



# Further Education Activity in Northern Ireland: 2013/14 to 2016/17

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This statistical bulletin presents a range of analysis regarding enrolments (both regulated and non-regulated) in the Northern Ireland Further Education Sector covering academic years 2013/14 to 2016/17. The statistics presented cover the characteristics of those enrolling in FE colleges along with analysis of areas of deprivation, funding streams and performance (retention, achievement and success rates).

**Key points:**

- Total enrolments at FE colleges have decreased by 15.3%, from 180,825 in 2013/14 to 153,088 in 2016/17; this includes a 12.5% fall between 2014/15 (175,818) and 2015/16 (153,817) (Table A1).
- The proportion of regulated enrolments has increased from 78.4% in 2013/14 to 84.0% in 2016/17 (Table A5).
- Of the 128,629 regulated enrolments in 2016/17, nearly four-fifths (78.4%) were at 'Level 2' or above (Table A14).
- Higher Education enrolments at FE colleges have decreased by 3.5%, from 11,576 in 2013/14 to 11,175 in 2016/17 (Table 3).
- Fewer qualifications were awarded in FE colleges in 2016/17 (83,015) than in 2013/14 (90,851), a net fall of 8.6% (Table 6).
- Over the period 2013/14 to 2016/17, while the retention rate in FE colleges has increased (89.1% to 90.2%), the achievement rate has decreased (87.1% to 85.9%), and the success rate hasn't changed in net terms (77.6% to 77.5%) (Table A34).

## Reader Information

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## **About Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education)**

Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education) is responsible for the collection, quality assurance, analysis and publication of Further and Higher Education statistical information supplied by the further education colleges across Northern Ireland and the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

The Head of the 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, Further Education 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.

Information is disseminated through a number of key statistical publications.

A 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 Official 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>

## Introduction

Further Education (FE) colleges are the main providers of further education and training in Northern Ireland (NI). The sector plays a central role in raising literacy and numeracy levels and in up-skilling and re-skilling the population through a broad range of courses leading to qualifications, particularly at National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) levels 2 and 3 and equivalents. Higher Education (at level 4 and above) is also delivered across the FE colleges.

This statistical bulletin has been produced by statisticians within DfE and presents a range of analysis regarding enrolments in the NI FE Sector covering academic years 2013/14 to 2016/17. The statistics presented in this bulletin cover the characteristics of those enrolling in FE colleges and trends across a range of variables, including gender, age, mode of attendance, provision area, level of study, subject area, areas of deprivation, funding streams, and performance (retention, achievement and success rates).

The figures in this statistical bulletin are a full year count of enrolments; however, it should be noted that students may be enrolled on more than one course at a given time and may, therefore, be counted as two or more enrolments. This report includes data relating to the academic years 2013/14 to 2016/17. Previous statistical reports can be found at:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/professional-and-technical-enrolments-northern-ireland-further-education-sector>

## Structure

The bulletin is divided into five sections:

- [Section 1](#) focuses on all enrolments at FE colleges in NI, including:
  - an analysis of all enrolments
  - regulated and non-regulated provision
  - the funding streams of enrolments.
- [Section 2](#) focuses on regulated enrolments only
- [Section 3](#) focuses on FLU funded enrolments only
- [Section 4](#) focuses on Higher Education enrolments in FE Colleges only
- [Section 5](#) details the qualifications and performance of final year enrolments at FE colleges in NI.

In most sections, the analysis is broken down into the trend and patterns of the entire FE sector, the individual FE colleges and then a focus on the most recent full 2016/17 academic year.



## **Explanatory Notes**

The 'Technical Notes' in [Annex B](#) provide detailed information on the methodology used to produce the statistics and the definitions of the terms used within the report.

Where tables and figures are mentioned within the commentary, these are hyperlinked to their location within the document.

### **Data Collection**

The information presented in this statistical bulletin has been derived from the Consolidated Data Return (CDR), which is provided by FE colleges.

The CDR came into operation for the 2013/14 academic year and is used for analysis related to the years 2013/14 to 2016/17. Each of the data returns are computerised data files consisting of individual records for each enrolment recorded by FE colleges during each academic year.

The CDR brings together into a single dataset the five main individual Departmental returns from FE colleges, namely, Funded Learning Unit (FLU), Further Education Statistical Return (FESR), Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER), Entitlement Framework (EF) and Further Education Leavers' Survey (FELS).

There are significant benefits to be realised in collating all DfE's data requirements into one single return. Streamlining the production process of data increases the efficiency of the process in generating the data. With extra information now available for each enrolment record, it also increases the potential in terms of analytical ability, while increasing the consistency of analysis across all FE college data by reducing the potential of using several datasets. Data quality is also enhanced with data being generated at the same point in time and a substantial number of validations employed on the data through the CDR process. More information on the CDR process can be found at [Annex B](#).

### **Additional Tables**

Detailed Additional and Supplementary Tables are available on the DfE web page: [Further Education Activity in FE Colleges in Northern Ireland 2016/17](#)

## **Rounding**

Percentages have been rounded to one decimal place and, as a consequence, some percentages may not sum to 100. Furthermore, 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 is based on data that have been validated and quality assured by FE colleges prior to publication. FE colleges are given a set period of time to submit the information to Statistics and Research Branch (Tertiary Education), which performs a series of validation checks to ensure that information is consistent both within and across returns and analyses to monitor annual variations and emerging trends. Queries arising from validation checks are presented to FE colleges for clarification and, if required, returns may be amended and/or re-submitted. Finally, prior to the publication of this information, the data are presented to FE colleges for final sign-off.

## **Main Uses of Data**

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

DfE is responsible for the policy, strategic development and financing of the statutory FE sector. Analysis of data trends against key strategic priorities remains a crucial component of data development within DfE.

## **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 within and those derived from this bulletin are currently used by DfE policy officials in their role of assisting and advising the Minister for the Economy in discharging his or her duties; by the NI Assembly and its Committee for the Economy to scrutinise the FE sector; by other NI government departments, such as the Department of Education; by prospective students to inform their choices around further education; by local businesses to quantify the supply of those qualifying in their business area; and by researchers and academics to try and understand the underlying trends in FE.

## **Contextual Information**

For contextual information on the use of FE statistics and comparing levels of qualifications, please see the document:

[Contextual Information for Using Further Education Statistics](#)

## **Policy and Operational Context**

For information on policy and operational context, please refer to:

[Policy and Operational Context](#)

## **Further Education Activity Information Elsewhere in the United Kingdom**

Users should be aware that FE activity information in other administrations is not always measured in a comparable manner to that in Northern Ireland. Details of the FE activity information published elsewhere in the UK can be found as detailed below.

England

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/fe-data-library>

Scotland

<http://www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/statistics/statistics.aspx>

Wales

<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/28679/1/170330-further-education-work-based-learning-community-learning-2015-16-en.pdf>

## Section 1: Further Education college enrolments

### 1.1 - All enrolments

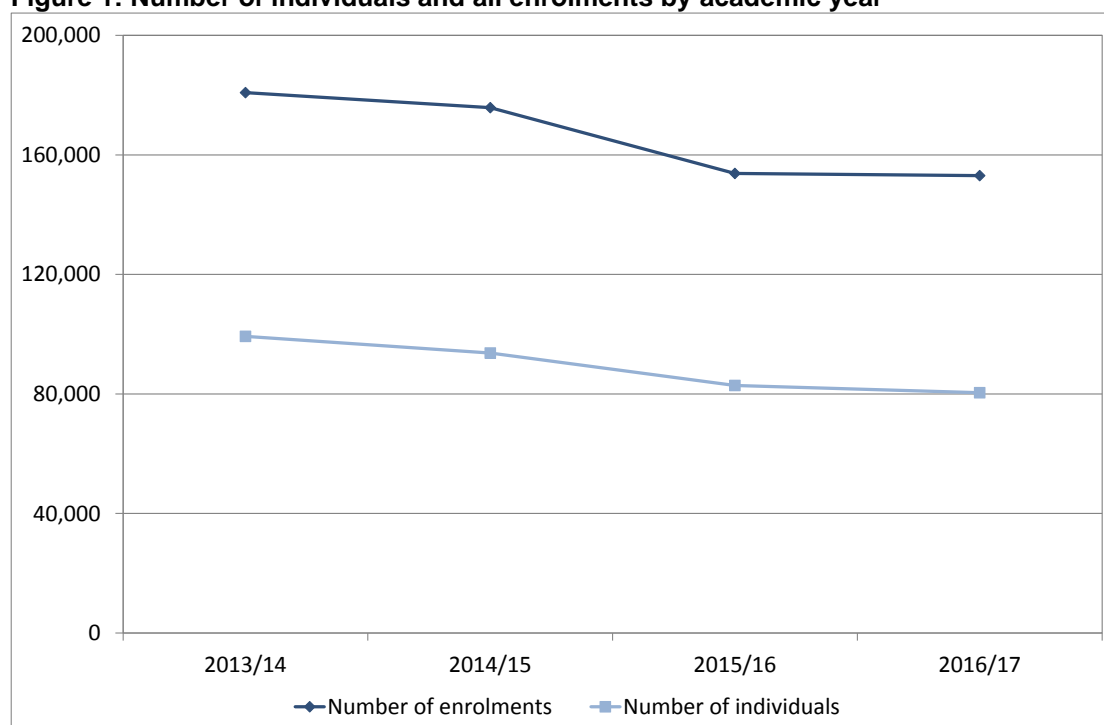
#### Background

This section provides detail on all Further Education (FE) college enrolments, which include general further education courses, Essential Skills provision and Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE). General FE courses include enrolments funded through Funded Learning Unit (FLU), government training programmes, Entitlement Framework and cost recovery. Most FE college provision includes courses that can potentially lead to a regulated qualification on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ); a smaller proportion are non-regulated, that is, courses that have the potential to lead to a formal qualification not on the RRQ, as well as hobby and leisure (recreational) courses.

#### Trends – 2013/14 to 2016/17

Total enrolments at FE colleges have decreased by 15.3%, from 180,825 in 2013/14 to 153,088 in 2016/17. Notably, they fell by 12.5% between 2014/15 (175,818) and 2015/16 (153,817), before a further 0.5% decrease to 153,088 in 2016/17. The number of individual students has also decreased, by 19.0%, from 99,293 in 2013/14 to 80,401 in 2016/17. The number of enrolments per individual has increased slightly from 1.8 to 1.9 over this period (Figure 1, Table A1).

**Figure 1: Number of individuals and all enrolments by academic year**



## FE colleges

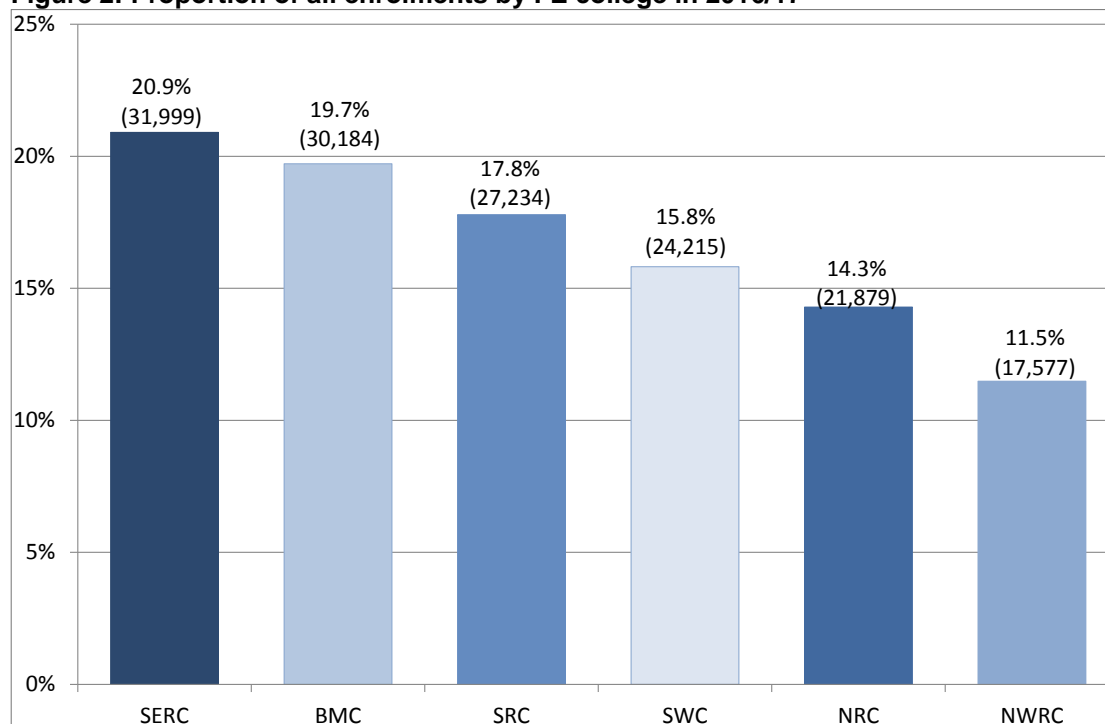
Since 2013/14, enrolments have decreased in each of the six FE colleges [NWRC (by 24.1%), BMC (18.5%), SRC (17.7%), NRC (10.9%), SWC (10.8%) and SERC (10.7%)] (Table 1).

**Table 1: All enrolments by FE college and academic year**

FE college	Academic Year			
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>BMC</b>	37,055	36,685	28,514	30,184
<b>NRC</b>	24,557	25,014	21,634	21,879
<b>NWRC</b>	23,167	22,603	19,181	17,577
<b>SERC</b>	35,832	35,520	32,858	31,999
<b>SRC</b>	33,075	30,076	26,967	27,234
<b>SWC</b>	27,139	25,920	24,663	24,215
<b>FE Sector Total</b>	<b>180,825</b>	<b>175,818</b>	<b>153,817</b>	<b>153,088</b>

In the most recent academic year (2016/17), SERC had the highest proportion of the 153,088 enrolments, accounting for 20.9% (31,999), and NWRC the lowest, with 11.5% (17,577) (Figure 2, Table 1).

**Figure 2: Proportion of all enrolments by FE college in 2016/17**



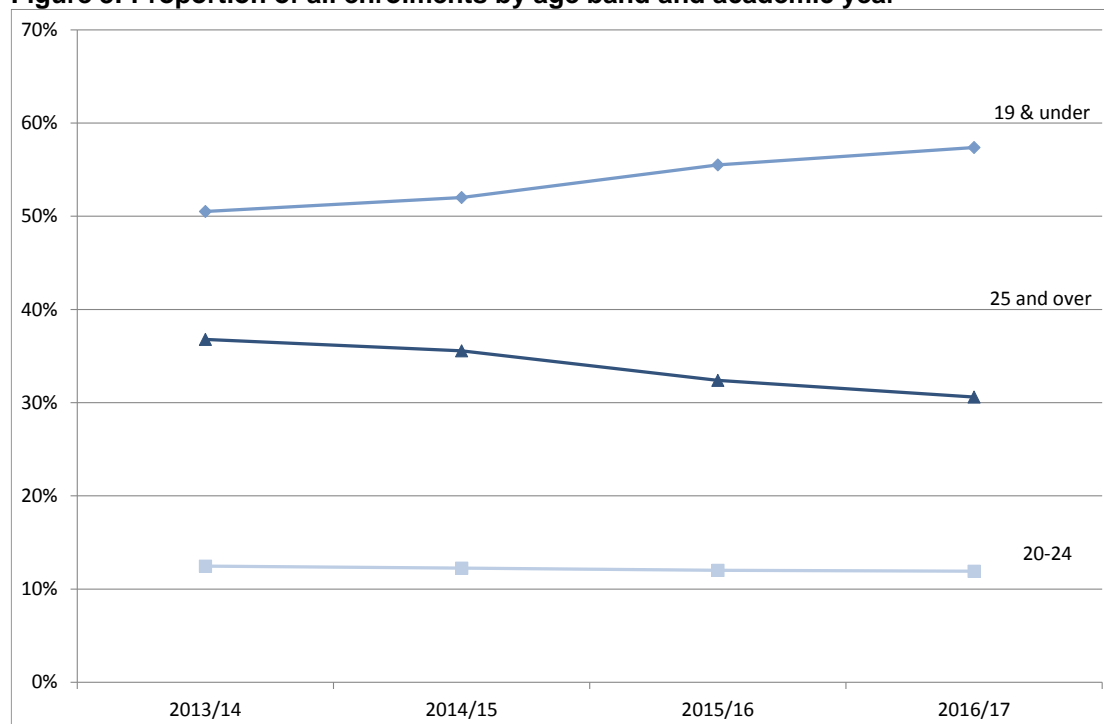
### FE College Abbreviations

BMC: Belfast Metropolitan College  
 NRC: Northern Regional College  
 NWRC: North West Regional College  
 SERC: South Eastern Regional College  
 SRC: Southern Regional College  
 SWC: South West College

## Age

Since 2013/14, the proportion of aged '19 and under' enrolments has increased from 50.5% to 57.4%; conversely, the proportions of those in the '20 to 24' and '25 and over' age groups have decreased, from 12.5% to 11.9% and from 36.8% to 30.6% respectively (Figure 3, Table A2)

**Figure 3: Proportion of all enrolments by age band and academic year**



Please note there are a small element of unknown ages (<0.5%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A2.

An individual can attend any FE college across Northern Ireland, although typically individuals will attend their nearest college. Hypothetical Regional College Catchment Areas (HRCCA) have been created for each of the six colleges to provide information, beyond enrolment data, on all eligible individuals aged 16 and above within the catchment area to each college, who may or may not be enrolled at a FE college. Please refer to [Annex B](#) for further details on HRCCA.

Based on [mid-year population estimates in 2016](#), the age profile in each of the six college HRCCAs indicates that the majority (typically over 80%) of eligible individuals are aged 25 or over.

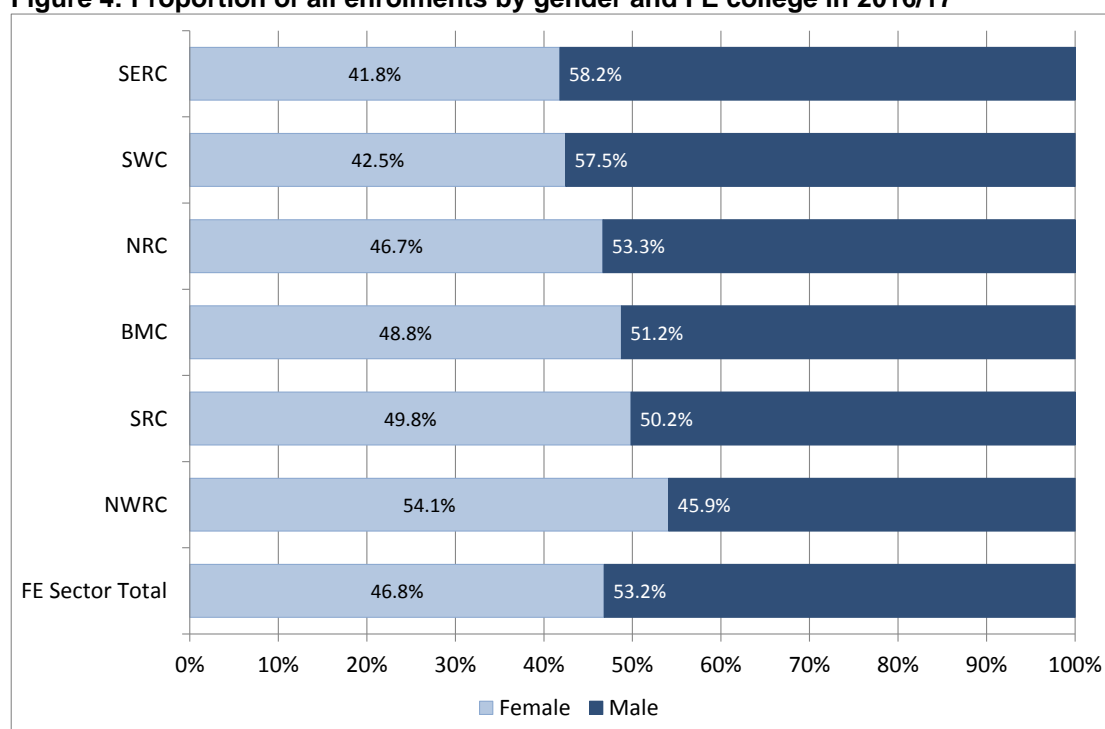
This pattern is only reflected to some extent in 2016/17 enrolments in NWRC, where the highest proportion related to those aged '25 and over' (47.9%). In the other five colleges, the highest proportions related to those aged '19 and under', ranging from 51.0% in BMC to 66.0% in SERC (Table A2).

## Gender

Overall, there has typically been a fairly even split in terms of the gender profile across the FE sector. Whereas female students accounted for a slight majority of enrolments in 2013/14 (50.8%) and 2014/15 (50.4%), most enrolments in 2015/16 (51.8%) and 2016/17 (53.2%) related to males (Table A3).

In the most recent academic year (2016/17), NWRC had a higher proportion of female enrolments (54.1%), whereas the other five colleges had higher proportions of male enrolments [SERC (58.2%), SWC (57.5%), NRC (53.3%), BMC (51.2%) and SRC (50.2%)]. In contrast, each of the college HRCCA profiles contains more females than males (Figure 4, Table A3).

**Figure 4: Proportion of all enrolments by gender and FE college in 2016/17**

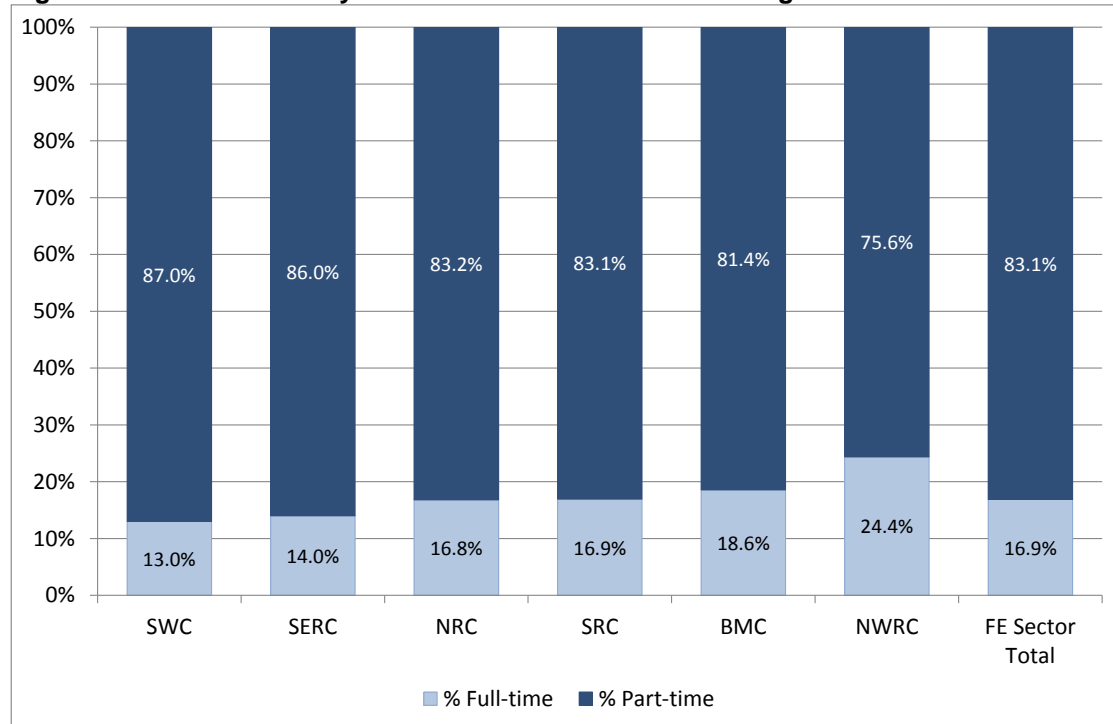


## Mode of attendance

In 2013/14, the proportion of all enrolments within full-time provision was 14.3%, with 85.7% part-time. This split, in terms of mode of attendance, has changed slightly to 16.9% full-time and 83.1% part-time in 2016/17 (Table A4).

