

SFC Statistical publication

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College Performance Indicators 2015-16

Issue date: 24 January 2017

Reference: SFC/ST/01/2017

Summary: The purpose of the indicators is to inform stakeholders about the performance of the sector.

FAO: Principals and directors of Scotland's colleges

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



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Executive summary

1. The sector exceeded its student number target for 2015-16 and in doing so delivered 117,204 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) student places which is 935 FTE more than the 116,269 FTE target.
2. Our PI report summarises the results for those students enrolled on courses leading to recognised qualifications.
3. The results for the 49,954 **full time further education** students enrolled on recognised qualifications are as follows:
 - 4,758 additional full time FE students successfully completed their course in 2015-16 in comparison to 2008-09.
 - 65.5% successfully completed their course. This is 1.5% higher than 2014-15.
 - A further 9.0% completed their course in 2015-16, these students did not achieve the qualification they were aiming for by the end of the academic year but some may gain their award at a later time.
 - The remaining 25.5% of full-time FE students are accounted for by 9.0% of students withdrawing before the funding qualifying date (colleges are not funded for these students) and a further 16.5% between this point and the end of the course.
 - Of the colleges delivering full time FE courses in 2015-16 fourteen had improved success rates in comparison to the previous year and eight saw a decline in the proportion successfully completing their course.
 - Changes in success rates for colleges ranged from +8% to -4%.

4. The results for the 33,701 **full time higher education** students enrolled on recognised qualifications are as follows:
- Success rates increased by 8.3% between 2008-09 and 2015-16 and as a result of these increasing success rates alone 2,797 additional students successfully completed their course in 2015-16.
 - As a result of increases in student numbers and improving success rates 6,888 additional full time HE students successfully completed their course in 2015-16 in comparison to 2008-09.
 - 72.2% of full-time students successfully completed their course which is a 0.9 percentage point increase on the previous year.
 - A further 10.6% completed their course in 2015-16, these students did not achieve the qualification they were aiming for by the end of the academic year but some may gain their award at a later time.
 - The remaining 17.2% of full-time HE students are accounted for by 4.6% of students withdrawing before the funding qualifying date and a further 12.6% between this point and the end of the course.
 - As stated above the sector success rate changed by +0.9%, however of the 16 colleges delivering full time HE courses in 2015-16 nine had improved pass rates in comparison to the previous year, one remained the same and six saw a decline in the proportion successfully completing their course.
 - Changes in success rates for colleges ranged from +5% to -4%¹.
5. Links to individual College PIs and a more detailed explanation on and examples of how we calculate PIs can be found in separate Technical Appendices to this document.

¹ One college outlier shows a reduction in success rate of -18% however, this is only based on one HNC course that had a relatively low number of enrolments.

Introduction

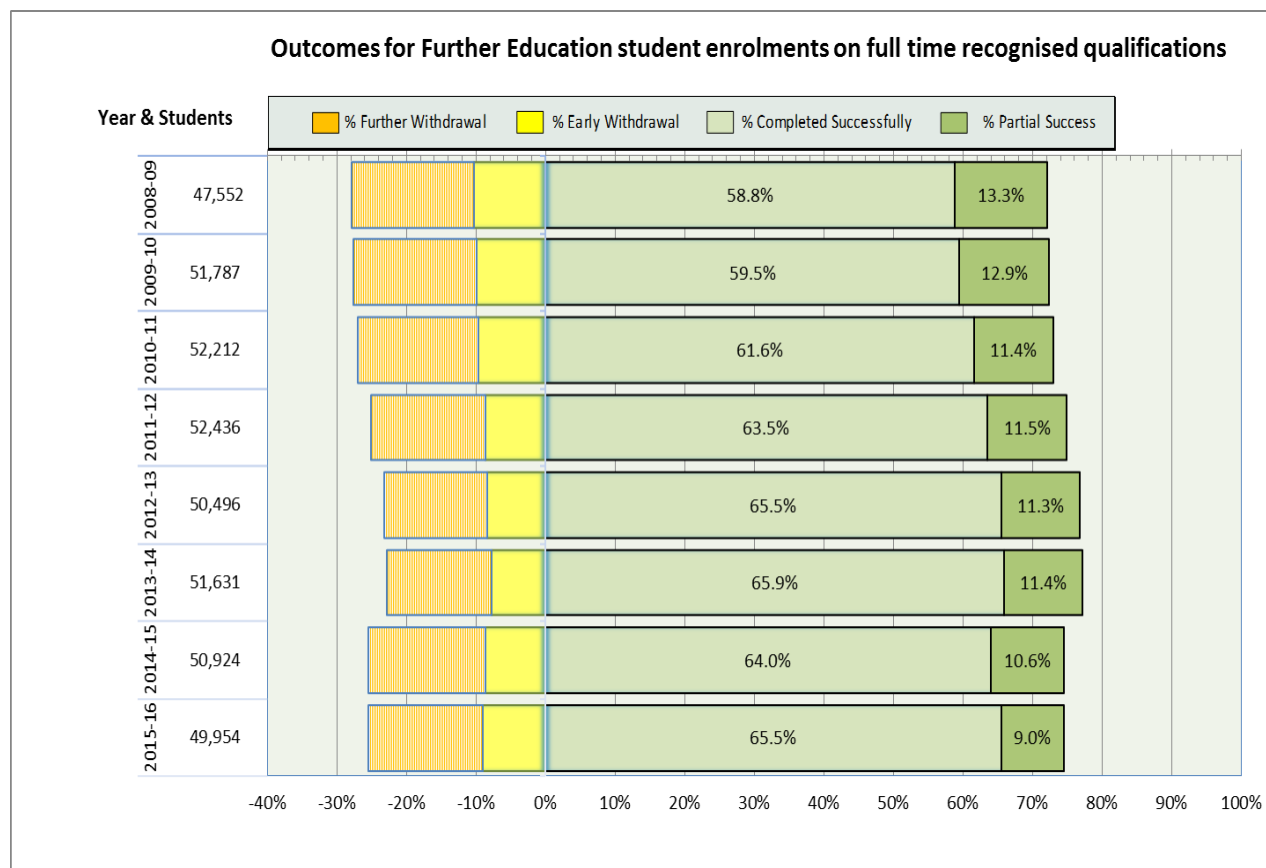
6. The SFC has published PIs on college teaching activity for the past fourteen years. Links to previous publications going back to 2008-09 are available on our website at: [Student and staff performance indicators for Scotland's further education colleges](#). The purpose of the indicators is to inform stakeholders about the performance of the sector. The reported PIs help colleges evaluate their own performance both over time and against other similar colleges thereby supporting a wider quality improvement agenda.
7. This is the fourteenth annual publication of Performance Indicators (PIs) for Scotland's colleges and covers the 2015-16 academic year.
8. The Performance Indicators report provides a broad coverage of activity and includes in addition to SFC funded student activity all Skills Development Scotland (SDS) employability fund and college based university 'Associate' status students.
9. Students have a wide variety of personal motivations for studying at college and study across an extensive range of programmes, from literacy and numeracy courses to engineering and agriculture, with awards ranging from courses not providing a recognised qualification to higher national certificates and diplomas or degrees in partnerships with universities.
10. Our method of presentation and breakdown of PIs by subject groups, duration of study, age groups and gender gives a comprehensive view of sector-wide provision and performance, enabling an informed comparison over time.
11. The PIs are based on student records submitted via the Further Education Statistics (FES) system. This is an automated data capture and record system which encompasses built-in iterative quality checks to ensure the data is correct and credible. Only when the data has passed will SFC permit the data to be used for PI purposes. In addition to our checks, every college Principal must also sign-off the data as a true and accurate record for their college.
12. As an additional reassurance of consistency and quality, SFC has a contract with Education Scotland (previously HMIE) to perform external quality reviews of college performance. Education Scotland reports are available on the [Education Scotland website](#)
13. Our analytical team also conduct data quality visits to ensure the student records submitted by colleges are accurate and comparable across the sector.
14. Each of the charts in this publication contains two percentage figures; the first describes the percentage of students who **successfully completed** the course

year and the second is the percentage that **completed** the course year irrespective of their result. Both these values have been calculated as a percentage of all enrolments.

