before decreasing in each subsequent year, to reach 9,348 in 2019/20.

A combination of factors may have influenced the decline in the number of Essential Skills enrolments in recent years, including the [Mid-Year Population Estimates](#), which show a dip in the number of 16-19 year olds (the main age group undertaking Essential Skills) in Northern Ireland in recent years. This effect is being compounded by [incremental increases in the proportion of school leavers achieving at least five GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Maths](#), from 63.5% in 2013/14 to 70.8% in 2018/19. Among the adult population, the potential supply may have decreased over time as many have now achieved Essential Skills qualifications or equivalent in their subjects of interest.

Over the last academic year, enrolments have decreased by 9.3%, from a total of 29,508 in 2018/19 to 26,768 in 2019/20 (Figure 1 and Table 1). This drop can be attributed largely to the effect the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak has had on the education sector, with the consequent restrictions meaning few new enrolments were possible from March 2020 until the end of the academic year.

Figure 1: Essential Skills enrolments and individuals by academic year

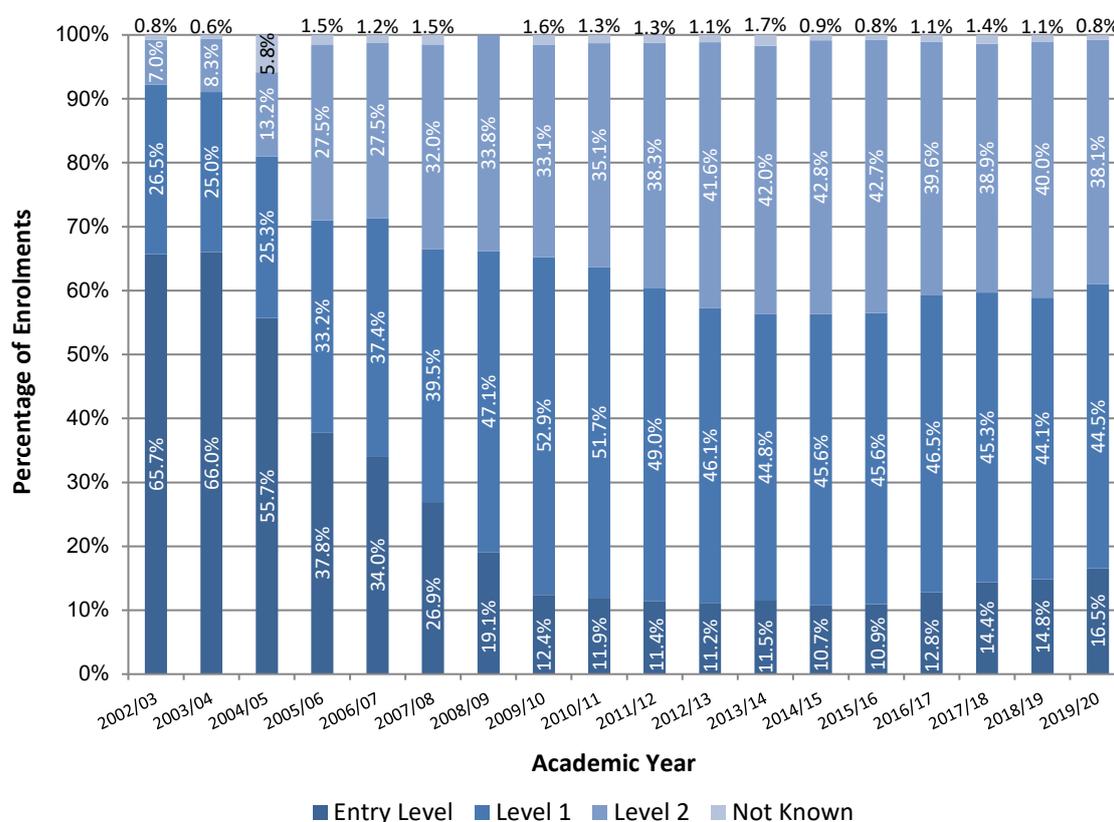


Target level of study

Over the course of the Essential Skills Strategy, the highest proportion of enrolments has been at target Level 1 (45.3%); including 44.5% in 2019/20.

The most recent academic year saw the proportion of enrolments at target Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE grade A*-C) decrease from 40.0% in 2018/19 to 38.1% in 2019/20. Inversely, the proportion of Entry Level enrolments increased by 1.7 percentage points to 16.5% in 2019/20 (Figure 2 and Table 2).

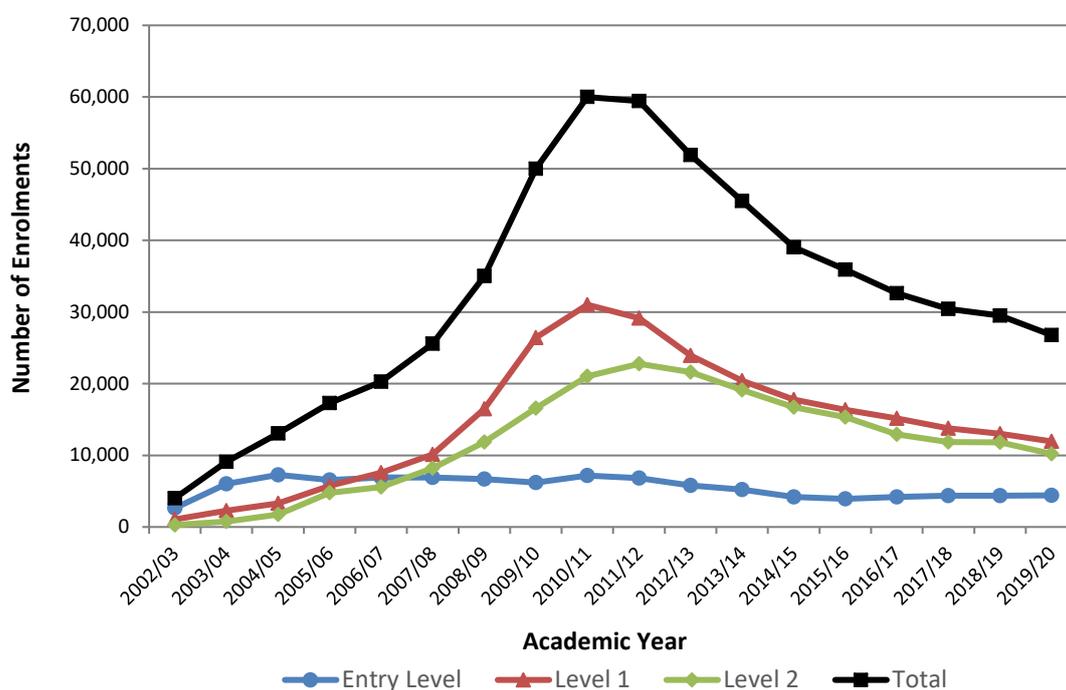
Figure 2: Percentage of Essential Skills enrolments by target level and academic year



Enrolments at Level 1 have decreased in number from a peak of 31,013 in 2010/11 to 11,922 in 2019/20. Similarly, Level 2 enrolments have decreased from a peak of 22,767 in 2011/12 to 10,210 in the most recent academic year.

Entry Level enrolments decreased from 7,165 in 2010/11 to 3,929 in 2015/16. However, while enrolments at Levels 1 and 2 have continued to decrease, Entry Level enrolments have since increased steadily, to a total of 4,421 in 2019/20, the highest since 2013/14. The refresh of Essential Skills curriculum standards in 2016, referred to in the introduction, may be a factor in this, with the increased rigour of assessment causing students to enrol at a lower target level (Figure 3 and Table 2).

Figure 3: Number of Essential Skills enrolments by target level and academic year



What are the characteristics of those participating?

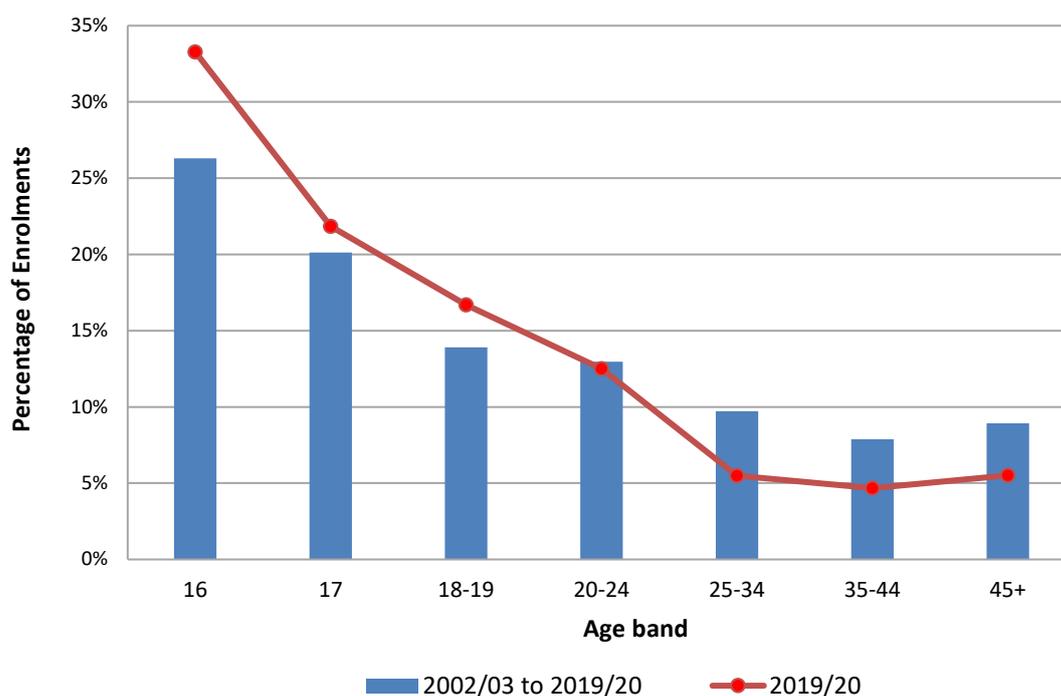
Age

Since the start of the Essential Skills Strategy, over a quarter (26.3%) of enrolments have been from 16-year-olds.