Comparing the FE colleges in 2016/17 indicates that NWRC had the highest proportion of full-time enrolments (24.4%), while SWC had the lowest proportion (13.0%) (Figure 5, Table A4).

**Figure 5: All enrolments by mode of attendance and FE college in 2016/17**





## 1.2 - Regulated and Non-regulated enrolments

### Background

An internal departmental review was conducted in 2014 on the definition of 'regulated' provision to ensure clarity and consistency across data analysis. Consequently, from the academic year 2013/14, 'regulated enrolments' are regarded as:

- those on courses that are at 'Level 3' or below and appear on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ), which contains qualifications on both the Qualifications and Credit Framework and the National Qualifications Framework or part of the Department's Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications<sup>1</sup> (PLAQ/Access list)
- Higher Education qualifications ('Level 4 and above').

From 2013/14, 'non-regulated enrolments' are those that either potentially lead to a formal qualification (at 'Level 3' or below) that doesn't appear on the RRQ or don't usually lead to a formal qualification, typically hobby and leisure or recreational courses.

The new definition of 'regulated enrolments' from 2013/14 onwards may result in a change in the number of regulated enrolments and, therefore, comparison with earlier years needs to take this into context. This publication reports on trend analysis over four years from 2013/14. This is the first such publication where there are four years' trend data to report since the review on 'regulated' provision. Refer to [Annex B](#) for further details on this estimation work.

The changes in the proportions of regulated and non-regulated enrolments, over the period 2013/14 to 2016/17, reflect the '[Further Education Means Success](#)' strategy, aimed at reducing the number of non-regulated enrolments and encouraging regulated economically focused provision.

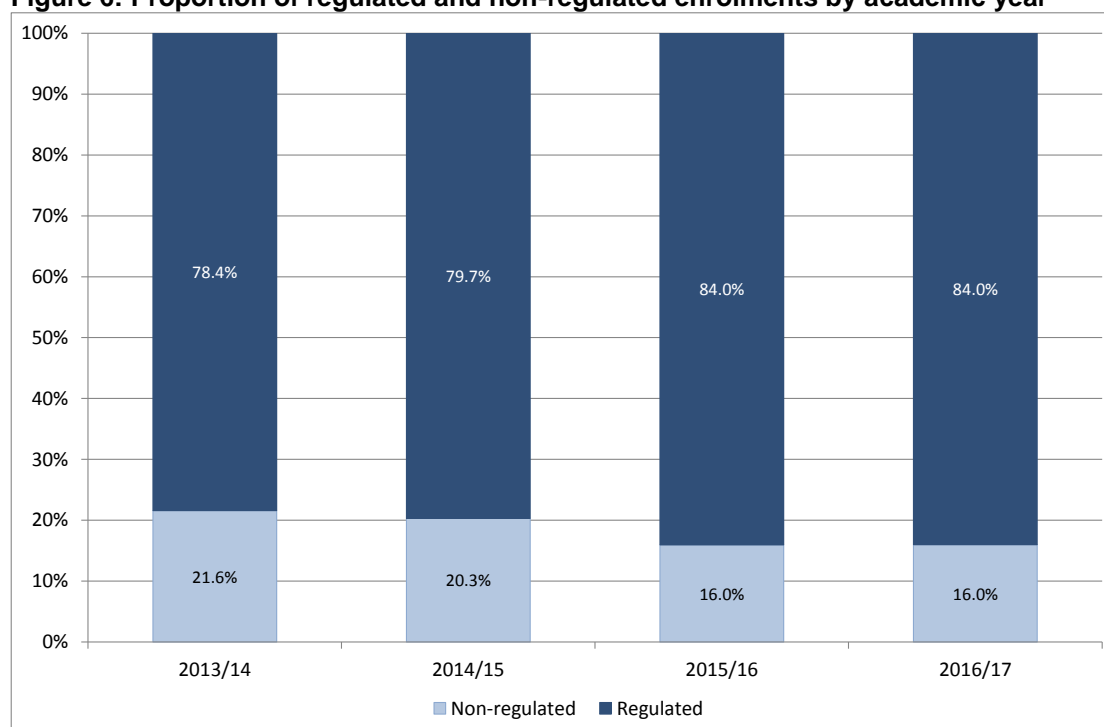
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<sup>1</sup> Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications (PLAQ) are defined within [Annex A: Definitions](#)

## Trends – 2013/14 to 2016/17

The proportion of regulated enrolments has increased by 5.6 percentage points from 78.4% in 2013/14 to 84.0% in 2016/17 (Figure 6, Table A5).

**Figure 6: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by academic year**



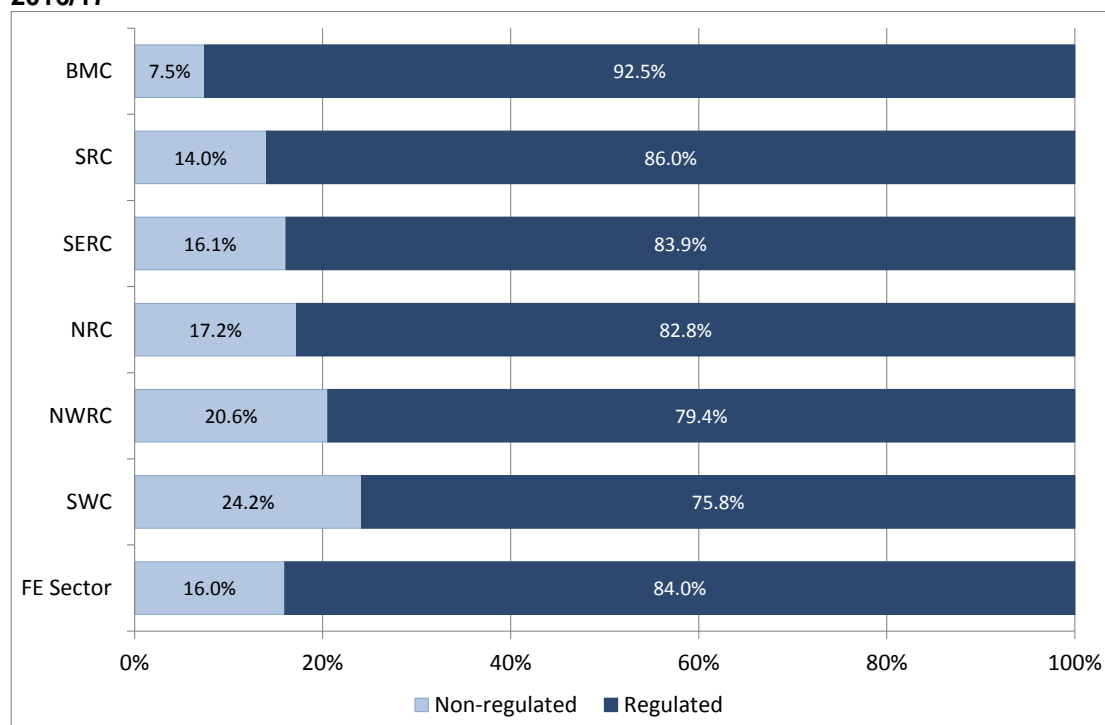
### **FE colleges**

The majority of enrolments were on regulated courses in all six colleges over the four year period 2013/14 to 2016/17. Five of the six colleges followed the sector trend of an increase in the proportion of regulated enrolments over the period. In SWC there was a slight decrease in the proportion of regulated enrolments (0.6 percentage points) (Table A5).

Over the same period, NRC reported the largest increase in the proportion of regulated enrolments (9.8 percentage points), increasing from 73.0% in 2013/14 to 82.8% in 2016/17 (Table A5).

In 2016/17, the proportion of regulated enrolments ranged from 75.8% in SWC to 92.5% in BMC (Figure 7, Table A5).

**Figure 7: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by FE college in 2016/17**

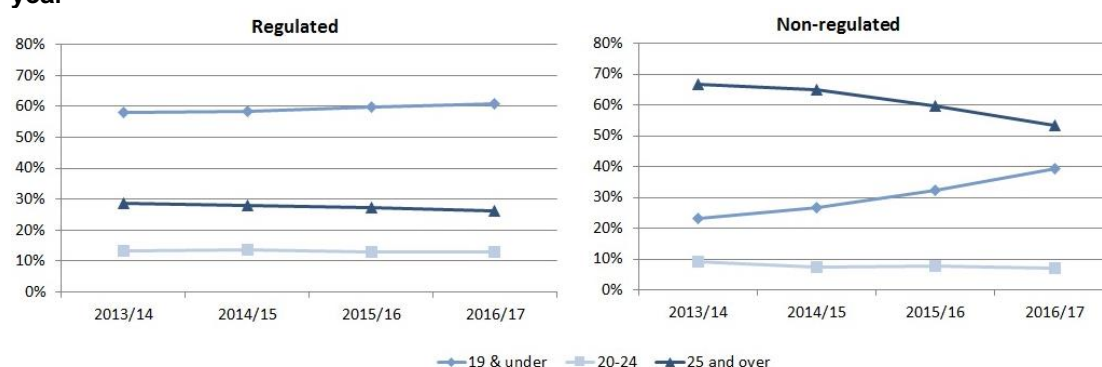


## Age

Since 2013/14, the proportion of aged '19 and under' regulated enrolments has increased from 58.0% to 60.9%; conversely, the proportions of those in the '20 to 24' have decreased, from 13.4% to 12.8%. and '25 and over' age groups and from 28.6% to 26.3% respectively (Figure 8, Table A6).

While traditionally the majority of non-regulated enrolments relate to individuals aged '25 and over', this proportion has fallen from 66.6% in 2013/14 to 53.2% in 2016/17. Those aged '20 to 24' have also decreased from 9.1% to 7.1%. Conversely, the proportion of those in the '19 and under' age group has increased over this period, from 23.3% to 39.1% (Figure 8, Table A6).

**Figure 8: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by age by academic year**



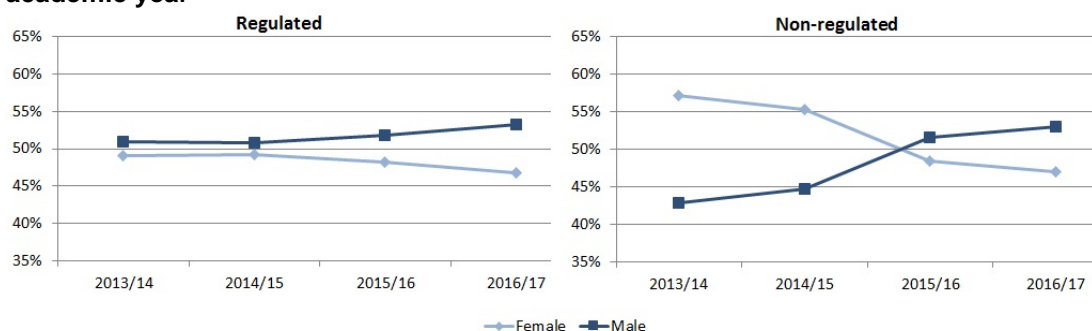
Please note there is a small element of unknown ages (<0.5%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A6

## Gender

In both 2013/14 and 2014/15, the gender split for regulated enrolments was fairly even, at 50.9% male and 49.1% female. In 2016/17, however, the gap was wider, at 53.2% for males and 46.8% for females (Figure 9, Table A7).

Typically, females have been more likely than males to enrol on non-regulated courses. Between 2013/14 and 2016/17, however, the proportion of female non-regulated enrolments has fallen from 57.1% to 47.1% (Figure 9, Table A7).

**Figure 9: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated enrolments by gender by academic year**



## Mode of attendance

Between 2013/14 and 2016/17, the full-time proportion of regulated enrolments has increased from 18.2% to 20.1%. In contrast, almost all non-regulated enrolments over this period have been part-time, for instance, 99.9% in 2016/17 (Table A8).

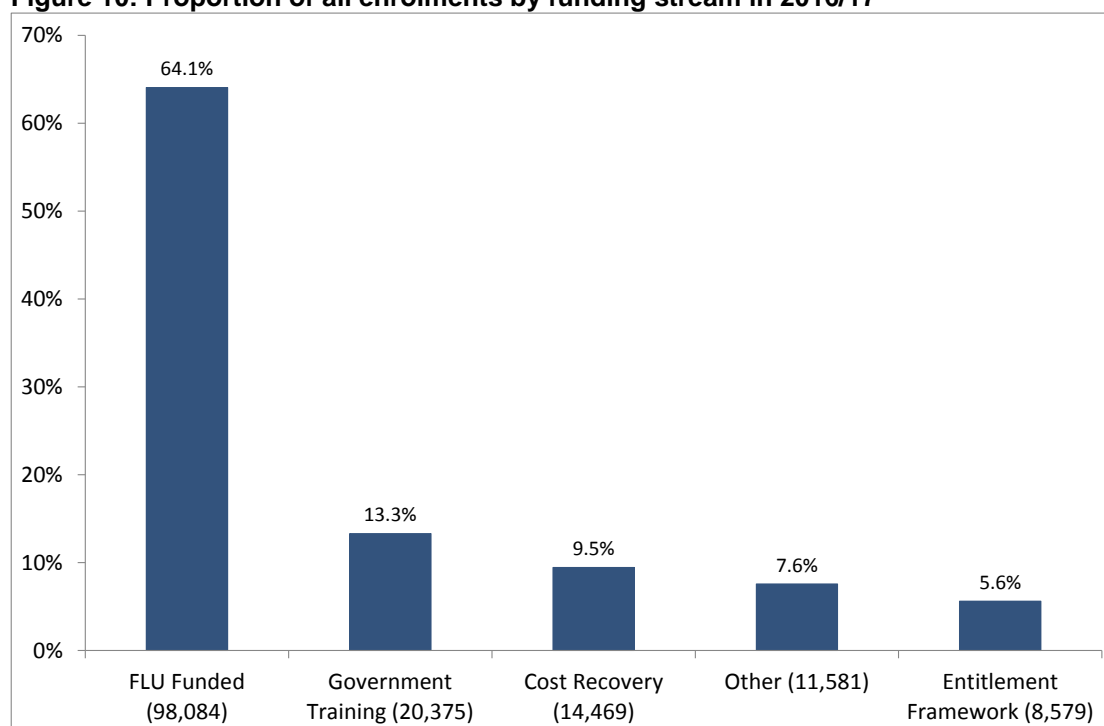
### 1.3 – Funding streams 2016/17

Several funding streams are available to FE colleges to deliver provision. These include direct funding from DfE, through either the Funded Learning Unit (FLU) mechanism or government training programmes, such as Training for Success or Steps to Work. FE colleges can also receive funding from businesses/individuals, termed as cost recovery, or from other government departments, such as Department of Education (DE), through the Entitlement Framework programme. These main funding streams are analysed below for the academic year 2016/17.

Of the 153,088 enrolments in 2016/17, almost two-thirds (64.1%) were funded through the Funded Learning Unit (FLU), 13.3% were funded through government training programmes, 9.5% were cost recovery and 5.6% were funded through the Entitlement Framework programme. For a further 7.6% of enrolments, the funding stream was classed as 'Other' (Figure 10, Table A9).

In 2016/17, the FLU proportion of all enrolments in colleges ranged from 50.1% in SWC to 78.9% in BMC (Table A9).

**Figure 10: Proportion of all enrolments by funding stream in 2016/17**



For further information regarding Funding streams, please see the [Funding Streams](#) definition at Annex A (page 62).

## Section 2: Regulated enrolments in 2016/17

### Overview

Most FE college provision includes courses that can potentially lead to a regulated qualification on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ). The following section focuses solely on regulated enrolments at FE colleges in the 2016/17 academic year.

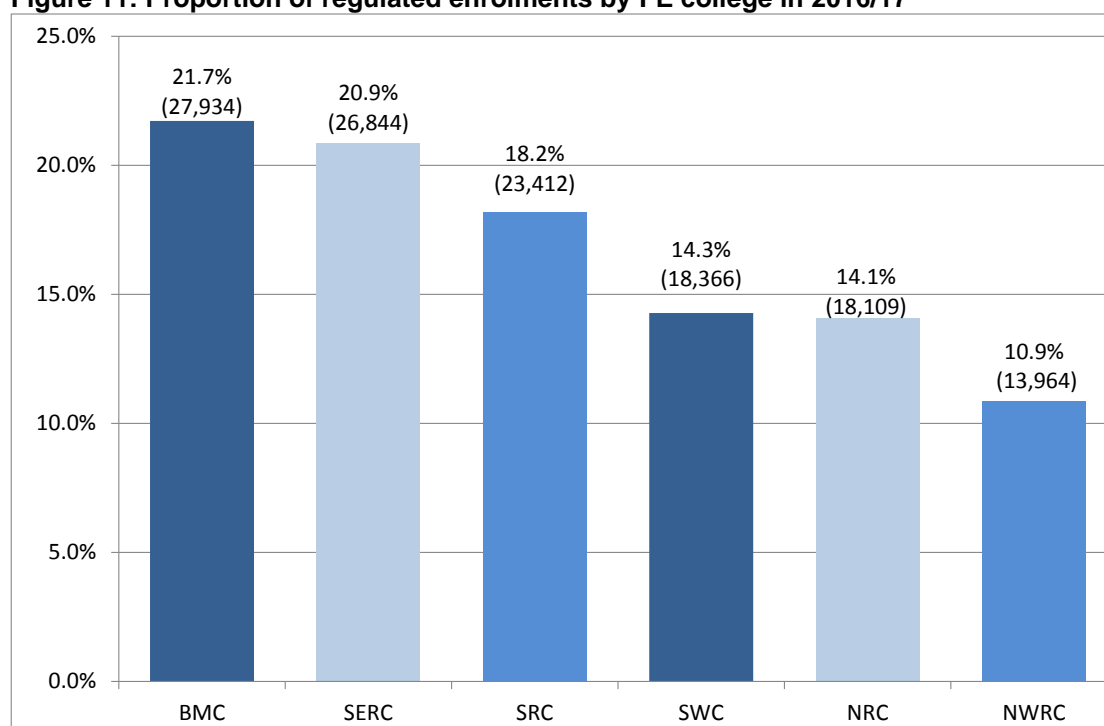
The Department's '[Further Education Means Success](#)' strategy emphasises the pivotal role of the further education system in Northern Ireland "in generating a strong and vibrant economy through the development of professional and technical skills, increasingly at higher levels, and by helping employers to innovate". As a result, regulated provision is becoming increasingly important in delivering this role.

In 2016/17, the 128,629 enrolments on regulated courses at FE colleges in Northern Ireland related to 67,344 individual students. Nearly 30,000 of these students were enrolled on more than one programme of study, resulting in 1.9 enrolments on regulated courses per individual in 2016/17 (Table A1).

### **FE colleges**

Of the 128,629 regulated enrolments, BMC accounted for the highest proportion, with 21.7% (27,934), and NWRC the lowest, with 10.9% (13,964) (Figure 11, Table A5). This distribution of regulated enrolments is very similar to the pattern within all enrolments (Figure 2).

**Figure 11: Proportion of regulated enrolments by FE college in 2016/17**



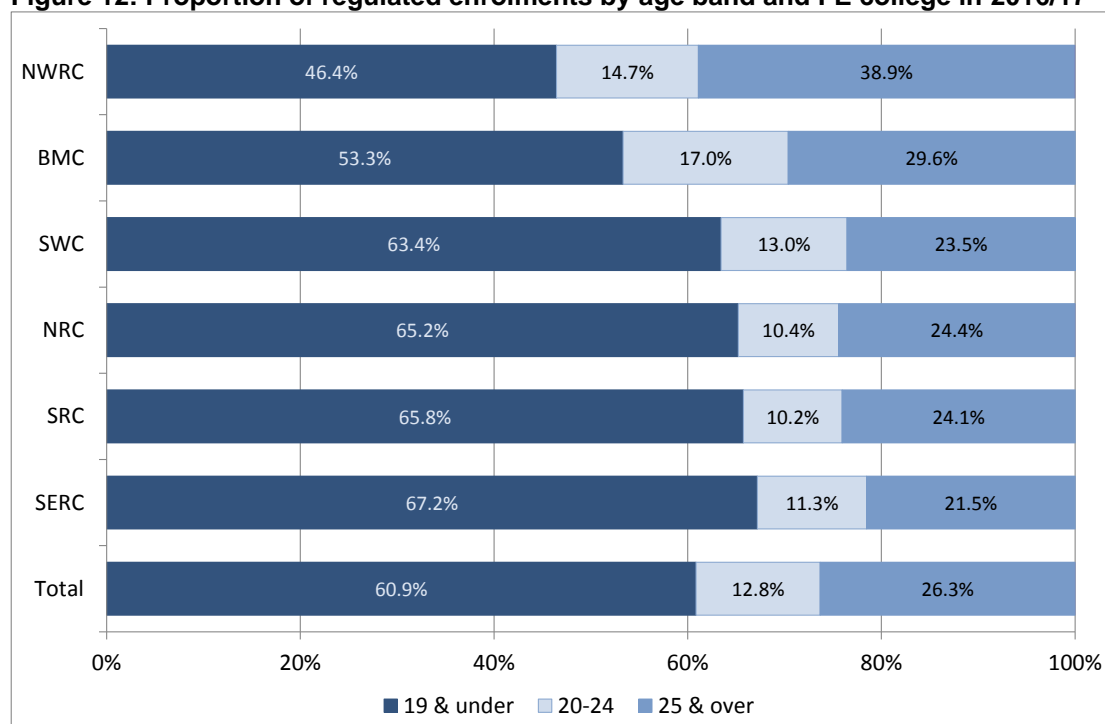
## Age

Of the 128,629 regulated enrolments in 2016/17, three-fifths (60.9%) related to students aged '19 and under', 12.8% to those aged '20 to 24' and 26.3% to the '25 and over' age band. The six FE colleges showed a similar pattern, with aged '19 and under' having the highest proportions and '20 to 24' the lowest (Figure 12, Table A10).

In 2016/17, SWC showed a very similar pattern to the FE sector age-profile, whereas SERC (67.2%), SRC (65.8%) and NRC (65.2%) had greater proportions aged '19 and under' and smaller proportions in the older age bands. NWRC (46.4%) and BMC (53.3%) had lower proportions of enrolments aged '19 and under' and larger proportions in the older age bands than those for the FE sector (Figure 12, Table A10).