15. When viewing individual college level PI data, where the number of enrolments is less than 50 in a category the data has been suppressed and is not shown. This avoids spurious statistical accuracy in the published success rates and reduces the risk of incorrect conclusions being drawn from success rates based on small numbers.
16. Links to individual College PIs and a more detailed explanation on and examples of how we calculate PIs can be found in separate Technical Appendices to this document.
17. It is our aim to strive for continuing improvement and enhanced usability of this document. We welcome feedback from readers on matters of content and presentation. Please pass any comments to: kwilson@sfc.ac.uk

How our performance indicators are presented

18. The chart below shows the actual results for full-time FE students over the period 2008-09 to 2015-16.



19. The blue line highlights the zero per cent point on the axis. Bars to the left of this line show the percentage of withdrawals before the course has ended. Bars to the right of the line show the percentage of students who have completed their course.
20. The first bar to the right of the blue line shows the percentage of students who have completed their course year successfully. This includes students who have progressed to a later year for multi-year courses.
21. Colleges must choose one of 12 student outcome options from our FES 2 guidance notes [Code List J](#) that best describes the student result. The following student outcomes for nationally recognised programmes are considered to have completed successfully:
- Completed programme / course, student assessed and successful.
 - Student has progressed to next year and has achieved 70% of the credits undertaken.

- Student has achieved 70% of the credits undertaken but has chosen not to progress onto the next year.
 - Student completed first year of a Higher National Diploma (HND) but has chosen to leave with a Higher National Certificate (HNC).
22. The second bar to the right of the blue line shows the percentage of students who have completed their course year but are not considered to be fully successful. For example, the student may have failed to achieve one or more units required for the course. The following two student outcomes are considered to have completed (with partial success):
- Completed programme / course, student assessed but not successful.
 - Student has progressed to next year but did not gain 70% of the credits undertaken.
23. The combination of these two bars shows the total percentage to have completed the course. For example, the 2015-16 bars shows that 65.5% of students completed successfully and a further 9.0% irrespective of the result. Therefore 74.5% completed the course in total.
24. This leaves 25.5% of students unaccounted for. These students are shown to the left of the blue line as withdrawals. The first bar to the left of the line is shown in yellow and shows the number who withdrew before the qualifying date for funding (colleges do not receive funding for students who leave the course before 25% of the course has been delivered).
25. The second bar to the left of the blue line is coloured orange and shows the percentage of students who withdraw after attending beyond the qualifying date but before the programme ends. Colleges are fully funded for these students.
26. The number of students enrolled on these courses is shown for each academic year to the left of the bar chart.
27. The technical annex shows the breakdown of enrolments for nationally recognised programmes for further education and higher education full and part time courses across each of the 12 possible student outcomes.

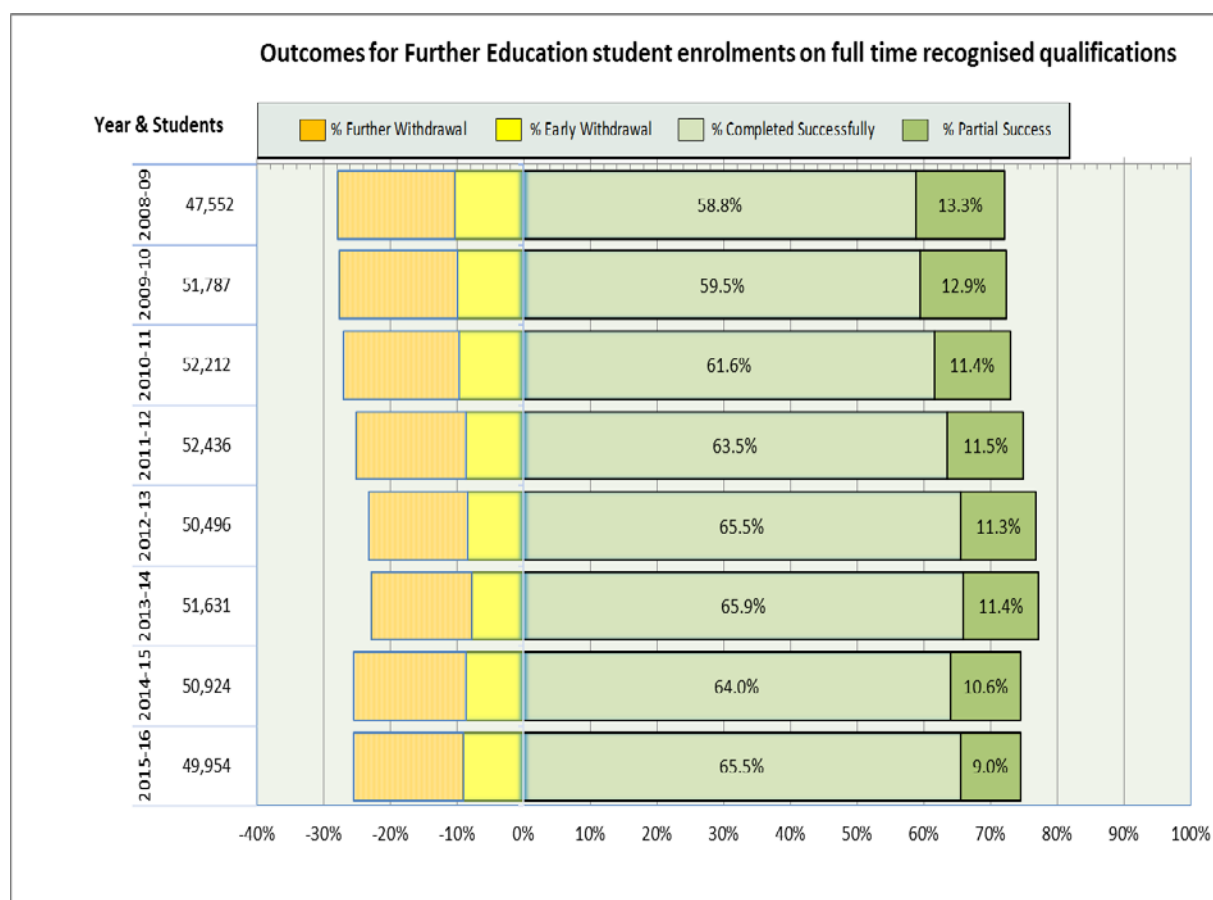
Key Performance Indicators charts

Outcomes for FE student enrolments on recognised qualifications

28. Chart 1 provides an overview of enrolments and success rates on full-time² recognised FE programmes from 2008-09 to 2015-16. The figures allow comparisons over a longer timeframe to reduce the risk of basing an assessment of performance on a snapshot of a single year when performance may vary over time.
29. In recent years the trend is for the number of full-time FE enrolments to show a steady year-on-year decline. Over the three year period 2013-14 to 2015-16 the number of student enrolments has reduced by 1,677.
30. In 2015-16, 65.5% of students on full-time programmes **completed successfully** whilst a further 9.0% completed irrespective of their final result. In total 74.5% of students completed their course. This displays across the years a strong trend for improved success rates of recognised qualifications and a decreasing proportion of students being retained who only achieved partial success.
31. Perhaps the most important measure is the percentage of successfully completing students. Chart 1 shows that in 2008-09, 58.8% of students completed successfully. This rose steadily year on year to peak in 2013-14 at 65.9% before dropping to 64.0% in 2014-15, rising again in 2015-16 to 65.5%.
32. Over the 8 years from 2008-09 this represents a 6.7 percentage point increase in the success rate and although the number of students has reduced by a further 970 in 2015-16 to 32,730, an extra 4,758 students have successfully completed compared to 27,972 in 2008-09, an increase of 17.0%.
33. The increase in the FE full-time success rate in 2015-16 is not consistent across all college regions. Most college regions show continued improvement whilst there are two that show a reduction in success rate of over 3%.
34. SFC has targeted colleges to further increase the FE full-time success rate to 69% by 2016-17 as part of our [outcome agreement](#) negotiations. It will be challenging, based on the current sector success rate trend, to realise this target within the next academic year.