While those aged 16-19 have accounted for 60.3% of enrolments over the full history of the Strategy, their proportion has been significantly higher over the past three years, including 71.8% in 2019/20. Those aged 25 and over have accounted for 26.5% of enrolments throughout the 18 years of the Strategy, although their share of enrolments has been reducing in recent years, reaching a low of 15.7% in 2019/20 (Figure 4 and Table 3).

The decrease in enrolments among the adult population is likely to be in part due to the potential supply decreasing over time, as many have already achieved Essential Skills qualifications or equivalent. Relatively low unemployment levels in recent years may also have been an important factor.

Figure 4: Essential Skills enrolments by age band since 2002/03

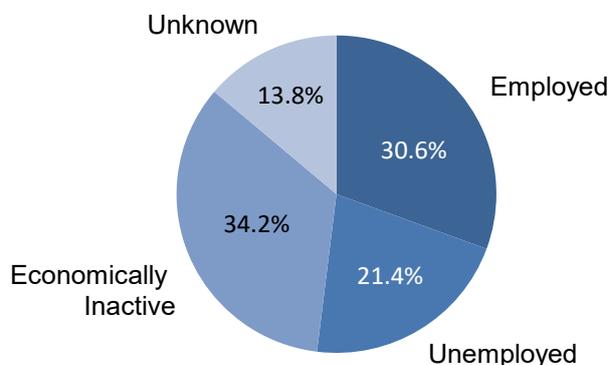


Employment Status

Over half (55.6%) of enrolments in the past 18 years have been from individuals who reported as either 'unemployed' (21.4%) or 'economically inactive' (34.2%). In 2019/20, the total share of these two groups was similar at 57.0%; however, the split between 'unemployed' and 'economically inactive' was significantly different, at 7.6% and 49.4% respectively.

Over the history of the Strategy, 30.6% of enrolments have been from employed individuals (23.5% in 2019/20). For the rest of the enrolments (13.8%), the employment status of the student was unknown (Figure 5 and Table 4).

Figure 5: Essential Skills enrolments by employment status since 2002/03

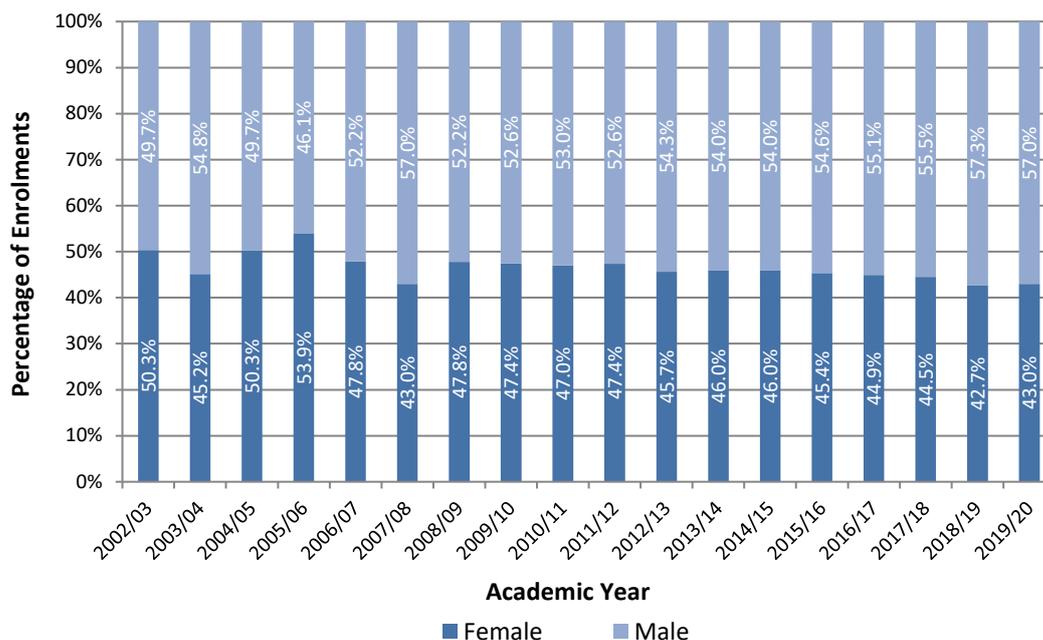


Sex

Over the 18-year history of the Strategy, 53.8% of enrolments on Essential Skills courses have been from male students. In each year since 2006/07, enrolments of males have formed the majority.

In the most recent academic year, males accounted for 57.0% (15,257) of enrolments (Figure 6 and Table 5).

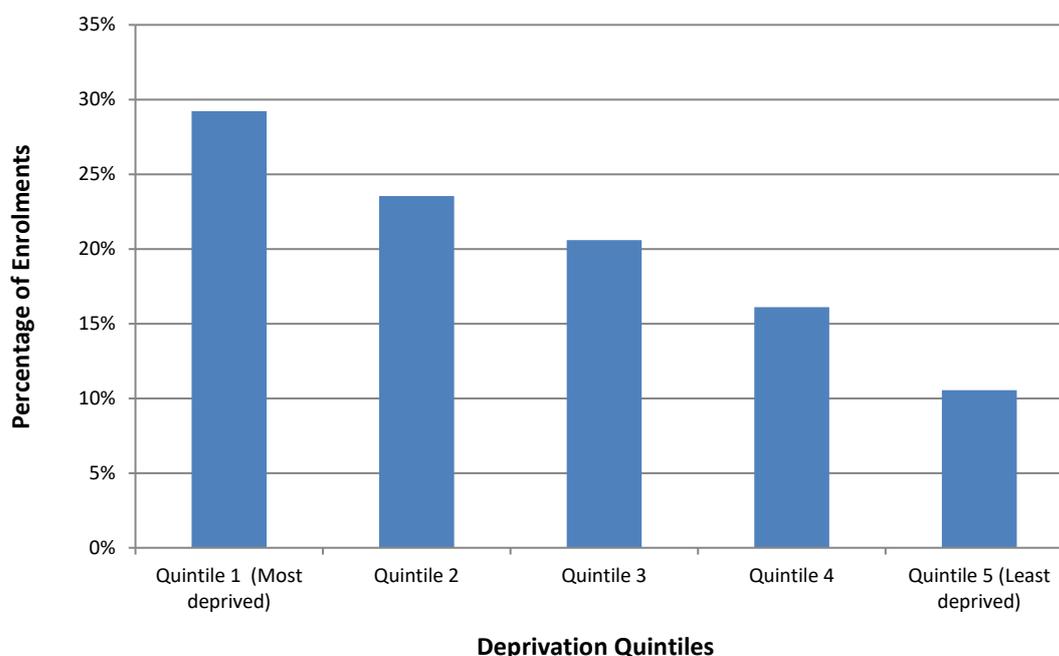
Figure 6: Essential Skills enrolments by sex and academic year



Deprivation Analysis

Relative deprivation is measured by the official Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM), which can be used to categorise Northern Ireland's 890 Super Output Areas (SOAs) into five equally sized groups, termed 'quintiles'. Quintile 1 is the most deprived group of areas and Quintile 5 is the least deprived group of areas.

Figure 7: Essential Skills enrolments by deprivation quintile since 2002/03



Generally, the more deprived an area is, the higher the number of Essential Skills enrolments from those living in that area. Excluding enrolments with invalid or unknown postcodes, over the 18 years of the Strategy, over half of enrolments (52.8%) have been from the two most deprived 'quintiles', with the largest share (29.2%) being from Quintile 1 (Figure 7).

In the most recent academic year, 27.8% (7,314) of enrolments with a valid postcode were from the most deprived quintile, while 10.3% (2,712) were from the least deprived quintile (Table 6).

Over the 18-year history of the Strategy, those living in Quintile 1 have accounted for 37.5% of Entry Level, 29.1% of Level 1 and 25.5% of Level 2 enrolments with a valid postcode. With regards to subject, 30.4% of Literacy and 30.3% of Numeracy enrolments have been from the most deprived quintile, while the proportion of ICT enrolments has been lower, at 25.2% (Table 7).

