

Essential Skills Enrolments and Outcomes in Northern Ireland from 2002/03 to 2020/21



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.

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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

Contents

Reader Information	2
Contents	3
List of Figures	4
About Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education)	5
Storyboard	6
Introduction	7
Structure	7
Policy and Operational Context	7
Explanatory Notes	8
Section A: Enrolments	10
<i>Enrolments and participants</i>	10
<i>Target level of study</i>	11
<i>What are the characteristics of those participating?</i>	12
<i>Age</i>	12
<i>Sex</i>	13
<i>Deprivation Analysis</i>	14
<i>What subjects are being studied?</i>	15
<i>Subject and Age</i>	16
<i>Subject and Sex</i>	16
<i>Where are the courses being studied?</i>	17
Section B: Qualifications issued	18
<i>Number of qualifications issued</i>	18
<i>Qualifications issued by level achieved</i>	19
<i>Qualifications issued by age band</i>	20
<i>Qualifications issued by sex</i>	21
<i>Qualifications issued by subject</i>	22
Section C: Performance	23
<i>Essential Skills performance</i>	23
<i>Performance by subject</i>	23
<i>Table A: Essential Skills performance indicators by subject since 2002/03</i>	23
<i>Performance by sex</i>	24
<i>Table B: Essential Skills performance indicators by sex since 2002/03</i>	24
<i>Performance by age band</i>	24
<i>Table C: Essential Skills retention rate by age band since 2002/03</i>	24
<i>Performance by target level of study</i>	24
<i>Table D: Essential Skills retention rate by target level since 2002/03</i>	24

Annexes	25
Annex 1: Tables	25
<i>Table 1: Essential Skills enrolments and individuals by academic year</i>	<i>25</i>
<i>Table 2: Essential Skills enrolments by target level of study and academic year</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Table 3: Essential Skills enrolments by age band and academic year</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Table 4: Essential Skills enrolments by employment status and academic year.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Table 5: Essential Skills enrolments by sex and academic year</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>Table 6: Essential Skills enrolments by deprivation quintile and academic year</i>	<i>28</i>
<i>Table 7: Essential Skills enrolments by deprivation quintile, subject and target level since 2002/03</i>	<i>29</i>
<i>Table 8: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and academic year</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Table 9: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and age band since 2002/03</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Table 10: Essential Skills enrolments by sex, subject and academic year</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Table 11: Essential Skills enrolments by FE College, 2020/21</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Table 12: Essential Skills qualifications issued by academic year</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Table 13: Essential Skills qualifications issued by level achieved and academic year.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>Table 14: Essential Skills qualifications issued by age band and academic year</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Table 15: Essential Skills qualifications issued by sex and academic year</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Table 16: Essential Skills qualifications issued by subject and academic year.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Table 17: Essential Skills qualifications issued by subject, level achieved and academic year</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Table 18: Essential Skills performance analysis by subject since 2002/03.....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Table 19: Essential Skills performance analysis by sex since 2002/03</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Table 20: Essential Skills retention rate by age band since 2002/03</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Table 21: Essential Skills retention rate by target level since 2002/03.....</i>	<i>36</i>
Annex 2: Definitions	37
Annex 3: Technical Notes	39
Further Enquiries	40

List of Figures

Figure 1: Essential Skills enrolments and individuals by academic year	10
Figure 2: Number of Essential Skills enrolments by target level and academic year	11
Figure 3: Essential Skills enrolments by age band since 2002/03	12
Figure 4: Essential Skills enrolments by sex and academic year	13
Figure 5: Essential Skills enrolments by deprivation quintile since 2002/03	14
Figure 6: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and academic year	15
Figure 7: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and age since 2002/03	16
Figure 8: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and sex since 2002/03	16
Figure 9: Essential Skills enrolments by FE College, 2020/21	17
Figure 10: Essential Skills qualifications issued by academic year	18
Figure 11: Percentage of Essential Skills qualifications issued by level achieved since 2002/03	19
Figure 12: Number of Essential Skills qualifications issued by level achieved and academic year	20
Figure 13: Essential Skills qualifications issued by age band since 2002/03	21
Figure 14: Essential Skills qualifications issued by sex and academic year	21
Figure 15: Essential Skills qualifications issued by subject and academic year	22

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 2020/21

<p>While there have been over 600,000 enrolments in the 19 years of the Strategy...</p>	<p>Since 2002/03, 241,037 individuals have participated in 608,394 Essential Skills enrolments and achieved 393,413 qualifications (Tables 1 and 12).</p>
<p>...there has been a decrease in the annual number of enrolments in each of the past 10 years.</p>	<p>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 ten years in a row, from a peak of 60,013 in 2010/11 to 24,008 in 2020/21 (Table 1).</p>
<p>The annual number of qualifications issued has decreased for the seventh consecutive year.</p>	<p>The number of Essential Skills qualifications issued has decreased for the seventh consecutive year, from 40,851 in 2013/14 to 15,156 in 2020/21. This 62.9% decrease in qualifications is greater than the 47.3% 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).</p>
<p>Two-thirds of enrolments in 2020/21 were from those aged 16-19.</p>	<p>While those aged 16-19 have accounted for 60.5% of enrolments over the full history of the Essential Skills Strategy, they made up 66.1% of enrolments in 2020/21. The historical share of those aged 25 and over is 26.2%, although this was lower (16.4%) in 2020/21 (Table 3).</p>
<p>Male students account for the majority of enrolments...</p>	<p>In 2020/21, males accounted for 57.7% (13,841) of enrolments. Over the past 19 years, 53.9% of enrolments on Essential Skills courses have been from male students (Table 5).</p>
<p>...and a higher proportion of enrolments are from the most deprived areas.</p>	<p>Generally, the more deprived an area is, the higher the number of Essential Skills enrolments from those living in that area. Over the 19 years of the Strategy, over half of enrolments (52.8%) have been from the two most deprived 'quintiles'. In 2020/21, 6,555 (27.9%) enrolments were from the most deprived quintile, while 2,305 (9.8%) were from the least deprived quintile (Table 6).</p>
<p>The most popular subject choice has varied across age groups.</p>	<p>From 2002/03 to 2020/21, Numeracy has been the most popular subject choice among those aged 16-19 (39.6%), while Literacy has been most popular among 20-44 year olds (43.7%). For those aged 45+, the most common subject studied has been ICT (38.6%) (Table 9).</p>
<p>Almost two-thirds of enrolments result in a qualification being issued...</p>	<p>Approaching two in every three (65.2%) Essential Skills enrolments result in a qualification being issued. Numeracy accounted for 41.3% of qualifications issued in the most recent academic year, while a further third (33.3%) were in Literacy and 25.3% were in ICT (Tables 16 and 18).</p>
<p>...with almost half of these being at Level 2.</p>	<p>Almost half (48.6%) 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 19.0% at Entry Level (Table 13).</p>

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 19 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 twelfth 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 – 2020/21;
- Essential Skills enrolment extract from the Client Management System (CMS) for the years 2002/03 – 2020/21;
- Essential Skills Qualifications Return for the years 2002/03 – 2020/21.