² FE full-time programmes of study contain greater than or equal to 600 nominal learning hours

Chart 1: Outcomes for FE student enrolments on full time recognised qualifications

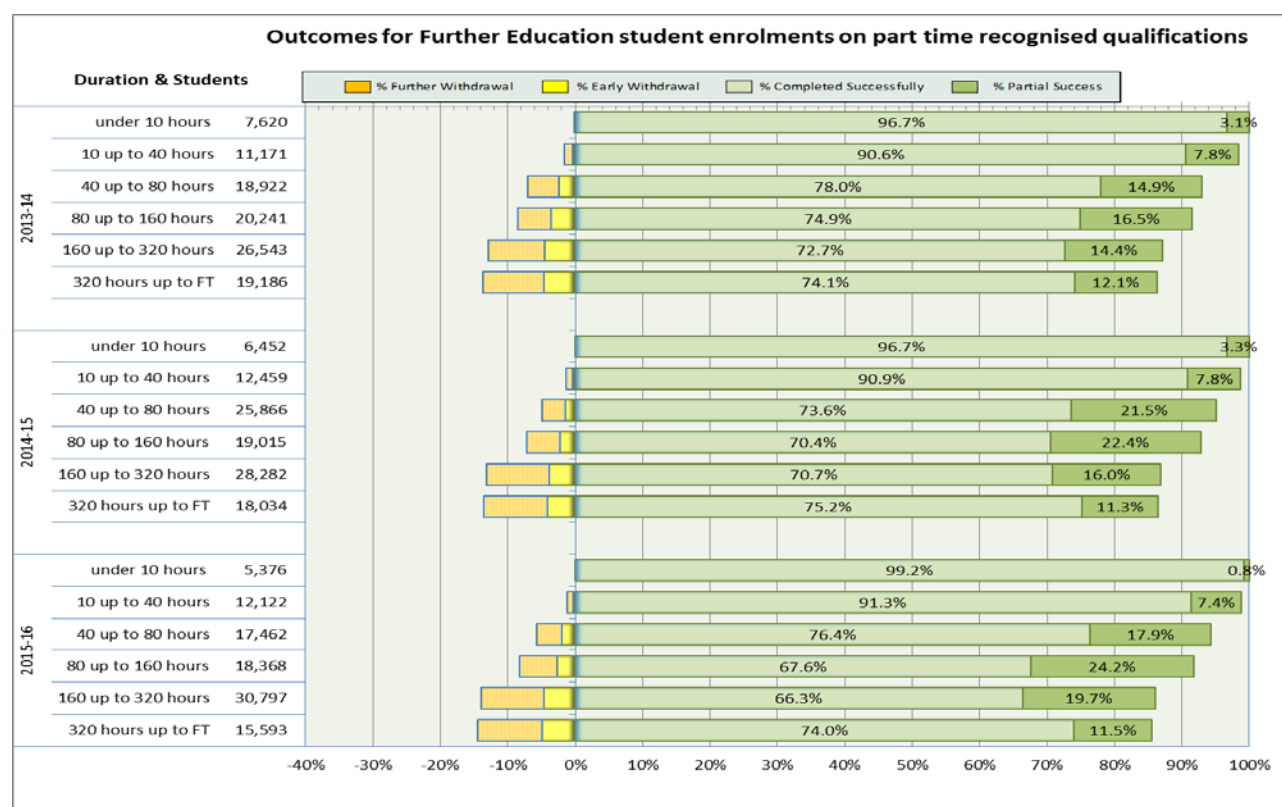


35. Chart 1 also shows that the withdrawal rate has reduced over the period from 27.9% to 25.5% (a 2.4 percentage point improvement). Colleges often report that students withdraw from their course early to take up employment opportunities as they arise. These opportunities are more likely to occur with a buoyant job market and a return to these conditions may see an increase in withdrawal rates leading to a reduction in the percentage of students successfully completing their studies. The resilience observed in the labour market during 2015, with employment and unemployment rates close to their long run averages, has been evident in the first half of 2016 also. Most recently, in the three months to August, unemployment fell to 4.6%, its lowest rate since 2008³.
36. Looking specifically at full-time FE enrolments, just over 4% (2,075) of students, withdrew from their studies in 2015-16 for positive reasons such as, to commence employment or to study at a university.

³ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Economy/state-economy/latestSofE> - Scottish Economic Performance – Pre-EU Referendum Section

37. Chart 2 shows the number of FE students on part-time programmes of study have shown a decrease from 103,683 in 2013-14 to 99,718 in 2015-16. Success rates across the higher study hour bands for part-time further education courses also show a declining trend. In particular, for programmes between 160 up to 320 hours there has been a 4.4 percentage point decrease in success from the previous year and on comparing partial success percentage with that of full time students they are more than twice as likely to only achieve partial success.
38. The results do show that students enrolled on shorter programmes are more likely to complete their studies irrespective of the result. Intuitively this would be in line with our expectations, for example a student attending a course lasting for 2 hours over 1 study visit offers less opportunity for withdrawing before the end date than a course requiring attendance 3 afternoons per week over 36 weeks.

Chart 2: Outcomes for Further Education student enrolments on part time recognised qualifications



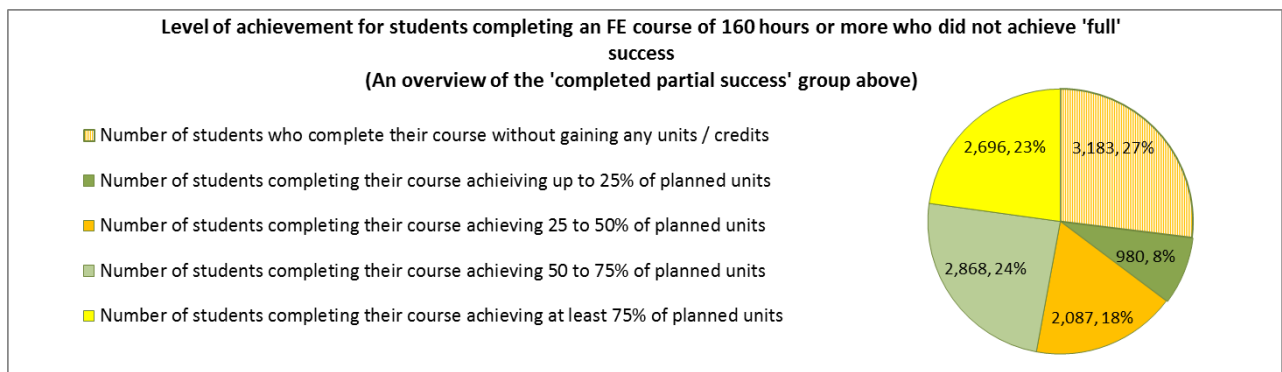
Students completing their FE course that did not achieve “full” success

39. Chart 3 below provides more detailed information for the students enrolled on FE programmes in 2015-16 who completed without “full” success (this includes both full-time FE and part-time students enrolled on programmes lasting for at least 160 hours). For the purpose of improving data quality, this publication now excludes, in the majority of charts presented, students with fewer than

160 hours of study which ensures that the PIs are focussed less on short duration, recreational courses and more on longer, more vocational courses which are more likely to be assessed and accredited.