As noted earlier (page 14) for NWRC, the highest proportion of all enrolments in 2016/17 related to those aged '25 and over', while for regulated enrolments only, it related to those aged '19 and under'. This difference in pattern indicates that most of the non-regulated enrolments within NWRC were being undertaken by older people (aged '25 and over') (Table A2, Table A10).

**Figure 12: Proportion of regulated enrolments by age band and FE college in 2016/17**

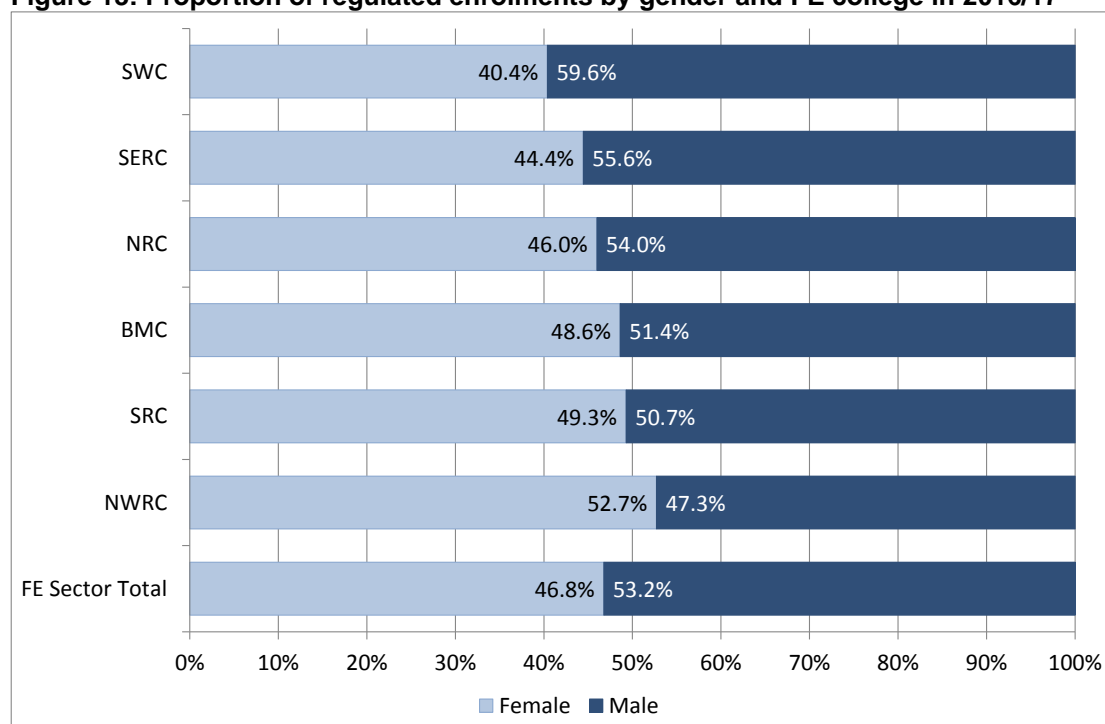


Please note there is a small element of unknown ages (<0.5%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A10.

## Gender

The gender profile of regulated enrolments varied across the six colleges in 2016/17. Five colleges had a higher proportion of males [SWC (59.6%), SERC (55.6%), NRC (54.0%), BMC (51.4%) and SRC (50.7%)], while NWRC (52.7%) had a higher proportion of females. As a result, the majority (53.2%) of regulated enrolments were male; the same pattern as for all enrolments (Figure 13, Table A11).

**Figure 13: Proportion of regulated enrolments by gender and FE college in 2016/17**



### Mode of attendance

In 2016/17, 20.1% (25,792) of regulated enrolments were on a full-time basis and almost four fifths (79.9%, 102,837) were part-time. In comparison with the FE sector, NWRC (30.6%) had the highest proportion of full-time, while SERC (16.7%), SWC (17.2%) and SRC (19.6%) had lower proportions. Across all colleges, the vast majority of regulated enrolments were on a part-time basis (Table A12).

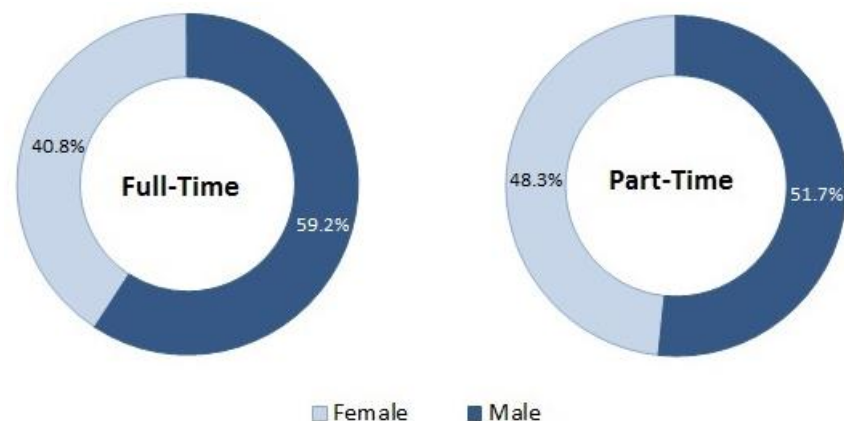
### Mode of attendance and gender

Whereas the gender split was fairly even (males 51.7% and females 48.3%) for 2016/17 part-time regulated enrolments, males accounted for approaching three-fifths (59.2%) of full-time enrolments (Figure 14, Table A12).

In contrast to the overall FE sector gender profile for part-time provision in 2016/17, female enrolments were in the majority in NWRC (53.6%), SRC (51.9%) and BMC (50.6%). In full-time provision, only NWRC differed from the FE sector profile, with a slight majority of females (50.6%) (Table A12).



**Figure 14: Proportion of regulated enrolments by gender and mode of attendance in 2016/17**



## Provision area

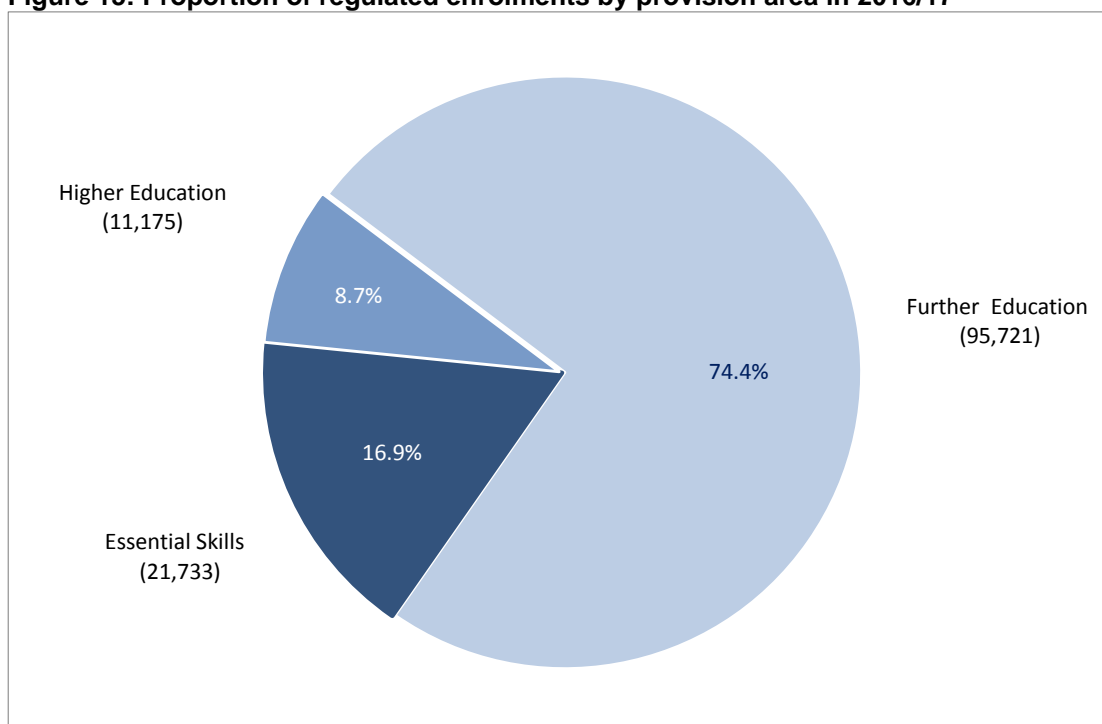
Three main provision areas are delivered within FE colleges:

- i. Further Education is regarded as enrolments at 'Level 3 or below', such as: professional and technical provision; A-Levels; GCSEs and Apprenticeships.
- ii. Higher Education is regarded as enrolments at 'Level 4 or above', such as: Certificate of Higher Education; Diplomas of Higher Education; Foundation degrees; Higher National Certificates (HNCs); Higher National Diplomas (HNDs); Bachelor's Degrees; Master's degrees; Postgraduate certificates; and Doctorates.
- iii. Essential Skills provision can be at Entry Level up to Level 2, which is equivalent to GCSEs. This cohort is separate from (i) Further Education (above). Further information on Essential Skills provision is available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/statistics-and-economic-research/essential-skills-statistics>

Of the 128,629 regulated enrolments in 2016/17, nearly three-quarters (74.4%) were in Further Education (FE) courses, 8.7% were in Higher Education (HE) courses and 16.9% in Essential Skills. Across each of the FE colleges, the proportions for each provision area generally followed the overall FE sector (Figure 15, Table A13).

In 2016/17, SERC's share of enrolments in FE courses (79.0%) was the highest across all colleges, while its HE proportion (5.8%) was the lowest. BMC's proportion of enrolments in HE courses (11.4%) was the highest across all colleges, while its Essential Skills share (14.5%) was the lowest. NRC had the highest proportion of enrolments in Essential Skills (21.1%), while NWRC had the lowest share in FE (69.2%). The other two colleges (SRC and SWC) had similar proportions of enrolments in provision area to the FE sector (Table A13).

**Figure 15: Proportion of regulated enrolments by provision area in 2016/17**



### Level of study

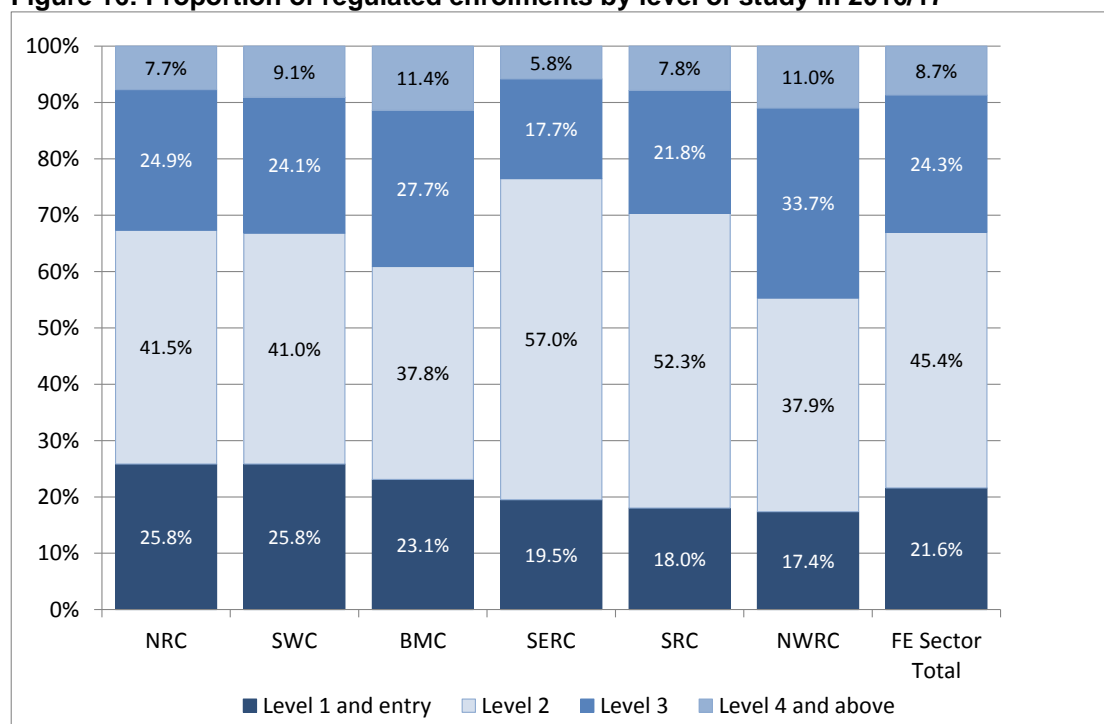
Each enrolment on a regulated course is assigned a level between 'Entry Level' and 'Level 8'. Qualifications at the same level have a similar level of demand or difficulty, for example at:

- 'Level 1 and Entry Level' includes, Vocational Qualifications Level 1, GCSEs at grade D–G, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Essential Skills;
- 'Level 2' includes Vocational Qualifications Level 2, GCSEs at grade A\*–C, ESOL and Essential Skills;
- 'Level 3' includes Vocational Qualifications Level 3, GCE AS and A Level;
- 'Level 4 and above' includes Vocational Qualifications Levels 4 to 8; Higher National Certificate (HNC), Higher National Diplomas (HND); Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE) and degrees.

Of the 128,629 regulated enrolments in 2016/17, those at 'Level 1 and below' accounted for 21.6% (27,758); 45.4% (58,435) were at 'Level 2', 24.3% (31,261) were at 'Level 3' and 8.7% (11,175) were at 'Level 4 and above'. This indicates that nearly four-fifths (78.4%) of regulated provision was at 'Level 2' or above. (Figure 16, Table A14).

There was a notable variation across the six colleges in terms of the level of study. While all colleges had their largest proportion of enrolments at 'Level 2', this ranged from 57.0% in SERC to 37.8% in BMC. SERC (57.0%) and SRC (52.3%) were the only colleges where the majority of enrolments were at 'Level 2'. Over two-fifths of provision in NWRC (44.7%) was at 'Level 3' and above (Figure 16, Table A14).

**Figure 16: Proportion of regulated enrolments by level of study in 2016/17**



## Subject area

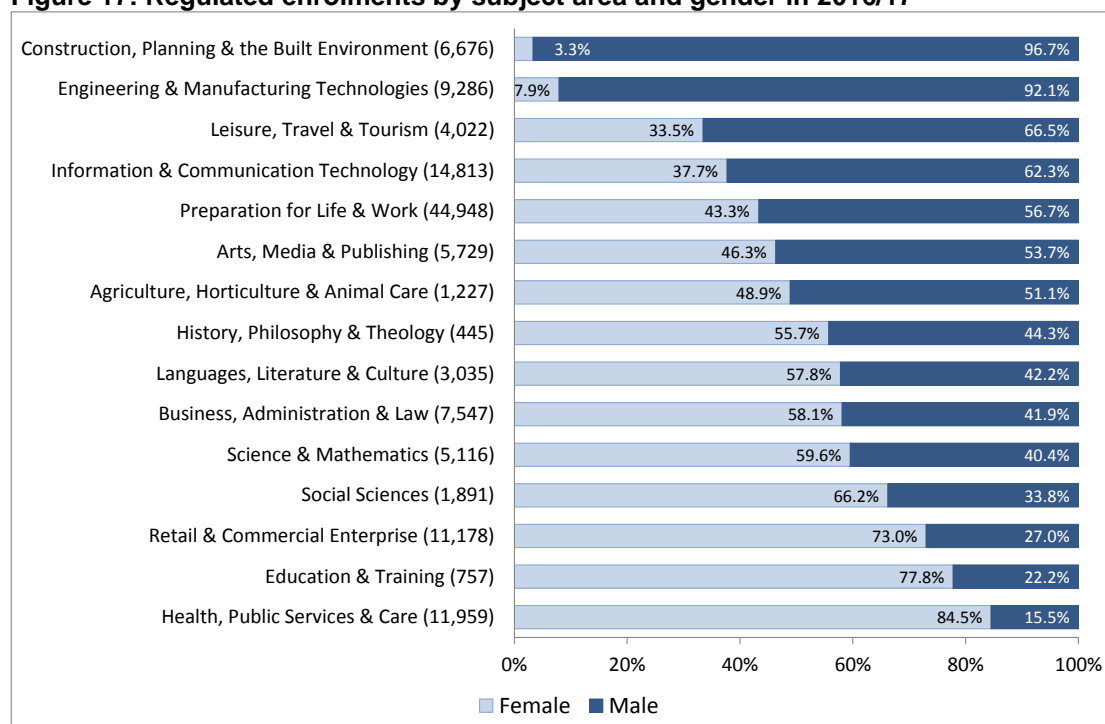
Of the 128,629 regulated enrolments in 2016/17, the subject area 'Preparation for Life and Work' had the largest share (34.9%). This was followed by 'Information and Communication Technology (ICT)' (11.5%) and 'Health, Public Services and Care' (9.3%). Almost one-third (32.9%, 14,774) of regulated enrolments within the subject area 'Preparation for Life and Work' were Essential Skills courses in Literacy and Numeracy (Table A15).

## Subject area and gender

Although the overall gender profile was fairly evenly split for all regulated enrolments in 2016/17, there was wide variation between male and female enrolments across the subject areas. Females accounted for the vast majority in 'Health, Public Services and Care' (84.5%) and in 'Education and Training' enrolments (77.8%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' (96.7%) and 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (92.1%) (Figure 17, Table A15).

Across the FE colleges, there was a similar pattern in the subject area by gender profile. Any college variations from the sector were mainly in 'Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care', which accounted for 1,227 enrolments across the FE sector. In BMC, SERC and NRC, the female share of this subject area was 77.7%, 73.9% and 58.3% respectively, compared with the 'FE sector female' share of 48.9%. In NWRC, SRC and SWC, the male share in 'Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care' was 94.0%, 82.1% and 79.4% respectively, while the 'FE sector male' share in this subject was 51.1% (Figure 17, Table A15).

**Figure 17: Regulated enrolments by subject area and gender in 2016/17**



## Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

The '[Success through Skills – transforming futures](#)' publication highlights a need to address subject imbalances, as forecasts predict that degree subject requirements will become more skewed towards STEM. The '[Report of the STEM Review](#)' examines ways in which Government and business can increase the number of people with STEM qualifications entering the workplace.

This section examines the level of enrolments within STEM subject areas to illustrate the further education contribution towards those undertaking STEM courses.

STEM or 'Broad' STEM provision is identified by subject category. 'Broad' STEM enrolments are regarded as those on courses of: 'Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects'; 'Biological and Physical Sciences'; 'Agriculture; Mathematics and IT'; 'Engineering and Technology'; and 'Architecture, Building and Planning'.

A subset of this cohort is termed 'Narrow' STEM and is identified as those enrolment records within courses of: 'Biological and Physical Sciences'; 'Mathematics and IT'; and 'Engineering and Technology'.

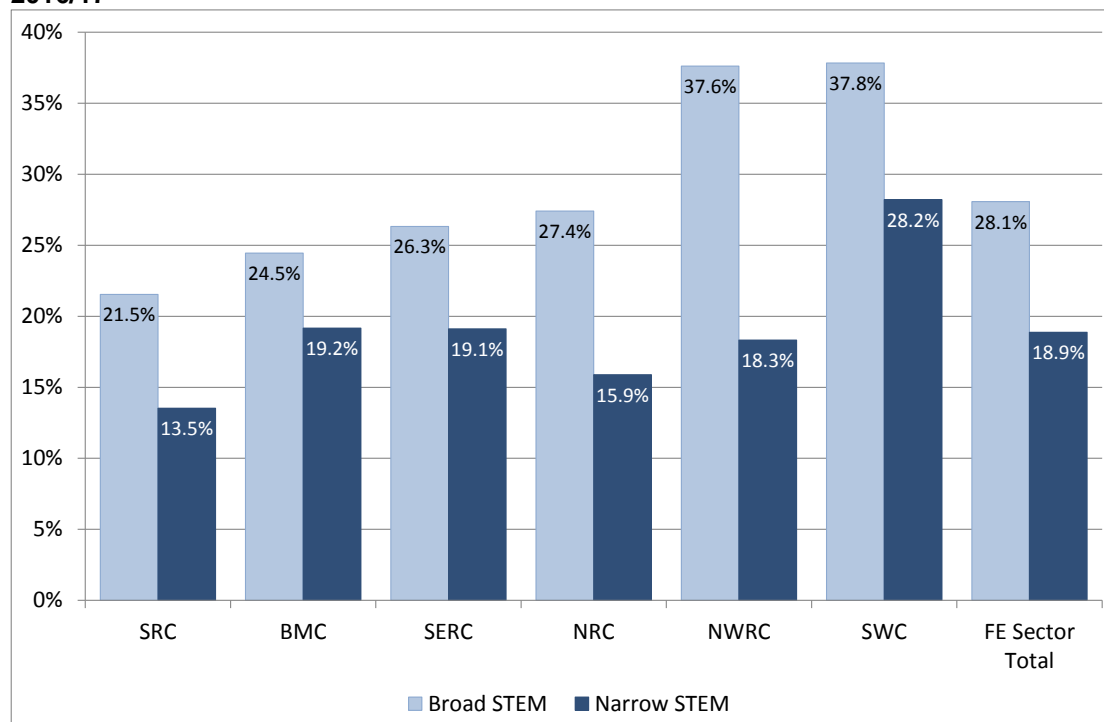
In 2016/17, 'Broad' STEM enrolments accounted for 28.1% (36,106) of all regulated enrolments, while 'Narrow' STEM enrolments accounted for 18.9% (24,271). Males accounted for almost three-quarters of both 'Broad' STEM (71.6%) and 'Narrow' STEM (74.9%) enrolments (Table A16a and Table A16b).

Two of the six colleges had 'Broad' STEM proportions higher than the FE sector average, namely SWC (37.8%) and NWRC (37.6%). 'Broad' STEM

enrolment proportions were lower in SRC (21.5%), BMC (24.5%), SERC (26.3%) and NRC (27.4%) (Figure 18, Table A16a).

'Narrow' STEM proportions in SWC (28.2%), BMC (19.2%) and SERC (19.1%) were above the FE sector level, while the other three colleges had proportions of 'Narrow' STEM that were lower [SRC (13.5%), NRC (15.9%) and NWRC (18.3%)] (Figure 18, Table A16b).