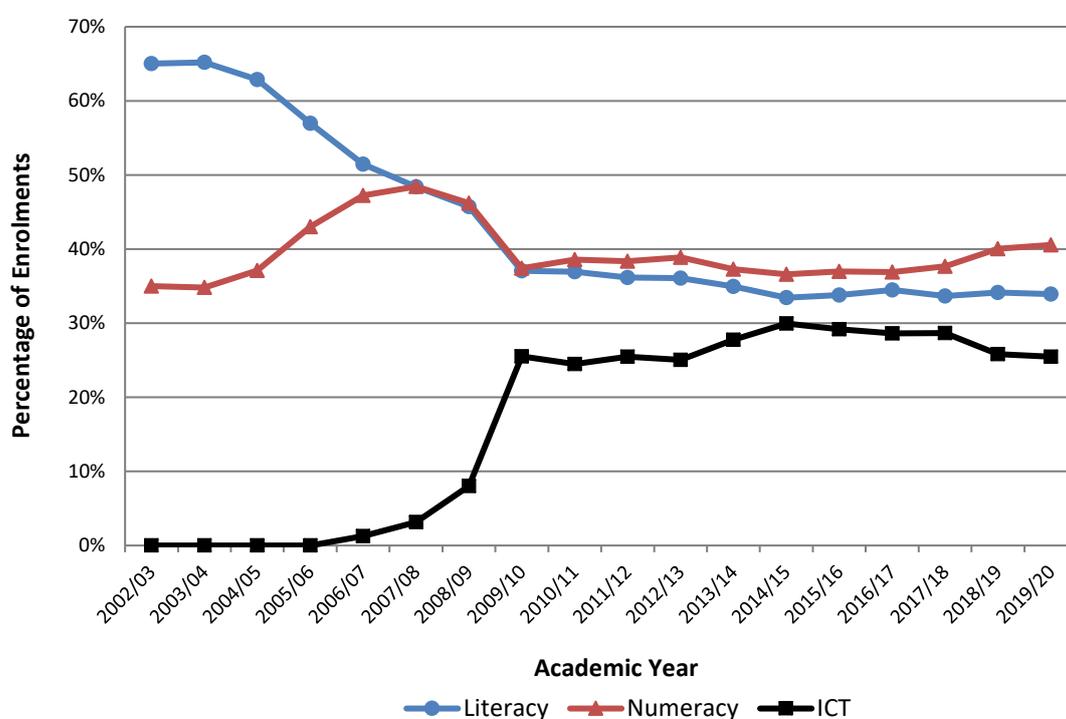
What subjects are being studied?

As a proportion of Essential Skills enrolments, Numeracy accounted for 40.6%, Literacy for 33.9% and ICT for 25.5% in the most recent academic year (2019/20).

Initially, Literacy was the most popular Essential Skills course. However, from 2007/08 onwards, Numeracy has accounted for the largest proportion of enrolments each year. ICT was rolled out as a full programme in August 2009 and has accounted for over a quarter of enrolments in each year since 2011/12.

In 2019/20, the ICT proportion (25.5%) was at its lowest since 2012/13 (25.1%), while the Numeracy proportion (40.6%) was at its highest since 2008/09 (46.2%) (Figure 8 and Table 8).

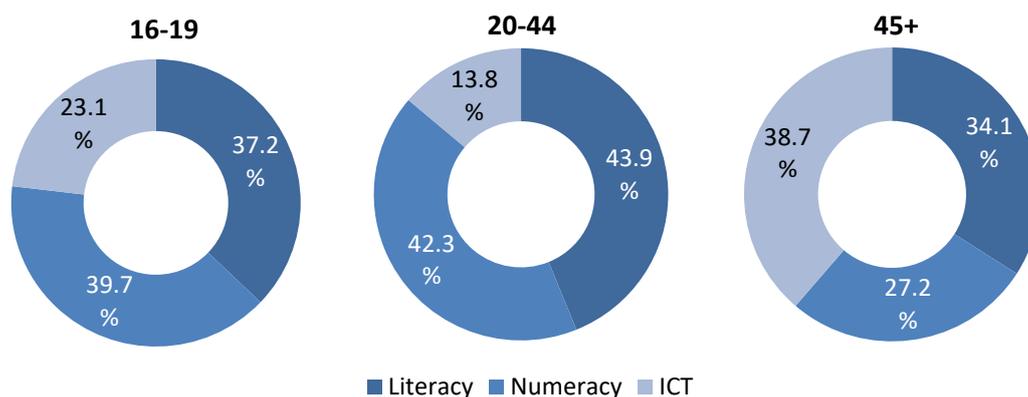
Figure 8: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and academic year



Subject and Age

Over the 18 years of the Essential Skills Strategy, Numeracy has been the most popular subject choice among those aged 16-19 (39.7%), while Literacy has been most popular among 20-44 year olds (43.9%). For those aged 45+, the most common subject studied has been ICT (38.7%), despite it having only been rolled out as a full programme since August 2009 (Figure 9 and Table 9).

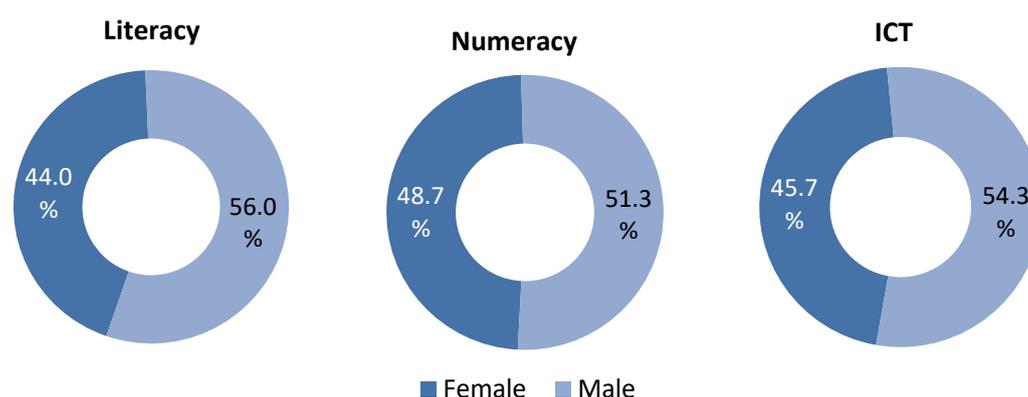
Figure 9: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and age since 2002/03



Subject and Sex

Higher proportions of males are enrolled in Essential Skills across all three subjects, ranging from 51.3% in Numeracy to 56.0% in Literacy (Figure 10 and Table 10).

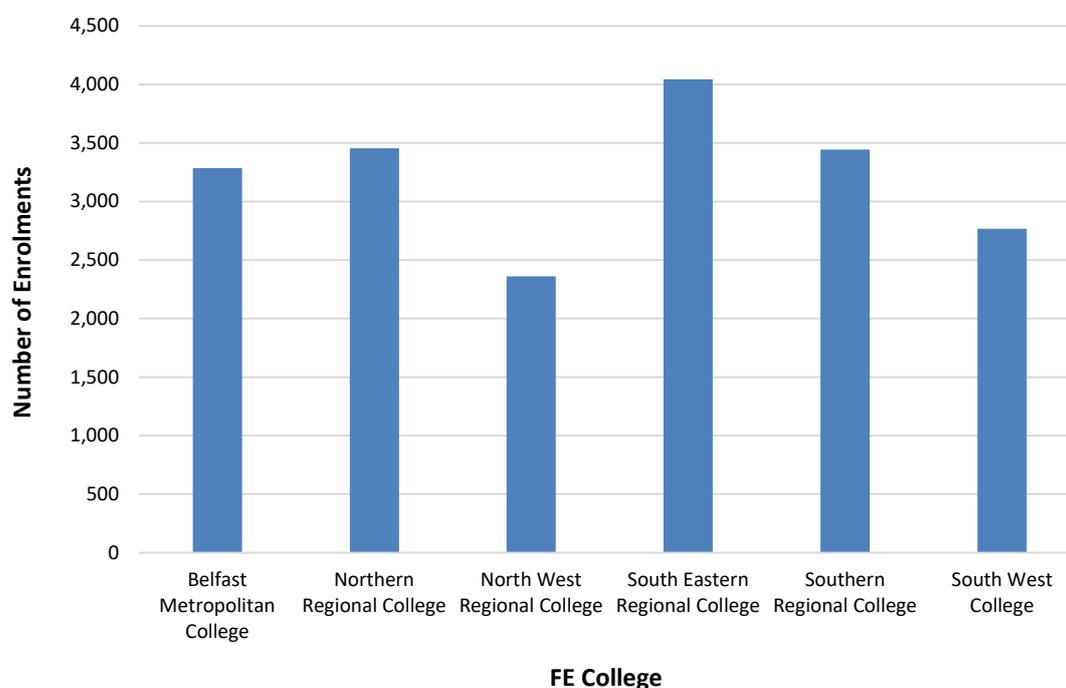
Figure 10: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and sex since 2002/03



Where are the courses being studied?

The main delivery of Essential Skills courses occurs within FE Colleges, with 72.3% of enrolments (19,356) being delivered at the Colleges in 2019/20. The number of enrolments delivered at each College in 2019/20 ranged from 2,362 at North West Regional College to 4,043 at South Eastern Regional College (Figure 11 and Table 11).

Figure 11: Essential Skills enrolments by FE College, 2019/20



In 2019/20, 12,291 Essential Skills enrolments were taken as part of DfE's Training Programmes. It should be noted that as a significant number of these enrolments are delivered at FE Colleges, the sum of FE College enrolments and DfE Training Programme enrolments is greater than the actual number of Essential Skills enrolments.