40. There are 11,814 students enrolled on FE programmes in 2015-16 who completed without “full” success (as shown in the previous charts). It excludes students with fewer than 160 hours of study and students who were not funded by SFC. It shows that 23% (2,696) of these students gained at least 75% of the units on their programme and 47% (5,564) of those students who completed their course year but were not fully successful managed to pass over 50% of the units attempted. At the other end of the scale 27% (3,183) or of these students failed to achieve any of the units for which they enrolled. In session 2014-15 this was 15% (1,752) of students following a significant reduction in 2014-15 of the number of students who completed their course without achieving any units. The number in 2015-16 has significantly increased and SFC intends to investigate this group in more detail to determine what factors may be relevant to this particular partial FE success outcome.

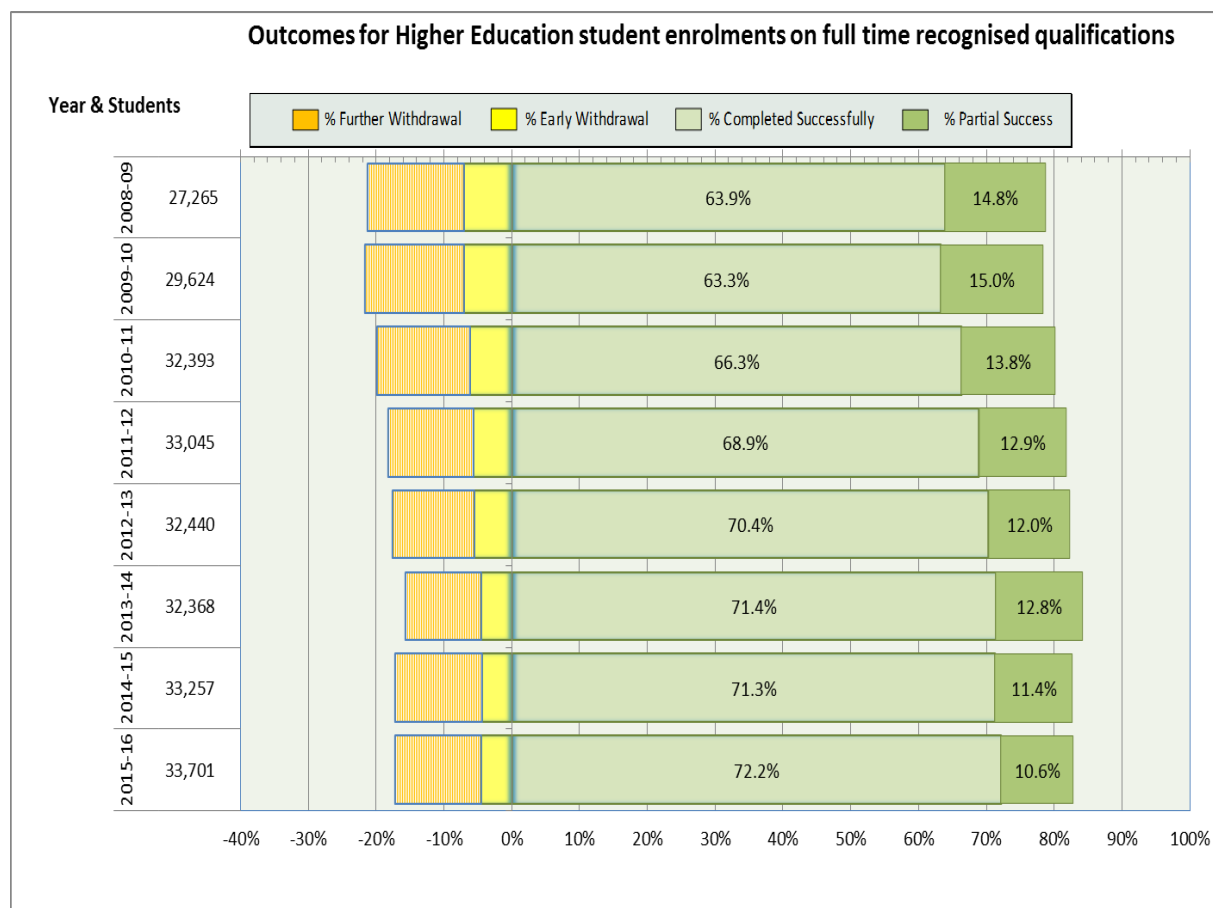
Chart 3: Level of achievement for students completing an FE course of 160 hours or more who did not achieve ‘full’ success



Outcomes for HE student enrolments on recognised qualifications

41. In terms of full-time⁴ recognised programmes at HE level, chart 4 below gives an overview of success rates for academic sessions 2008-09 to 2015-16.

Chart 4: Outcomes for HE student enrolments on full time recognised qualifications

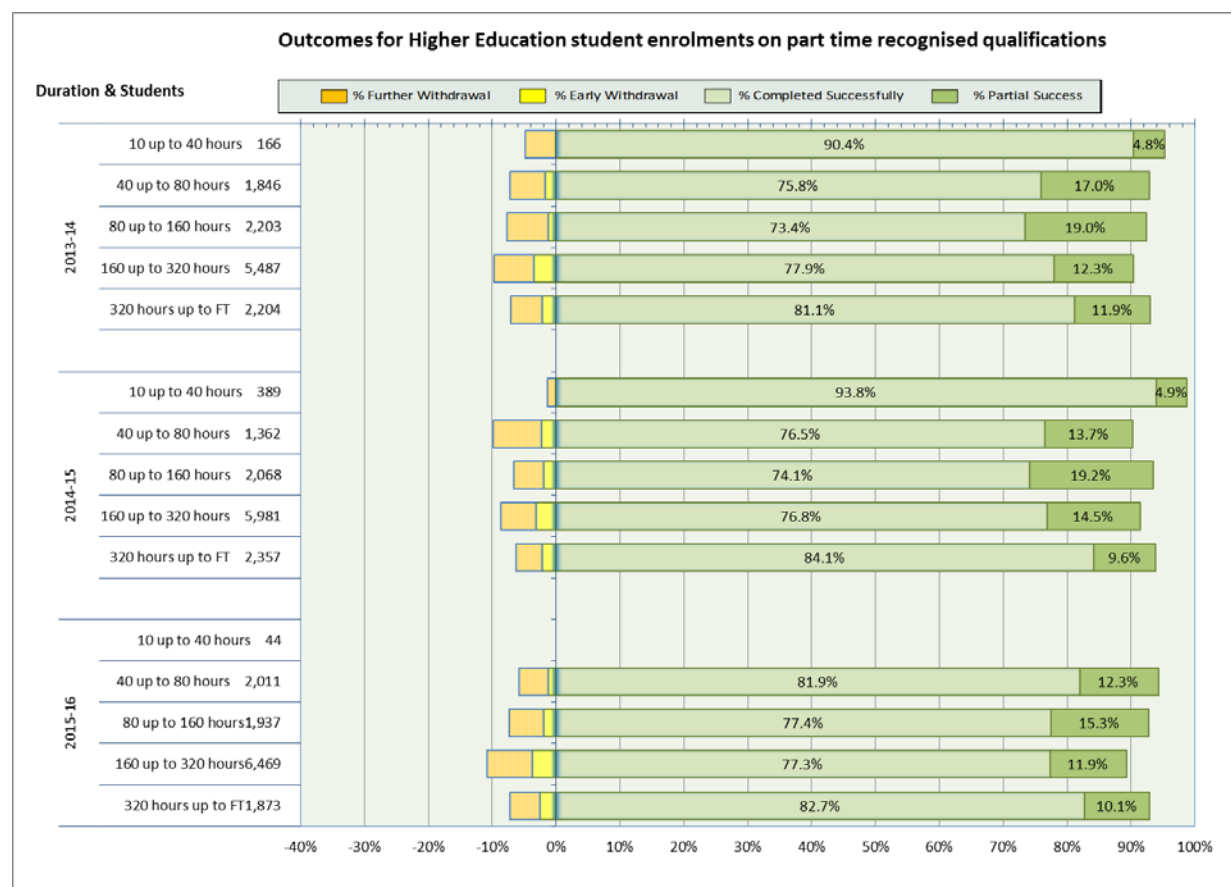


42. The pass rates for HE programmes tend to be higher than FE programmes over the course year and this is reflected above with 72.2% of students on full-time programmes **completing successfully** and a total of 82.8% completing irrespective of their final result, compared with the values of 65.5% and 74.5% for FE programmes.
43. It should be noted that full-time HE programmes are more likely than FE courses to last longer than a year in duration. As a result this one year snapshot does not fully reflect the likely percentage of students who achieve the qualification for which they enrol.