**Figure 18: Proportion of regulated enrolments by STEM indicators and FE college in 2016/17**



## Deprivation

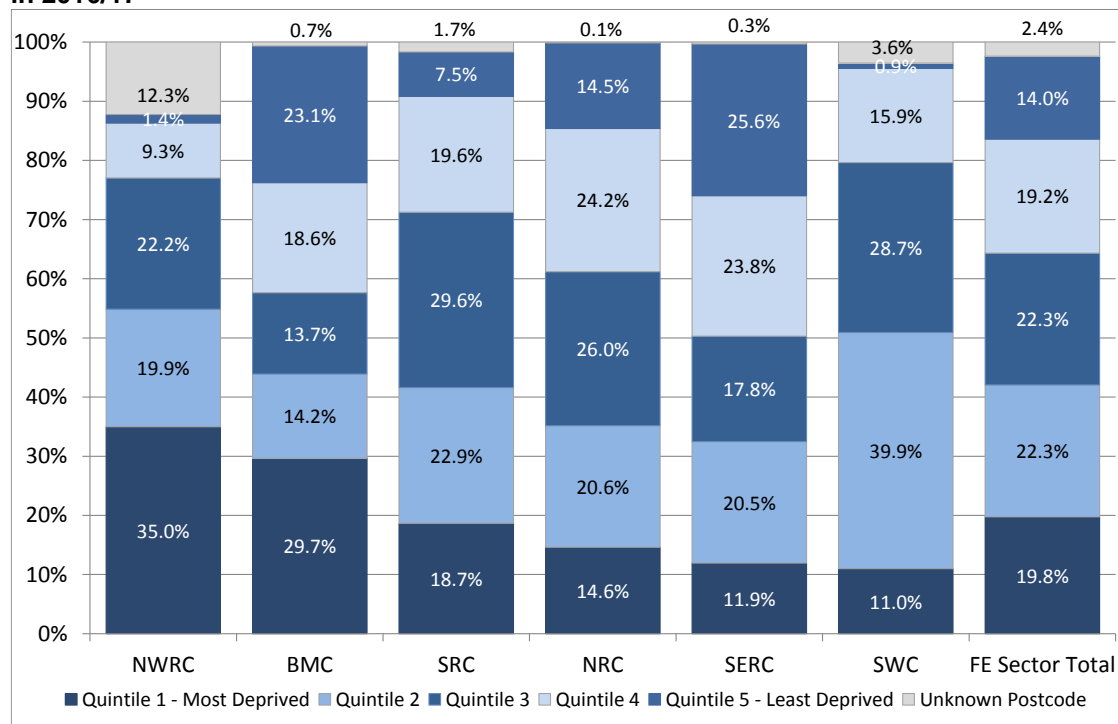
Deprivation has been measured using the official Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM), which categorises areas across Northern Ireland into five geographical groups, termed 'quintiles', each accounting for 20% of the 890 Super Output Areas (SOAs). Quintile 1 is the most deprived group of areas and Quintile 5 is the least deprived group of areas.

In 2016/17, over two-fifths (42.1%) of regulated enrolments were from the two most deprived quintiles. A fifth (19.8%) of regulated enrolments came from Quintile 1, compared with 14.0% from Quintile 5 (Table A17).

When considering regulated enrolments from different deprivation quintiles across the six FE colleges, there was a lot of regional variation. In 2016/17, NWRC had over a third (35.0%) of enrolments from Quintile 1, in contrast to 1.4% from Quintile 5. BMC, another college with a large urban concentration, was quite polarised in terms of deprivation levels of intake. Over half of BMC regulated enrolments (52.8%) were from either Quintile 1 or Quintile 5 (Figure 19, Table A17).

SWC (11.0%), SERC (11.9%), NRC (14.6%) and SRC (18.7%) all had below average proportions of regulated enrolments from Quintile 1. The largest proportion of regulated enrolments in SERC was from Quintile 5 (25.6%), whereas over 50% of regulated enrolments in NWRC and SWC came from the two most deprived quintiles (Figure 19, Table A17).

**Figure 19: Proportion of regulated enrolments by deprivation quintiles and FE college in 2016/17**



Notably, NWRC had a significant proportion of enrolments with unknown postcodes (12.3%). This is largely due to a student flow from the Republic of Ireland (RoI). Of the 1,711 enrolments with unknown postcodes in NWRC, 1,540 were RoI domiciled student enrolments, accounting for 11.0% of regulated enrolments in NWRC (13,964). Excluding these enrolments from the NWRC analysis, 39.3% of enrolments were from Quintile 1 and 1.6% were from Quintile 5 (Table 2 and Table A17).

**Table 2: Proportion of regulated enrolments with and without RoI domicile students in NWRC by deprivation quintiles in 2016/17**

Domicile	Quintile 1 - Most Deprived	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 - Least Deprived	Unknown Postcode
Including RoI	35.0%	19.9%	22.2%	9.3%	1.4%	12.3%
Excluding RoI	39.3%	22.3%	24.9%	10.4%	1.6%	1.4%

## Section 3: FLU funding

### Background

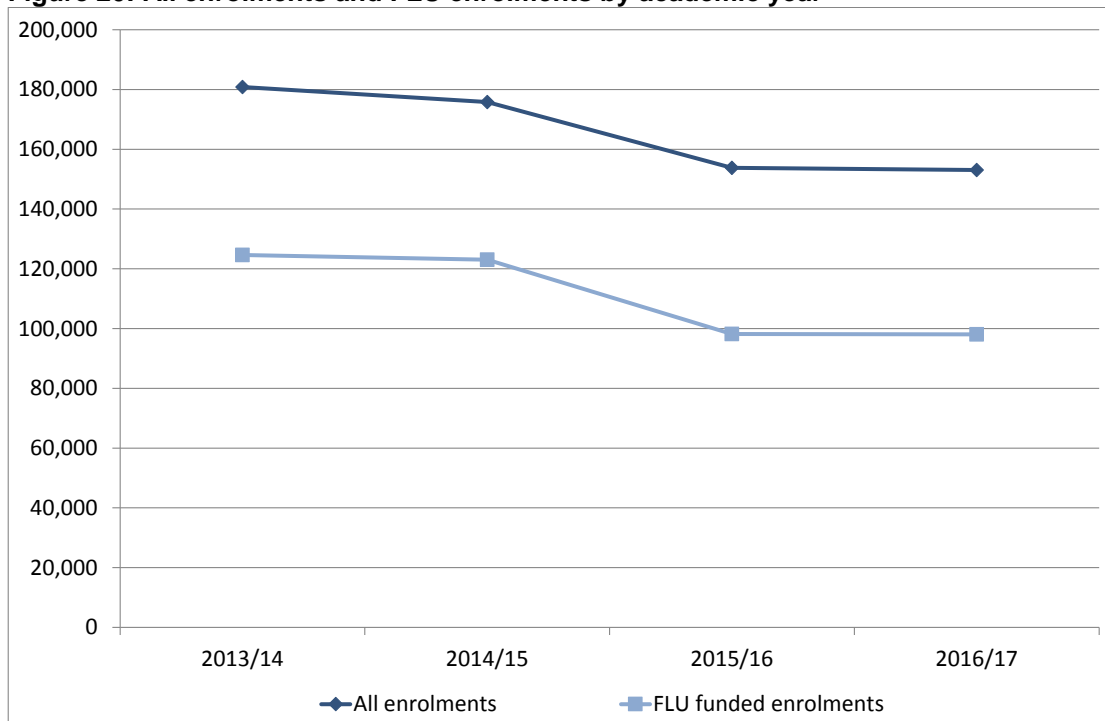
FE colleges are funded through the FLU funding model, a distributive funding mechanism designed to support DfE's strategic priorities for further education, which have previously been outlined. It provides funding to enable colleges to deliver further education, Essential Skills and Higher Education delivered within FE colleges. In this section, FLU enrolments refer to enrolments eligible for FLU funding. They are a subset of all enrolments at FE colleges and include both regulated and non-regulated provision.

The largest proportion of enrolments in FE colleges (64.1% in 2016/17) is funded through FLU each year (Figure 10). This is also the element of colleges' activity that is regarded as mainstream further education provision. The following section will focus solely on FLU enrolments at FE colleges in Northern Ireland over the last four academic years.

### Trends – 2013/14 to 2016/17

Between 2013/14 and 2016/17, FLU enrolments followed a similar pattern to all enrolments, decreasing by 21.3% from 124,597 to 98,084. Notably, they fell by 20.2% between 2014/15 (123,060) and 2015/16 (98,173), before a further 0.1% decrease to 98,084 in 2016/17 (Figure 20, Table A18).

**Figure 20: All enrolments and FLU enrolments by academic year**

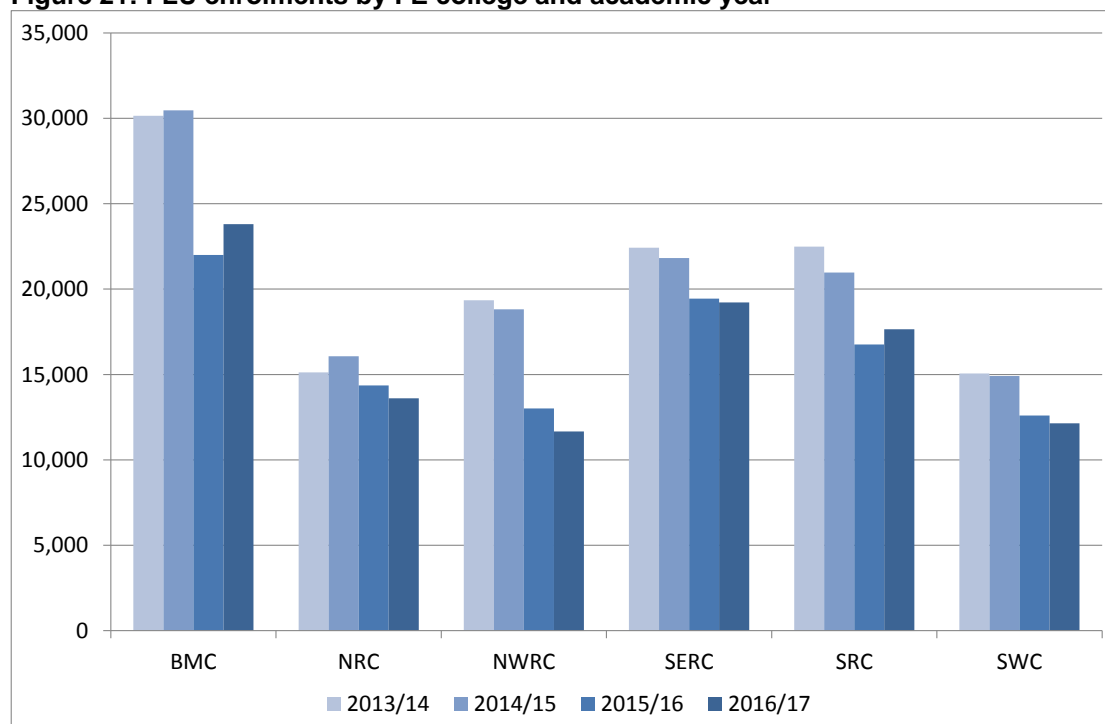


## FE colleges

Between 2013/14 and 2016/17, the number of FLU enrolments decreased in each of the six colleges, ranging from 10.0% in NRC to 39.7% in NWRC (Figure 21, Table A18).

Of the 98,084 FLU enrolments in 2016/17, BMC accounted for the highest proportion (24.3%, 23,807), while the lowest proportion was in NWRC (11.9%, 11,667) (Figure 21, Table A18).

**Figure 21: FLU enrolments by FE college and academic year**

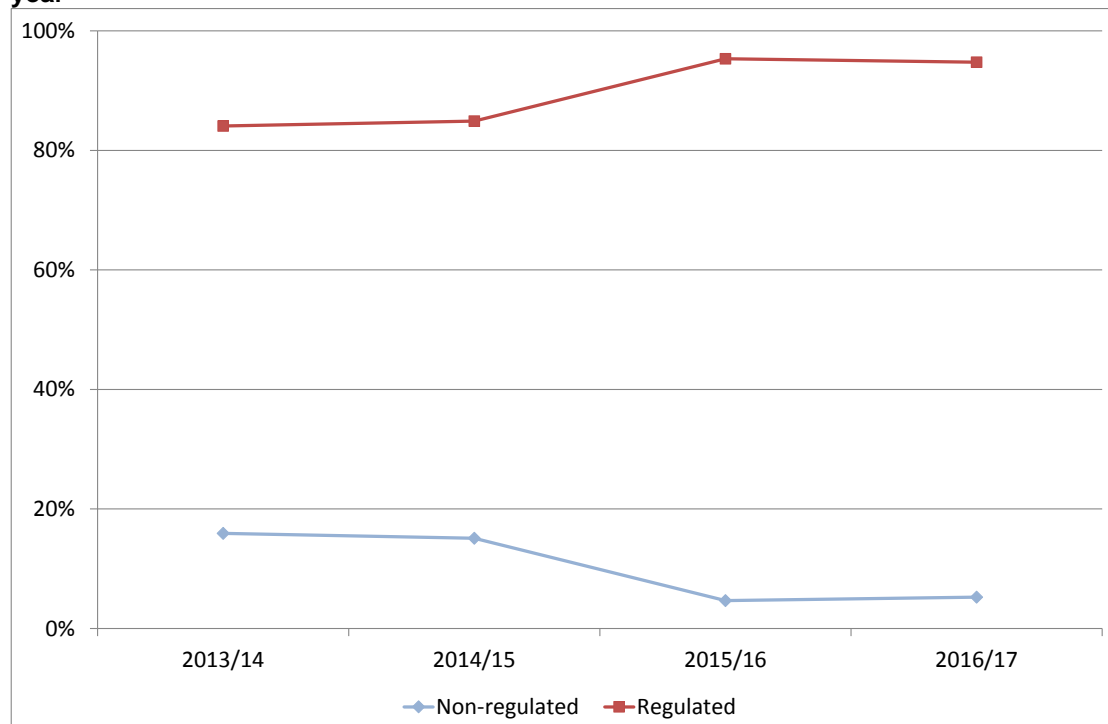


## Regulated and non-regulated

Between 2013/14 and 2016/17, the regulated proportion of FLU enrolments increased by a net 10.7 percentage points, from 84.1% to 94.8%; this included a 10.4 percentage point increase from 84.9% in 2014/15 to 95.3% in 2015/16. As indicated earlier, these changes in the proportions of regulated and non-regulated FLU enrolments reflect the vision of the '[Further Education Means Success](#)' strategy, aimed at encouraging more economically-focused regulated provision (Figure 22, Table A18).

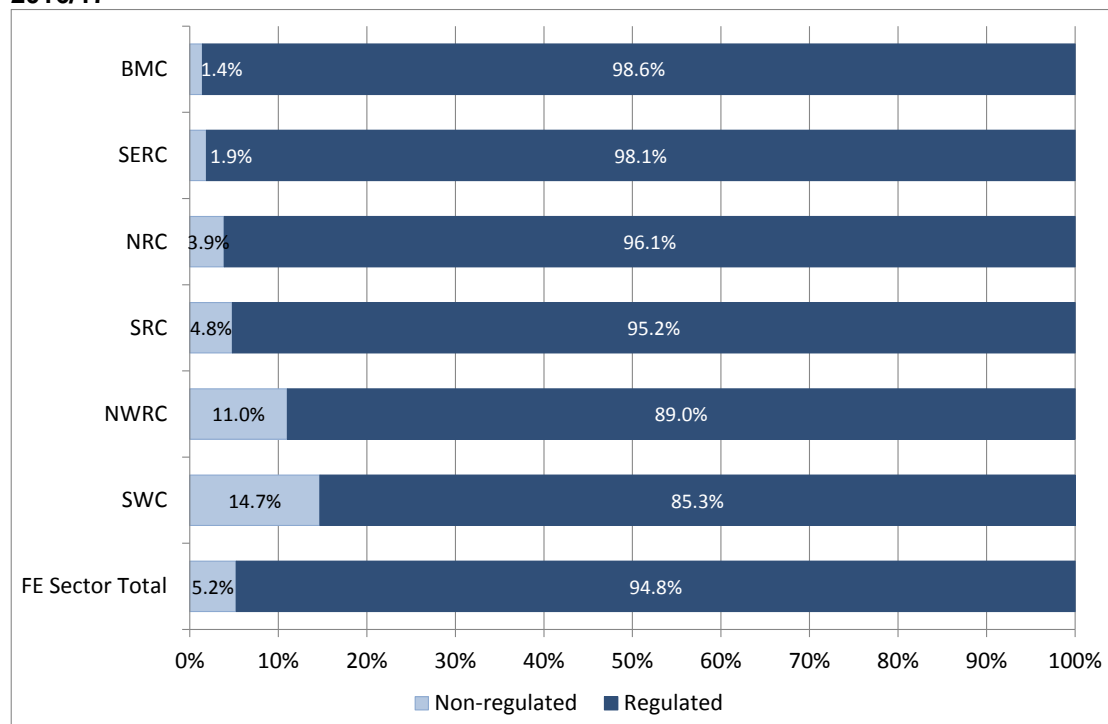


**Figure 22: Proportion of regulated and non-regulated FLU enrolments by academic year**



The regulated proportions of FLU enrolments varied across the six colleges in 2016/17, ranging from 85.3% in SWC to 98.6% in BMC (Figure 23, Table A18).

**Figure 23: Proportions of FLU funded enrolments by regulated status and FE college in 2016/17**



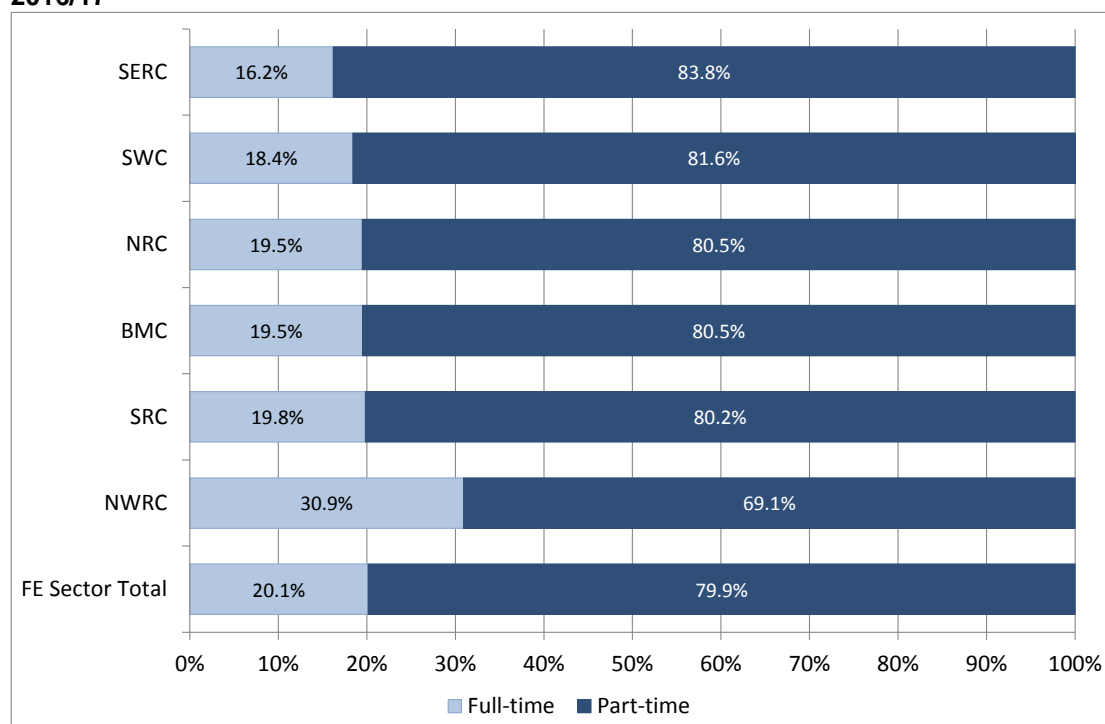
## Mode of attendance

Over the period 2013/14 to 2016/17, the part-time proportion of FLU enrolments decreased by 3.0 percentage points, from 82.9% to 79.9% (Table A21).

The part-time proportion of FLU enrolments also fell in five of the six colleges between 2013/14 and 2016/17; the largest being an 11.1 percentage point decrease in NWRC, from 80.2% to 69.1%. In NRC, however, the part-time proportion increased by 1.7 percentage points, from 78.8% to 80.5% (Table A21).

In the latest academic year (2016/17), a similar breakdown to the FE sector was evident in five of the six colleges (the exception being NWRC); with proportions of part-time provision ranging from 69.1% in NWRC to 83.8% in SERC (Figure 24, Table A21).

**Figure 24: Proportion of FLU enrolments by mode of attendance and FE college in 2016/17**



## Level of study

Over the period 2013/14 to 2016/17, the proportion of 'Level 1 and entry' FLU enrolments fell by 8.9 percentage points, from 33.3% to 24.4%. Conversely, increases occurred in the proportions of FLU enrolments at 'Level 2' (from 36.2% to 41.1%), 'Level 3' (from 21.3% to 24.4%) and 'Level 4 and above' (from 8.7% to 10.1%) (Table A23).

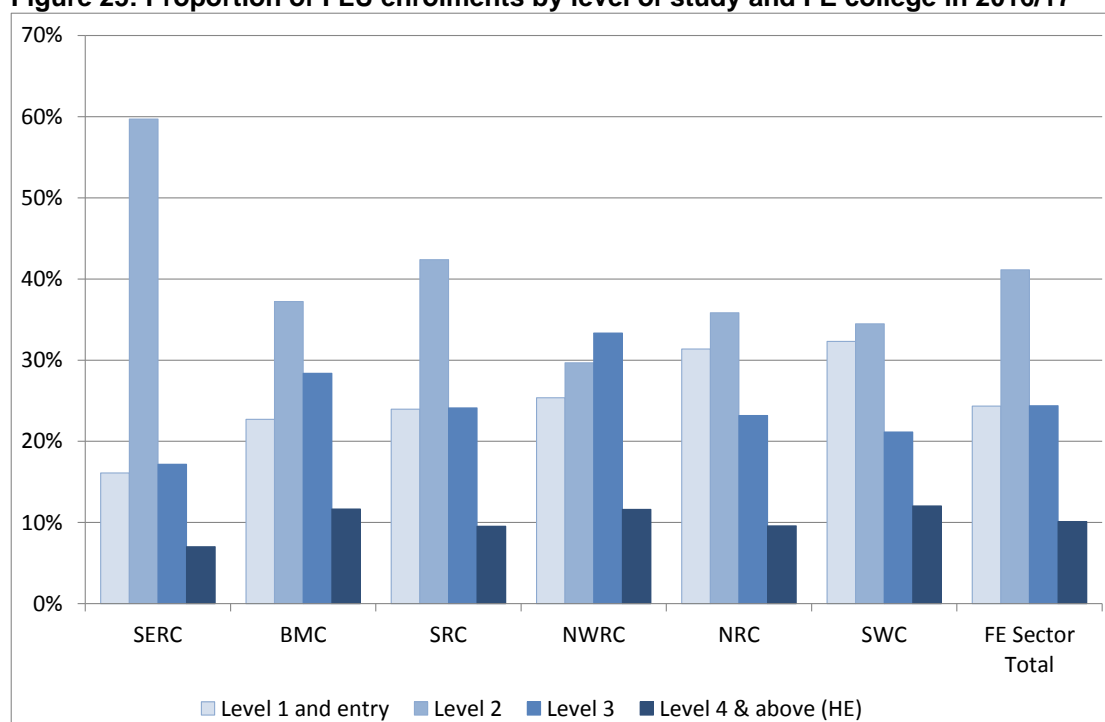
All six colleges followed the FE sector trend of a decrease in the proportion of 'Level 1 and entry' FLU enrolments between 2013/14 and 2016/17, ranging from nearly 4.0 percentage points in NRC to 15.3 percentage points in NWRC. Also in line with the FE sector, five of the six colleges experienced increases in their proportions of 'Level 2' FLU enrolments, the largest being BMC's 6.4 percentage point increase, from 30.8% to 37.2% (Table A23).

