

Higher Education Statistical Fact Sheet 5: Enrolments at UK Higher Education Institutions by country of institution and subject area – 2020/21

Of the 66,245 students enrolled at Northern Ireland Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in 2020/21:

- 16,610 (25%) were enrolled on Narrow STEM related courses. The equivalent percentages for English, Scottish and Welsh HEIs were higher, at 26%, 29% and 31% respectively.
- 36,405 (55%) were enrolled on Broad STEM related courses. The equivalent percentages for English, Scottish and Welsh HEIs were lower, at 44%, 49% and 48% respectively.
- The three most popular subject areas studied in NI HEIs were 'Subjects allied to medicine' (23%), 'Business and management' (16%) and 'Social sciences' (9%).

Enrolments at UK HEIs by subject area and country of institution – 2020/21

Subject Area	Country of Institution			
	England	NI	Scotland	Wales
Biological and sports sciences	91,600	2,005	13,165	10,550
Psychology	112,515	2,185	12,190	8,195
Physical sciences	55,175	1,100	8,660	3,260
Mathematical sciences	40,410	740	5,695	1,685
Engineering and technology	146,870	4,230	21,850	10,205
Computing	121,790	5,540	17,380	9,115
Geographical and environmental studies (natural sciences)	25,190	810	4,240	2,160
Total Narrow STEM¹ related subjects	593,550	16,610	83,180	45,165
Medicine and dentistry	61,530	2,230	9,595	3,675
Subjects allied to medicine	272,170	15,375	34,255	17,345
Veterinary Science	9,240	0	2,240	95
Agriculture, food and related studies	13,895	465	2,755	1,310
Architecture, building and planning	51,130	1,730	6,935	2,445
Total Broad STEM² related subjects	1,001,520	36,405	138,960	70,030
Geographical and environmental studies (social sciences)	10,345	115	1,175	700
Social sciences	234,240	5,940	25,945	16,485
Law	119,530	2,290	9,855	6,405
Business and management	404,200	10,540	39,340	20,890
Language and area studies	72,760	1,625	12,555	5,695
Historical, philosophical and religious studies	68,880	1,025	12,120	3,910
Education and teaching	108,995	3,045	16,255	7,745
Combined and general studies	28,680	2,050	10,060	3,735
Media, journalism and communications	39,970	925	4,205	2,525
Design, and creative and performing arts	168,460	2,275	12,405	7,040
All subject Areas	2,257,580	66,245	282,875	145,170
% Narrow STEM related subject	26%	25%	29%	31%
% Broad STEM related subject	44%	55%	49%	48%

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Notes:

1. There has been a change to the data coverage in this year's fact sheet, as Alternative Provider (AP) data from the HESA Student Alternative record was combined for the first time with the usual HESA Student Record data submitted by HEI providers. An AP is any provider of higher education courses: not in direct receipt of recurrent funding from UK funding bodies; not a Further Education college; and not registered as 'approved (fee cap)' on the Office for Students (OfS) register. They consist solely of English providers, such as The University of Law, BIMM Limited and BPP University. Historical figures in the online open data tables have been produced back to, and including 2017/18, using this new methodology.
2. 2019/20 saw the introduction of a new subject coding system, the Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECoS). This replaced the previous subject coding system, the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) used in years prior to 2019/20. In addition to HECoS, a Common Aggregation Hierarchy (CAH) was introduced to provide a standardised hierarchical aggregation of HECoS codes suitable for the majority of users. The CAH was developed to provide standard groupings that could be applied to both HECoS and JACS allowing for consistent analysis across coding frames. It is important to remember though that these are two distinct coding frames. CAH was subsequently updated from version 1.2 to version 1.3.4 in 2020/21, CAH version 1.3.4 has been retrospectively applied to data in the online tables for 2019/20. For more information, please refer to HESA's webpage on [HECoS and CAH](#). Information on subject area provided in this fact sheet is based on CAH level 1, comprising 21 groups; for the purposes of STEM analysis though Geographical and environmental studies have been split into natural sciences and social sciences.
3. The STEM groupings used in this fact sheet are based on the approach developed by HESA to categorise subjects into science/non-science subjects. Their science grouping is an aggregation of relevant CAH level 1 subject codes (derived from HECoS), with the exception of CAH26 (Geographical and environmental studies), which has been split into natural sciences and social sciences. The natural science element is categorised into the science grouping and the social sciences element into the non-science grouping. The same approach has been taken when categorising CAH level 1 subject codes into STEM groupings, and maps well to the previous JACS coding of STEM subjects.
4. Narrow STEM related subject areas include: Biological and sports sciences; Psychology; Physical sciences; Mathematical sciences; Engineering and technology; Computing; and Geography, earth and environmental studies (natural sciences).
5. Broad STEM related subject areas: Medicine and dentistry; Subjects allied to medicine; Biological and sports sciences; Psychology; Veterinary sciences; Agriculture, food and related studies; Physical Sciences; Mathematical sciences; Engineering and technology; Computing; Geography, earth and environmental studies (natural sciences); and Architecture, building and planning.
6. To prevent the identification of individuals, figures have been rounded to the nearest 5, in line with HESA rounding strategy, with 0, 1 and 2 rounded to 0.
7. Due to rounding, the sum of rows or columns may not match the totals shown.
8. Percentages are based on rounded figures and rounded to the nearest integer.

Links:

Data from this fact sheet are available in open data format at the following link:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/articles/higher-education-statistical-fact-sheets>

More Higher Education statistics are available from:

[Higher Education Statistics and Research](#)