⁴ HE full-time programmes of study contain greater than or equal to 480 nominal learning hours

44. In recent years the trend is for the number of full-time HE enrolments to show year-on-year growth. Over the three year period 2013-14 to 2015-16 the number of student enrolments has increased by 1,333.
45. Rates of success for full-time HE students have clearly improved over the previous seven years rising from 63.9 percentage points in 2008-09 to 72.2 percentage points in 2015-16 (+8.3 percentage points).
46. The combined effect of an improved success rate and a larger population means that an extra 6,888 students have successfully completed in 2015-16, in comparison to 2008-09 (+39.5 percentage points).
47. The number of HE students has grown by 23.6% (6,436) over the eight year period and 2015-16 had the highest number of successfully completing HE students (24,317) of all time.
48. For full-time HE enrolments, just over 3% (1,045) of students, withdrew from their studies in 2015-16 for positive reasons such as, to commence employment or to study at a university.
49. Numbers of HE part-time students show a steady increase; from 11,906 in 2013-14 to 12,334 in 2015-16. Success rates in most categories have tended to improve, see Chart 5 below.

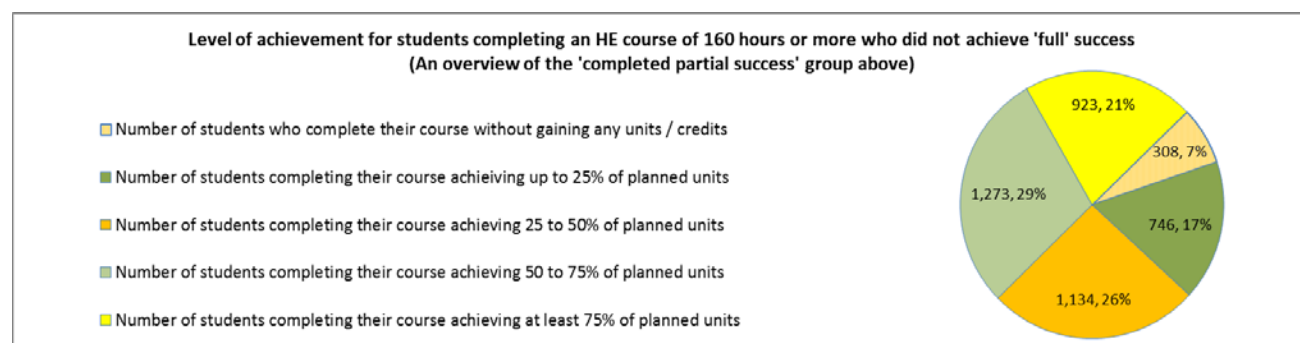
Chart 5: Outcomes for HE student enrolments on part time recognised qualifications



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

50. Chart 6 shows that there are 4,384 students enrolled on HE programmes in 2015-16 that completed without “full” success. It excludes students with fewer than 160 hours of study and students not funded by SFC. It shows that 50% (2,196) of these students achieved at least 50% of the units they enrolled on, while over 21% (923) of these students achieved at least 75% of the units on their programme. At the other end of the scale 7% (308) of the students failed to gain any of the units for which they enrolled. In session 2014-15 this was 8% (383) of students. The number of partial HE success has shown a marginal reduction from the previous year and with an increase in the number of students achieving at least 50% of planned units this would indicate that colleges have been more effective in monitoring and supporting students’ progress to achieve a higher number of units, even though they did not achieve ‘full’ success.

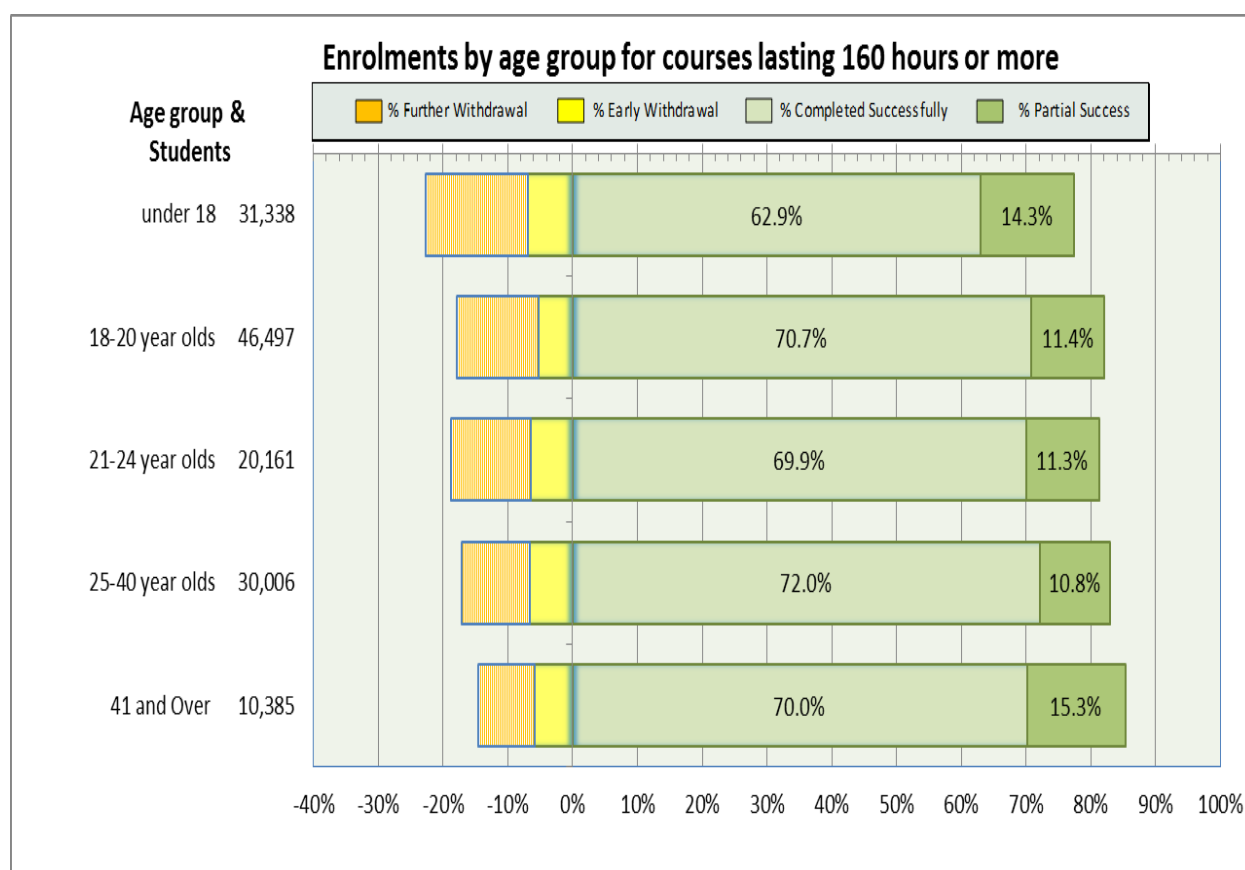
Chart 6: Level of achievement for students completing an HE course of 160 hours or more who did not achieve 'full' success



Outcomes by age group (combined FE and HE courses)

51. Chart 7 below shows that students in the younger age groups are less likely to complete successfully than those in the older age groups; for example 62.9% of those under 18 compared to 70.0% of those aged over 41 complete successfully, and similarly, 77.2% and 85.3% including those with partial success.
52. The under 18 success rate is significantly less than the sector FE full time success rate and the further withdrawal rate is much higher than the other student age groups.
53. Younger students are more likely to enrol on full-time programmes which have a lower pass rate in comparison to part-time programmes and this may partly explain the lower pass rates for younger students.
54. The chart allows for a more informed comparison of college activity, but should nevertheless take account of the specific environment in which each college operates.