Between 2013/14 and 2016/17, five of the six colleges experienced increases in their proportions of 'Level 3' FLU enrolments, the largest being the almost 12.2 percentage point increase in NWRC, from 21.2% to 33.3%. All six colleges followed the FE sector trend of an increase in the proportion of 'Level 4 and above' FLU enrolments (Table A23).

In the latest academic year (2016/17), 24.4% (23,889) of all FLU enrolments were at 'Level 1 and entry'; 41.1% (40,346) were at 'Level 2', 24.4% (23,917) at 'Level 3' and 10.1% (9,932) at 'Level 4 and above' (Table A23).

While 'Level 2' accounted for the largest proportion of FLU enrolments (41.1%) across the FE sector in 2016/17, NWRC's largest proportion was in 'Level 3' (33.3%). As (Figure 25) illustrates, three-fifths (59.7%) of SERC's FLU enrolments were at 'Level 2' (Table A23).

**Figure 25: Proportion of FLU enrolments by level of study and FE college in 2016/17**

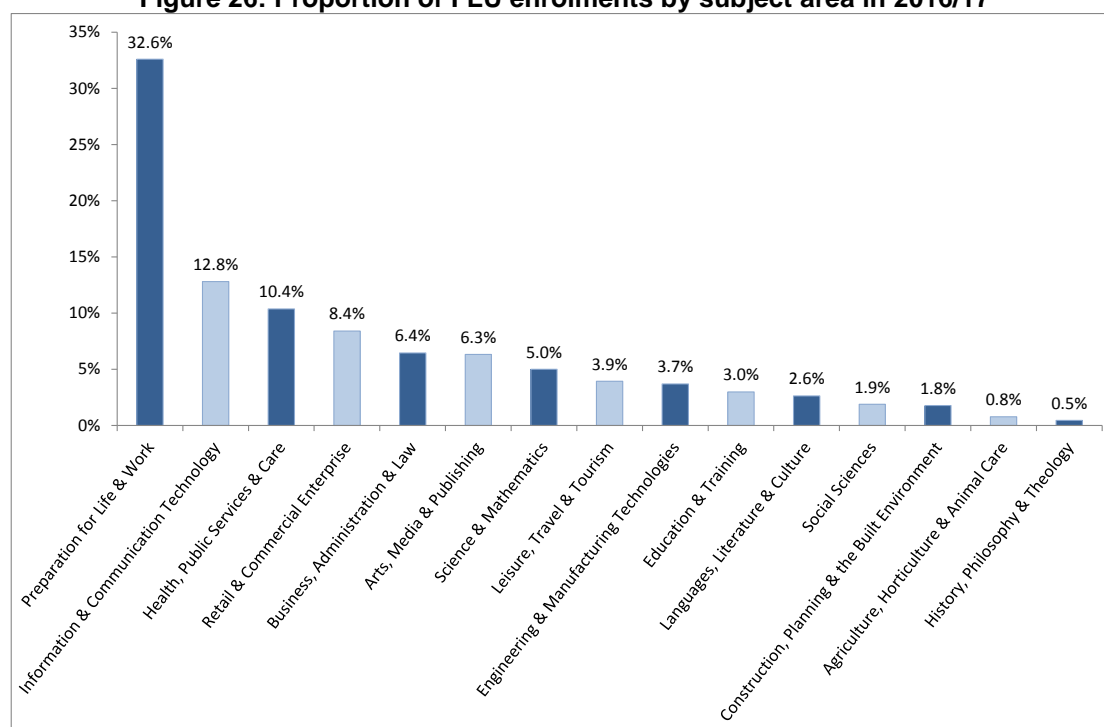


Please note there are a small element of unknown levels of study (<1.0%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A23.

## Subject area

In 2016/17, the largest proportion (32.6%) of FLU funded enrolments was in the subject area 'Preparation for life and work'. This was followed by 'Information and communication technology' (12.8%) and 'Health, Public Services & Care' (10.4%) (Figure 26, Table A24).

**Figure 26: Proportion of FLU enrolments by subject area in 2016/17**



In five of the six colleges, 'Preparation for life and work' had the highest proportions of FLU enrolments in 2016/17. This share of the subject area ranged from 16.3% in NWRC to 54.5% in SERC. In NWRC, 'Health, Public Services and Care' (21.3%) had the highest level of FLU enrolments (Table A24).

In 2016/17, 'Information and communication technology' accounted for: the second highest proportions of FLU enrolments in four colleges [(SRC (15.6%), BMC (14.5%), NRC (13.6%) and SERC (9.3%)]; the third highest in SWC (12.1%), after 'Education & Training (14.5%); and the fourth highest in NWRC (10.6%), after 'Health, Public Services and Care' (21.3%), 'Preparation for life and work' (16.3%) and 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (13.7%) (Table A24).

BMC's third highest share of 2016/17 FLU enrolments was in 'Science and Mathematics' (7.1%), in SERC it was in 'Business, Administration & Law' (6.0%), while in SRC and NRC, it was in 'Health, Public Services and Care' (14.5% and 11.4% respectively) (Table A24).

## Section 4: Higher Education Enrolments in Further Education Colleges

### Background

Higher Education in Further Education (HE in FE) is regarded as enrolments to FE Colleges in Northern Ireland at 'Level 4 or above', such as: Certificates of Higher Education; Diplomas of Higher Education; Foundation degrees; Higher National Certificates (HNCs); Higher National Diplomas (HNDs); Bachelor's degrees; Master's degrees; Postgraduate certificates; and Doctorates. HE in FE is a subset of all regulated provision within FE Colleges. Within this report, the term HE enrolments will be used to represent HE in FE provision. For further details on HE provision at UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), please click [Higher Education Statistics](#).

### Trends – 2013/14 to 2016/17

Over the period 2013/14 to 2016/17, the number of HE in FE enrolments has decreased by 3.5% from 11,576 to 11,175 (Table 3).

Five of the six colleges experienced decreases in the number of HE enrolments [NWRC (8.8%), NRC (7.4%), SRC (3.6%), BMC (3.3%) and SWC (1.8%)] between 2013/14 and 2016/17. SERC, however, experienced a 4.4% increase (Table 3).

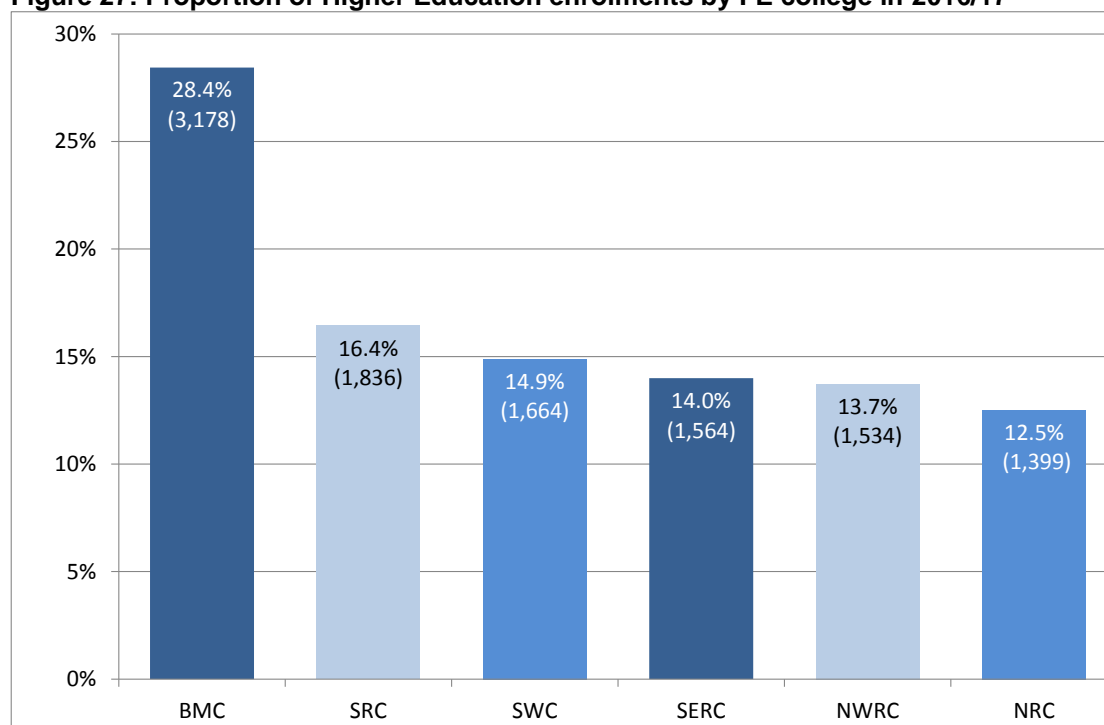
**Table 3: Higher Education enrolments by FE college and academic year**

FE college	Academic Year			
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
BMC	3,285	3,348	3,188	3,178
NRC	1,511	1,508	1,502	1,399
NWRC	1,682	1,736	1,594	1,534
SERC	1,498	1,461	1,560	1,564
SRC	1,905	1,922	2,030	1,836
SWC	1,695	1,747	1,757	1,664
<b>FE Sector Total</b>	<b>11,576</b>	<b>11,722</b>	<b>11,631</b>	<b>11,175</b>

## Higher Education Enrolments in 2016/17

In 2016/17, BMC accounted for the highest proportion of all HE in FE enrolments (28.4%, 3,178) and NRC the lowest with 12.5% (1,399) (Figure 27, Table 3).

**Figure 27: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by FE college in 2016/17**



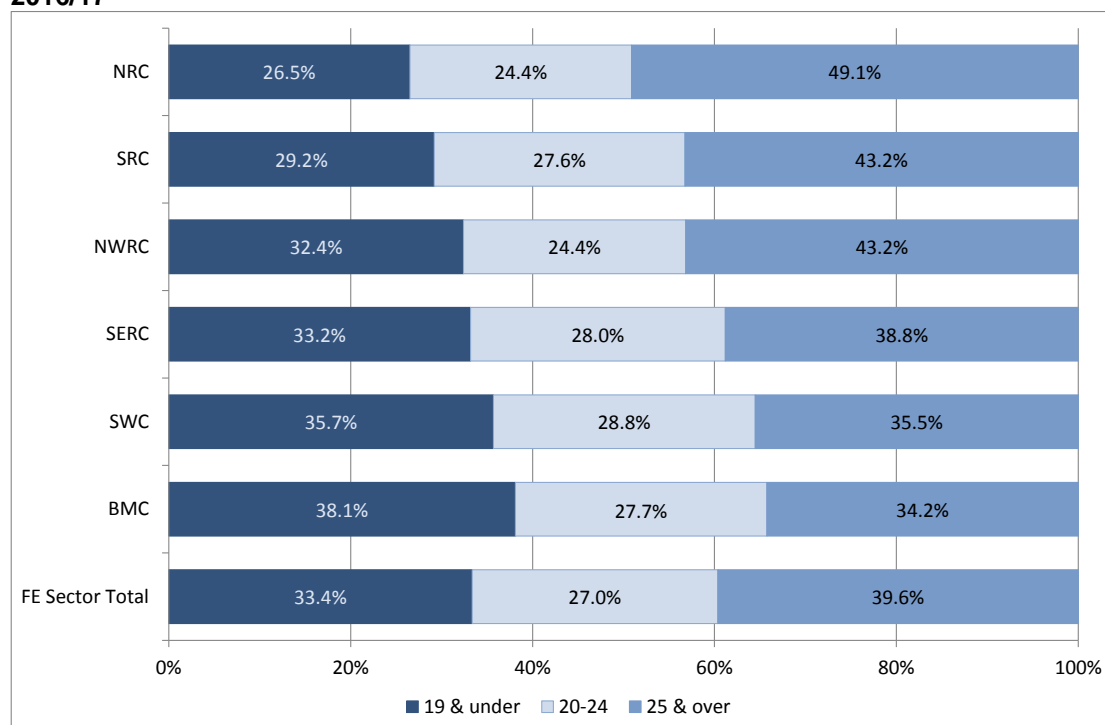
## Age

Of the 11,175 HE in FE enrolments in 2016/17, the highest proportion was in the age group '25 and over' (39.6%), followed by those aged '19 and under' (33.4%) and those aged '20 to 24' (27.0%) (Table A27).

Four of the six FE colleges [NRC (49.1%), SRC (43.2%), NWRC (43.2%) and SERC (38.8%)] showed a similar trend to the overall FE sector in 2016/17, with the age band '25 and over' having the highest proportions of HE enrolments and '20 to 24' years olds having the lowest proportions (24.4%, 27.6%, 24.4% and 28.0% respectively). In two colleges [BMC (38.1%) and SWC (35.7%)], the highest proportions were in the age-band '19 and under' (Table A27).

In all six colleges, the lowest proportions of HE enrolments in 2016/17 were for those aged '20 to 24', ranging from 24.4% in both NRC and NWRC to 28.8% in SWC. Across the colleges, BMC (38.1%) had the highest proportion of enrolments in those aged '19 and under' and also had the lowest proportion within the oldest age group (34.2%) (Figure 28, Table A27).

**Figure 28: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by age band and FE college in 2016/17**

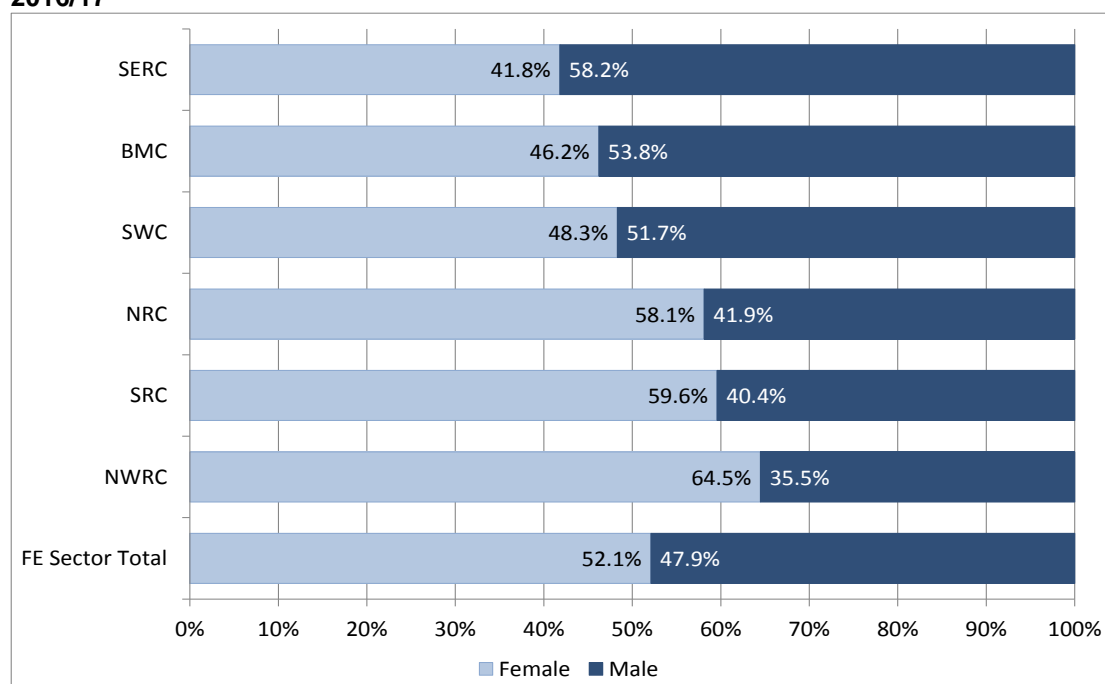


Please note there are a small element of unknown ages (<0.5%) not labelled in the chart but included in Table A27.

## Gender

The gender profile of HE enrolments varied greatly across the six colleges in 2016/17. Three colleges had higher proportions of male enrolments [SERC (58.2%), BMC (53.8%) and SWC (51.7%)], while the others had higher proportions of female enrolments [NWRC (64.5%), SRC (59.6%) and NRC (58.1%)]. The resultant effect was a fairly even split in the HE in FE gender profile, with 52.1% female and 47.9% male (Figure 29, Table A28).

**Figure 29: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by gender and FE college in 2016/17**



## Mode of attendance

In 2016/17, 40.3% (4,501) of HE in FE enrolments were on a full-time basis and 59.7% were part-time (6,674). In comparison with the FE sector, NWRC (48.0%) and BMC (47.6%) had above average proportions of full-time enrolments, while NRC (28.4%), SRC (35.1%), SWC (37.2%) and SERC (37.9%) had lower proportions. (Table A29).

## Mode of attendance and gender

For part-time provision, females made up the majority of HE in FE enrolments (58.1%) in 2016/17, while in full-time provision males (56.7%) accounted for the majority (Figure 30, Table A29).

In terms of the part-time provision and gender profile for each college, only SERC deviated from the overall HE in FE pattern in 2016/17, with more male enrolments (55.1%) than female enrolments. In full-time provision, only NWRC differed from the FE sector pattern, with a majority of female enrolments (56.3%) (Table A29).

**Figure 30: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by gender and mode of attendance in 2016/17**



## Level of study

Each enrolment on a Higher Education course is assigned a level between 'Level 4' and 'Level 8'. Qualifications at the same level typically have a similar level of demand or difficulty:

- 'Level 4' are Vocational Qualifications Level 4, Higher National Certificate (HNC); qualifications are at a level equivalent to Certificates of Higher Education
- 'Level 5' are Vocational Qualifications Level 5 and qualifications at a level equivalent to intermediate Higher Education qualifications, such as Higher National Diplomas (HND), Foundation and other degrees that do not typically provide access to postgraduate programmes
- 'Level 6' are Vocational Qualifications Level 6 and qualifications at a level equivalent to Bachelor's degrees with honours, graduate certificates and graduate diplomas

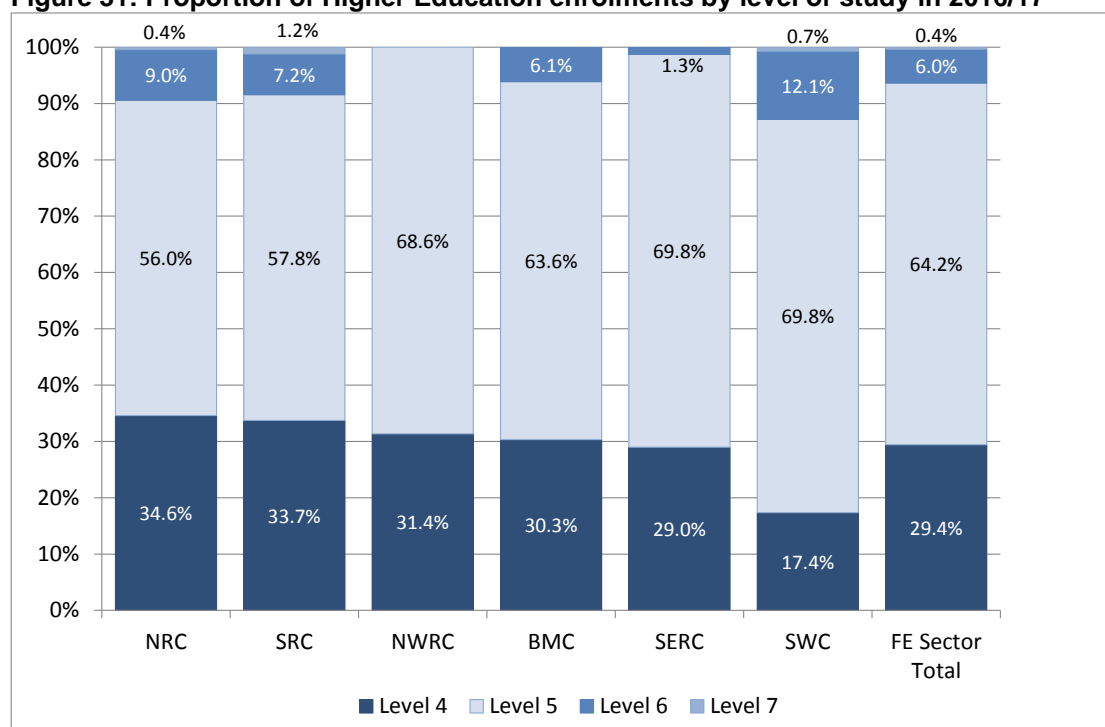


- 'Level 7' are Vocational Qualifications Levels 7 and qualifications at a level equivalent to Master's degrees, postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas
- 'Level 8' are Vocational Qualifications Levels 8 and qualifications at a level equivalent to doctorates.

Of the 11,175 HE enrolments in 2016/17, the vast majority (93.6%) were at levels 4 or 5. 'Level 5' accounted for 64.2% (7,172) of enrolments and 'Level 4' 29.4% (3,289), while 6.0% (674) were at 'Level 6' and 0.4% (40) at 'Level 7' (Table A30).

There is notable variation across the six colleges in terms of the level of HE study. While all colleges had their largest share of enrolments at 'Level 5' in 2016/17, this ranged from 56.0% in NRC to 69.8% in both SERC and SWC. In all six colleges, over four-fifths of HE enrolments were at 'Level 4' or 'Level 5', ranging from 87.2% in SWC to 100% in NWRC (Figure 31, Table A30).

**Figure 31: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by level of study in 2016/17**



## Subject area

Of the 11,175 HE in FE enrolments in 2016/17, the subject area 'Health, Public Services and Care' had the largest share (26.1%, 2,918). This was followed by 'Business, Administration and Law' (21.8%, 2,440) and 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies' (11.8%, 1,318). Almost three-fifths (59.7%, 6,676) of HE in FE enrolments fell within these three subject areas (Table A31).

