

# Survey of Further Education College Leavers Report Academic Year 2017/18

## Summary of Findings

**This report presents the findings from the fifth annual Northern Ireland Survey of Further Education (FE) College Leavers. Undertaken approximately six months after course completion, it provides a snapshot of the immediate added value to leavers of completing and achieving a regulated qualification at Level 3 or below in the FE sector during the academic year 2017/18.**

### All FE College leavers

Over two-fifths (45.9%) of FE College leavers were in employment six months after achieving their 2017/18 qualification, up from 40.8% before their course began; conversely, the proportion in learning fell from 44.0% to 41.1% (**Table 3**).

When asked to give the most important reason for doing their course, FE College leavers were most likely to say: 'I thought it would improve my career prospects' (25.2%); 'I was interested in the subject' (17.6%); or 'I wanted to go on to further / higher learning' (14.6%) (**Table 2**).

Two-thirds (66.3%) of leavers agreed that, were they to do their course again, they would be unlikely to study at a different FE College. Over half (51.6%) said they would be unlikely to study a different subject, while 52.9% would be unlikely to do a different kind of qualification (**Table 5**).

Employment rates for FE College leavers varied depending on subject area studied. The subject areas with the highest proportions of FE College leavers in full-time employment were 'Construction, Planning and the Built Environment' (55.4%), 'Business, Administration and Law' (52.8%) and 'Education and Training' (50.0%) (**Figure 7**).

The subject areas with the lowest proportions of FE College leavers in employment were 'Social Sciences' (7.0%), 'History, Philosophy and Theology' (11.1%) and 'Science and Mathematics' (18.3%), however; these subjects had some of the highest proportions of leavers in further full-time study (**Figure 7**).

Typically, unemployment rates were lower for those qualifying at higher levels. Over one-quarter of those who had studied at Entry Level were unemployed (27.5%), in contrast to 14.5% of those who had studied at Level 1, 7.0% of those at Level 2 and 3.7% of those at Level 3 (**Figure 6**).

### FE College leavers in employment

Over a third (35.4%) of the FE College leavers in employment had not been in employment before they started their 2017/18 course (**Table A12a**) – of these, three-quarters (74.9%) had been in learning.

For leavers in full-time employment, 40.2% were earning less than £300 per week. For leavers in part-time employment this was 89.7%. A further 27.5% of leavers in full-time employment were earning between £300 and £399 per week, while only 5.1% of those in part-time employment earn similar wages (**Table S23**).

Males (32.2%) were twice as likely as females (16.7%) to be earning £400 or more per week (**Table S24**).

The vast majority (95.7%) of FE College leavers in employment were working in Northern Ireland, while 2.9% were working in the Republic of Ireland, 0.5% in Great Britain and 0.9% overseas (**Table 7**).

Seven-tenths (70.9%) of FE College Leavers in employment said the course had prepared them well for employment (**Table S19**).

Of the FE College leavers who were in employment six months after their course two-thirds (65.8%) were working full-time; a further 23.9% had one or more part-time jobs, while 10.4% were primarily working but also studying (**Table A11**).

Most of the FE College leavers in employment had jobs classified as either: 'Caring, leisure and other service occupations' (22.6%); 'Skilled Trade occupations' (20.4%); or 'Administrative and secretarial occupations' (12.5%) (**Table S18**).

## FE College leavers in learning

Three-quarters (75.2%) of FE College leavers in learning had also been in learning before the course they had completed in 2017/18 (**Figure 15** and **Table A12b**), while four-fifths (80.8%) are now studying towards a higher level qualification (**Table S28**).

Almost two-thirds (65.5%) of leavers in learning have continued their learning in the FE sector, while almost three-tenths (29.5%) have started university (**Table S29**).

Over nine-tenths (91.0%) of FE College leavers in learning stated the course they had undertaken during 2017/18 had prepared them well for further study (**Table S30**).

## Unemployed FE College leavers

The proportion of FE College leavers who classified themselves as unemployed six months after completing their course in 2017/18 was 6.4% down from 9.2% before their course (**Table A5**).

Unemployment rate falls as education level rises. Over one-quarter of those who had studied at Entry Level were unemployed (27.5%), in contrast to 14.5% of those who had studied at Level 1, 7.0% of those at Level 2 and 3.7% of those at Level 3 (**Figure 6**).