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

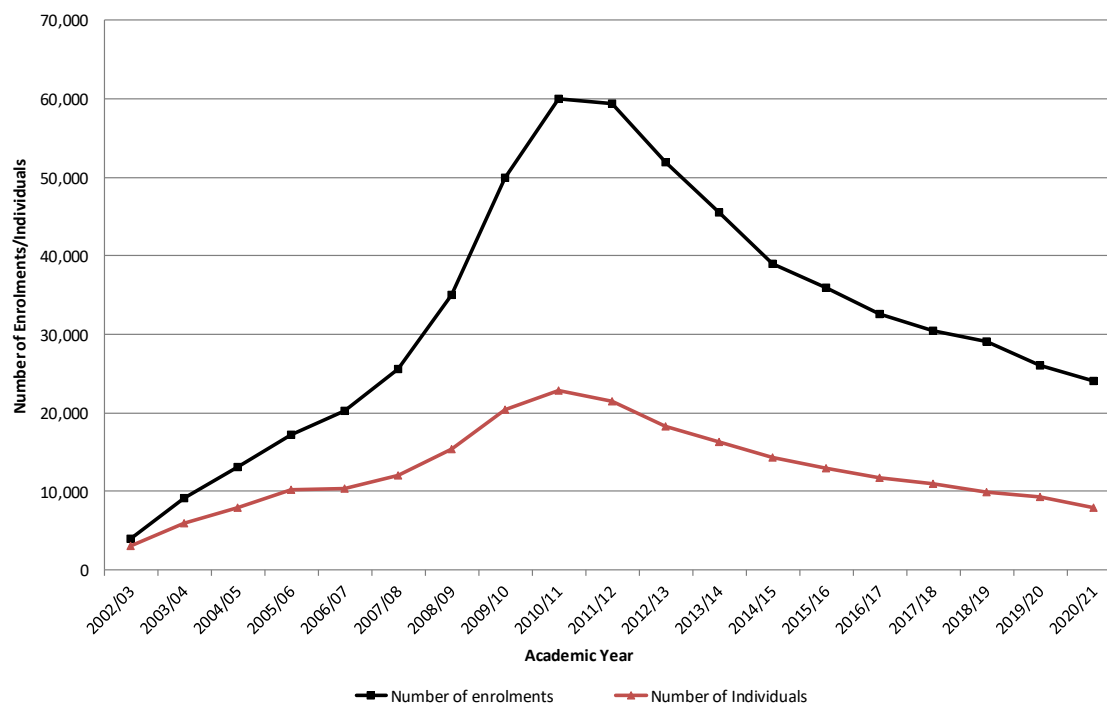
Enrolments and participants

Since 2002/03, 241,037 individuals have participated in 608,394 Essential Skills enrolments. Between 2002/03 and 2010/11, the annual number of enrolments increased year on year, reaching a peak of 60,013. Since then, the annual number of enrolments has decreased each year to a total of 24,008 in 2020/21. The number of individuals enrolling has followed a similar pattern, peaking at 22,879 in 2010/11, before decreasing in each subsequent year, to reach 7,884 in 2020/21.

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 76.2% in 2019/20. 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. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions were a contributory factor in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

Over the last academic year, enrolments have decreased by 7.7%, from 26,023 in 2019/20 to 24,008 in 2020/21 (Figure 1 and Table 1).

Figure 1: Essential Skills enrolments and individuals by academic year



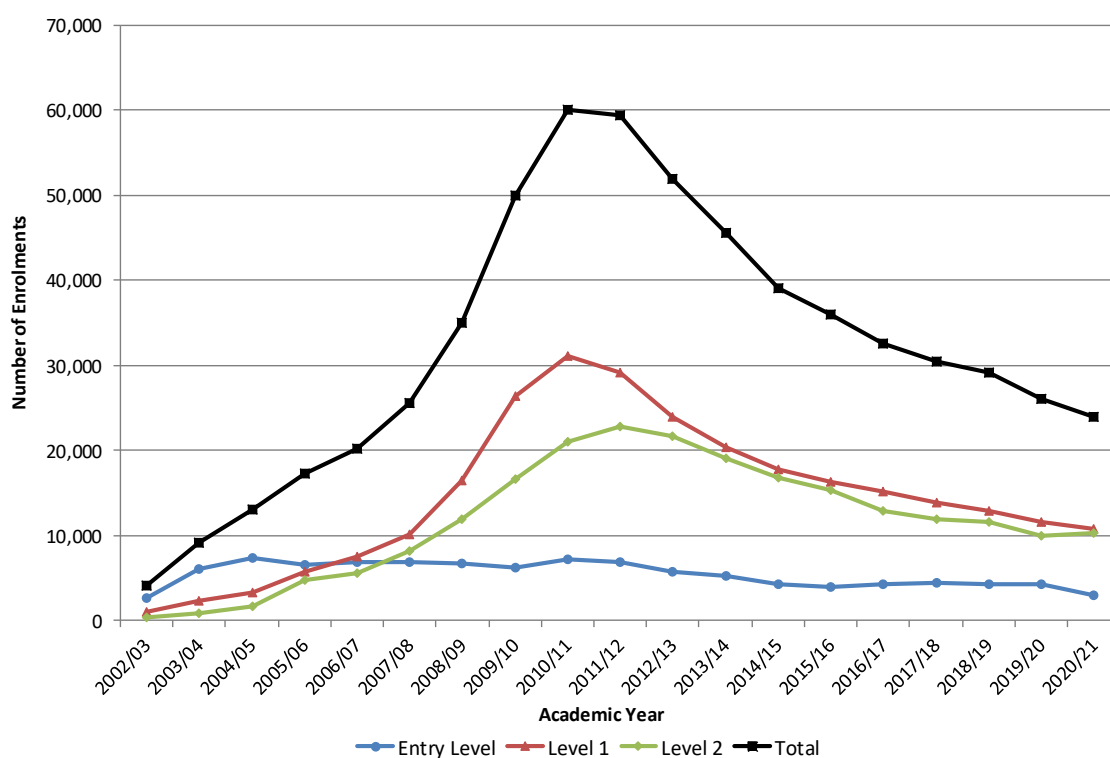
Target level of study

Over the course of the Essential Skills Strategy, the highest proportion of enrolments has been at target Level 1 (45.3%); including 44.6% in 2020/21.

The most recent academic year saw the proportion of enrolments at target Level 2 (equivalent to GCSE grade A*-C) increase from 37.9% in 2019/20 to 43.0% in 2020/21. Inversely, the proportion of Entry Level enrolments decreased by 4.4 percentage points to 12.1% in 2020/21 (Table 2).

While Entry Level enrolments had remained stable for a number of years, they have decreased from 4,306 in 2019/20 to 2,916 in 2020/21. Enrolments at Level 1 have decreased in number for a tenth consecutive year, from a peak of 31,025 in 2010/11 to 10,717 in 2020/21. Similarly, Level 2 enrolments decreased for eight consecutive years, from a peak of 22,773 in 2011/12 to 9,868 in 2019/20; however, these increased to 10,316 in the most recent academic year (Figure 2 and Table 2).

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



What are the characteristics of those participating?

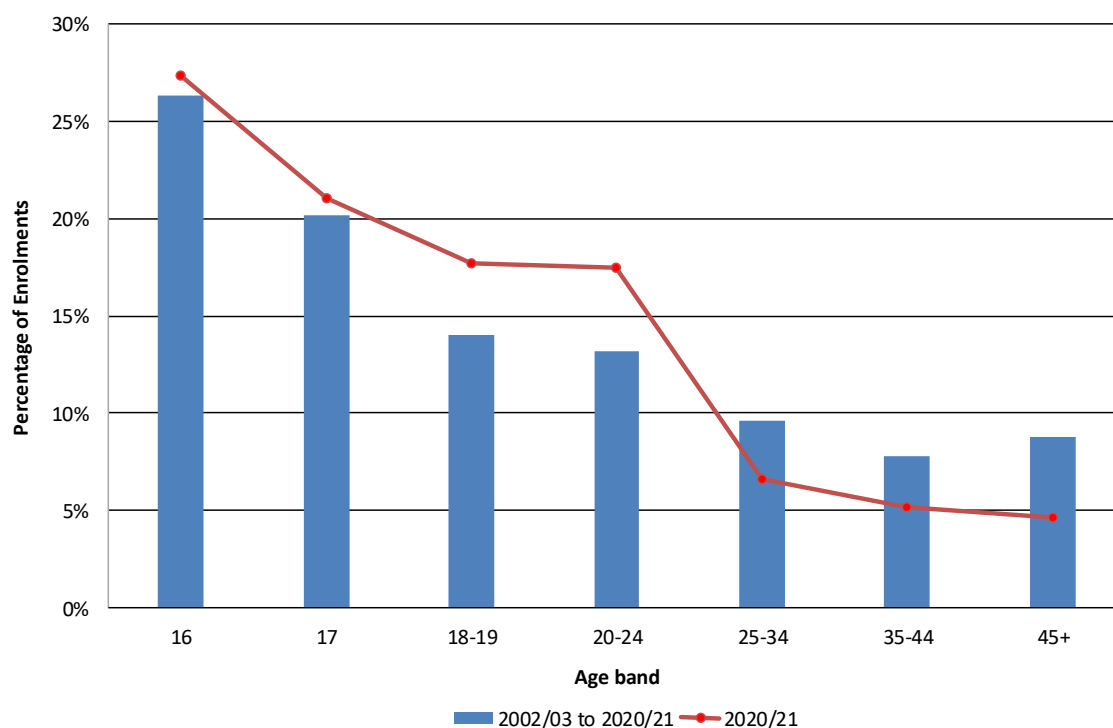
Age

Since the start of the Essential Skills Strategy, over a quarter (26.3%) of enrolments have been from 16-year-olds, including 27.4% in 2020/21. The 16-19 age group have accounted for 60.5% of enrolments over the full history of the Strategy; their proportion was 66.1% in 2020/21.