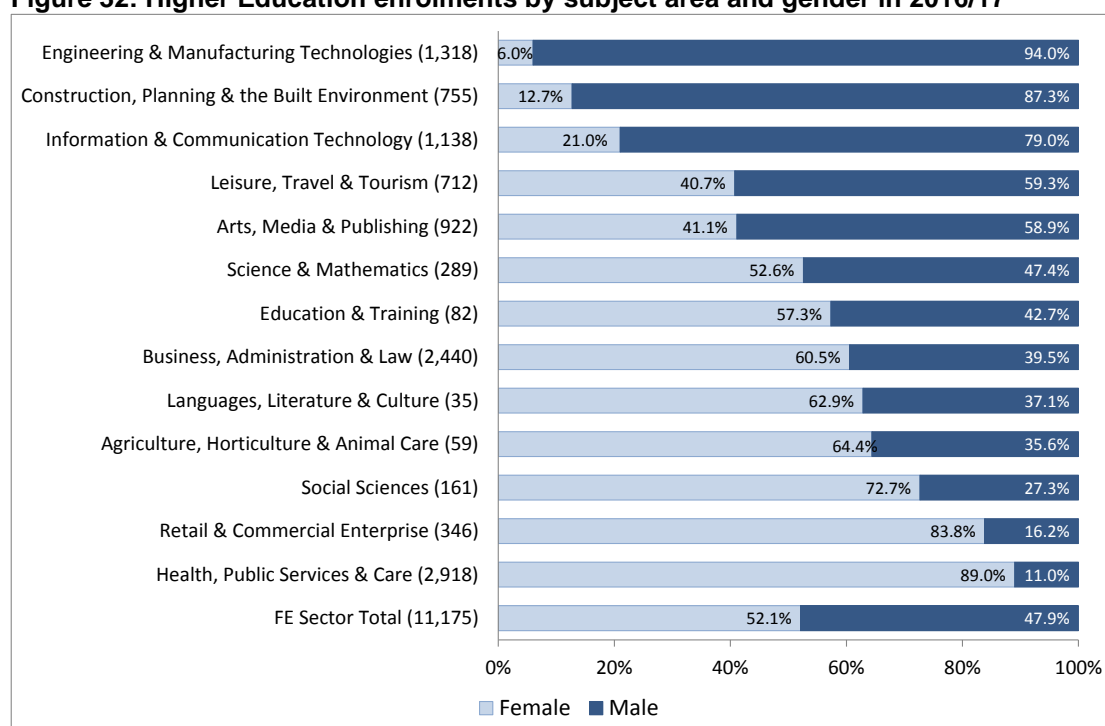
## Subject area and gender

While the overall gender profile was fairly evenly split for all HE in FE enrolments in 2016/17, there was wide variation between male and female

enrolment shares across the subject areas. Females accounted for the vast majority in 'Health, Public Services and Care' (89.0%) and in 'Retail and Commercial Enterprise' enrolments (83.8%). Male-dominated subject areas included 'Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies (94.0%) and 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment (87.3%) (Figure 32, Table A31).

Across the FE colleges, there was a similar trend to the FE sector subject area by gender profile in 2016/17. Some notable differences were in NRC, where there was a 75.3% male share of HE enrolments in 'Science and Mathematics', compared with the FE sector share of 47.4%. In contrast, in SWC, NWRC and SERC, the female share of this subject area was 83.3%, 70.0% and 69.6% respectively, compared with the 'FE sector female' share of 52.6%. In NRC and SERC, the proportion of male HE enrolments in 'Leisure, Travel and Tourism' was 76.5% and 72.6% respectively, in comparison with 59.3% in the FE sector. In contrast, the female share of the same subject area was 64.1% in NWRC, as opposed to 40.7% in the FE sector (Table A31).

**Figure 32: Higher Education enrolments by subject area and gender in 2016/17**



Please note there were no HE in FE enrolments in the subject areas of 'History, Philosophy & Theology' and 'Preparation for Life & Work'.

### Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

'Broad' STEM enrolments are regarded as those on courses of: 'Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects'; 'Biological and Physical Sciences'; 'Agriculture'; 'Mathematics and IT'; 'Engineering and Technology; and 'Architecture, Building and Planning'. A subset of this cohort is termed 'Narrow' STEM and is identified as those enrolment records within courses classed as: 'Biological and Physical Sciences'; 'Mathematics and IT'; and 'Engineering and Technology'.

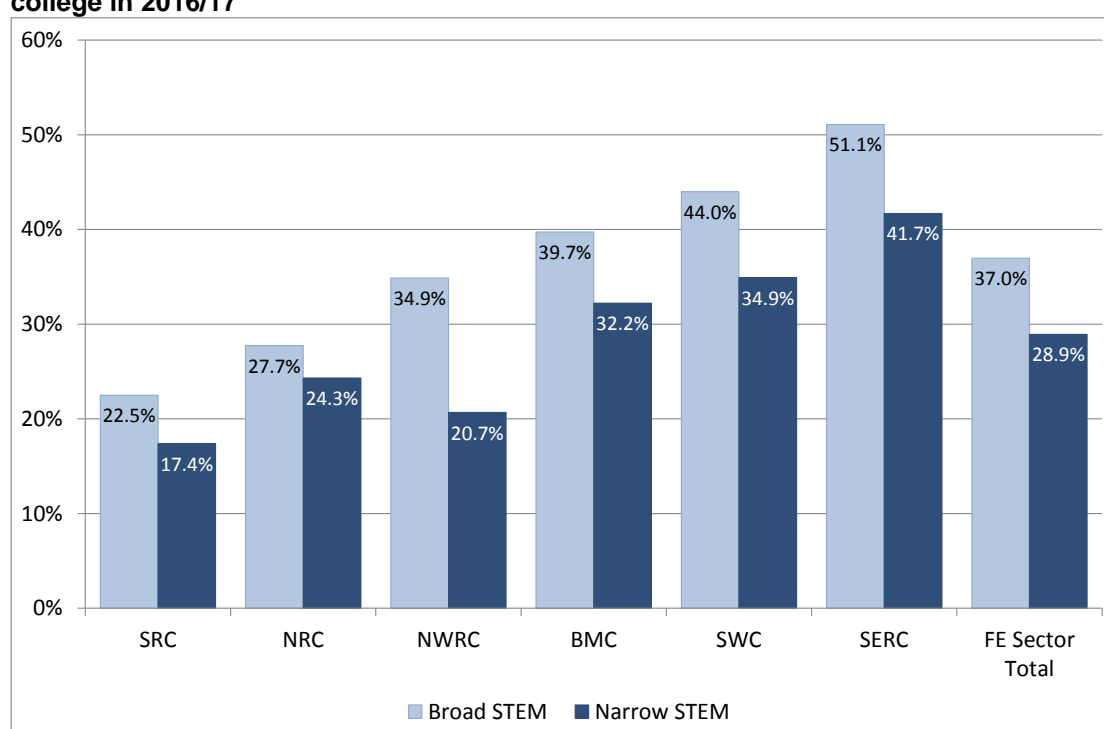
In 2016/17, 'Broad' STEM accounted for 37.0% (4,130) of all HE in FE enrolments, while 'Narrow' STEM accounted for 28.9% (3,233). Males

accounted for over three-quarters of 'Broad' STEM (77.3%) and for four-fifths of 'Narrow' STEM (79.7%) enrolments (Table A32a and Table A32b).

In comparison with the FE sector, SERC (51.1%), SWC (44.0%) and BMC (39.7%) had higher 'Broad' STEM proportions of HE enrolments in 2016/17; 'Broad' STEM enrolment proportions were lower in SRC (22.5%), NRC (27.7%) and NWRC (34.9%) (Figure 33, Table A32a).

'Narrow' STEM proportions of HE enrolments in three of the six colleges, namely SERC (41.7%), SWC (34.9%) and BMC (32.2%), were above the FE sector level, while the other three colleges had proportions of 'Narrow' STEM HE enrolments that were lower than the FE sector figure [SRC (17.4%), NWRC (20.7%) and NRC (24.3%)] (Figure 33, Table A32b).

**Figure 33: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by STEM indicators and FE college in 2016/17**



## Deprivation

Deprivation has been measured on the official Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM), which categorises geographical areas across Northern Ireland into five groups, termed 'quintiles', each accounting for 20% of the 890 Super Output Areas (SOAs). Quintile 1 is the most deprived group of areas and Quintile 5 is the least deprived group of areas.

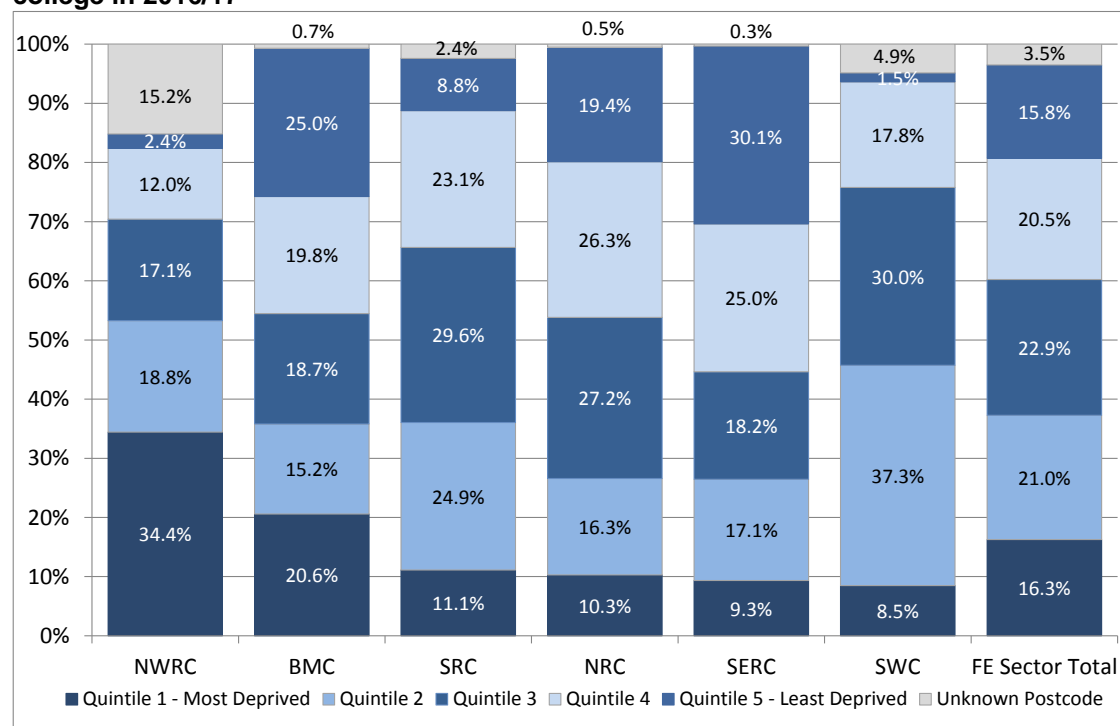
Over a third (37.3%) of 2016/17 HE in FE enrolments were from the two most deprived quintiles. A sixth (16.3%) of enrolments came from Quintile 1, compared with 15.8% from Quintile 5 (Figure 34, Table A33).

When considering enrolments from different areas of deprivation across the six FE colleges, there was a lot of regional variation in 2016/17. NWRC had 34.4% of HE enrolments from Quintile 1, compared with 2.4% from Quintile 5. BMC, another college with a large urban concentration, is quite polarised in

terms of deprivation levels of its intake. Almost half (45.6%) of BMC HE enrolments were from either the most or least deprived quintile. In contrast, 10.0% of SWC HE enrolments came from these two quintiles. While 8.5% of HE enrolments in SWC were from Quintile 1, 37.3% were from Quintile 2 (Figure 34, Table A33).

Compared with the FE sector, SWC (8.5%), SERC (9.3%), NRC (10.3%) and SRC (11.1%) all had lower proportions of HE enrolments from Quintile 1 in 2016/17. Indeed, the largest proportion of HE enrolments in SERC was from Quintile 5 (30.1%) (Figure 34, Table A33).

**Figure 34: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments by deprivation quintiles and FE college in 2016/17**



Notably, NWRC had a significant proportion of HE in FE enrolments with unknown postcodes (15.2%) in 2016/17. This is largely due to a student flow from the Republic of Ireland (RoI). Of the 233 enrolments with unknown postcodes in NWRC, 210 were RoI domiciled student enrolments, accounting for 13.7% of HE enrolments in NWRC (1,534). If these RoI enrolments were excluded from the NWRC analysis, the resultant figures would indicate that 39.9% of enrolments were from Quintile 1 and 2.8% were from Quintile 5; and that over three-fifths (61.7%) of enrolments were from the two most deprived areas (Table 4 and Table A33).

**Table 4: Proportion of Higher Education enrolments with and without RoI domicile students in NWRC by deprivation quintiles in 2016/17**

Domicile	Quintile 1 - Most Deprived	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5 - Least Deprived	Unknown Postcode
Including RoI	34.4%	18.8%	17.1%	12.0%	2.4%	15.2%
Excluding RoI	39.9%	21.8%	19.9%	13.9%	2.8%	1.7%

## Section 5: Qualifications and Performance

### 5.1 - Final year enrolments

A student can enrol on a course that is multiple years in length, but will only have the opportunity to achieve within the final year. Regulated enrolments are those that potentially result in a formal qualification at the end of the study. Consequently, performance analysis is only focused on final year regulated enrolments, for example, regulated enrolments on a one year course, or the second year of a two year course. Please refer to [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#) for further details on the definitions and changes to these in regard to performance analysis.

#### Trends - 2013/14 to 2016/17

In each year between 2013/14 and 2016/17, over four-fifths of all regulated enrolments were in the final year and as such are included in any performance analysis over this period. The percentage of final year enrolments within all regulated enrolments has increased from 82.5% in 2013/14 to 83.3% in 2016/17 (Table 5).

In line with regulated enrolments, final year enrolments have decreased (8.5%), from 117,022 in 2013/14 to 107,093 in 2016/17. The number of individuals enrolled in their final year has also fallen by 13.0%, from 66,565 to 57,944 over the same period (Table 5).

Final year enrolments increased by 6.2% in NRC between 2013/14 and 2016/17, while they decreased at NWRC (19.5%), SWC (12.3%), BMC (11.8%), SRC (9.1%) and SERC (3.9%) (Table 5).

**Table 5: Number of final year enrolments by FE college and academic year**

FE college	Academic Year			
	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
<b>BMC</b>	26,462	27,629	22,765	23,351
<b>NRC</b>	14,110	15,581	15,484	14,985
<b>NWRC</b>	14,088	13,128	12,785	11,336
<b>SERC</b>	24,341	24,244	23,317	23,386
<b>SRC</b>	21,569	20,112	19,606	19,607
<b>SWC</b>	16,452	15,783	15,346	14,428
<b>Total Final Year enrolments</b>	<b>117,022</b>	<b>116,477</b>	<b>109,303</b>	<b>107,093</b>
<b>Total Regulated enrolments</b>	<b>141,778</b>	<b>140,137</b>	<b>129,274</b>	<b>128,629</b>
<b>Final Year/Regulated (%)</b>	<b>82.5%</b>	<b>83.1%</b>	<b>84.6%</b>	<b>83.3%</b>
<b>Total Final Year individuals</b>	<b>66,565</b>	<b>64,162</b>	<b>60,907</b>	<b>57,944</b>

## **5.2 – Qualifications**

The following section focuses solely on qualifications from final year enrolments in regulated courses at FE colleges. An individual can fully achieve, partially achieve or fail their qualification. The number of qualifications presented within this section includes both full and partial achievements. Partial achievement accounted for 5.4%, 5.9%, 5.3% and 4.7% of total achievements in 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17 respectively. Please refer to [Annex A](#) and [Annex B](#) for further information on partial and full achievement.

### **Trends – 2013/14 to 2016/17**

Fewer qualifications were awarded in FE colleges in 2016/17 (83,015) than in 2013/14 (90,851), a net fall of 8.6%. The volume of qualifications peaked in 2014/15 (92,479) and then declined to 83,015 in 2016/17 (Table 6).

Net decreases have occurred in qualifications awarded in all six colleges over the period 2013/14 to 2016/17 [NWRC (24.7%), SWC (12.3%), SRC (11.4%), BMC (4.4%), NRC (3.3%) and SERC (1.7%)]. As a result, NWRCs share of qualifications awarded has fallen from 12.3% to 10.1% (Table 6).

**Table 6: Number of qualifications by FE college and academic year**

<b>FE College</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2016/17</b>
<b>BMC</b>	19,244	20,811	17,766	18,403
<b>NRC</b>	10,787	12,113	12,022	10,431
<b>NWRC</b>	11,135	10,291	10,029	8,382
<b>SERC</b>	19,438	20,176	19,416	19,115
<b>SRC</b>	17,808	16,626	16,575	15,770
<b>SWC</b>	12,439	12,462	12,345	10,914
<b>FE Sector Total</b>	<b>90,851</b>	<b>92,479</b>	<b>88,153</b>	<b>83,015</b>

## **5.3 - Performance**

The strategic driver for analysing performance has been a commitment under the Programme for Government (2011-2015) to deliver 210,000 qualifications at Level 2 and above between 2011/12 and 2016/17. The focus, therefore, is on outputs, and necessitates a much greater priority on student retention and, in particular, the achievement of qualifications. Performance can be measured across three indicators:

- **Retention rate** is defined as the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study to the number of final year enrolments. Since 2012/13, those who complete their course early (and recorded in the data as a withdrawal) and who have subsequently achieved their programme of study qualification have been regarded as a 'completer'.
- **Achievement rate** relates to the percentage of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study and achieve their qualification to the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study. Please note that, within this publication, achievement rate is presented within the trend analysis and FE College sections below, but not in the remaining sections of the 2016/17 analysis. These figures are available in the accompanying online tables.
- **Success rate** is the overall measure of performance, which is the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study and achieve their qualification to the number of final year enrolments.

### **Trends – 2013/14 to 2016/17**

#### **Retention rate**

Over the period 2013/14 to 2016/17, the retention rate in FE colleges increased by 1.1 percentage points, from 89.1% to 90.2%. Compared with 2013/14, this implies that proportionately more people stayed on and completed their course in the most recent year (Figure 35, Table A34).

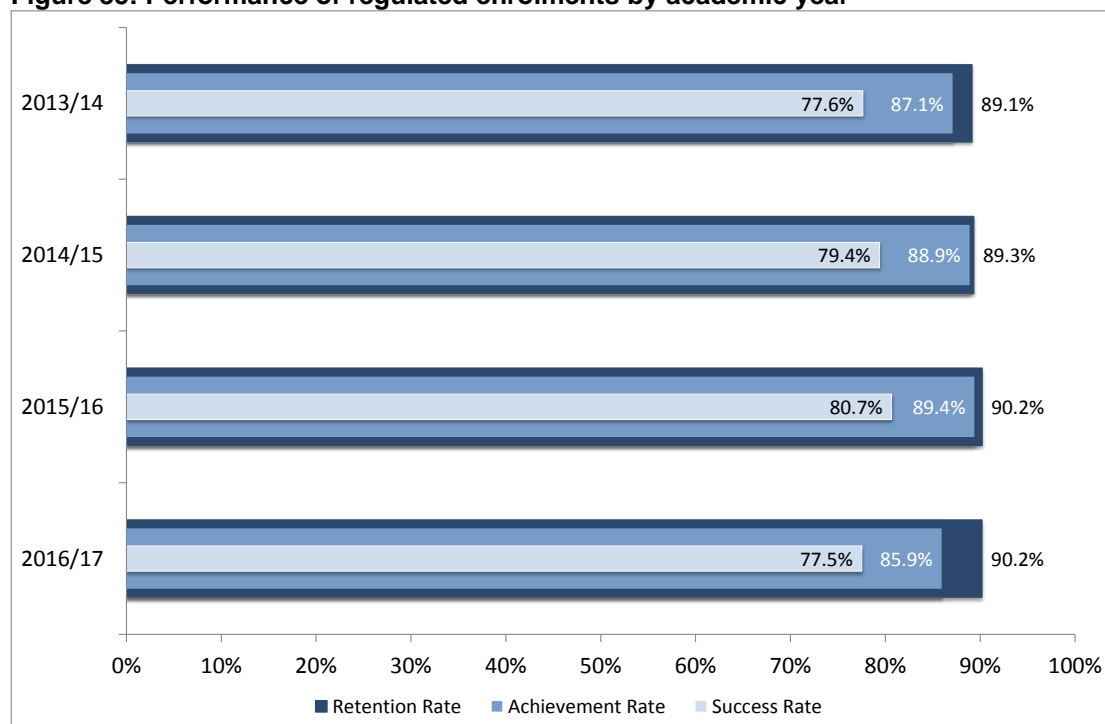
#### **Achievement rate**

The achievement rate in FE colleges fell by 1.2 percentage points, from 87.1% to 85.9%, over the period 2013/14 to 2016/17. This indicates that, of those who completed their course, proportionately fewer people achieved their qualification in 2016/17 than in 2013/14 (Figure 35, Table A34).

#### **Success rate**

The success rate (that is, the proportion of students staying on their course and achieving a qualification) hasn't changed in net terms between 2013/14 (77.6%) and 2016/17 (77.5%). However, it did rise in the interim years, 2014/15 (79.4%) and 2015/16 (80.7%) (Figure 35, Table A34).

**Figure 35: Performance of regulated enrolments by academic year**



## FE colleges

### Retention rate

In contrast to the FE sector trend of a slight rise in retention rates over the four year period, SRC's retention rate fell by 1.2 percentage points from 93.0% to 91.8%. In NWRC, the retention rate remained steady at 87.7%, while the other four colleges followed the FE sector trend, with increases in retention rates ranging from 0.2 percentage points in NRC to 2.8 percentage points in BMC (Table A34).

### Achievement rate

Five of the six colleges followed the FE sector trend of a decrease in achievement rate between 2013/14 and 2016/17. The largest decrease (8.1 percentage points) over this period was in NRC, from 88.8% to 80.7%, while the smallest decrease was in SERC (0.2 percentage points), from 89.1% to 88.9%. BMC's achievement rate improved from 83.4% in 2013/14 to 87.5% in 2016/17 (almost 4.2 percentage points) (Table A34).

### Success rate

Success rates in three colleges (NRC, NWRC and SRC) decreased between 2013/14 and 2016/17, with the largest decrease (6.8 percentage points) being in NRC, from 76.4% to 69.6%. SWC's success rate didn't change (75.6%), while those in BMC and SERC increased by 6.1 percentage points (to 78.8%) and almost 1.9 percentage points (to 81.7%) respectively (Table A34).



## Academic Year 2016/17

### Performance by age

#### Retention rate

In 2016/17, the retention rate for those aged '19 and under' was 90.4%, for the '20 to 24' age group it was 89.0%, and for those aged '25 and over' it was 90.4% (Figure 36, Table A35).

In three of the six colleges (SWC, BMC and NRC), the highest retention rates were in the youngest age group, at 92.2%, 90.4% and 86.7% respectively. In the other three colleges (SERC, SRC and NWRC), the highest retention rates were in the '25 and over' age group, at 93.6%, 93.1% and 89.5% respectively.

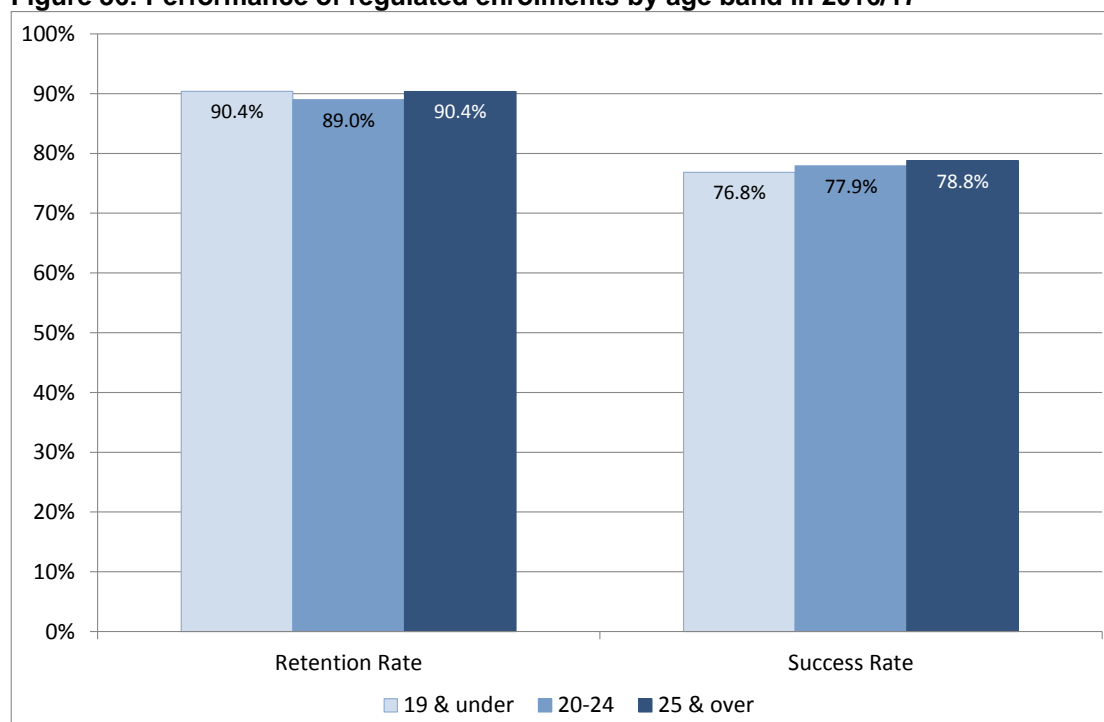
The retention rates for the '19 and under' age group ranged from 86.7% in NRC to 92.2% in SWC. For the '20 to 24' age group, they ranged from 84.4% in NWRC to 91.3% in SERC, while those for the '25 and over' age group ranged from 85.6% in NRC to 93.6% in SERC (Table A35).

