

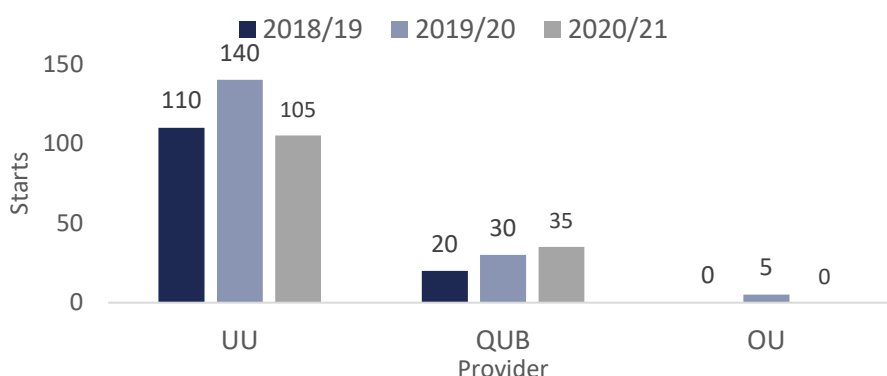
Statistical Fact Sheet - Higher Level Apprenticeship (HLA) level 6/7 at Higher Education Institutions in Northern Ireland, Academic year 2020/21

This is an addendum to the [Higher Level Apprenticeship bulletin at FE colleges](#). It includes details of the characteristics and subject areas of participants on HLAs (level 6 or level 7) delivered at Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Northern Ireland (NI) in academic year 2020/21.

1. Starts¹

In academic year 2020/21, 140 starts commenced HLA programmes at HEIs in NI, this was a decrease of 20% compared to 2019/20. This decrease in starts may be attributed to the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic. Ulster University and Queen's University Belfast (QUB) recorded 105 and 35 HLA starts respectively (Figure 1.1, Table A1).

Figure 1.1: HLA Starts at HEIs by Provider, 2018/19 – 2020/21

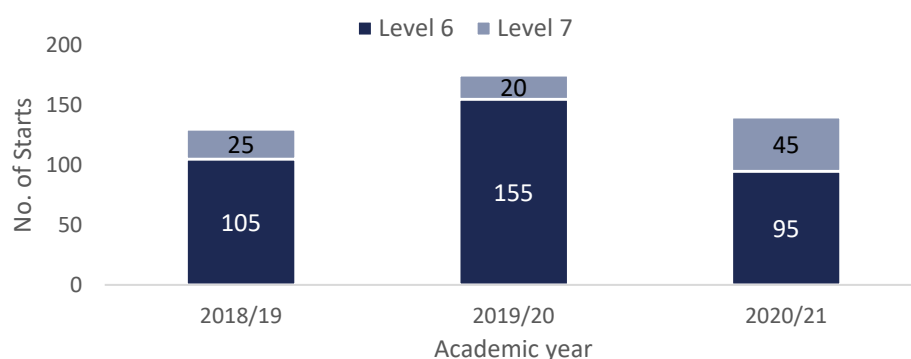


Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Note: Data has been rounded to the nearest 5.

In 2020/21 there was approximately a two-third (68%) to one-third (32%) split in the proportion of HLA starts at level 6 and level 7. Although the uptake in level 6 HLAs was greater, there was a noticeable increase in level 7 HLA starts in 2020/21 compared to previous years (Figure 1.2, Table A2).