Those aged 25 and over have accounted for 26.2% of enrolments throughout the 19 years of the Strategy, although their share of enrolments has been lower in recent years, including 16.4% in 2020/21 (Figure 3 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 3: Essential Skills enrolments by age band since 2002/03

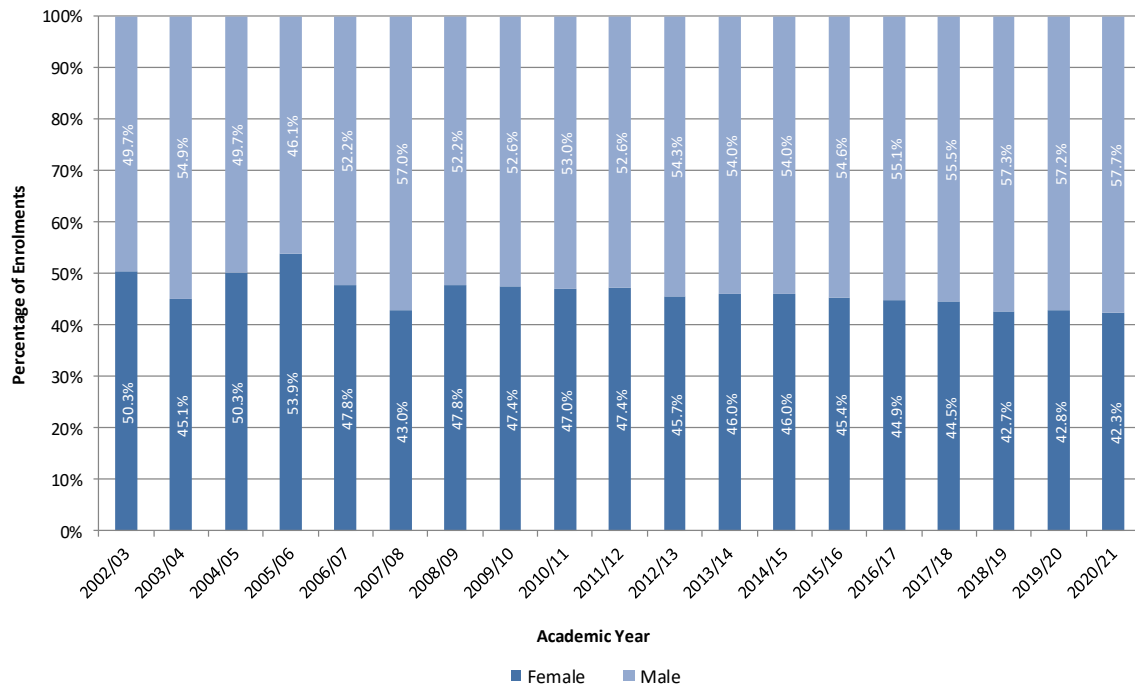


Sex

Over the 19-year history of the Strategy, 53.9% 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 57.7% (13,841) of enrolments (Figure 4 and Table 5).

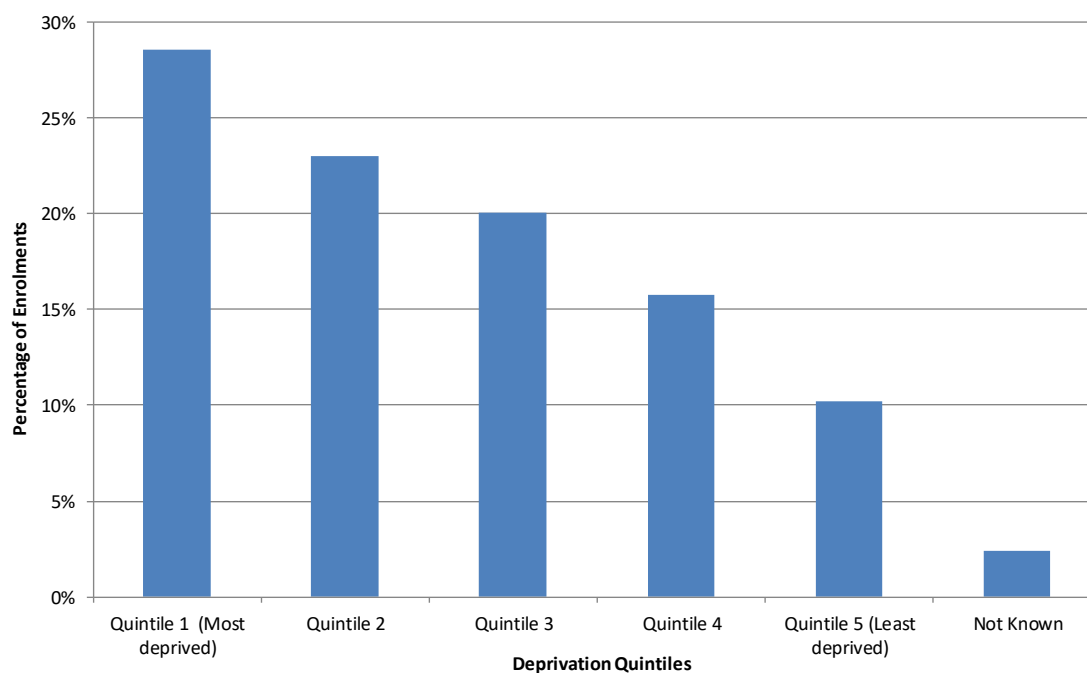
Figure 4: Essential Skills enrolments by sex and academic year



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 5: 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 19 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 5).

In the most recent academic year, 27.9% (6,555) of enrolments with a valid postcode were from the most deprived quintile, while 9.8% (2,305) were from the least deprived quintile (Table 6).

Over the 19-year history of the Strategy, those living in Quintile 1 have accounted for 37.7% of Entry Level, 29.1% of Level 1 and 25.5% of Level 2 enrolments with a valid postcode. With regard to subject, 30.4% of Literacy and 30.3% of Numeracy enrolments with a valid postcode have been from the most deprived quintile, while the proportion of ICT enrolments has been lower, at 25.2% (Table 7).

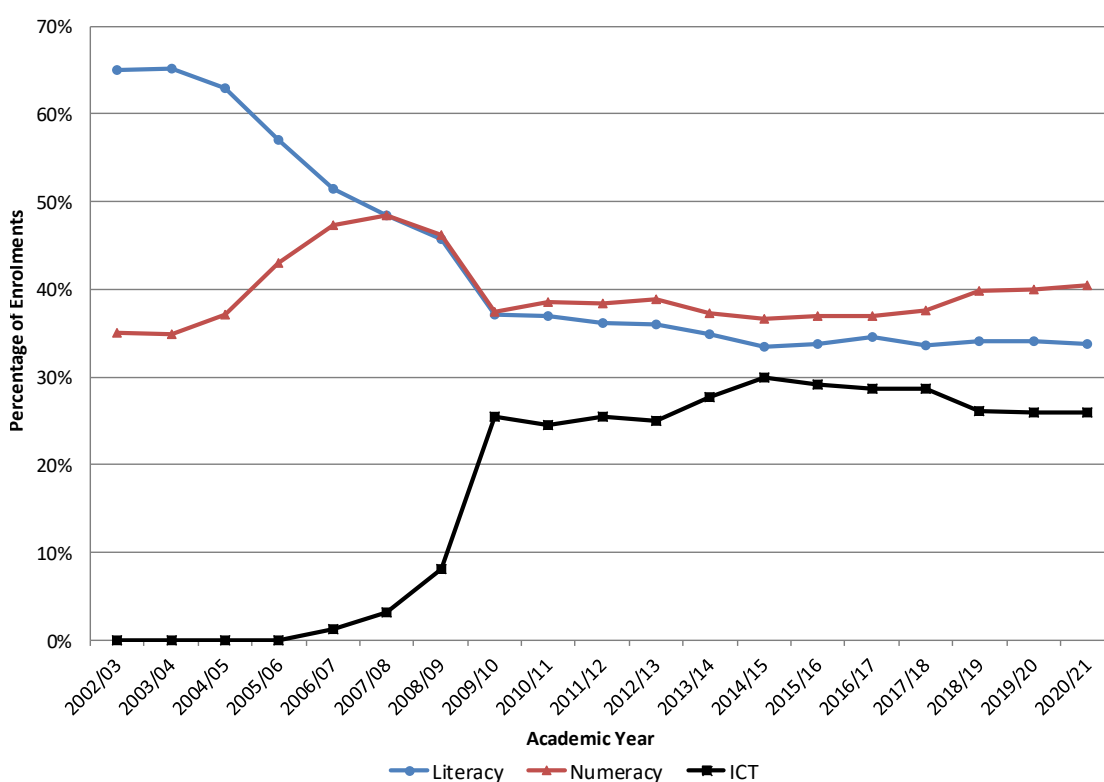
What subjects are being studied?