#### Success rate

In 2016/17, the success rate for those aged '19 and under' was 76.8%, for the '20 to 24' age group it was 77.9%, and for those aged '25 and over' it was 78.8% (Figure 36 , Table A35).

The success rates for the '19 and under' age group ranged from 68.7% in NRC to 81.5% in SERC. For the '20 to 24' age group, they ranged from 71.0% in NRC to 80.5% in SRC, while those for the '25 and over' age group ranged from 71.4% in NRC to 83.3% in SERC (Table A35).

**Figure 36: Performance of regulated enrolments by age band in 2016/17**



## Performance by gender

### Retention rate

In 2016/17, within the FE sector, males (90.9%) had a slightly higher retention rate than females (89.5%) (Figure 37, Table A36).

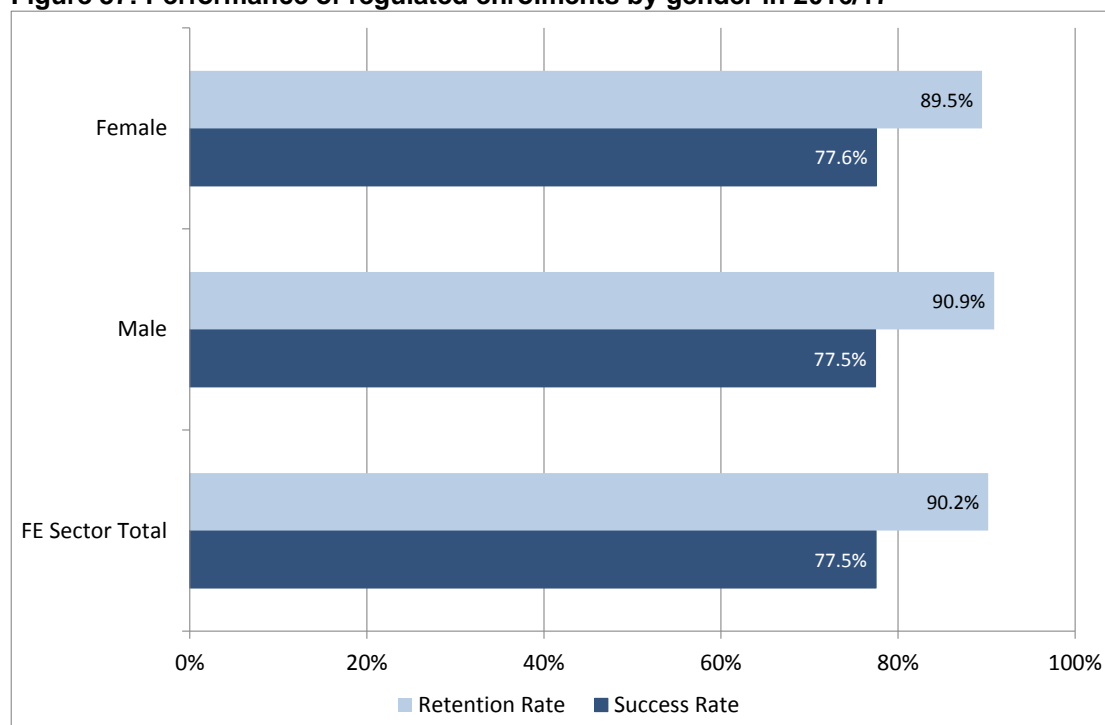
In NWRC, both genders had a retention rate of 87.7% in 2016/17. The other five colleges followed the FE sector pattern of the male retention rate being greater than the female rate, with the largest difference between males (87.6%) and females (84.8%) being in NRC (Table A36).

### Success rate

The FE sector success rates by gender were similar, at 77.6% for females and 77.5% for males (Figure 37, Table A36).

In four of the six colleges (SWC, NRC, NWRC and BMC), the success rate for males was higher than for females; in the other two colleges (SERC and SRC), females had higher success rates. The largest difference in success rates by gender was in SWC, at 76.3% for males and 74.8% for females (Table A36).

**Figure 37: Performance of regulated enrolments by gender in 2016/17**



## Performance by mode of attendance

### Retention rate

In 2016/17, retention rates for part-time regulated enrolments (90.5%) were higher than those for full-time (88.5%) (Figure 38, Table A37).

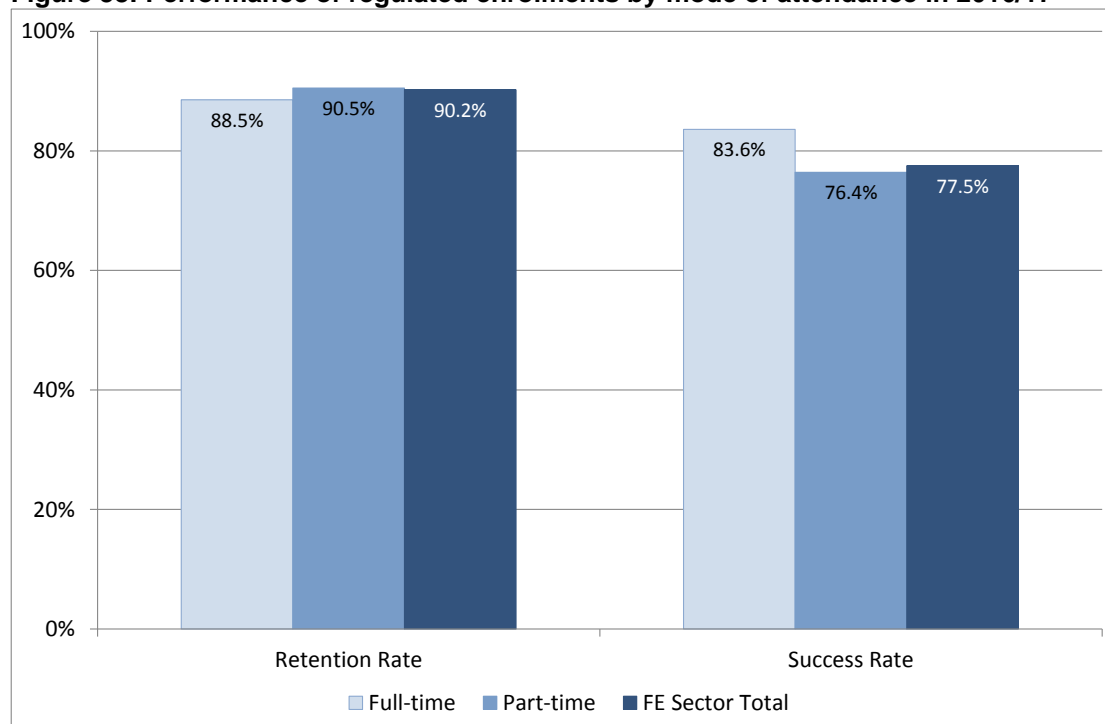
In two colleges (BMC and NRC), the full-time retention rate was greater than the part-time rate in 2016/17. At 5.9 percentage points, NWRC had the biggest difference between part-time (89.5%) and full-time (83.6%) retention rates (Table A37).

### Success rate

In 2016/17, success rates for full-time regulated enrolments (83.6%) were higher than those for part-time (76.4%) (Figure 38, Table A37).

In all of the colleges, the full-time success rate was greater than the part-time rate in 2016/17. Success rates within part-time provision ranged from 68.6% in NRC to 81.3% in SERC, while those for full-time provision ranged from 74.9% in NRC to 90.1% in BMC. The largest difference in success rates between full-time (90.1%) and part-time (77.1%) provision occurred in BMC (13.0 percentage points) (Table A37).

**Figure 38: Performance of regulated enrolments by mode of attendance in 2016/17**



## Performance by provision area

### Retention rate

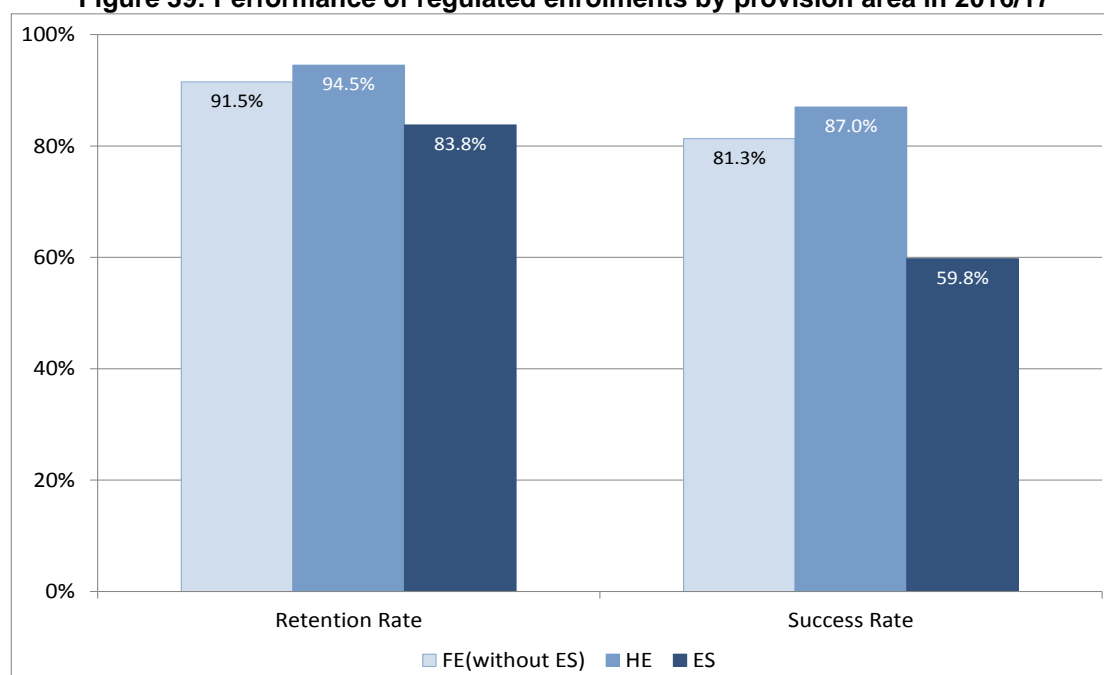
In 2016/17, within the FE colleges, HE students were more likely than Further Education (FE) or Essential Skills (ES) students to complete their courses. The retention rates across the three main provision areas were 94.5% for HE, 91.5% for FE and 83.8% for ES regulated enrolments (Figure 39, Table A38).

In SRC, the highest retention rate in 2016/17 was in FE (93.8%). The HE provision area had the highest retention rate in the other five colleges. HE retention rates ranged from 92.5% in SRC to 96.6% in BMC. Within FE provision, retention rates ranged from 87.6% in NRC to 93.8% in SRC. Retention rates within ES provision ranged from 80.8% in NRC to 89.3% in SWC (Table A38).

### Success rate

Within the FE sector, higher proportions of people stayed on and achieved within HE than in either FE or ES; the respective success rates in 2016/17 were 59.8% for ES, 81.3% for FE and 87.0% for HE (Figure 39, Table A38).

**Figure 39: Performance of regulated enrolments by provision area in 2016/17**



In 2016/17, success rates within HE provision ranged from 81.5% in NRC to 92.6% in BMC, while those for FE provision ranged from 75.2% in NRC to 85.7% in SRC. Success rates within ES provision ranged from 51.6% in NRC to 70.9% in BMC. In five of the six colleges, the highest success rate was within HE provision. The exception was SRC, where the highest success rate was in FE (85.7%) (Table A38).

## Performance by level of study

### Retention rate

In 2016/17, the retention rate in FE colleges ranged from 86.7% at 'Level 1 and Entry' to 94.5% at 'Level 4 and above' and generally increased as the level of study increased (Figure 40, Table A39).

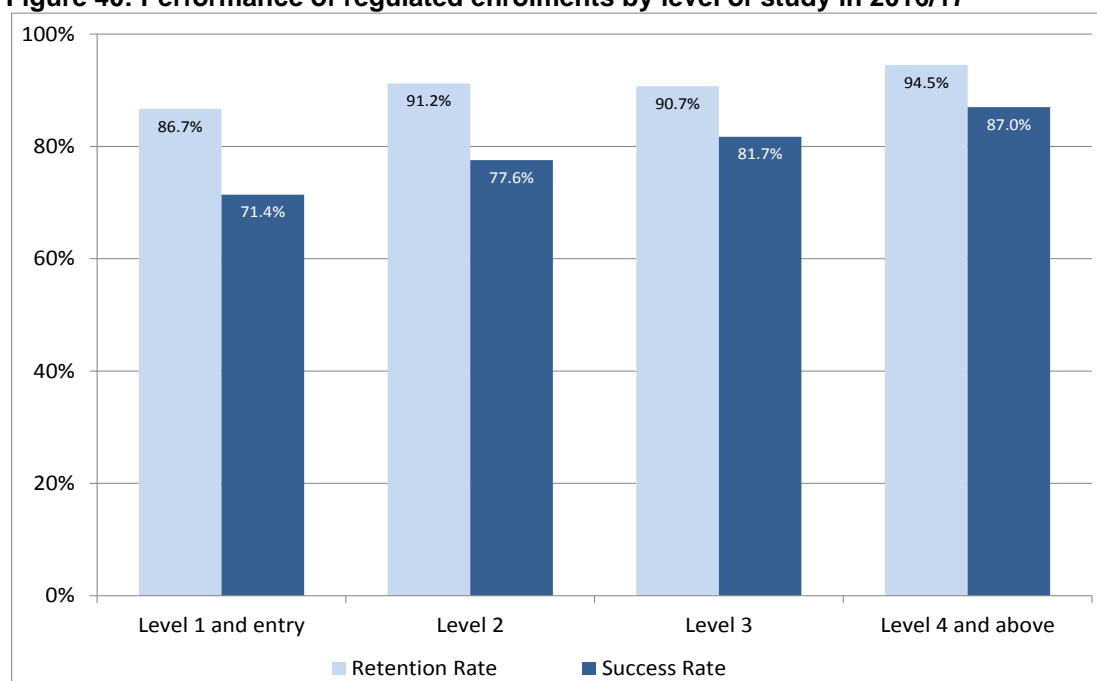
This same pattern of increasing retention rates as the level increased occurred across all the colleges in 2016/17. In five colleges, the lowest retention rates were at 'Level 1 and Entry', ranging from 82.3% in NRC to 90.3% in SRC. In NWRC, however, the lowest retention rate was at Level 3 (86.3%). In four colleges (BMC, NRC, NWRC and SWC), the highest retention rates were at 'Level 4 and above'. In SERC and SRC, the highest retention rates were at 'Level 2' and 'Level 3' respectively. Across all colleges, the highest retention rate was at 'Level 4 and above' in BMC (96.6%) (Table A39).

### Success rate

In 2016/17, success rates in FE colleges generally increased as the level increased, ranging from 71.4% ('Level 1 and Entry') to 87.0% ('Level 4 and above'). Following on from the patterns seen within retention rates, it seems those on higher levels of study are more likely to stay on and achieve in their courses (Figure 40, Table A39).

In all six colleges, the lowest success rates in 2016/17 were in 'Level 1 and entry', ranging from 64.5% in NRC to 76.5% in BMC. In four colleges (BMC, NRC, NWRC and SERC), the highest success rates were in 'Level 4 and above'. The two exceptions were SRC and SWC, where the highest rates (86.2% and 83.8% respectively) were at 'Level 3'. The highest success rate was at 'Level 4 and above' within BMC (92.6%); this was 13.7 percentage points higher than its second highest rate ('Level 2', 78.8%) (Table A39).

**Figure 40: Performance of regulated enrolments by level of study in 2016/17**



## Performance by subject area

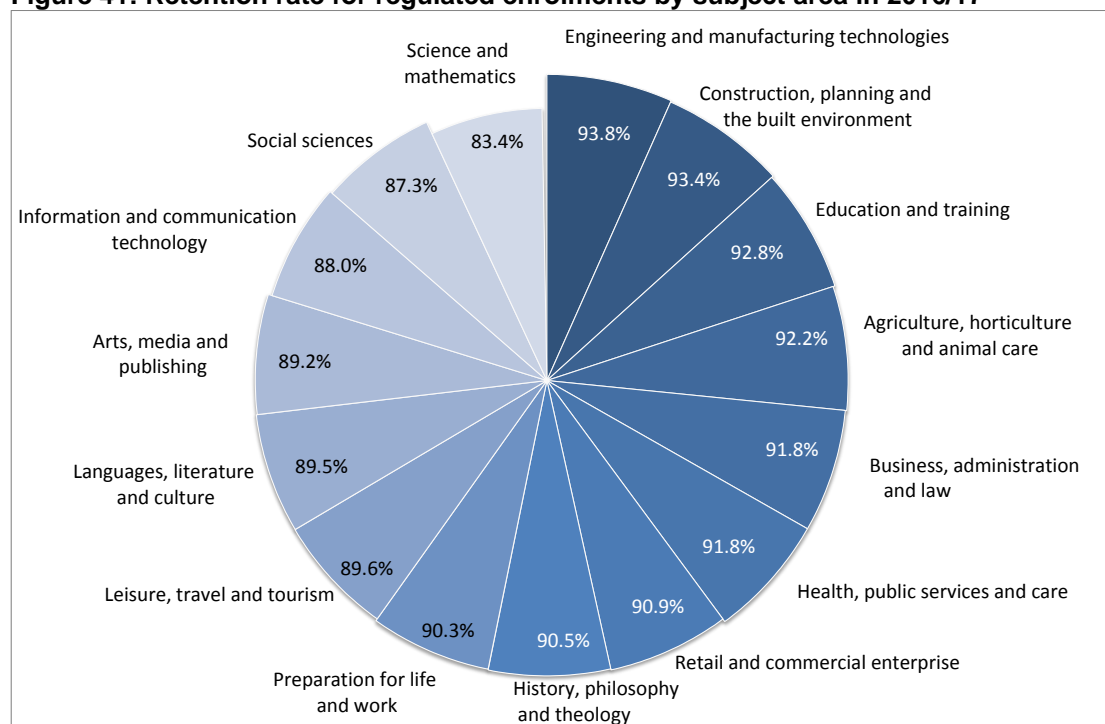
### Retention rate

Subject area retention rates ranged from 83.4% in 'Science and mathematics' to 93.8% in 'Engineering and manufacturing technologies' in 2016/17 (Figure 41, Table A40).

Only SRC followed the sector pattern, with its highest retention rate in 'Engineering and manufacturing technologies' (95.7%) in 2016/17. 'Education and training' had the highest retention rate in two colleges, SWC (97.6%) and SERC (97.0%). The highest rates in NWRC, BMC and NRC were for 'Languages, literature and culture' (97.5%), 'Construction, planning and the built environment' (95.2%) and 'Agriculture, horticulture and animal' (94.2%) respectively (Table A40).

Following the 2016/17 sector pattern, the lowest retention rates in both NRC and SERC were in 'Science and mathematics' (78.2%) and (81.4%) respectively. The lowest retention rate in BMC was in 'Agriculture, horticulture and animal' (71.8%), while in NWRC the lowest retention rate was in 'Social Sciences' (73.3%). The lowest retention rates in SWC and SRC were in 'Languages, literature and culture' (75.0%) and 'Information and communication technology' (86.8%) respectively (Table A40).

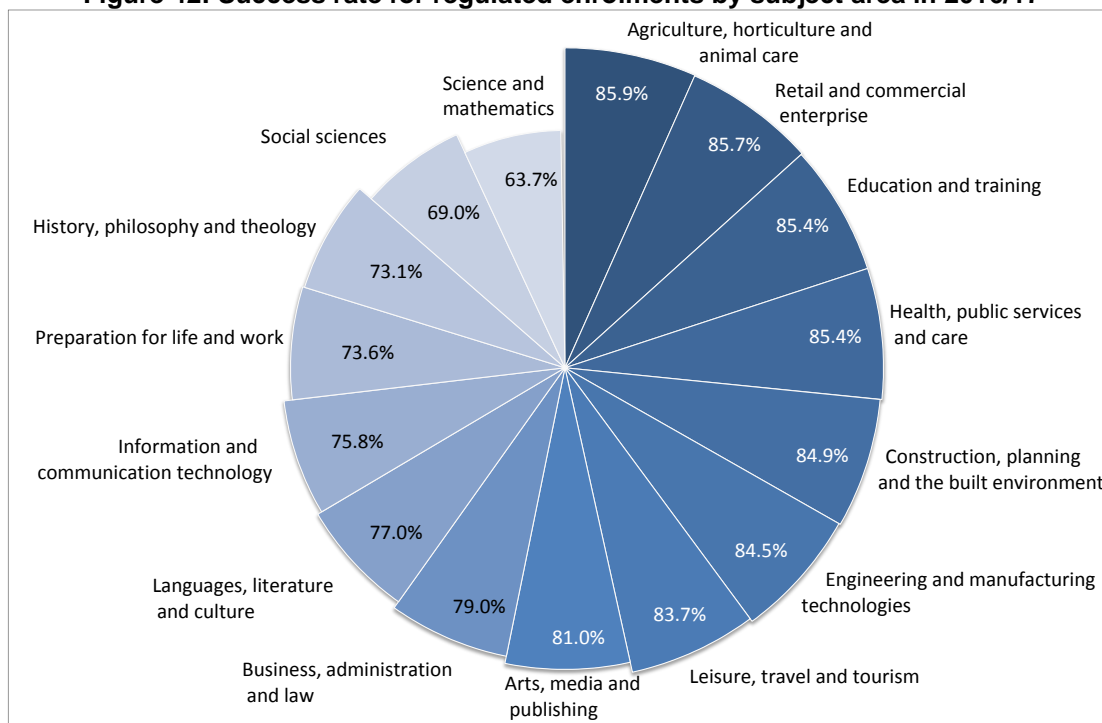
**Figure 41: Retention rate for regulated enrolments by subject area in 2016/17**



## Success rate

In 2016/17, subject area success rates ranged from 63.7% in 'Science and mathematics' to 85.9% in 'Agriculture, horticulture & animal care' (Figure 42, Table A40).