Figure 1.2: HLA Starts at HEIs by level, 2018/19 - 2020/21



Source: HESA

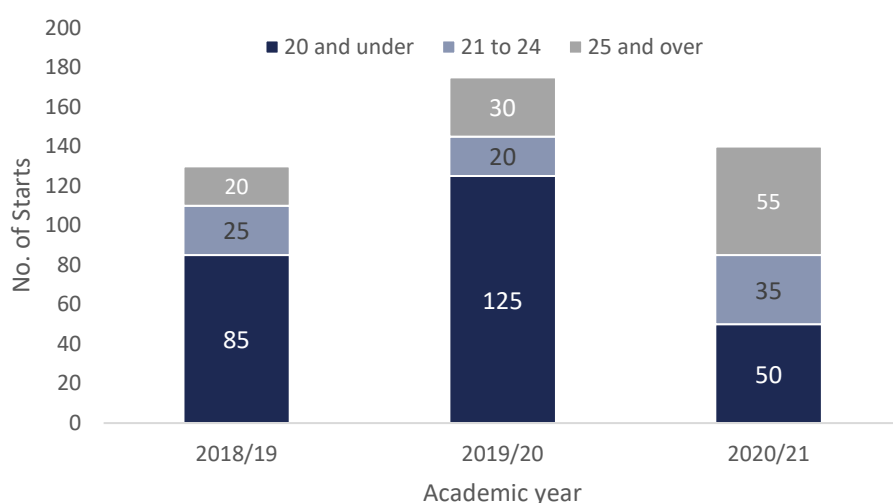
Note: Data has been rounded to the nearest 5.

¹ Starts are defined as individuals who have joined a HLA programme in a particular academic year regardless of the year of study they are on. For the purpose of this analysis HLA starts are treated as being in the first year of their HLA programme which may not correspond with their year of study.

Participant Profile of Starts

The age profile of starts was slightly different compared to the previous two academic years. The 25 and over age group recorded the greatest number of starts (55, 39%), closely followed by the youngest age group 20 and under (50, 36%) and the 21 to 24 age group accounted for one quarter (35, 25%) (Figure 1.3, Table A3).

Figure 1.3: HLA Starts at HEIs by age group, 2018/19 - 2020/21

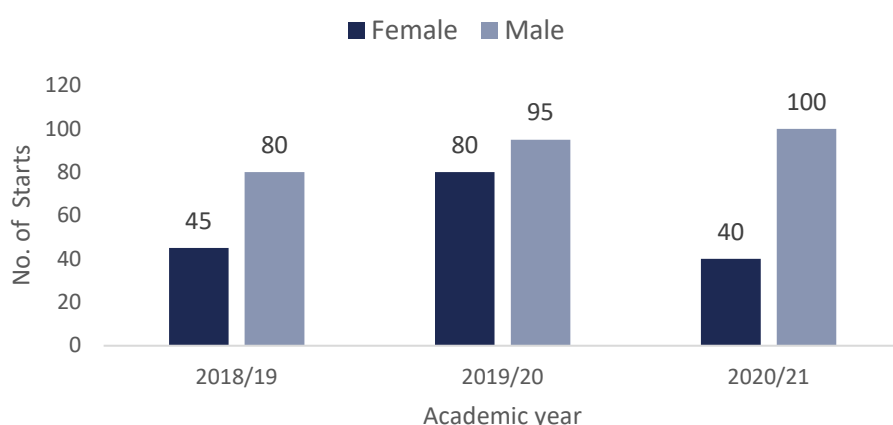


Source: HESA

Note: Data has been rounded to the nearest 5.

At HEIs in 2020/21 approximately three in ten (29%) HLA starts were female. Over time, there have been consistently more males than females starting HLAs at HEIs (Figure 1.4, Table A4).