As a proportion of Essential Skills enrolments, Numeracy accounted for 40.4%, Literacy for 33.7% and ICT for 25.9% in the most recent academic year (2020/21).

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 2020/21, the ICT proportion (25.9%) was at its lowest since 2012/13 (25.1%), while the Numeracy proportion (40.4%) was at its highest since 2008/09 (46.2%) (Figure 6 and Table 8).

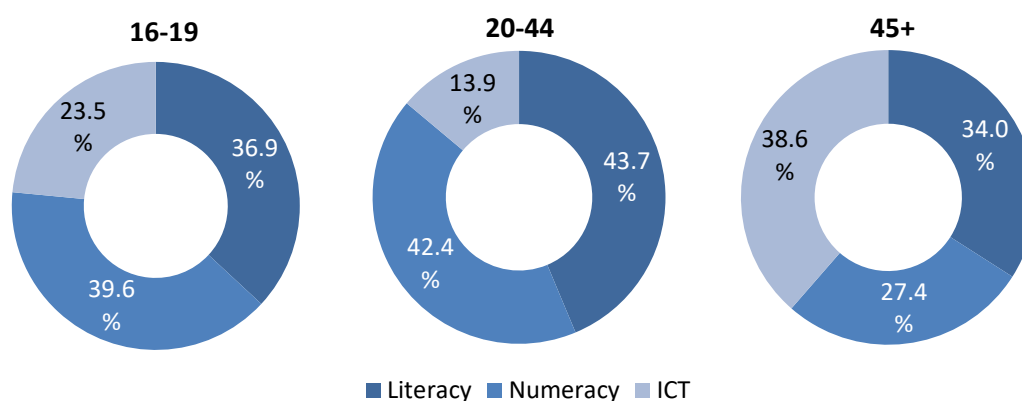
Figure 6: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and academic year



Subject and Age

Over the 19 years of the Essential Skills Strategy, Numeracy has been the most popular subject choice among those aged 16-19 (39.6%), while Literacy has been most popular among 20-44 year olds (43.7%). For those aged 45+, the most common subject studied has been ICT (38.6%), despite it having only been rolled out as a full programme since August 2009 (Figure 7 and Table 9).

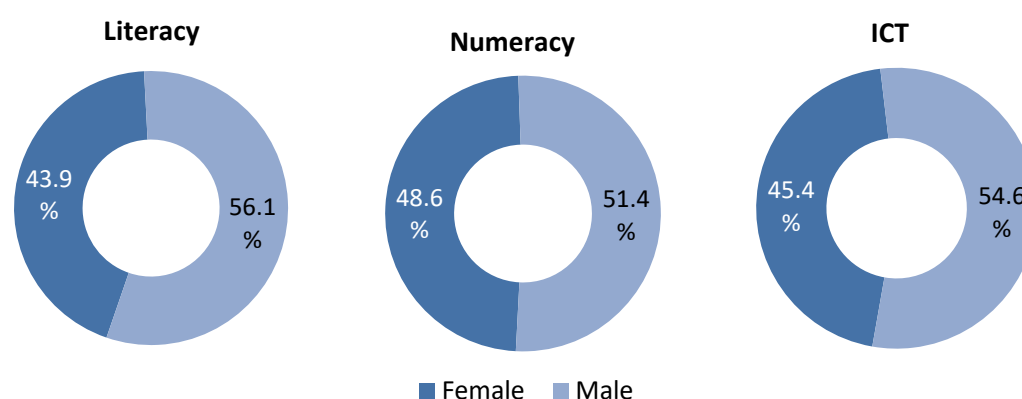
Figure 7: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and age since 2002/03



Subject and Sex

Males account for higher proportions of Essential Skills enrolments across all three subjects, ranging from 51.4% in Numeracy to 56.1% in Literacy (Figure 8 and Table 10).

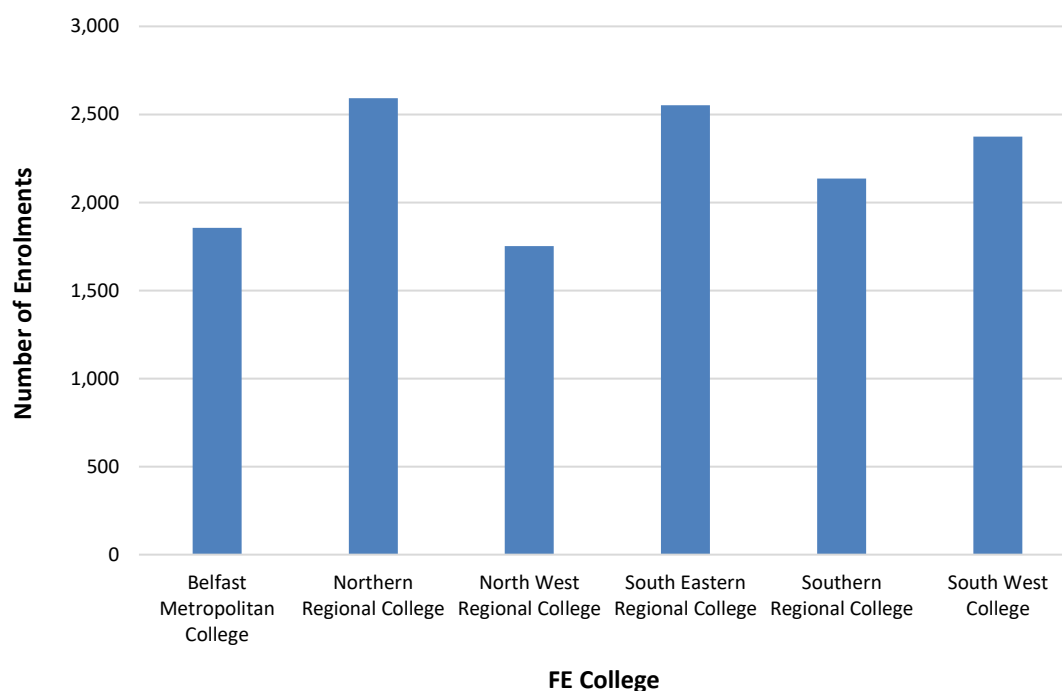
Figure 8: Essential Skills enrolments by subject and sex since 2002/03



Where are the courses being studied?

The main delivery of Essential Skills courses occurs within FE Colleges, with 55.2% of enrolments (13,262) being delivered at the Colleges in 2020/21. The number of enrolments delivered at each College in 2020/21 ranged from 1,753 at North West Regional College to 2,592 at Northern Regional College (Figure 9 and Table 11).

Figure 9: Essential Skills enrolments by FE College, 2020/21



In 2020/21, 13,948 Essential Skills enrolments were taken as part of DfE's Training Programmes. It should be noted that, as a substantial 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

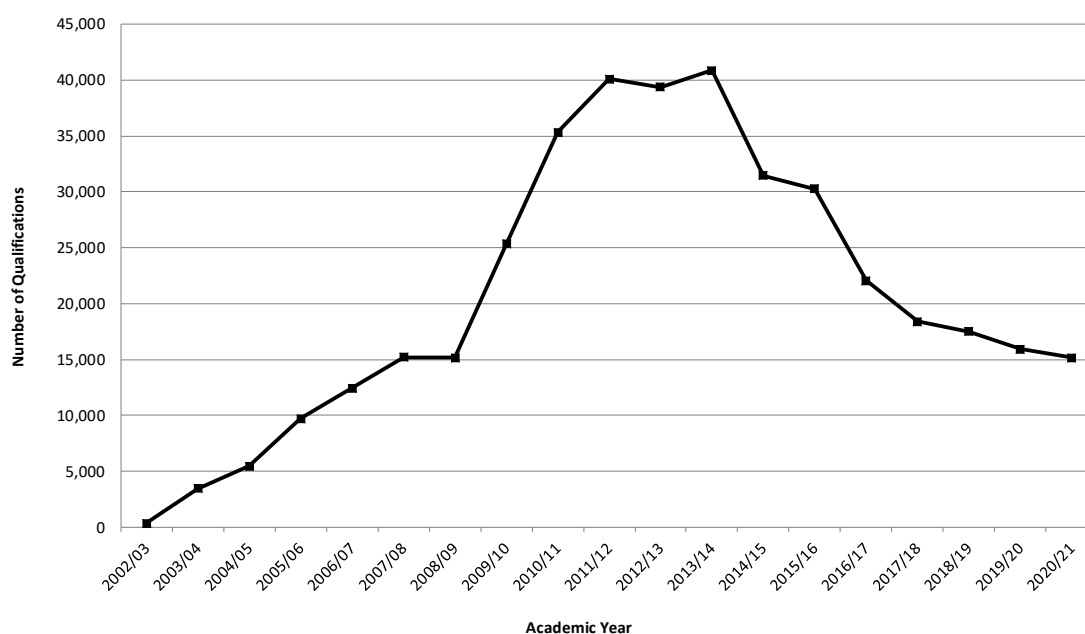
Over 393,000 qualifications have been issued in Essential Skills since the Strategy began 19 years ago. However, the annual number of qualifications issued has decreased for the seventh year in a row. As shown in Figure 12, after reaching a peak of 40,851 in 2013/14, the number of qualifications issued 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.