**Figure 42: Success rate for regulated enrolments by subject area in 2016/17**



Two of the six colleges followed the sector pattern, with their highest success rates in 'Agriculture, horticulture & animal care' [SRC (93.4%) and NRC (87.8%)]. In SWC (95.2%), SERC (93.5%) and NWRC (90.0%), the highest success rates were in 'Education and training'. The highest success rate in BMC was in 'Construction, planning and the built environment' (90.2%). (Table A40).

In terms of lowest success rates, four colleges followed the sector pattern in 'Science and mathematics' [NWRC (45.4%), SWC (45.6%), SERC (66.5%) and SRC (68.6%)]. The lowest success rates in NRC and BMC were in 'Preparation for life and work' (60.6%) and 'Social sciences' (66.8%) respectively (Table A40).

## Performance by STEM

### Retention rate

In 2016/17, students were more likely to complete 'Broad' STEM courses than either 'Narrow' STEM or non-STEM courses. The retention rates for final year enrolments in 'Broad' STEM, 'Narrow' STEM and non-STEM were 91.6%, 90.5% and 89.8% respectively (Figure 43, Table A41a and Table A41b).

For 'Broad' STEM, three colleges [SRC (94.5%), SWC (94.3%) and BMC (91.7%)] had higher retention rates than the FE sector average in 2016/17, while the other three colleges [NWRC (89.5%), NRC (89.9%) and SERC (89.9%)] had retention rates below the sector average (Table A41a)

In 2016/17, retention rates in 'Narrow' STEM by college ranged from 86.6% in NWRC to 93.6% in SWC (Table A41b).

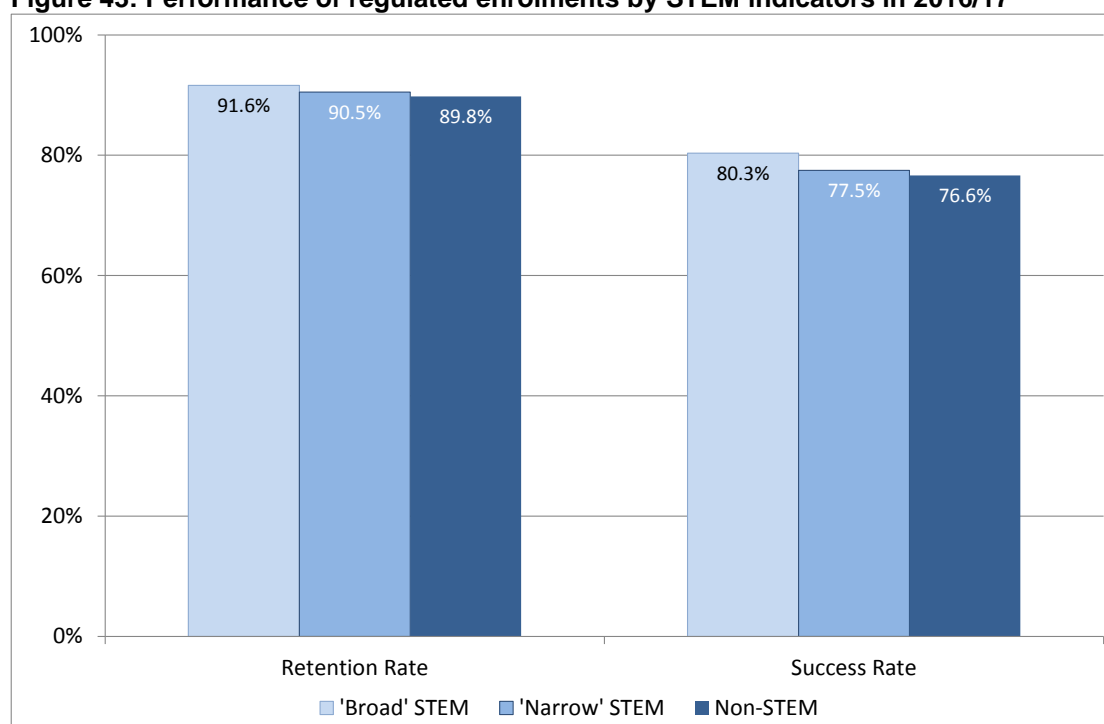
### Success rate

The 2016/17 FE sector success rates for 'Broad' STEM (80.3%) and 'Narrow' STEM (77.5%) were higher than that for non-STEM (76.6%) (Figure 43, Table A41a and Table A41b).

For 'Broad' STEM, three colleges [SRC (84.5%), SERC (82.5%) and SWC (80.9%)] had higher success rates than the FE sector average in 2016/17, while the other three colleges [NRC (75.6%), NWRC (77.9%) and BMC (79.6%)] had success rates below the FE sector average (Table A41a).

In 2016/17, success rates in 'Narrow' STEM by college ranged from 69.7% in NRC to 82.2% in SERC (Table A41b).

**Figure 43: Performance of regulated enrolments by STEM indicators in 2016/17**





## Performance by deprivation

### Retention rate

Across the FE sector, 2016/17 retention rates were slightly higher for less deprived areas, ranging from 87.6% for the most deprived quintile (Quintile 1) to 91.9% for the least deprived quintile (Quintile 5) (Figure 44, Table A42).

In 2016/17, final year enrolments from Quintile 5 had the highest retention rate in SRC (94.8%), SWC (93.2%), SERC (93.1%) and BMC (91.7%), while the highest retention rate in NWRC (89.9%) was in Quintile 3. In NRC, the highest retention rate was in Quintile 4 (88.8%) (Table A42).

Across all colleges, final year enrolments from Quintile 1 had the lowest retention rates in 2016/17. However, the range in retention rates for final year enrolments from the five quintiles varied little across the colleges, with the largest difference being 5.2 percentage points in NRC and SRC (Table A42).

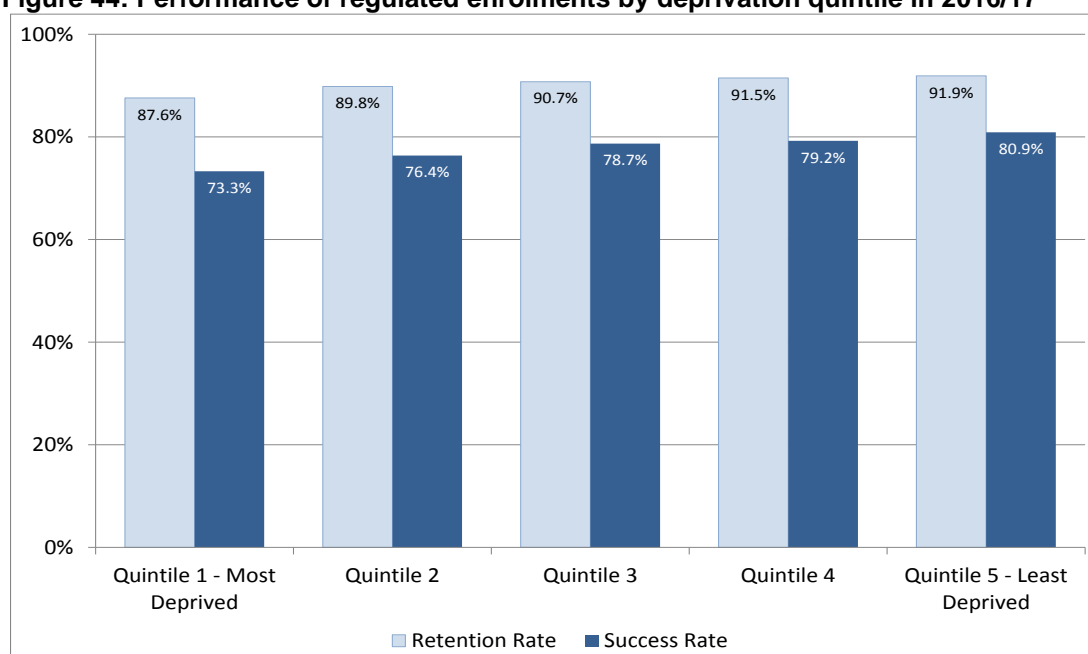
### Success rate

In 2016/17, success rates in the FE sector ranged upwards from 73.3% for final year enrolments from Quintile 1 to 80.9% for those from Quintile 5 (Figure 44, Table A42).

In all six colleges, final year enrolments from Quintile 1 had the lowest success rates in 2016/17, ranging from 61.6% in NRC to 77.5% in BMC (Table A42).

The percentage point range in success rates across deprivation quintiles varied from 3.0 in BMC to 13.7 in NWRC. In BMC, the lowest success rate was in Quintile 1 (77.5%) and the highest was in Quintile 5 (80.5%). In NWRC, the lowest success rate was also in Quintile 1 (67.3%), although the highest was in Quintile 3 (81.0%) (Table A42).

**Figure 44: Performance of regulated enrolments by deprivation quintile in 2016/17**



## **Annex A: Definitions**

### ***Academic Year***

Each academic year period is defined by each FE college and potentially will differ across all six colleges. An academic year traditionally starts in August and finishes in July the following year.

### ***Achievement rate***

Achievement rate relates to the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study and achieve their qualification to the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study.

Achievement rate = 
$$\frac{\text{Number of achievements}}{\text{Number of non-withdrawals plus Number of withdrawals who achieve (both full and partial)}}$$

### ***Age***

Age is at 1<sup>st</sup> July of the previous academic year, based on the start date of the course.

### ***Deprivation***

The analysis presented in the publication utilises five groups or quintiles of super output areas (SOAs) across Northern Ireland. These groups are based on their level of relative deprivation using the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM).

SOAs ranked 1 to 178 form the most deprived quintile of SOAs relative to all other SOAs. Those ranked 713 to 890 form the least deprived quintile. SOA is determined using the postcode provided on the enrolment record.

NIMDM 2010 is a weighted combination of the seven domains of deprivation. The Income and Employment Deprivation domains account for 50% of the multiple deprivation measure. The Health Deprivation and Disability Domain and Education, Skills and Training Deprivation Domain account for a further 30% and the remainder is made up of the Proximity to Services, Living Environment and Crime and Disorder Domains.

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

[http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/nimdm\\_2010.htm](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/nimdm_2010.htm)

On 23rd November 2017, an updated NIMDM became available – NIMDM 2017. As this was too close to the publication date of this bulletin, the older NIMDM 2010 has been used for deprivation analysis. NIMDM 2017 will be used in future publications.

Further information on the updated NIMDM 2017 is available at the below link:

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

### ***Enrolments***

Total enrolments are taken to be the sum of all regulated and non-regulated enrolments within FE colleges during each academic year. The enrolment figures are simply a count of the number of enrolment records within the data return.

### ***Essential Skills***

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

### ***Final year enrolments***

A student can enrol on a course that is multiple years in length, but will only have the opportunity to achieve within the final year. Enrolments of students on a one year course or in the second year of a two year course are regarded as final year enrolments.

### ***Final year completers***

Enrolments of students in their final year who do not withdraw from their course are regarded as final year completers.

### ***Final year achievements***

Enrolments of students in their final year who have completed the course and subsequently achieved are regarded as final year achievements.

### ***Funding streams***

Enrolments at FE colleges can be funded through a variety of funding streams, including DfE funded provisions, such as the Funded Learning Unit (FLU) or government training programmes. These training programmes include Training for Success (TfS), Steps to Work (StW) and apprenticeships. TfS includes Programme Led Apprenticeships (PLA), Skills for Life and Skills for Work. Enrolments can also be funded through non-DfE funded provision, such as Entitlement Framework (EF) or Cost Recovery (CR). EF includes Discrete Special Education/Needs. CR can be either public or private.

### ***Further Education College***

Please refer to the link below for further detail about FE colleges in Northern Ireland.

[Contextual Information regarding the FE Sector](#)

### ***Individual***

The number of individuals for each academic year has been determined (using Student Reference and FE college as the unique identifier) within the specific academic year period. The total number of individuals calculated over the entire time period, therefore, does not equal the summation of all individual academic years. This is due to the fact an individual may be enrolled in a number of academic years.

**Level**

If the enrolment is regulated, the level is derived from the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ). If the enrolment is not part of the RRQ, the level is based on the information entered against the enrolment by the FE college.

Each regulated qualification has a level between entry level and Level 8. Qualifications at the same level typically have a similar level of demand or difficulty. The content and size of qualifications at the same level may be quite different.

For further information on comparing qualifications across the UK, RoI and overseas, please refer to the link below:

<http://ofqual.gov.uk/help-and-advice/comparing-qualifications/>

**Mode of Attendance**

Mode of attendance identifies enrolments studying full-time or part-time.

For enrolments from 2013/14:

- (a) Full-time enrolments include all enrolments where attendance is:
- i. full-time (for at least 15 hours and at least 7 sessions per week, or for more than 21 hours per week, with no sessional requirement);
- (b) Part-time enrolments include all enrolments where attendance is:
- i. on sandwich courses;
  - ii. on short courses (single self-contained periods of full-time study of under 4 weeks' duration, within one academic year, which do not have to satisfy the hour and session requirement of (a) above).
  - iii. part-time day;
  - iv. block release;
  - v. evening only;
  - vi. open/distance learning; or
  - vii. linked to their attendance at a school on a full-time basis.

**Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications (PLAQ)**

Access courses and courses included on DfE's PLAQ reside outside those recognised by OFQUAL, but comply with quality criteria specified by the Department. DfE has granted all such qualifications the same status as those qualifications on the OFQUAL register for the purposes of funding and performance measurement.

### **Provision Area**

For the purposes of this analysis, the three Provision Areas are Further Education, Higher Education and Essential Skills:

- Further Education provision is identified by the qualification aim code and level entered. If the code is 500 or higher and the level is 3 or lower, this indicates that the enrolment is Further Education. This excludes Essential Skills provision, which is identified by the codes 960, 961 or 962.
- Higher Education provision is identified by the qualification aim and level entered. If the code is lower than 500 and the level is 4 or higher, this indicates that the enrolment is Higher Education.
- Essential Skills provision is identified by the qualification aim entered. If the code is 960, 961 or 962, this indicates that the enrolment is Essential Skills. Only Essential Skills enrolments in FE colleges are included in this analysis. For further details on all Essential Skills enrolments, please refer to the Essential Skills publications at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/essential-skills-enrolments-publications-2017>

### **Qualifications**

Qualifications are counted for those final year enrolments in regulated courses at FE colleges. An individual can fully achieve, partially achieve or fail their qualification.

The underlying principle is that full achievement and partial achievement should be measured against the programme of study on which a student is enrolled, for example, what is agreed in the learner's Individual Learning Programme. Therefore, full and partial achievements are defined as:

- Full achievement will be recorded when those enrolling on a full qualification achieve that qualification, and when those enrolling on a part/unit of a qualification achieve that part/unit.
- Partial achievement should be recorded when the qualification for which a student has enrolled has not been achieved in full and either: (a) a student achieves a certified component of the intended qualification, for example, a Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) Award instead of a QCF Certificate, or a QCF Certificate instead of a QCF Diploma; or (b) a student does not achieve a certified component of the intended qualification, but still achieves 50% or more of the intended qualification, for example, 50% or more of the QCF units. It should be noted that 50% or more of QCF qualifications is based on units achieved and not on credits; even though credits would be a more accurate measure of achievement, credit information is not readily available to colleges from the examination results provided by awarding organisations.

### **Regulated**

From academic year 2013/14, only those courses on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ) or DfE's Prescribed List of Approved Non NQF/QCF Qualification (PLAQ) list (for Level 3 and below), or are Higher Education (HE) in FE courses (Level 4 and above), will be deemed as 'regulated' by the Department. Anything that falls outside this definition is not considered as 'regulated', regardless of whether it is considered to produce 'outcomes', for example, internal college certification.

The term 'regulated' is comparable with the previous figures for Professional and Technical used in publications covering years prior to 2013/14.

As students can be enrolled in multiple courses, the same individual can have enrolments in regulated and non-regulated courses within the one academic year.

### **Retention rate**

Retention rate is defined as the proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study to the number of final year enrolments. Since 2012/13, those who complete their course early (and recorded in the data as a withdrawal) and who have subsequently achieved their programme of study qualification have been regarded as a 'completer'. This may inflate the retention rate from 2012/13 onwards in comparison with earlier academic years.

The number of non-withdrawals includes any enrolments that have not been classified as a withdrawal, namely those options within Course Status - 'Continuing', 'Completed' or the status is unknown.

Retention rate = 
$$\frac{\text{Number of non-withdrawals plus Number of withdrawals who achieve (both full and partial)}}{\text{Number of Enrolments}}$$

### **Sector Subject Area**

The Sector Subject Area (SSA) code is derived from the OFQUAL Register of Regulated Qualifications, which is based on the qualification or unit code. The SSA code registered against each qualification or unit has been assigned by the responsible awarding organisation. The SSAs were developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Department for Education and Skills (Wales), along with other key educational bodies according to industry sector and academic subject area. They aim to allow more consistent reporting of data across the UK.

Further information on SSAs is available at:

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+www.ofqual.gov.uk/research-and-statistics/statistics/429-sector-subject-area-classification-system-ssac>

**STEM**

STEM provision is identified by the subject code entered by the FE college. If the subject code starts with a letter between A and K (that is, Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects; Biological and Physical Sciences; Agriculture; Mathematics and IT; Engineering and Technology; and Architecture, Building and Planning), it is regarded as 'Broad' STEM. 'Narrow' STEM comprises those enrolment records with a subject code starting with a letter C, F, G, H or J (that is, Biological and Physical Sciences; Mathematics and IT; and Engineering and Technology).

**Success rate**

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

Success rate =  $\frac{\text{Number of achievements}}{\text{Number of Final Year Enrolments}}$

OR

Retention rate x Achievement rate

## **Annex B: Technical Notes**

1. The information presented in this statistical bulletin has been derived from the Consolidated Data Return (CDR), which is provided by FE colleges.
2. In recent years, extensive work has been carried out to develop the CDR, which brings together into a single dataset the five main individual Departmental returns from FE colleges, namely Funded Learning Unit (FLU), Further Education Statistical Return (FESR), Essential Skills Enrolment Return (ESER), Entitlement Framework (EF) and Further Education Leavers' Survey (FELS).
3. The CDR came into operation for the 2013/14 academic year and is used for analysis related to the years 2013/14 to 2016/17. Each of the data returns are computerised data files consisting of individual records for each enrolment recorded by FE colleges during each academic year.
4. There are significant benefits to be realised in collating all the data requirements of the Department into one single return. Streamlining the production process of data increases the efficiency of the process in generating the data. With extra information now available for each enrolment record, it also increases the potential in terms of analytical ability, while increasing the consistency of analysis across all FE college data. Data quality is also enhanced with data being generated at the same point in time and a substantial number of validations employed on the data through the CDR process.
5. The number of enrolments is simply a count of the number of enrolment records within the relevant data return.
6. The number of individuals for each academic year has been determined (using Student Reference and FE college as the unique identifier) within the specific academic year period.
7. The enrolment information is correct as at 13<sup>th</sup> October 2017.
8. Any enrolments indicated to be Keyskills (qualification 199 and 599) have been excluded from this analysis.
9. The FLU mechanism converts all eligible student enrolments and activity into standard Funded Learning Units (FLU); the number of FLU generated by each enrolment being determined by the mode of attendance (that is, full-time or part-time), duration, level and economic priority of the study, and the appropriate disadvantage weighting.
10. The Student with Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (SLDD) field indicates if the student has any Special Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities and requires special teaching instruction, for example, taught in reduced class number. Students who indicate a learning need on their enrolment form are assessed accordingly by learning support



through the student's FE college. For this analysis, a student has been identified, using the SLDD field within the FLU return, as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities if the codes '02' (Mainstream - DO require extra support) or '03' (Discrete) are recorded by the FE college. This group of students is funded through the Additional Support Fund (ASF), which is provided to facilitate SLDD students to attend college.

11. A student can also be registered as '04' (Day Centre). This provision is delivered outside of FE college campuses. As there are no overheads or adjustments to be made to those registered as '04' (Day Centre), these are not included as part of the ASF and, therefore, excluded from this analysis. Further information is available at: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/participation-by-and-provision-students-learning-difficulties-and-disabilities-sldd>
12. Since 2013/14, the identification of final year enrolments has changed slightly from the selection criteria within the FELS data return, which contained final year regulated enrolments only.
13. A student can enrol on a course for a matter of weeks (sometimes months) and then transfer to another course. Due to the original course incurring teaching hours and funding, it is included within the overall enrolment count. It is, therefore, a measurable component of enrolment activity actually delivered. The recording of transfers is also important due to particular interest in transferred students and linking this to careers guidance.
14. In terms of outcome, the original enrolment recorded as a transfer will not have any outcome recorded against it and, 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.
15. For academic years from 2013/14, full-time provision consists of either: at least 15 hours and at least 7 sessions per week; or more than 21 hours per week, with no sessional requirement. All other mode of attendance options are regarded as part-time.
16. For academic years from 2013/14, 'regulated enrolments' are regarded as those on courses that are at 'Level 3 or below' and appear on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ), which contains qualifications on both the Qualifications and Credit Framework and the National Qualifications Framework or part of the Department's Prescribed List of Approved Qualifications (PLAQ)/Access list) and Higher Education qualifications ('Level 4 and above').

From 2013/14, non-regulated enrolments are those that potentially lead to a formal qualification (at 'Level 3 or below'), but do not appear on the RRQ, or where a qualification is not expected, typically hobby and leisure or recreational courses.

17. For all enrolments, the Sector Subject Area (SSA) categorisation was revised during 2013/14. It is derived from the OFQUAL Register of Regulated Qualifications, based on the qualification or unit code. The SSA code registered against each qualification or unit has been assigned by the responsible awarding organisation. Prior to this, it was derived from the subject code entered by the FE college. Following the outcome of the review, when enrolments are presented by SSA, they are only comparable from the academic year 2013/14 onwards.
18. Equality related data, such as political opinion, religious belief and sexual orientation, were introduced in 2013/14 to the data capture process within FE colleges. Due to a continued large number of non-responses, political opinion has been omitted from the supplementary tables covering the period 2013/14 to 2016/17.
19. In 2013/14, additional dependant categories (older people, disability, no care required) have been added to the data collection process. In previous academic years, only dependant adults and children were recorded (Table S2).
20. Although typically individuals will attend their local college, an individual can attend any FE college across Northern Ireland. 'Hypothetical Regional College Catchment Areas' (HRCCAs) have been created for each of the six colleges to provide information, beyond enrolment data, on all individuals within the catchment area to each college, who may or may not be in contact with the FE college.
21. The HRCCAs were established by merging certain pre-2014 Local Government District (LGD) areas together based on Further Education enrolments over a five academic year period. The Regional College with the highest percentage of enrolments from a particular LGD was assigned that LGD.
22. The 2016 mid-year population estimates have been examined in terms of the age and gender profile to compare against the profiles within the enrolments of each regional college.
23. Further information on the mid-year population estimates, please visit: <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/demography/default.asp17.htm>

## **Further Enquiries**

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