Figure 1.4: HLA Starts at HEIs by gender, 2018/19 – 2020/21



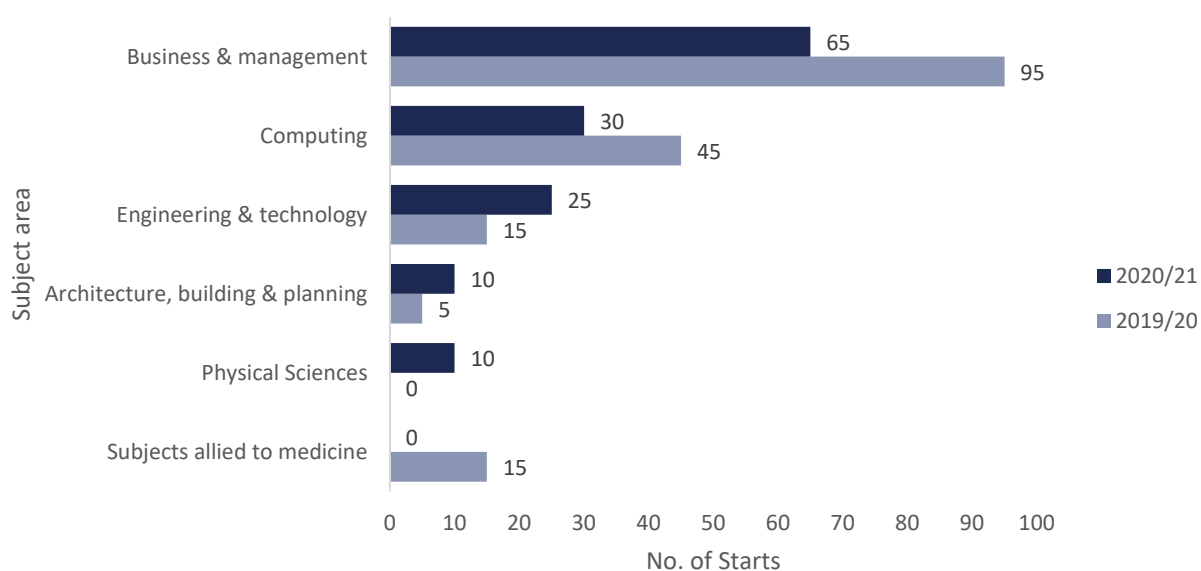
Source: HESA

Note: Data has been rounded to the nearest 5.

Subject Area

The most popular subject area for starts in 2020/21 was 'Business and management', which accounted for just under half (46%) of starts on HLA programmes at HEIs. 'Computing' was the second most popular HLA subject area at HEIs (21%) (Figure 1.5, Table A5).

Figure 1.5: HLA starts at HEIs by subject area, 2019/20 - 2020/21

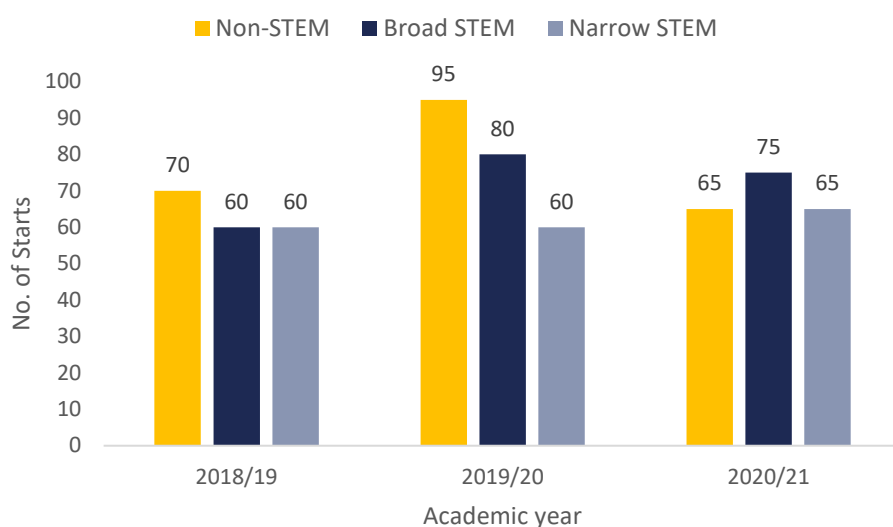


Source: HESA

Note: Data is rounded to nearest 5. In 2019/20 a new subject coding system was introduced, therefore there is no comparable 2018/19 data. See notes on [subject coding](#).

In 2020/21 there were more starts completing an HLA in a Broad STEM subject area than a non-STEM subject, previous years recorded it the opposite way round. (Figure 1.6, Table A6).