Over the past three academic years, qualifications issued have continued to decrease, but at a similar rate to enrolments. In the last academic year, qualifications issued decreased by 4.8%, from 15,919 in 2019/20 to 15,156 in 2020/21 (Figure 10 and Table 12).

Under the instruction of the Minister for the Economy, exceptional arrangements for assessing and awarding Essential Skills were put in place from March 2020 to July 2020, and again from February 2021 to the end of the 2020/21 academic year. This approach was designed to enable students to progress as planned, despite the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 10: Essential Skills qualifications issued by academic year



Qualifications issued by level achieved

Over the 19-year period of the Strategy, target Level 1 has seen the highest number of enrolments (275,801). However, as shown in Figure 13, most qualifications issued have been at Level 2 (191,277), accounting for 48.6% 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 54.0% of the qualifications issued in 2020/21, up from 46.9% in 2019/20. Conversely, the share of Entry Level qualifications decreased by 6.4 percentage points between 2019/20 (19.2%) and 2020/21 (12.8%). The Level 1 share was 33.2% in 2020/21, similar to the previous academic year (33.9%) (Figure 11 and Table 13).

Figure 11: Percentage of Essential Skills qualifications issued by level achieved since 2002/03

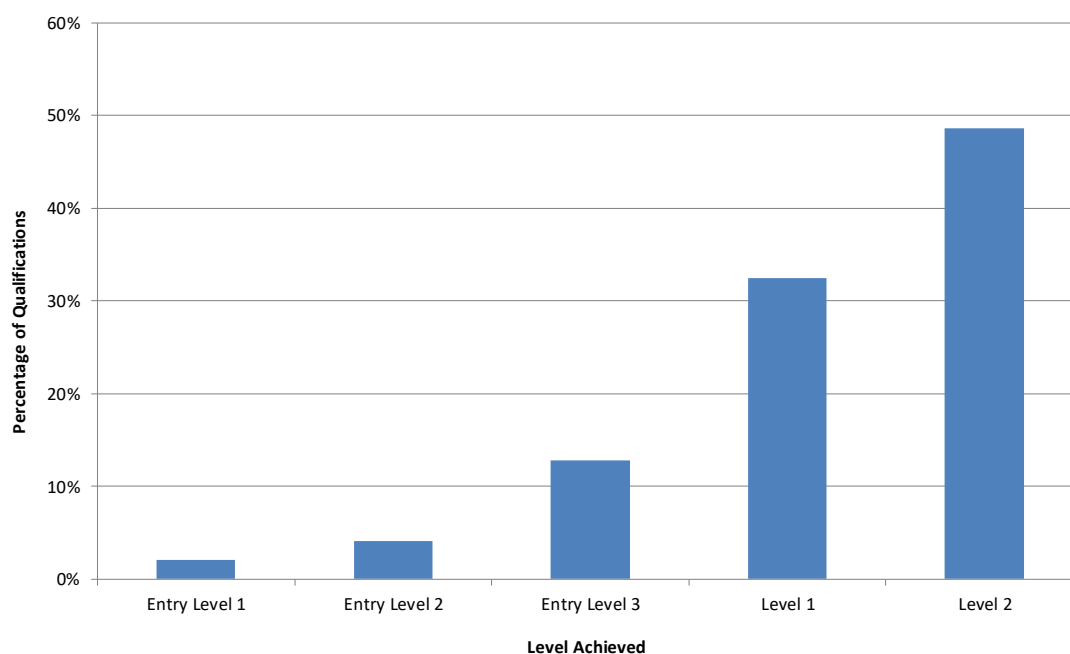
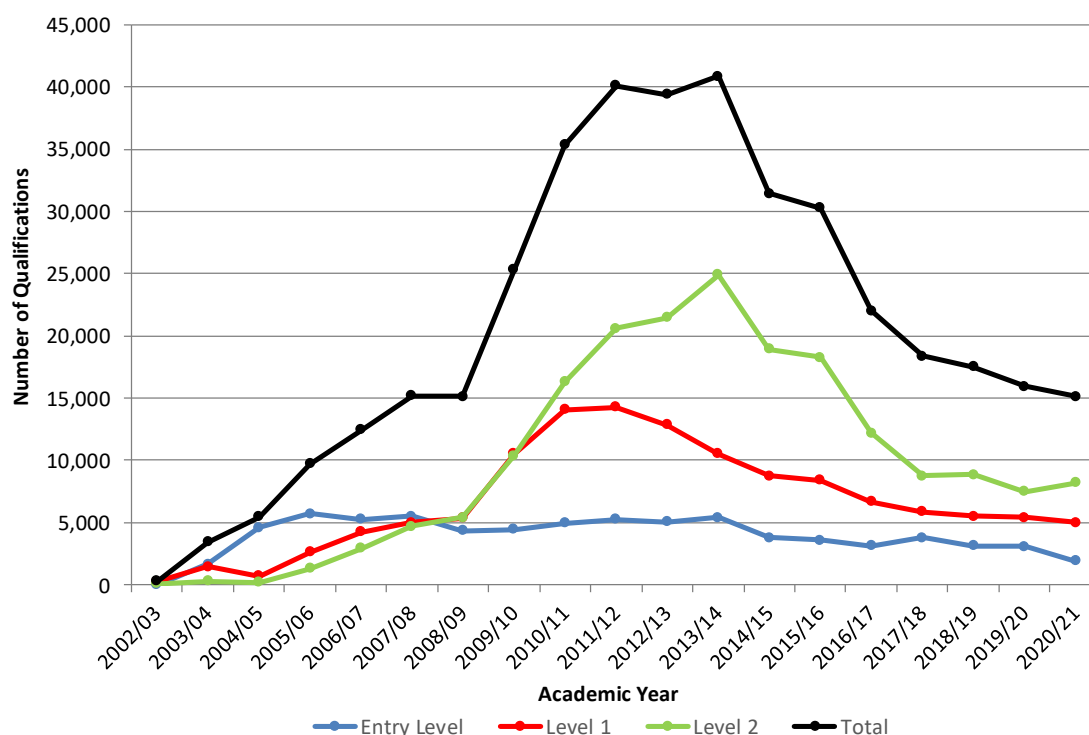


Figure 12 shows that, of the 15,156 qualifications issued in 2020/21, 1,938 were at Entry Level, 5,029 at Level 1 and 8,189 at Level 2. While the Entry Level and Level 1 figures represent a decrease from 2019/20, the number of Level 2 qualifications issued increased by 717 (Figure 12 and Table 13).