Section B: Qualifications issued

Number of qualifications issued

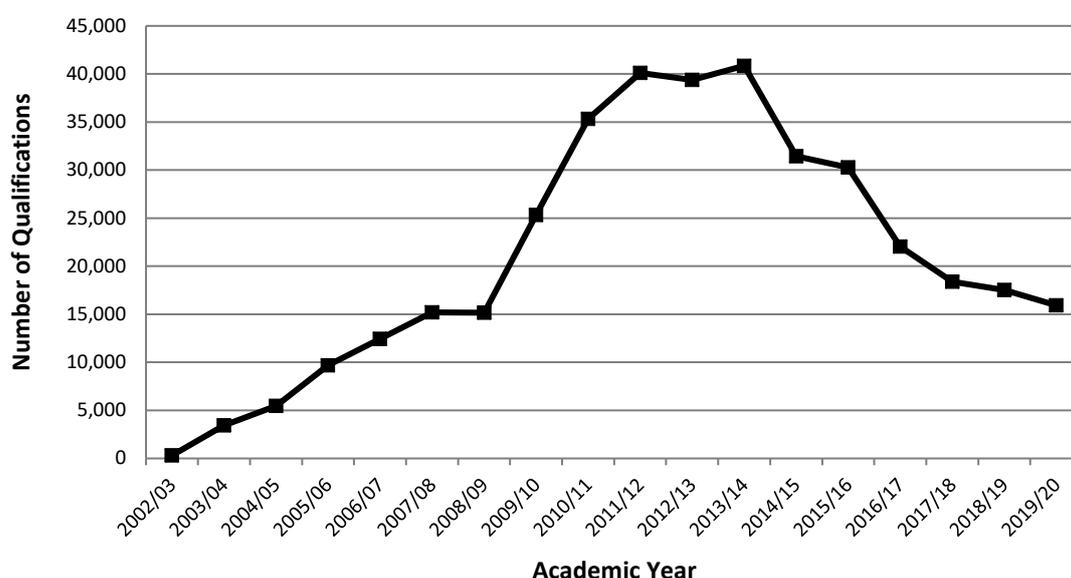
Over 378,000 qualifications have been issued in Essential Skills since the Strategy began 18 years ago. However, the annual number of qualifications issued has decreased for the sixth year in a row. As shown in Figure 12, after reaching a peak of 40,851 in 2013/14, the number of qualifications issued decreased to 30,259 in 2015/16.

A refresh of the Essential Skills curriculum standards is likely to have been an important factor in the 39.2% decrease in qualifications issued between 2015/16 (30,259) and 2017/18 (18,394). Over this period, the number of qualifications issued fell at a much faster rate than enrolments, which saw a 15.3% decrease. A further decrease of 880 occurred in 2018/19 (17,514) (Figure 12 and Table 12).

An additional 9.1% decrease has occurred in the past academic year, with qualifications issued falling from 17,514 in 2018/19, to 15,926 in 2019/20. This was in line with the 9.3% fall in enrolments over the same period, and can likewise be attributed largely to the effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Under the instruction of the Minister for the Economy, an awarding process was put in place whereby students were issued with a calculated result for Essential Skills in summer 2020. The approach adopted by Awarding Organisations to calculating results combined three elements: a calculated grade that drew on different evidence sources including a Centre Assessment Grade; quality assurance measures; and an overall check of outcomes. Despite the disruption caused by the pandemic, this approach enabled many students to progress to either further study or employment by the end of summer 2020.

Figure 12: Essential Skills qualifications issued by academic year



Qualifications issued by level achieved

Over the 18-year period of the Strategy, target Level 1 has seen the highest number of enrolments (265,448). However, as shown in Figure 13, most qualifications issued have been at Level 2 (183,095), accounting for 48.4% of all qualifications issued. This indicates that many students have qualified at a higher level than the target level they initially enrolled at.

Level 2 qualifications accounted for 47.0% of the qualifications issued in 2019/20, down from 50.4% in 2018/19. Conversely, the share of Level 1 qualifications increased by 2.2 percentage points between 2018/19 (31.6%) and 2019/20 (33.8%), while the Entry Level share increased by 1.2 percentage points to 19.2% over the same period (Figure 13 and Table 13).

Figure 13: Percentage of Essential Skills qualifications issued by level achieved since 2002/03

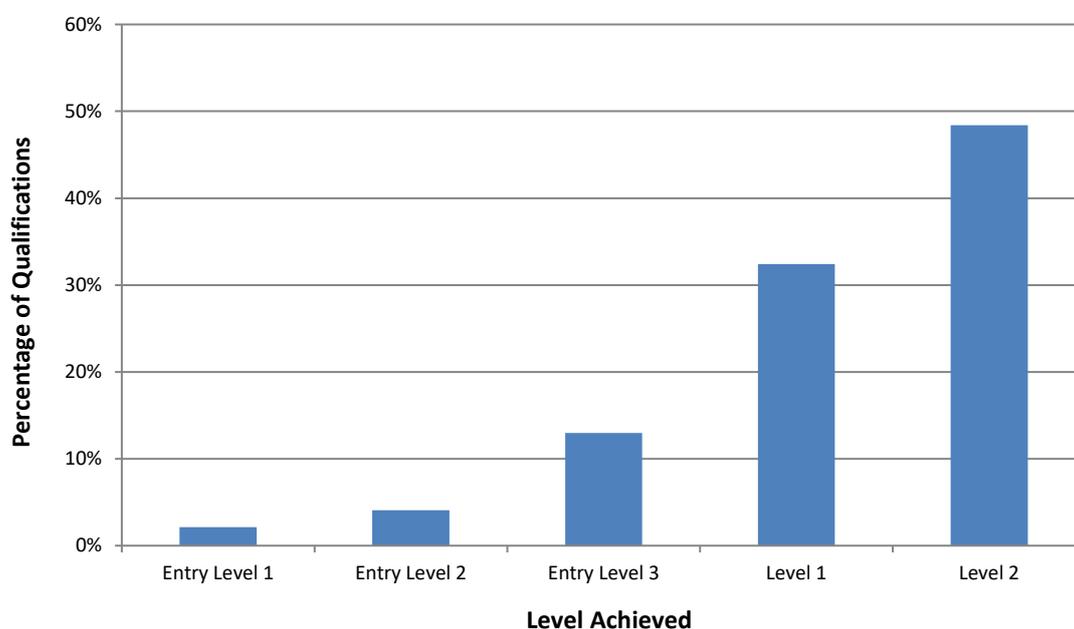
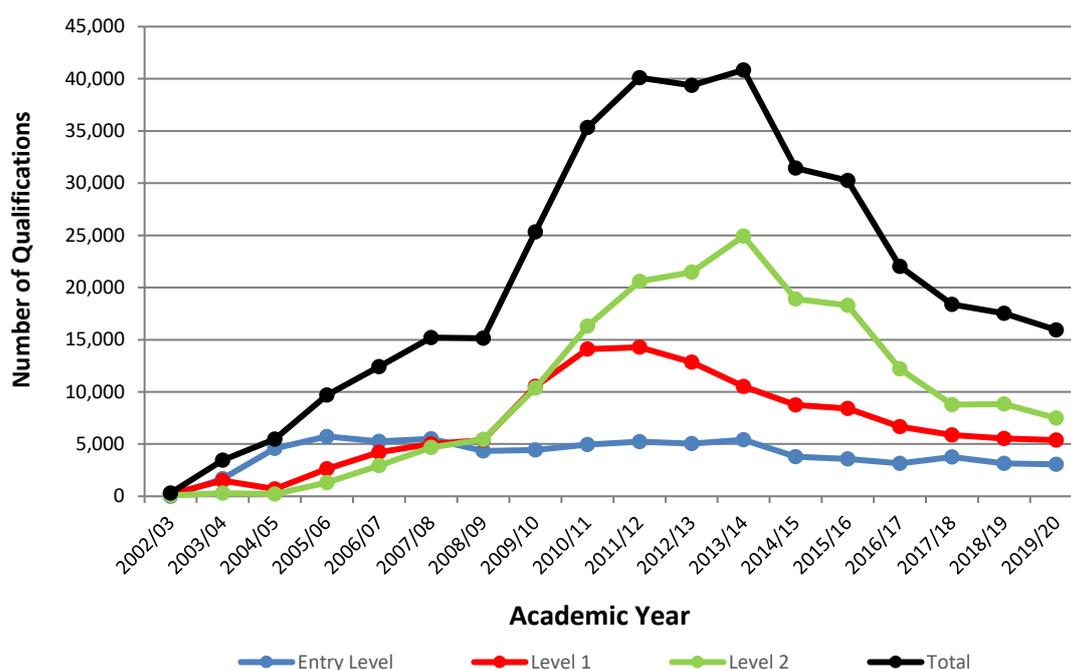


Figure 14 shows that of the 15,926 qualifications issued in 2019/20, 3,058 were at Entry Level, 5,389 at Level 1 and 7,479 at Level 2. Each of these three figures represent a decrease from 2018/19 (Figure 14 and Table 13).

Figure 14: Number of Essential Skills qualifications issued by level achieved and academic year



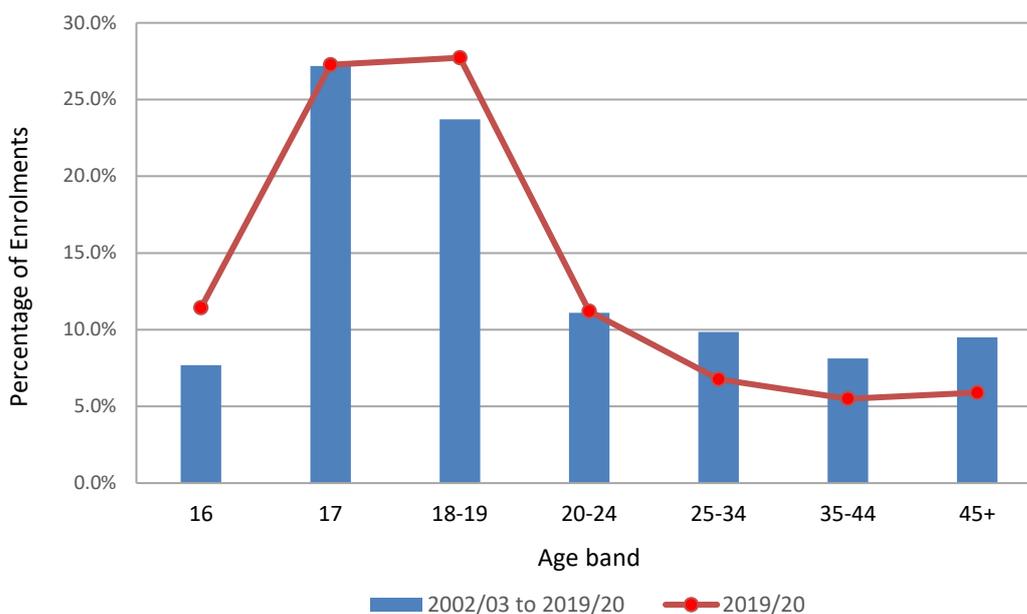
Qualifications issued by age band

Since the start of the Strategy, similar to the pattern of enrolments, the majority (58.6%) of qualifications have been issued to those between the ages of 16 and 19, as seen in Figure 15. This includes 66.4% in the most recent academic year. Seventeen-year-olds alone have accounted for over a quarter (27.2%) of all Essential Skills qualifications issued.