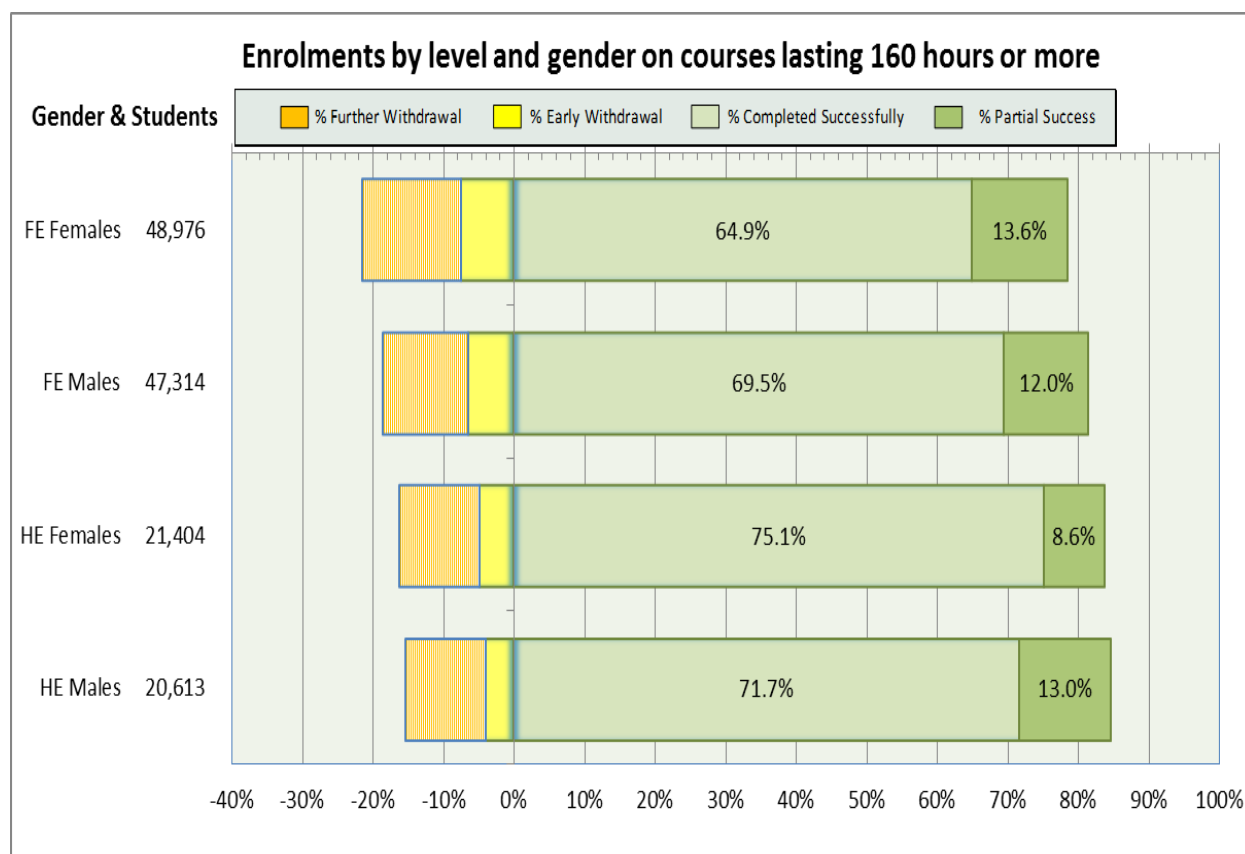
Chart 7: Enrolments by age group for courses lasting 160 hours or more



Outcomes by gender and level (combined FE and HE courses)

55. Chart 8 below shows that in 2015-16 more than two thirds of enrolments relate to students studying FE level programmes. The success rates are different across these groups and provide a more rounded picture of college performance.
56. The chart below suggests that male students are 4.6% more likely to successfully complete their FE programmes than female students, while the situation is reversed for HE programmes with a 3.4% difference. The subjects and modes of study are associated with different pass rates and the 'mix' of these may differ across genders and individual colleges.

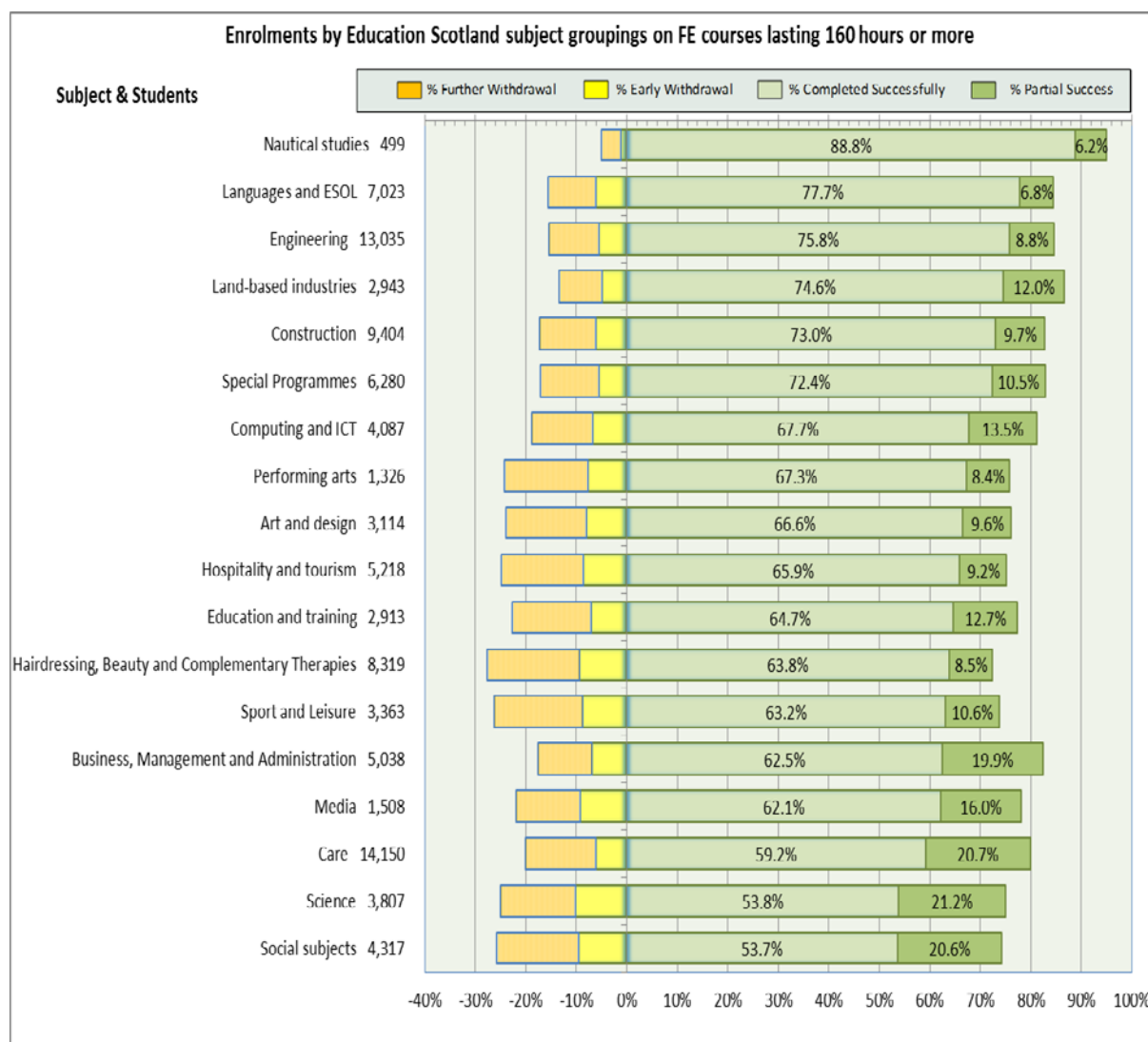
Chart 8: Enrolments by level and gender on courses lasting 160 hours or more