Figure 12: Number of Essential Skills qualifications issued by level achieved and academic year



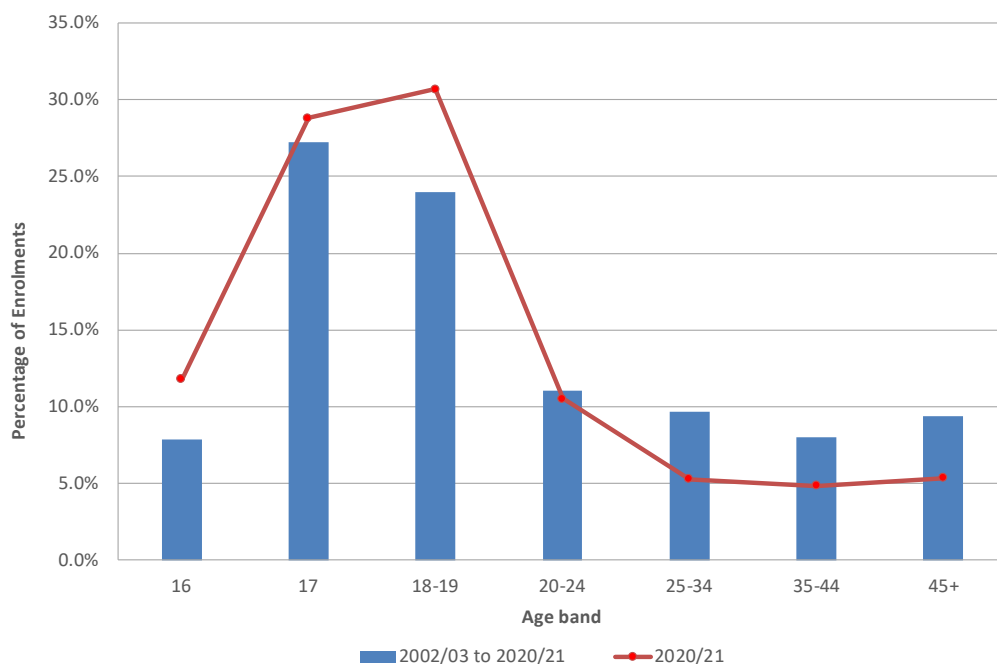
Qualifications issued by age band

Since the start of the Strategy, similar to the pattern of enrolments, the majority (59.1%) of qualifications have been issued to those between the ages of 16 and 19, as seen in Figure 15. This includes 71.3% 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 19-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 (15.4%) in 2020/21 (Figure 13 and Table 14).

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

Figure 13: Essential Skills qualifications issued by age band since 2002/03

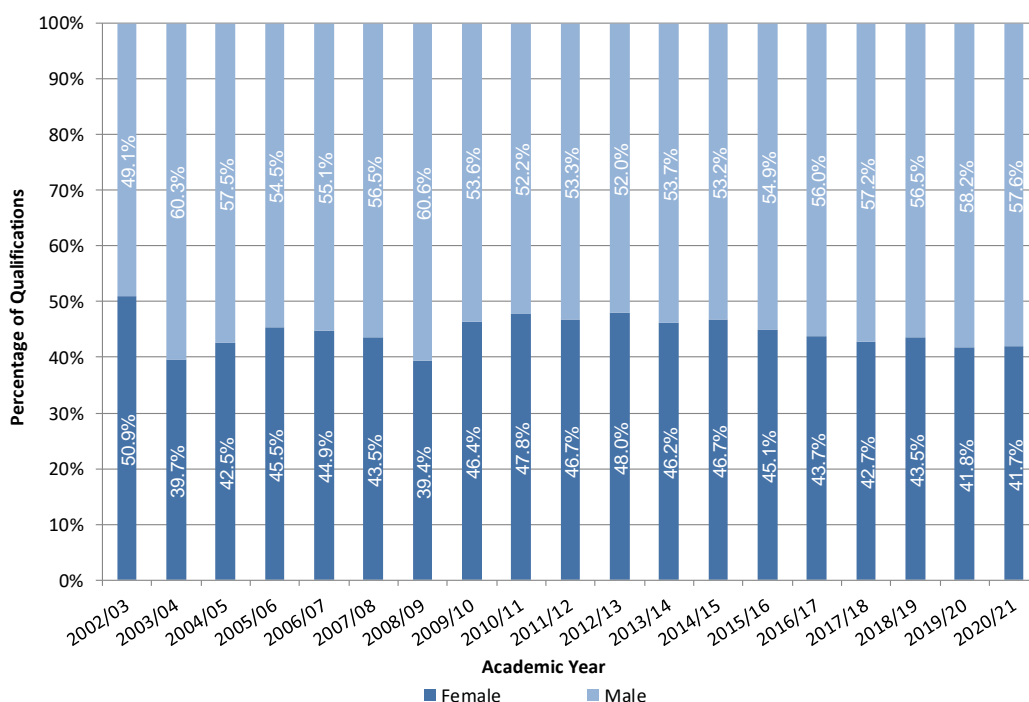


Qualifications issued by sex

In each of the past 18 academic years, as illustrated in Figure 14, 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 2020/21, males gained 8,730 qualifications (57.6%), with females gaining 6,317 (41.7%). The share of qualifications over the 19-year history of the Strategy is 54.7% male and 45.2% female (Figure 14 and Table 15).

Figure 14: Essential Skills qualifications issued by sex and academic year

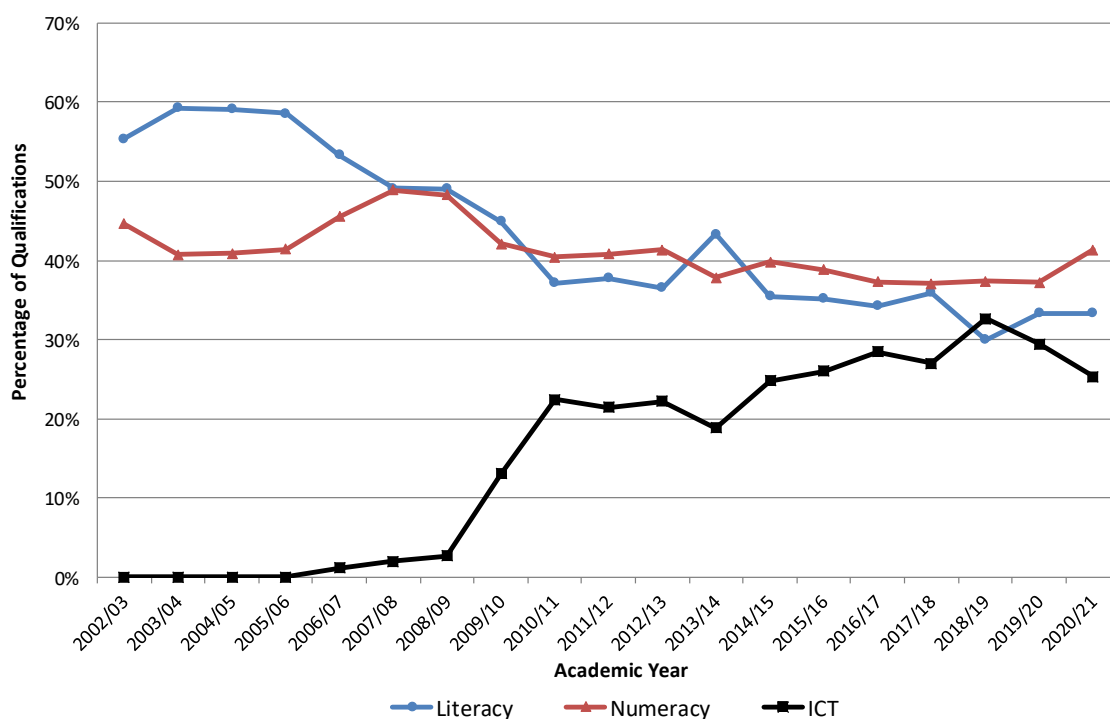


Qualifications issued by subject

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 15, Literacy accounted for a third (33.3%) of qualifications issued in 2020/21, the same proportion as in 2019/20. The share of ICT qualifications issued in 2020/21 was 25.3%, the lowest proportion since 2014/15. Numeracy's share accounted for 41.3% of qualifications issued in 2020/21, the highest proportion since 2009/10 (Figure 15 and Table 16).

Figure 15: 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 percentage of enrolments completed by students.
- **Achievement rate** is defined as the percentage of enrolments completed by students who achieve a qualification.
- **Success rate** is the overall measure of performance, which is the percentage of enrolments of students who complete and achieve a qualification.

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 89.7%, the achievement rate has been 72.6%, while the success rate has been 65.2%. 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 88.4% in ICT to 90.2% in Numeracy. There has been a larger range in the achievement rate, from 67.0% in ICT to 74.3% in Numeracy.

The success rates for Literacy (66.6%) and Numeracy (67.0%) have been similar over the 19 years of the Strategy, while ICT has seen a lower success rate of 59.2% (Table A and Table 18).

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

Subject	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
Literacy	89.9%	74.1%	66.6%
Numeracy	90.2%	74.3%	67.0%
ICT	88.4%	67.0%	59.2%
Total	89.7%	72.6%	65.2%

Performance by sex

While females have a slightly higher achievement rate (72.9%) than males (72.4%), males have a higher retention rate (91.3%) than females (87.8%). The higher retention rate means that males (66.1%) also have a higher success rate than females (64.0%) (Table B and Table 19).