Over the 18-year history of the Strategy students aged 25 and over have accounted for 27.5% of qualifications issued. However, they accounted for their lowest share (18.2%) in 2019/20 (Figure 15 and Table 14).

Differences in the way age is calculated for enrolments and qualifications are explained in Annex 2.

Figure 15: Essential Skills qualifications issued by age band since 2002/03

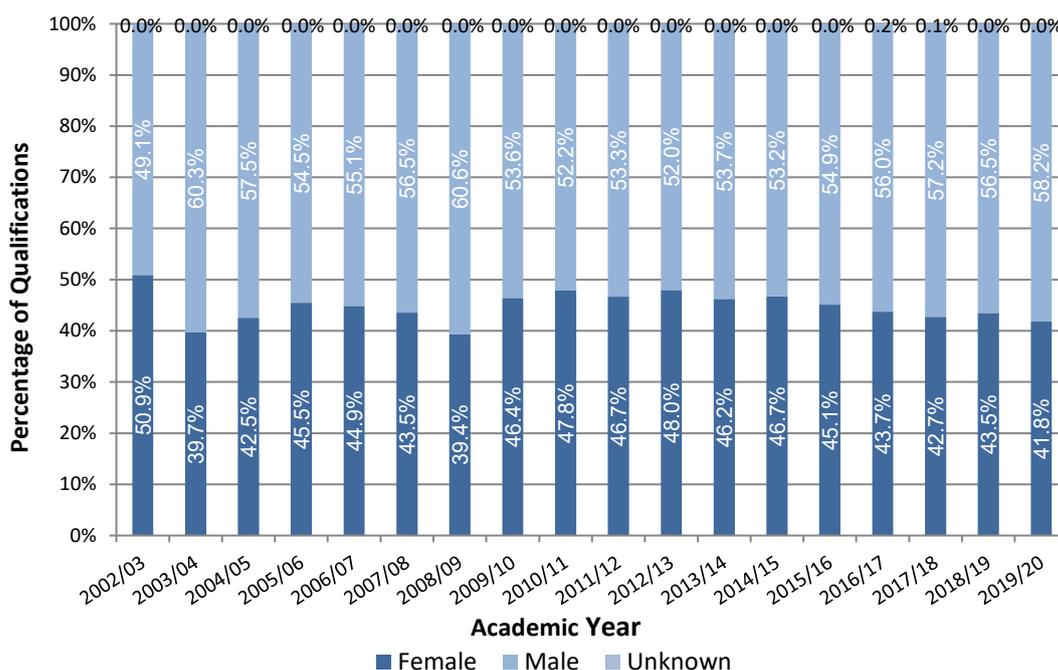


Qualifications issued by sex

In each of the past 17 academic years, as illustrated in Figure 16, males have accounted for the majority of those gaining an Essential Skills qualification, ranging from a low of 52.0% in 2012/13 to a high of 60.6% in 2008/09.

In 2019/20, males gained 9,265 qualifications (58.2%), with females gaining 6,658 (41.8%). The share of qualifications over the 18-year history of the Strategy is 54.6% male and 45.4% female (Figure 16 and Table 15).

Figure 16: Essential Skills qualifications issued by sex and academic year

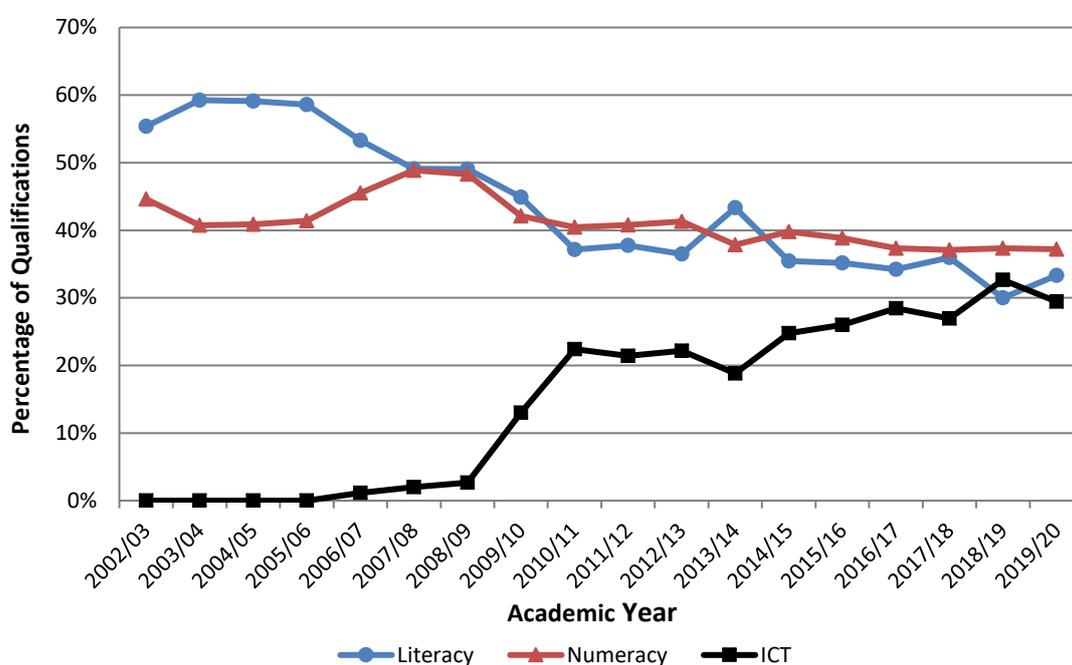


Qualifications issued by subject

Until 2009/10, Literacy accounted for the largest proportion of Essential Skills qualifications. However, with the exception of 2013/14, Numeracy has had the highest proportion of qualifications in each year since 2010/11.

As illustrated in Figure 17, Literacy accounted for a third (33.3%) of qualifications issued in 2019/20, up from a low of 30.0% in 2018/19. The share of ICT qualifications issued in 2019/20 was 29.5%, down from a high of 32.7% in 2018/19. Numeracy's share has been stable in recent years, accounting for 37.2% of qualifications issued in 2019/20 (Figure 17 and Table 16).

Figure 17: Essential Skills qualifications issued by subject and academic year



Section C: Performance

Performance can be measured across three indicators:

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

Further details on how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated can be found in Annex 2. No individual academic year figures are presented within performance analysis, as explained in technical note 9 (Annex 3).

Essential Skills performance

Over the course of the Strategy, the retention rate within Essential Skills courses has been 89.5%, the achievement rate has been 72.7%, while the success rate has been 65.1%. Therefore, approaching two in every three Essential Skills enrolments result in a qualification being issued (Table A).

Performance by subject

The retention rate has ranged from 88.1% in ICT to 90.1% in Numeracy. There has been a larger range in the achievement rate, from 67.0% in ICT to 74.3% in both Literacy and Numeracy. The success rates for Literacy (66.7%) and Numeracy (67.0%) have also been similar over the 18 years of the Strategy, while ICT has seen a lower success rate of 59.0% (Table A and Table 18).

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

Subject	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
Literacy	89.8%	74.3%	66.7%
Numeracy	90.1%	74.3%	67.0%
ICT	88.1%	67.0%	59.0%
Total	89.5%	72.7%	65.1%

Performance by sex

While females have a slightly higher achievement rate (73.0%) than males (72.5%), males have a higher retention rate (91.2%) than females (87.6%). The higher retention rate means that males (66.1%) also have a higher success rate than females (63.9%) (Table B and Table 19).

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

Sex	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
Female	87.6%	73.0%	63.9%
Male	91.2%	72.5%	66.1%
Total	89.5%	72.7%	65.1%

Performance by age band

The retention rate generally decreases inversely with age band of participant, with those aged 16 having the highest retention rate (92.6%) and those aged 45+ having the lowest (84.4%) (Table C and Table 20). Achievement and success rates have not been calculated by age band due to differences in the way age is calculated for enrolments and qualifications (see Annex 2).

Table C: Essential Skills retention rate by age band since 2002/03

Age Band	Retention rate
16	92.6%
17	90.8%
18-19	87.7%
20-24	90.9%
25-34	86.8%
35-44	86.6%
45+	84.4%
Total	89.5%

Performance by target level of study

Across the five levels of study, the retention rate has ranged from 87.6% at Entry Level 1 to 90.9% at Level 1 over the 18 years of the Strategy (Table D and Table 21). Achievement and success rates have not been calculated by level as students may qualify at a different level to the target level at which they enrolled.