Outcomes by subject groupings on FE courses

57. The subject groupings are based on the subject classification for the course aggregated into areas considered similar by Education Scotland. A subject mapping can be found in a separate technical appendix. There are two charts, one for FE level programmes and one for HE level programmes. Colleges offer a very wide ranging portfolio of courses and subject areas of study to potential students.
58. Chart 9 below for FE programmes clearly shows that some subjects have lower success rates than others. Social subjects and Science, for example, shows a success rate of just under 54% whilst Engineering stands at just under 76%. Programmes of Highers are also more likely to fall into the Social subjects and Science group, these pass rates can be influenced by changing priorities amongst students, for example, initially enrolling for four Highers but only completing two as this is sufficient to gain entry to university.

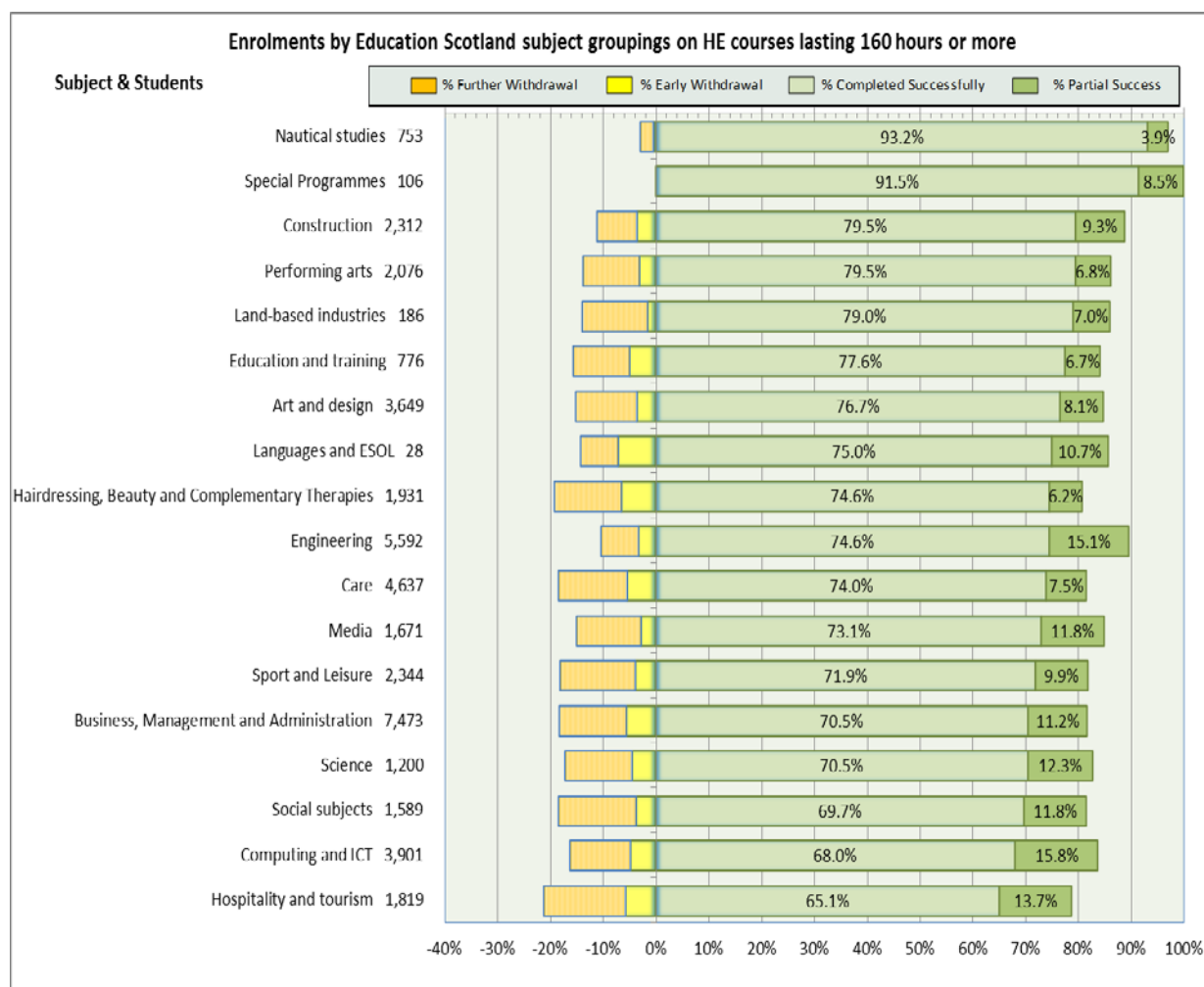
Chart 9: Enrolments by Education Scotland subject groupings on FE courses lasting 160 hours or more



Outcomes by subject groupings on HE courses

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

Chart 10: Enrolments by Education Scotland subject groupings on HE courses lasting 160 hours or more

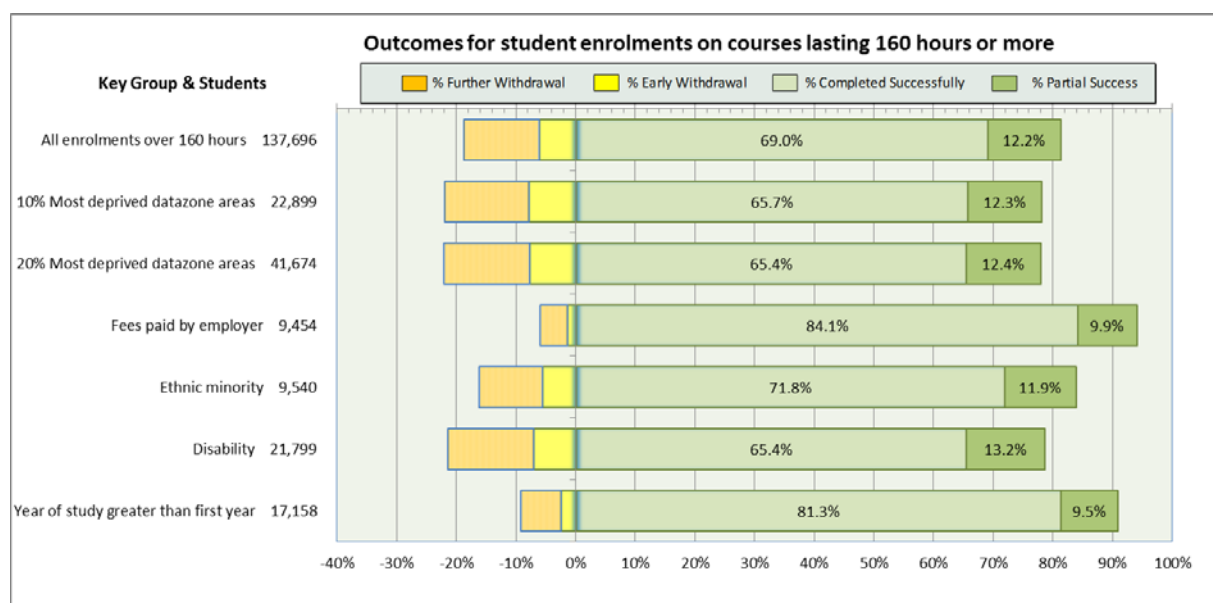


Outcomes by key groups (combined FE and HE courses)

60. Chart 11 below highlights groups of interest to various stakeholders and helps identify factors that may affect the success rates for an individual college. For example, a college with a high proportion of students on day release from their employer or supported by their employer in some other way is likely to have a high success rate for these students and this may be enough to affect overall success rates.
61. The data suggests that the success rates on courses lasting more than 160 hours for those students from the 10% and 20% most deprived datazone areas⁵ are very similar, 65.7% and 65.4% respectively.