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

Sex	Retention rate	Achievement rate	Success rate
Female	87.8%	72.9%	64.0%
Male	91.3%	72.4%	66.1%
Total	89.7%	72.6%	65.2%

Performance by age band

The retention rate generally decreases inversely with age band of participant, with those aged 16 having the highest retention rate (92.7%) and those aged 45+ having the lowest (84.5%) (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	92.7%
17	90.8%
18-19	87.8%
20-24	91.2%
25-34	87.0%
35-44	86.8%
45+	84.5%
Total	89.7%

Performance by target level of study

Across the five levels of study, the retention rate has ranged from 87.7% at Entry Level 1 to 91.0% at Level 1 over the 19 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	87.7%
Entry Level 2	89.2%
Entry Level 3	89.2%
Level 1	91.0%
Level 2	90.1%
Total	89.7%

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	9,112	5,888
2004/05	13,071	7,924
2005/06	17,267	10,166
2006/07	20,276	10,305
2007/08	25,586	12,106
2008/09	35,021	15,325
2009/10	50,012	20,420
2010/11	60,013	22,879
2011/12	59,461	21,485
2012/13	51,923	18,206
2013/14	45,519	16,253
2014/15	39,035	14,265
2015/16	35,913	13,010
2016/17	32,636	11,795
2017/18	30,429	10,950
2018/19	29,079	9,893
2019/20	26,023	9,259
2020/21	24,008	7,884
Total	608,394	241,037

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; 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	2,282	759	56	9,112
2004/05	1,196	1,792	4,295	3,300	1,724	764	13,071
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	1,733	4,583	10,106	8,200	387	25,586
2008/09	499	1,490	4,702	16,482	11,848	0	35,021
2009/10	506	1,424	4,268	26,442	16,570	802	50,012
2010/11	825	1,449	4,890	31,025	21,057	767	60,013
2011/12	600	1,573	4,635	29,131	22,773	749	59,461
2012/13	566	1,162	4,066	23,951	21,589	589	51,923
2013/14	468	1,178	3,580	20,399	19,116	778	45,519
2014/15	409	812	2,975	17,795	16,705	339	39,035
2015/16	261	788	2,882	16,364	15,341	277	35,913
2016/17	207	972	2,997	15,166	12,935	359	32,636
2017/18	419	1,007	2,956	13,784	11,832	431	30,429
2018/19	320	978	3,026	12,857	11,584	314	29,079
2019/20	341	995	2,970	11,638	9,868	211	26,023
2020/21	147	668	2,101	10,717	10,316	59	24,008
Total	11,009	23,757	67,592	275,801	222,822	7,413	608,394

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; 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	1,661	1,150	605	1,121	1,717	1,431	1,291	136	9,112
2004/05	2,109	1,761	927	1,326	2,345	2,397	2,059	147	13,071
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	3,723	2,973	1,581	1,469	1,195	36	25,586
2008/09	9,745	7,448	4,435	3,531	3,709	3,294	2,850	9	35,021
2009/10	12,344	10,284	6,866	5,229	5,024	4,490	5,701	74	50,012
2010/11	13,654	11,754	7,985	6,905	7,229	5,457	6,971	58	60,013
2011/12	13,930	11,457	7,872	7,089	7,031	5,389	6,646	47	59,461
2012/13	12,993	10,779	7,039	7,125	5,360	3,780	4,774	73	51,923
2013/14	12,015	9,405	6,255	7,429	3,941	2,882	3,568	24	45,519
2014/15	10,975	8,054	5,639	5,825	3,247	2,374	2,896	25	39,035
2015/16	10,262	7,047	5,242	5,794	2,834	2,052	2,628	54	35,913
2016/17	8,765	5,903	5,105	5,482	2,756	2,023	2,595	7	32,636
2017/18	8,944	6,430	5,156	4,521	1,926	1,475	1,743	234	30,429
2018/19	8,322	5,976	5,056	4,546	1,971	1,561	1,642	5	29,079
2019/20	8,637	5,642	4,345	3,298	1,437	1,225	1,434	5	26,023
2020/21	6,573	5,049	4,256	4,189	1,578	1,248	1,111	4	24,008
Total	160,175	122,560	85,437	80,043	58,447	47,346	53,314	1,072	608,394

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; 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	3,807	9,112
2004/05	2,938	3,085	1,469	5,579	13,071
2005/06	3,981	4,074	3,198	6,014	17,267
2006/07	3,411	5,340	3,056	8,469	20,276
2007/08	6,010	6,388	5,098	8,090	25,586
2008/09	11,500	7,801	9,672	6,048	35,021
2009/10	15,835	10,227	18,042	5,908	50,012
2010/11	21,835	11,497	21,038	5,643	60,013
2011/12	20,354	12,685	22,159	4,263	59,461
2012/13	16,977	11,565	18,955	4,426	51,923
2013/14	13,180	11,225	17,920	3,194	45,519
2014/15	11,964	9,889	15,893	1,289	39,035
2015/16	12,094	9,098	12,149	2,572	35,913
2016/17	12,068	7,354	11,147	2,067	32,636
2017/18	9,269	7,123	11,723	2,314	30,429
2018/19	8,384	2,280	13,821	4,594	29,079
2019/20	5,934	1,865	13,187	5,037	26,023
2020/21	4,597	893	8,707	9,811	24,008
Total	183,737	125,642	208,715	90,300	608,394

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; 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	4,998	9,112
2004/05	6,572	6,499	13,071
2005/06	9,308	7,959	17,267
2006/07	9,697	10,579	20,276
2007/08	10,998	14,588	25,586
2008/09	16,736	18,285	35,021
2009/10	23,712	26,300	50,012
2010/11	28,212	31,801	60,013
2011/12	28,173	31,288	59,461
2012/13	23,711	28,212	51,923
2013/14	20,925	24,594	45,519
2014/15	17,946	21,089	39,035
2015/16	16,307	19,606	35,913
2016/17	14,666	17,970	32,636
2017/18	13,546	16,883	30,429
2018/19	12,414	16,665	29,079
2019/20	11,131	14,892	26,023
2020/21	10,167	13,841	24,008
Total	280,353	328,041	608,394

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; 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	1,189	911	644	434	323	509	4,010
2003/04	2,757	2,171	1,728	1,149	832	475	9,112
2004/05	4,223	2,820	2,498	1,878	1,122	530	13,071
2005/06	5,294	3,849	3,281	2,570	1,667	606	17,267
2006/07	6,678	4,506	3,869	2,888	2,006	329	20,276
2007/08	8,121	5,538	5,120	3,921	2,509	377	25,586
2008/09	10,434	8,000	7,198	5,217	3,691	481	35,021
2009/10	14,226	11,507	9,818	7,863	5,495	1,103	50,012
2010/11	16,721	13,797	11,921	9,776	6,382	1,416	60,013
2011/12	16,838	13,957	11,702	9,399	6,193	1,372	59,461
2012/13	14,763	12,035	10,519	8,264	5,224	1,118	51,923
2013/14	13,041	10,554	9,074	7,031	4,522	1,297	45,519
2014/15	10,807	8,693	8,100	6,000	4,151	1,284	39,035
2015/16	9,945	8,162	7,660	5,585	3,688	873	35,913
2016/17	9,058	7,562	6,748	5,209	3,454	605	32,636
2017/18	8,088	6,965	6,168	5,287	3,268	653	30,429
2018/19	7,688	6,831	6,030	5,103	2,828	599	29,079
2019/20	7,192	6,243	5,162	4,394	2,600	432	26,023
2020/21	6,555	5,861	4,865	3,937	2,305	485	24,008
Total	173,618	139,962	122,105	95,905	62,260	14,544	608,394

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21, Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; 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	2,373	1,411	1,213	986	614	310	6,907
	Entry Level 2	4,950	2,920	2,661	1,730	1,095	384	13,740
	Entry Level 3	12,112	6,876	6,337	4,135	2,609	731	32,800
	Level 1	27,642	21,832	18,378	14,283	9,354	1,706	93,195
	Level 2	22,329	20,511	18,129	14,674	9,034	1,772	86,449
	Not Known	840	579	494	463	286	85	2,747
	Total	70,246	54,129	47,212	36,271	22,992	4,988	235,838
Numeracy	Entry Level 1	1,420	798	622	599	398	127	3,964
	Entry Level 2	3,571	2,099	1,905	1,303	782	222	9,882
	Entry Level 3	12,957	7,142	6,392	4,483	2,722	713	34,409
	Level 1	30,577	23,608	19,911	16,184	10,359	2,152	102,791
	Level 2	21,540	20,587	18,366	14,368	8,924	2,368	86,153
	Not Known	762	467	392	403	309	64	2,397
	Total	70,827	54,701	47,588	37,340	23,494	5,646	239,596
ICT	Entry Level 1	56	23	27	21	11	0	138
	Entry Level 2	30	33	35	18	17	2	135
	Entry Level 3	126	83	55	65	33	21	383
	Level 1	20,570	18,616	16,184	13,185	9,849	1,411	79,815
	Level 2	11,220	11,814	10,570	8,592	5,589	2,435	50,220
	Not Known	543	563	434	413	275	41	2,269
	Total	32,545	31,132	27,305	22,294	15,774	3,910	132,960
Total	Entry Level 1	3,849	2,232	1,862	1,606	1,023	437	11,009
	Entry Level 2	8,551	5,052	4,601	3,051	1,894	608	23,757
	Entry Level 3	25,195	14,101	12,784	8,683	5,364	1,465	67,592
	Level 1	78,789	64,056	54,473	43,652	29,562	5,269	275,801
	Level 2	55,089	52,912	47,065	37,634	23,547	6,575	222,822
	Not Known	2,145	1,609	1,320	1,279	870	190	7,413
	Total	173,618	139,962	122,105	95,905	62,260	14,544	608,394