Table D: Essential Skills retention rate by target level since 2002/03

Target Level	Retention rate
Entry Level 1	87.6%
Entry Level 2	89.1%
Entry Level 3	89.1%
Level 1	90.9%
Level 2	89.9%
Total	89.5%

Annexes

Annex 1: Tables

Table 1: Essential Skills enrolments and individuals by academic year

Academic Year	Number of enrolments	Number of individuals
2002/03	4,010	3,024
2003/04	9,110	5,887
2004/05	13,067	7,922
2005/06	17,267	10,166
2006/07	20,276	10,303
2007/08	25,584	12,103
2008/09	35,015	15,321
2009/10	50,003	20,416
2010/11	59,994	22,869
2011/12	59,443	21,476
2012/13	51,906	18,195
2013/14	45,504	16,245
2014/15	39,036	14,265
2015/16	35,908	13,008
2016/17	32,631	11,794
2017/18	30,424	10,950
2018/19	29,508	9,965
2019/20	26,768	9,348
Total	585,454	233,257

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change. Individual students are determined using name and date of birth, and allocated to a particular academic year based on the start date of their first registration. Individuals can enrol in more than one course.

Table 2: Essential Skills enrolments by target level of study and academic year

Academic Year	Entry Level 1	Entry Level 2	Entry Level 3	Level 1	Level 2	Not Known	Total
2002/03	885	719	1,031	1,062	282	31	4,010
2003/04	1,264	1,808	2,943	2,280	759	56	9,110
2004/05	1,196	1,792	4,291	3,300	1,724	764	13,067
2005/06	829	1,599	4,104	5,726	4,755	254	17,267
2006/07	690	1,610	4,588	7,574	5,568	246	20,276
2007/08	577	1,732	4,583	10,106	8,199	387	25,584
2008/09	499	1,490	4,702	16,477	11,847	-	35,015
2009/10	506	1,425	4,265	26,435	16,570	802	50,003
2010/11	825	1,450	4,890	31,013	21,049	767	59,994
2011/12	600	1,571	4,631	29,125	22,767	749	59,443
2012/13	566	1,162	4,066	23,935	21,588	589	51,906
2013/14	468	1,174	3,578	20,391	19,115	778	45,504
2014/15	409	812	2,975	17,796	16,705	339	39,036
2015/16	261	788	2,880	16,361	15,341	277	35,908
2016/17	207	972	2,995	15,163	12,935	359	32,631
2017/18	419	1,007	2,956	13,778	11,833	431	30,424
2018/19	325	994	3,058	13,004	11,813	314	29,508
2019/20	344	1,011	3,066	11,922	10,210	215	26,768
Total	10,870	23,116	65,602	265,448	213,060	7,358	585,454

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 3: Essential Skills enrolments by age band and academic year

Academic Year	Aged 16	Aged 17	Aged 18-19	Aged 20-24	Aged 25-34	Aged 35-44	Aged 45+	Age unknown	Total
2002/03	209	200	280	585	982	826	867	61	4,010
2003/04	1,659	1,150	605	1,121	1,717	1,431	1,291	136	9,110
2004/05	2,105	1,761	927	1,326	2,345	2,397	2,059	147	13,067
2005/06	4,200	3,317	1,815	1,473	2,138	2,309	1,985	30	17,267
2006/07	6,194	4,938	2,836	1,602	1,641	1,664	1,358	43	20,276
2007/08	8,643	5,966	3,721	2,973	1,581	1,469	1,195	36	25,584
2008/09	9,741	7,449	4,433	3,531	3,709	3,293	2,850	9	35,015
2009/10	12,338	10,282	6,864	5,230	5,024	4,490	5,701	74	50,003
2010/11	13,648	11,752	7,983	6,903	7,224	5,455	6,971	58	59,994
2011/12	13,925	11,451	7,870	7,088	7,029	5,387	6,646	47	59,443
2012/13	12,990	10,774	7,039	7,125	5,354	3,777	4,774	73	51,906
2013/14	12,006	9,399	6,255	7,429	3,941	2,882	3,568	24	45,504
2014/15	10,973	8,057	5,639	5,825	3,247	2,374	2,896	25	39,036
2015/16	10,262	7,042	5,242	5,794	2,834	2,052	2,628	54	35,908
2016/17	8,762	5,901	5,105	5,482	2,756	2,023	2,595	7	32,631
2017/18	8,944	6,426	5,155	4,521	1,926	1,475	1,743	234	30,424
2018/19	8,488	6,077	5,135	4,581	1,986	1,579	1,657	5	29,508
2019/20	8,905	5,846	4,470	3,346	1,469	1,251	1,475	6	26,768
Total	153,992	117,788	81,374	75,935	56,903	46,134	52,259	1,069	585,454

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change. Age is calculated based on date of birth and start date of the enrolment.

Table 4: Essential Skills enrolments by employment status and academic year

Academic Year	Employed	Unemployed	Economically inactive	Unknown	Total
2002/03	1,349	972	514	1,175	4,010
2003/04	2,057	2,281	967	3,805	9,110
2004/05	2,937	3,081	1,469	5,580	13,067
2005/06	3,977	4,076	3,198	6,016	17,267
2006/07	3,407	5,341	3,056	8,472	20,276
2007/08	6,002	6,388	5,100	8,094	25,584
2008/09	11,476	7,801	9,675	6,063	35,015
2009/10	15,824	10,226	18,045	5,908	50,003
2010/11	21,794	11,498	21,059	5,643	59,994
2011/12	20,328	12,687	22,165	4,263	59,443
2012/13	16,951	11,567	18,961	4,427	51,906
2013/14	13,132	11,227	17,951	3,194	45,504
2014/15	11,919	9,886	15,942	1,289	39,036
2015/16	12,026	9,098	12,212	2,572	35,908
2016/17	11,997	7,356	11,211	2,067	32,631
2017/18	9,193	7,135	11,734	2,362	30,424
2018/19	8,447	2,349	13,918	4,794	29,508
2019/20	6,297	2,031	13,218	5,222	26,768
Total	179,113	125,000	200,395	80,946	585,454

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 5: Essential Skills enrolments by sex and academic year

Academic Year	Female	Male	Total
2002/03	2,018	1,992	4,010
2003/04	4,114	4,996	9,110
2004/05	6,572	6,495	13,067
2005/06	9,308	7,959	17,267
2006/07	9,697	10,579	20,276
2007/08	10,998	14,586	25,584
2008/09	16,733	18,282	35,015
2009/10	23,709	26,294	50,003
2010/11	28,206	31,788	59,994
2011/12	28,161	31,282	59,443
2012/13	23,704	28,202	51,906
2013/14	20,915	24,589	45,504
2014/15	17,946	21,090	39,036
2015/16	16,298	19,610	35,908
2016/17	14,665	17,966	32,631
2017/18	13,545	16,879	30,424
2018/19	12,610	16,898	29,508
2019/20	11,511	15,257	26,768
Total	270,710	314,744	585,454

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 6: Essential Skills enrolments by deprivation quintile and academic year

Academic Year	Quintile 1 (Most deprived)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (Least deprived)	Not Known	Total
2002/03	1,188	912	646	432	323	509	4,010
2003/04	2,776	2,154	1,728	1,149	830	473	9,110
2004/05	4,216	2,823	2,497	1,878	1,119	534	13,067
2005/06	5,275	3,856	3,277	2,572	1,674	613	17,267
2006/07	6,681	4,502	3,877	2,881	1,999	336	20,276
2007/08	8,108	5,540	5,147	3,889	2,510	390	25,584
2008/09	10,421	7,993	7,221	5,173	3,721	486	35,015
2009/10	14,212	11,509	9,827	7,822	5,524	1,109	50,003
2010/11	16,691	13,814	11,915	9,763	6,392	1,419	59,994
2011/12	16,787	13,942	11,706	9,410	6,216	1,382	59,443
2012/13	14,744	12,052	10,503	8,263	5,211	1,133	51,906
2013/14	12,997	10,600	9,065	7,021	4,515	1,306	45,504
2014/15	10,772	8,713	8,094	6,002	4,169	1,286	39,036
2015/16	9,929	8,137	7,674	5,589	3,706	873	35,908
2016/17	9,018	7,578	6,739	5,238	3,448	610	32,631
2017/18	8,084	6,969	6,174	5,279	3,267	651	30,424
2018/19	7,752	6,948	6,156	5,170	2,879	603	29,508
2019/20	7,314	6,405	5,357	4,512	2,712	468	26,768
Total	166,965	134,447	117,603	92,043	60,215	14,181	585,454

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20. Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 7: Essential Skills enrolments by deprivation quintile, subject and target level since 2002/03

Subject	Target Level	Quintile 1 (Most deprived)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 (Least deprived)	Not Known	Total
Literacy	Entry Level 1	2,331	1,396	1,209	977	613	308	6,834
	Entry Level 2	4,796	2,854	2,617	1,699	1,073	379	13,418
	Entry Level 3	11,793	6,685	6,195	4,026	2,567	737	32,003
	Level 1	26,676	21,068	17,746	13,695	9,068	1,641	89,894
	Level 2	21,457	19,698	17,444	14,147	8,751	1,719	83,216
	Not Known	833	575	486	456	283	84	2,717
	Total	67,886	52,276	45,697	35,000	22,355	4,868	228,082
Numeracy	Entry Level 1	1,386	787	616	592	391	126	3,898
	Entry Level 2	3,417	2,034	1,868	1,264	762	218	9,563
	Entry Level 3	12,495	6,853	6,196	4,324	2,645	710	33,223
	Level 1	29,427	22,640	19,156	15,525	10,026	2,084	98,858
	Level 2	20,643	19,719	17,622	13,758	8,604	2,289	82,635
	Not Known	750	461	390	402	309	62	2,374
	Total	68,118	52,494	45,848	35,865	22,737	5,489	230,551
ICT	Entry Level 1	56	22	28	21	11	0	138
	Entry Level 2	28	34	35	19	17	2	135
	Entry Level 3	126	79	52	65	32	22	376
	Level 1	19,629	17,889	15,569	12,618	9,601	1,390	76,696
	Level 2	10,581	11,090	9,939	8,042	5,188	2,369	47,209
	Not Known	541	563	435	413	274	41	2,267
	Total	30,961	29,677	26,058	21,178	15,123	3,824	126,821
Total	Entry Level 1	3,773	2,205	1,853	1,590	1,015	434	10,870
	Entry Level 2	8,241	4,922	4,520	2,982	1,852	599	23,116
	Entry Level 3	24,414	13,617	12,443	8,415	5,244	1,469	65,602
	Level 1	75,732	61,597	52,471	41,838	28,695	5,115	265,448
	Level 2	52,681	50,507	45,005	35,947	22,543	6,377	213,060
	Not Known	2,124	1,599	1,311	1,271	866	187	7,358
	Total	166,965	134,447	117,603	92,043	60,215	14,181	585,454