⁵ Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2012: the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is the Scottish Government's official tool for identifying those places in Scotland suffering from deprivation, combining in a single index several different aspects of deprivation. The new SIMD 2016 has not been used in this publication.

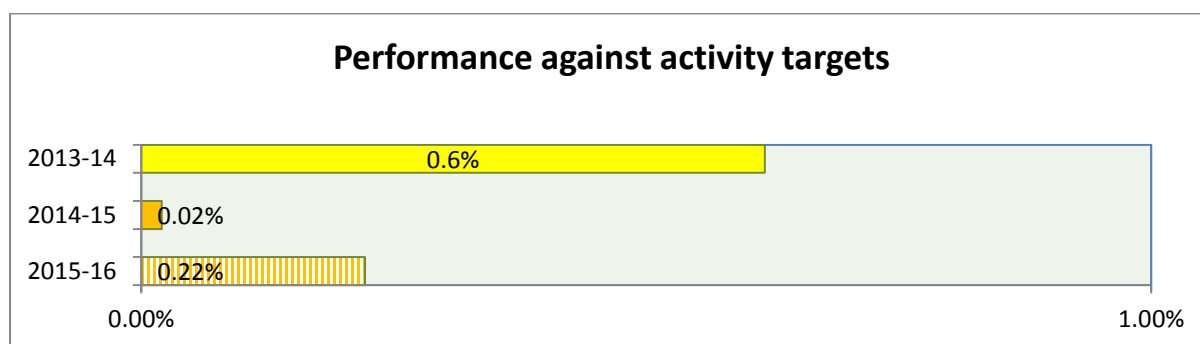
Chart 11: Outcomes for student enrolments on courses lasting 160 hours or more



Performance against activity targets

62. Colleges receive funding from SFC to deliver a target number of hours of learning (credits). These can be related to college places and at the sector level we expect colleges to deliver 116,269 FTE places (equivalent to 15 credits). Colleges exceeded the 116,269 places target by 935 FTE in 2015-16.
63. Colleges delivered in addition to the above an extra 3,980 FTE places through two SFC match-funded European Social Fund (ESF) programmes; 'Developing Scotland's Workforce' and the 'Youth Employment Initiative'.
64. The total number of FTE places delivered by colleges in 2015-16 is therefore 121,184.
65. Separately to the FTE targets above colleges are expected to deliver a minimum number of credits (1 credit equates to 40 notional hours of learning) and the sector exceeded the 2015-16 credit target, including for the ESF programmes, by 0.22 percentage points, as outlined in Chart 12 below.

Chart 12: Performance against activity targets



Further information

66. The performance indicators are of primary importance to Ministers, College Principals, Governing Boards and Scottish Government officials.
67. In order to bring the performance indicators to the widest possible audience of employers, staff, students and parents. The individual college PIs are hosted by each college on their own website, thereby raising the profile of the figures and making them more useable.
68. Further information from SFC on Scotland's colleges is available on [our website](#).
69. Student numbers may differ across SFC's publications as the reports are prepared for different purposes. For example, this PI report excludes students who begin courses in January and finish in December of the same year, as results will not be available for these students until the course ends. However, activity related to these students will be included in another SFC publication; the Baseline report for academic year 2015-16.
70. Full copies of Education Scotland subject and college reviews, and overviews of provision are available from the [Education Scotland website](#).
71. Additional information regarding student enrolments and courses is available via our interactive database. The [Infact database](#), available on our website, allows for more detailed analysis of provision within Scotland's colleges. Please note that figures on the database may differ from those presented here. The database includes figures for all students regardless of who provides the funding.

Technical annex

72. Our performance indicators are primarily based on our [further education statistics \(FES\) returns](#) which include the course / exam result for each student funded by SFC and SDS. [Code List J](#) from our 2015-16 FES 2 guidance outlines the 12 different options to record the result for the student for the academic year period. This includes options for student withdrawals, transfers, success and failures and continuation to the next stage of the course.

Student Outcome	Enrolments			
	Full time		Part time	
	HE	FE	HE	FE
Withdrawn from programme/course and commenced employment	955	1,913	123	662
Withdrawn from programme/course and now studying in an HEI	52	37	10	47
Withdrawn from programme/course and destination unknown	4,750	10,562	946	8,099
Transferred to another programme course within the college	13	102	4	98
Completed programme/course, student assessed but not successful	3,339	4,397	1,211	15,521
Completed programme/course, student assessed and successful	16,728	30,776	6,924	68,081
Withdrawn from programme/course and now studying elsewhere (not HEI)	38	125	21	315
Completed programme/course, student not assessed as programme/course not designed to be assessed	-	-	-	151
Student has progressed to next year but did not gain 70% of the assessed credits undertaken	237	88	297	858
Student has progressed to next year and has achieved 70% of the assessed credits undertaken	6,715	1,903	2,770	5,754
Student has achieved 70% of the assessed credits undertaken but has chosen not to progress onto the next year	141	51	20	132
Student completed first year of an HND but has chosen to leave with an HNC	733	-	8	-
Total	33,701	49,954	12,334	99,718

73. We collect a student record for each individual. SFC working with the college sector continues to improve protective characteristics data collection; disclosure, coverage and quality.
74. Colleges submit their returns via our FES Online web tool which performs around 150 separate validations on each record. These validations are updated on an annual basis based on feedback from our statistical advisory and performance indicator groups.
75. As well as performing data validation, our FES Online system provides colleges with management reports which include performance indicators. These reports include the published Performance Indicators for the college which we ask the college to confirm as accurate.

76. Other reports include performance indicators for each course run by the college which enables colleges to evaluate the national PI values by confirming those at course level which are more closely managed by the relevant course teams. Colleges are able to submit files to FES Online as part of an iterative process until they are happy with their data quality and performance indicators. This enables course teams to examine the management reports and update the student records appropriately until they are happy that the results reflect the success rates for their course.
77. SFC will be working with our statistical advisory groups and with the 'College Development Network' to develop a revised set of performance indicator guidance notes. These will help ensure student results are coded consistently across the sector.
78. In addition to our FES and current PI guidance notes SFC also provides the performance indicator and student outcome datasets to Education Scotland for use within their college reviews. This helps ensure the accuracy of our data and provides a richer context in which the results can be reviewed. The Education Scotland reports on college inspection can be found on the [Education Scotland website](#).
79. SFC allocated £394 million in teaching and fee waiver grant to colleges to deliver learning activity and an additional £105 million to provide financial student support in 2015-16. This excludes additional funding for strategic projects and £20 million for ESF activity. As a result colleges undergo significant audit of their student records to ensure these funds are being spent in line with guidance. These audits include checking that student withdrawals are being properly managed and recorded and that the correct credits are being claimed for students. Our PIs are based on these same records and therefore the robust audit process helps ensure the accuracy of our student records.
80. SFC completed a cycle of visits to each college before the 2015-16 performance indicators were finalised. These visits checked the data quality of the 2015-16 student records to ensure our performance indicators continue to be based on accurate data.