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; 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	5,940	3,172	-	9,112
2004/05	8,219	4,852	-	13,071
2005/06	9,838	7,429	-	17,267
2006/07	10,434	9,581	261	20,276
2007/08	12,386	12,395	805	25,586
2008/09	16,014	16,187	2,820	35,021
2009/10	18,540	18,702	12,770	50,012
2010/11	22,163	23,148	14,702	60,013
2011/12	21,499	22,802	15,160	59,461
2012/13	18,722	20,186	13,015	51,923
2013/14	15,907	16,972	12,640	45,519
2014/15	13,052	14,291	11,692	39,035
2015/16	12,142	13,288	10,483	35,913
2016/17	11,256	12,041	9,339	32,636
2017/18	10,246	11,459	8,724	30,429
2018/19	9,926	11,577	7,576	29,079
2019/20	8,857	10,411	6,755	26,023
2020/21	8,090	9,700	6,218	24,008
Total	235,838	239,596	132,960	608,394

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; 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	60,926	61,616	37,633	160,175
17	44,874	48,724	28,962	122,560
18-19	30,088	35,495	19,854	85,437
20-24	34,341	35,635	10,067	80,043
25-34	26,216	24,571	7,660	58,447
35-44	20,644	18,584	8,118	47,346
45+	18,150	14,593	20,571	53,314
Unknown	599	378	95	1,072
Total	235,838	239,596	132,960	608,394

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; 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	0	0	0	4,010
2003/04	2,677	3,263	5,940	1,437	1,735	3,172	0	0	0	9,112
2004/05	4,157	4,062	8,219	2,415	2,437	4,852	0	0	0	13,071
2005/06	5,199	4,639	9,838	4,109	3,320	7,429	0	0	0	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	6,763	12,395	290	515	805	25,586
2008/09	7,268	8,746	16,014	8,235	7,952	16,187	1,233	1,587	2,820	35,021
2009/10	8,269	10,271	18,540	9,258	9,444	18,702	6,185	6,585	12,770	50,012
2010/11	9,824	12,339	22,163	11,329	11,819	23,148	7,059	7,643	14,702	60,013
2011/12	9,582	11,917	21,499	11,388	11,414	22,802	7,203	7,957	15,160	59,461
2012/13	8,029	10,693	18,722	9,757	10,429	20,186	5,925	7,090	13,015	51,923
2013/14	6,760	9,147	15,907	8,207	8,765	16,972	5,958	6,682	12,640	45,519
2014/15	5,512	7,540	13,052	6,882	7,409	14,291	5,552	6,140	11,692	39,035
2015/16	5,185	6,957	12,142	6,419	6,869	13,288	4,703	5,780	10,483	35,913
2016/17	4,736	6,520	11,256	5,667	6,374	12,041	4,263	5,076	9,339	32,636
2017/18	4,295	5,951	10,246	5,451	6,008	11,459	3,800	4,924	8,724	30,429
2018/19	4,000	5,926	9,926	5,383	6,194	11,577	3,031	4,545	7,576	29,079
2019/20	3,605	5,252	8,857	4,918	5,493	10,411	2,608	4,147	6,755	26,023
2020/21	3,221	4,869	8,090	4,545	5,155	9,700	2,401	3,817	6,218	24,008
Total	103,546	132,292	235,838	116,494	123,102	239,596	60,313	72,647	132,960	608,394

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; they are provisional and are subject to change.

Table 11: Essential Skills enrolments by FE College, 2020/21

FE College	Enrolments
Belfast Metropolitan College	1,855
Northern Regional College	2,592
North West Regional College	1,753
South Eastern Regional College	2,553
Southern Regional College	2,135
South West College	2,374
Total	13,262

Sources: Consolidated Data Return (CDR)

Notes: Figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; 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	15,919
2020/21	15,156
Total	393,413

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2021; 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	7,472	15,919
2020/21	161	387	1,390	5,029	8,189	15,156
Total	8,263	15,890	50,400	127,583	191,277	393,413

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2021; 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+	Unkn-own	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	1,820	4,341	4,415	1,784	1,078	875	940	666	15,919
2020/21	1,785	4,368	4,652	1,592	798	732	808	421	15,156
Total	30,853	107,184	94,376	43,565	38,077	31,454	36,774	11,130	393,413

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2021; 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	0	316
2003/04	1,366	2,077	0	3,443
2004/05	2,325	3,140	0	5,465
2005/06	4,407	5,284	0	9,691
2006/07	5,577	6,850	0	12,427
2007/08	6,615	8,582	0	15,197
2008/09	5,966	9,187	0	15,153
2009/10	11,763	13,570	0	25,333
2010/11	16,907	18,430	0	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	0	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	0	17,514
2019/20	6,658	9,258	3	15,919
2020/21	6,317	8,730	109	15,156
Total	178,011	215,189	213	393,413

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2021; 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	4,685	15,919
2020/21	5,049	6,266	3,841	15,156
Total	155,924	159,266	78,223	393,413

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2021; 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	0	123	52	0	115	26	0	0
2003/04	904	952	184	764	532	107	0	0
2004/05	2,603	519	109	1,974	170	90	0	0
2005/06	3,202	1,659	819	2,530	974	507	0	0
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	2,961
2020/21	853	1,772	2,424	1,085	2,139	3,042	1,118	2,723
Total	36,406	46,292	73,226	38,147	49,086	72,033	32,205	46,018

Source: Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Figures are correct as at 30th September 2021; 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	233,984	210,435	89.9%	155,924	74.1%	66.6%
Numeracy	237,638	214,355	90.2%	159,266	74.3%	67.0%
ICT	132,216	116,814	88.4%	78,223	67.0%	59.2%
All Subjects	603,838	541,604	89.7%	393,413	72.6%	65.2%

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21; Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; they are provisional and are subject to change. Qualifications figures are correct as at 30th September 2021; 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	278,235	244,179	87.8%	178,011	72.9%	64.0%
Male	325,603	297,425	91.3%	215,189	72.4%	66.1%
Unknown	0	0	N/A	213	N/A	N/A
Total	603,838	541,604	89.7%	393,413	72.6%	65.2%

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21; Awarding Organisations.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; they are provisional and are subject to change. Qualifications figures are correct as at 30th September 2021; 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	158,768	147,136	92.7%
17	121,354	110,243	90.8%
18-19	84,832	74,470	87.8%
20-24	79,715	72,718	91.2%
25-34	58,150	50,594	87.0%
35-44	47,055	40,828	86.8%
45+	52,897	44,721	84.5%
Unknown	1,067	894	N/A
Total	603,838	541,604	89.7%

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; 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	10,864	9,529	87.7%
Entry Level 2	23,362	20,846	89.2%
Entry Level 3	66,713	59,489	89.2%
Level 1	274,569	249,789	91.0%
Level 2	221,680	199,642	90.1%
Not Known	6,650	2,309	N/A
Total	603,838	541,604	89.7%

Sources: Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER) for 2002/03 to 2012/13, Consolidated Data Return (CDR) for 2013/14 to 2020/21, Client Management System for 2002/03 to 2020/21.

Notes: Enrolments figures are correct as at 15th October 2021; 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 percentage of enrolments completed by students who achieve a qualification.

'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 percentage of enrolments completed by students.

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

Success rate

Success rate is recognised as the overall measure of performance, which is the percentage of enrolments of students who complete and achieve a qualification.

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

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 2020/21. 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 15th October 2021. However, as some erroneous records are later 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 2021. 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 2020/21. 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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