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20. Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 8: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and academic year

Academic Year	Literacy	Numeracy	ICT	Total
2002/03	2,607	1,403	-	4,010
2003/04	5,939	3,171	-	9,110
2004/05	8,217	4,850	-	13,067
2005/06	9,838	7,429	-	17,267
2006/07	10,434	9,581	261	20,276
2007/08	12,386	12,393	805	25,584
2008/09	16,011	16,185	2,819	35,015
2009/10	18,537	18,699	12,767	50,003
2010/11	22,156	23,140	14,698	59,994
2011/12	21,493	22,795	15,155	59,443
2012/13	18,716	20,181	13,009	51,906
2013/14	15,902	16,966	12,636	45,504
2014/15	13,053	14,291	11,692	39,036
2015/16	12,140	13,286	10,482	35,908
2016/17	11,254	12,039	9,338	32,631
2017/18	10,243	11,460	8,721	30,424
2018/19	10,072	11,820	7,616	29,508
2019/20	9,084	10,862	6,822	26,768
Total	228,082	230,551	126,821	585,454

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 9: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and age band since 2002/03

Age band	Literacy	Numeracy	ICT	Total
16	59,076	59,542	35,374	153,992
17	43,307	46,931	27,550	117,788
18-19	28,815	33,756	18,803	81,374
20-24	32,748	33,803	9,384	75,935
25-34	25,566	23,852	7,485	56,903
35-44	20,171	18,056	7,907	46,134
45+	17,801	14,233	20,225	52,259
Unknown	598	378	93	1,069
Total	228,082	230,551	126,821	585,454

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 10: Essential Skills enrolments by sex, subject and academic year

Academic Year	Literacy			Numeracy			ICT			Total
	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	Female	Male	Total	
2002/03	1,325	1,282	2,607	693	710	1,403	-	-	-	4,010
2003/04	2,677	3,262	5,939	1,437	1,734	3,171	-	-	-	9,110
2004/05	4,157	4,060	8,217	2,415	2,435	4,850	-	-	-	13,067
2005/06	5,199	4,639	9,838	4,109	3,320	7,429	-	-	-	17,267
2006/07	4,826	5,608	10,434	4,769	4,812	9,581	102	159	261	20,276
2007/08	5,076	7,310	12,386	5,632	6,761	12,393	290	515	805	25,584
2008/09	7,266	8,745	16,011	8,234	7,951	16,185	1,233	1,586	2,819	35,015
2009/10	8,268	10,269	18,537	9,257	9,442	18,699	6,184	6,583	12,767	50,003
2010/11	9,821	12,335	22,156	11,326	11,814	23,140	7,059	7,639	14,698	59,994
2011/12	9,577	11,916	21,493	11,383	11,412	22,795	7,201	7,954	15,155	59,443
2012/13	8,027	10,689	18,716	9,755	10,426	20,181	5,922	7,087	13,009	51,906
2013/14	6,757	9,145	15,902	8,203	8,763	16,966	5,955	6,681	12,636	45,504
2014/15	5,512	7,541	13,053	6,882	7,409	14,291	5,552	6,140	11,692	39,036
2015/16	5,182	6,958	12,140	6,416	6,870	13,286	4,700	5,782	10,482	35,908
2016/17	4,736	6,518	11,254	5,666	6,373	12,039	4,263	5,075	9,338	32,631
2017/18	4,294	5,949	10,243	5,451	6,009	11,460	3,800	4,921	8,721	30,424
2018/19	4,061	6,011	10,072	5,512	6,308	11,820	3,037	4,579	7,616	29,508
2019/20	3,701	5,383	9,084	5,167	5,695	10,862	2,643	4,179	6,822	26,768
Total	100,462	127,620	228,082	112,307	118,244	230,551	57,941	68,880	126,821	585,454

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 11: Essential Skills enrolments by FE College, 2019/20

FE College	Enrolments
Belfast Metropolitan College	3,286
Northern Regional College	3,455
North West Regional College	2,362
South Eastern Regional College	4,043
Southern Regional College	3,443
South West College	2,767
Total	19,356

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 12: Essential Skills qualifications issued by academic year

Academic Year	Number of Qualifications
2002/03	316
2003/04	3,443
2004/05	5,465
2005/06	9,691
2006/07	12,427
2007/08	15,197
2008/09	15,153
2009/10	25,333
2010/11	35,337
2011/12	40,094
2012/13	39,381
2013/14	40,851
2014/15	31,453
2015/16	30,259
2016/17	22,030
2017/18	18,394
2018/19	17,514
2019/20	15,926
Total	378,264

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 13: Essential Skills qualifications issued by level achieved and academic year

Academic Year	Entry Level 1	Entry Level 2	Entry Level 3	Level 1	Level 2	Total
2002/03	-	-	-	238	78	316
2003/04	380	455	833	1,484	291	3,443
2004/05	740	987	2,850	689	199	5,465
2005/06	773	1,336	3,623	2,633	1,326	9,691
2006/07	655	1,164	3,433	4,231	2,944	12,427
2007/08	598	1,244	3,658	5,012	4,685	15,197
2008/09	306	928	3,116	5,374	5,429	15,153
2009/10	394	906	3,138	10,534	10,361	25,333
2010/11	472	1,025	3,444	14,089	16,307	35,337
2011/12	517	1,088	3,634	14,273	20,582	40,094
2012/13	579	1,103	3,353	12,861	21,485	39,381
2013/14	460	1,016	3,922	10,530	24,923	40,851
2014/15	487	822	2,495	8,740	18,909	31,453
2015/16	426	755	2,389	8,404	18,285	30,259
2016/17	318	699	2,120	6,678	12,215	22,030
2017/18	453	778	2,537	5,863	8,763	18,394
2018/19	292	577	2,279	5,532	8,834	17,514
2019/20	252	620	2,186	5,389	7,479	15,926
Total	8,102	15,503	49,010	122,554	183,095	378,264

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 14: Essential Skills qualifications issued by age band and academic year

Academic Year	16	17	18-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45+	Unknown	Total
2002/03	15	34	44	47	72	56	46	2	316
2003/04	192	721	327	497	718	513	409	66	3,443
2004/05	191	1,517	847	560	715	733	718	184	5,465
2005/06	178	2,659	1,857	1,014	1,251	1,415	1,237	80	9,691
2006/07	392	4,217	2,999	1,216	1,243	1,246	1,026	88	12,427
2007/08	518	5,341	4,002	1,545	1,250	1,251	1,076	214	15,197
2008/09	543	5,466	4,075	1,743	1,095	913	826	492	15,153
2009/10	1,221	7,134	6,070	2,869	2,457	2,283	2,750	549	25,333
2010/11	1,497	9,221	8,768	4,042	3,467	3,215	4,546	581	35,337
2011/12	2,367	9,603	9,412	4,706	4,485	3,732	4,725	1,064	40,094
2012/13	3,131	9,751	8,832	4,434	4,408	3,412	4,410	1,003	39,381
2013/14	3,511	10,789	9,172	4,824	4,618	3,281	3,675	981	40,851
2014/15	2,999	8,525	7,612	3,493	3,096	2,310	2,548	870	31,453
2015/16	3,864	8,377	7,012	3,114	2,529	1,891	2,309	1,163	30,259
2016/17	2,818	5,627	5,257	2,309	1,863	1,299	1,737	1,120	22,030
2017/18	2,489	4,663	4,402	1,834	1,481	1,140	1,444	941	18,394
2018/19	1,322	4,830	4,621	1,942	1,453	1,157	1,544	645	17,514
2019/20	1,821	4,344	4,416	1,786	1,078	875	940	666	15,926
Total	29,069	102,819	89,725	41,975	37,279	30,722	35,966	10,709	378,264

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 15: Essential Skills qualifications issued by sex and academic year

Academic Year	Female	Male	Unknown	Total
2002/03	161	155	-	316
2003/04	1,366	2,077	-	3,443
2004/05	2,325	3,140	-	5,465
2005/06	4,407	5,284	-	9,691
2006/07	5,577	6,850	-	12,427
2007/08	6,615	8,582	-	15,197
2008/09	5,966	9,187	-	15,153
2009/10	11,763	13,570	-	25,333
2010/11	16,907	18,430	-	35,337
2011/12	18,720	21,364	10	40,094
2012/13	18,887	20,484	10	39,381
2013/14	18,884	21,956	11	40,851
2014/15	14,697	16,747	9	31,453
2015/16	13,645	16,614	-	30,259
2016/17	9,634	12,346	50	22,030
2017/18	7,859	10,524	11	18,394
2018/19	7,623	9,891	-	17,514
2019/20	6,658	9,265	3	15,926
Total	171,694	206,466	104	378,264

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 16: Essential Skills qualifications issued by subject and academic year

Academic Year	Literacy	Numeracy	ICT	Total
2002/03	175	141	-	316
2003/04	2,040	1,403	-	3,443
2004/05	3,231	2,234	-	5,465
2005/06	5,680	4,011	-	9,691
2006/07	6,626	5,656	145	12,427
2007/08	7,464	7,428	305	15,197
2008/09	7,429	7,319	405	15,153
2009/10	11,376	10,661	3,296	25,333
2010/11	13,125	14,293	7,919	35,337
2011/12	15,143	16,357	8,594	40,094
2012/13	14,375	16,267	8,739	39,381
2013/14	17,694	15,461	7,696	40,851
2014/15	11,155	12,511	7,787	31,453
2015/16	10,646	11,748	7,865	30,259
2016/17	7,542	8,221	6,267	22,030
2017/18	6,612	6,822	4,960	18,394
2018/19	5,254	6,541	5,719	17,514
2019/20	5,308	5,926	4,692	15,926
Total	150,875	153,000	74,389	378,264

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 17: Essential Skills qualifications issued by subject, level achieved and academic year

Academic Year	Literacy			Numeracy			ICT	
	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Entry Level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 1	Level 2
2002/03	-	123	52	-	115	26	-	-
2003/04	904	952	184	764	532	107	-	-
2004/05	2,603	519	109	1,974	170	90	-	-
2005/06	3,202	1,659	819	2,530	974	507	-	-
2006/07	2,895	2,210	1,521	2,357	1,920	1,379	101	44
2007/08	2,889	2,437	2,138	2,611	2,350	2,467	225	80
2008/09	2,212	2,557	2,660	2,138	2,514	2,667	303	102
2009/10	2,256	4,352	4,768	2,182	4,029	4,450	2,153	1,143
2010/11	2,369	4,602	6,154	2,572	4,818	6,903	4,669	3,250
2011/12	2,464	4,753	7,926	2,775	5,081	8,501	4,439	4,155
2012/13	2,355	4,126	7,894	2,680	4,661	8,926	4,074	4,665
2013/14	2,255	3,441	11,998	3,143	4,137	8,181	2,952	4,744
2014/15	1,830	2,839	6,486	1,974	3,228	7,309	2,673	5,114
2015/16	1,656	2,853	6,137	1,914	3,111	6,723	2,440	5,425
2016/17	1,392	2,158	3,992	1,745	2,586	3,890	1,934	4,333
2017/18	1,662	1,865	3,085	2,106	2,338	2,378	1,660	3,300
2018/19	1,342	1,406	2,506	1,806	2,386	2,349	1,740	3,979
2019/20	1,267	1,668	2,373	1,791	1,997	2,138	1,724	2,968
Total	35,553	44,520	70,802	37,062	46,947	68,991	31,087	43,302

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

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

Subject	Enrolments (enrolments dataset)	Completers (enrolments dataset)	Retention rate	Qualifications (awarding organisations dataset)	Achievement rate	Success rate
Literacy	226,167	203,093	89.8%	150,875	74.3%	66.7%
Numeracy	228,431	205,787	90.1%	153,000	74.3%	67.0%
ICT	126,071	111,083	88.1%	74,389	67.0%	59.0%
All Subjects	580,669	519,963	89.5%	378,264	72.7%	65.1%

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20; Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Qualifications figures are correct as at 30th September 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Further details on how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated are available in Annex 2.

Table 19: Essential Skills performance analysis by sex since 2002/03

Sex	Enrolments (enrolments dataset)	Completers (enrolments dataset)	Retention rate	Qualifications (awarding organisations dataset)	Achievement rate	Success rate
Female	268,491	235,204	87.6%	171,694	73.0%	63.9%
Male	312,178	284,759	91.2%	206,466	72.5%	66.1%
Unknown	0	0	N/A	104	N/A	N/A
Total	580,669	519,963	89.5%	378,264	72.7%	65.1%

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20; Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Qualifications figures are correct as at 30th September 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Further details on how retention, achievement and success rates are calculated are available in Annex 2.

Table 20: Essential Skills retention rate by age band since 2002/03

Age Band	Enrolments (enrolments dataset)	Completers (enrolments dataset)	Retention rate
16	152,478	141,237	92.6%
17	116,496	105,761	90.8%
18-19	80,737	70,774	87.7%
20-24	75,601	68,734	90.9%
25-34	56,604	49,121	86.8%
35-44	45,844	39,689	86.6%
45+	51,845	43,755	84.4%
Unknown	1,064	892	N/A
Total	580,669	519,963	89.5%

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Further details on how retention rate is calculated are available in Annex 2.

Achievement and success rates have not been calculated by age band due to differences in the way age is calculated for enrolments and qualifications (see Annex 2).

Table 21: Essential Skills retention rate by target level since 2002/03

Target level	Enrolments (enrolments dataset)	Completers (enrolments dataset)	Retention rate
Entry Level 1	10,725	9,393	87.6%
Entry Level 2	22,719	20,249	89.1%
Entry Level 3	64,702	57,663	89.1%
Level 1	264,119	240,009	90.9%
Level 2	211,808	190,366	89.9%
Not Known	6,596	2,283	N/A
Total	580,669	519,963	89.5%

Source: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13 and Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 13th November 2020; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Further details on how retention rate is calculated are available in Annex 2.

Achievement and success rates have not been calculated by level as students may qualify at a different level to the 'target level' at which they enrolled.

Annex 2: Definitions

Academic year

An academic year is defined as 1st August to 31st July.

Achievement rate

Achievement rate is defined as the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their study and achieve their qualification to the number of enrolments who complete their study.

'Completers' include any enrolments not classified as 'Withdrawn' or 'Transferred'.

$$\text{Achievement rate} = \frac{\text{Number of achievements}}{\text{Number of completers}}$$

Age

For enrolments, age is calculated at the start date of the enrolment.

For qualifications, age is calculated at the certification date.

Deprivation

The analysis presented in the publication utilises five groups or quintiles of Super Output Areas (SOAs), based on relative level of deprivation using the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM). Enrolments are assigned to SOAs using the postcodes provided on enrolment records.

On 23rd November 2017, NIMDM 2017 replaced NIMDM 2010 as the official measure of relative deprivation in Northern Ireland. This provides a mechanism for ranking the 890 SOAs from the most deprived (rank 1) to the least deprived (rank 890). Accordingly, SOAs ranked 1 to 178 form the most deprived group relative to all other SOAs (Quintile 1), while those ranked 713 to 890 form the least deprived group (Quintile 5).

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

<https://www.nisra.gov.uk/statistics/deprivation/northern-ireland-multiple-deprivation-measure-2017-nimdm2017>

Enrolments

The enrolment returns are merged and a process is in place to deal with any duplicate enrolments. The resultant file is then analysed to present the total number of Essential Skills enrolments.

FE College

There are six Further Education (FE) Colleges across Northern Ireland: Belfast Metropolitan College, Northern Regional College, North West Regional College, South Eastern Regional College, Southern Regional College and South West College.

Individuals

Individual students are determined using name and date of birth, and allocated to a particular academic year based on the start date of their first enrolment. Individuals can enrol on more than one course.

Level achieved

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

Qualifications

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

Retention rate

Retention rate is defined as the proportion of the number of completed enrolments to the number of enrolments.

$$\text{Retention rate} = \frac{\text{Number of completers}}{\text{Number of enrolments}}$$

Success rate

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

$$\text{Success rate} = \frac{\text{Number of achievements}}{\text{Number of enrolments}}$$

Target level

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

Annex 3: Technical Notes

1. Enrolment information for FE Colleges is sourced from the Essential Skills enrolment return for the academic years 2002/03 to 2012/13 and from the Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2019/20. For DfE's training and employment programmes, the source is the Essential Skills extract from the Client Management System (CMS).
2. Both Essential Skills enrolment returns are merged and a process is in place to deal with any duplicate enrolments. The resultant file is then analysed to present the total number of Essential Skills enrolments.
3. FE Colleges have indicated that some 2002/03 Essential Skills enrolments were collated on a paper basis and registered with Awarding Organisations without being recorded on a computerised enrolment management system. Consequently, these enrolments are not available and are not included in this analysis.
4. The enrolment information is correct as at 13th November 2020. However, as some erroneous records are excluded from the Essential Skills enrolment database, figures are provisional and are subject to change.
5. The source of the qualifications issued information is the quarterly data provided by the awarding organisations.
6. Qualifications issued figures are correct as at 30th September 2020. However, figures may be subject to change due to any amendments in the qualification data supplied later by the awarding organisations.
7. Any enrolment records that have been recorded as a 'transfer' should have an accompanying second enrolment record (the one they have transferred onto). These will be accounted for and only one record will remain for analysis purposes.
8. In terms of outcome, the original enrolment recorded as a transfer will not have any outcome recorded against it. Therefore the transferred enrolment cannot be measured in terms of performance. Consequently, any enrolments recorded as transfers are excluded from performance analysis and are not included in final year enrolment counts.
9. Performance analysis is determined over the life of the Strategy from 2002/03 to 2019/20. No individual academic year retention, achievement or success rates are calculated, as two separate datasets are utilised to produce the performance rates; one dataset is used to determine enrolments and one for qualifications issued. An individual can enrol in one academic year, whereas the qualification may not be issued until the next academic year. Consequently, individual year performance analysis may be skewed due to this scenario and, therefore, is not calculated within this publication.

Further Enquiries

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

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