Figure 1.6: HLA starts at HEIs by STEM indicator, 2018/19 - 2020/21



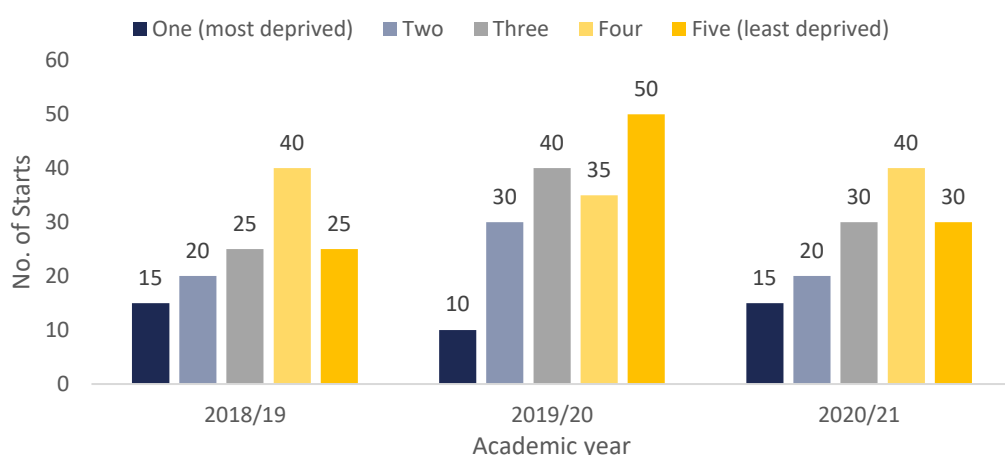
Source: HESA

Note: Data has been rounded to the nearest 5, Narrow STEM is a subset of Broad STEM.

Deprivation quintile

There were twice as many HLA starts from those living in the two least deprived quintiles (70) compared to those living in the two most deprived quintiles (35). A pattern is emerging showing the areas within the most deprived quintile are recording the least number of HLA starts (Figure 1.7, Table A7).

Figure 1.7: HLA starts at HEIs by deprivation quintile, 2018/19 - 2020/21



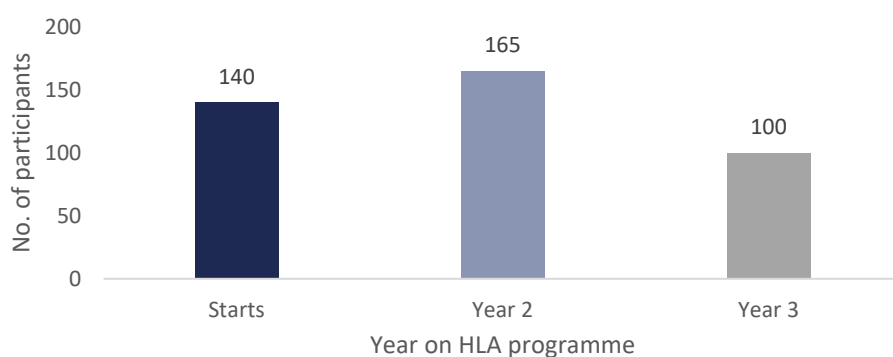
Source: HESA

Note: Data has been rounded to the nearest 5. NIMDM (2017) is only available for NI domiciled students, not all HLA starts.

2. HLA Participants

In 2020/21 there were 405 participants on level 6/7 HLA programmes at HEIs; 140 starts, 165 on year 2 of an HLA programme and 100 on year 3 (Figure 2.1, Table B1). It is important to note for purpose of analysis the year of on the HLA programme may not correspond with an individual's year of study.

Figure 2.1: HLA participants at HEIs by year of HLA programme, 2020/21



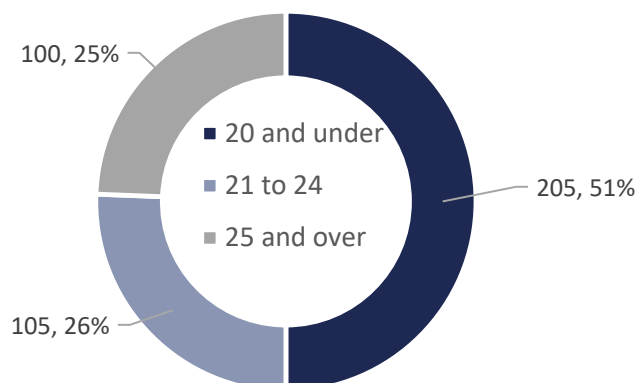
Source: HESA

Note: Data has been rounded to the nearest 5.

Participant Profile

Approximately half the HLA participants were aged under 20 (51%) and approximately one quarter fell within the 21 to 24 age group (26%) and 25 and over age group (25%) (Figure 2.2, Table B2).

Figure 2.2: HLA participants at HEIs by age group, 2020/21

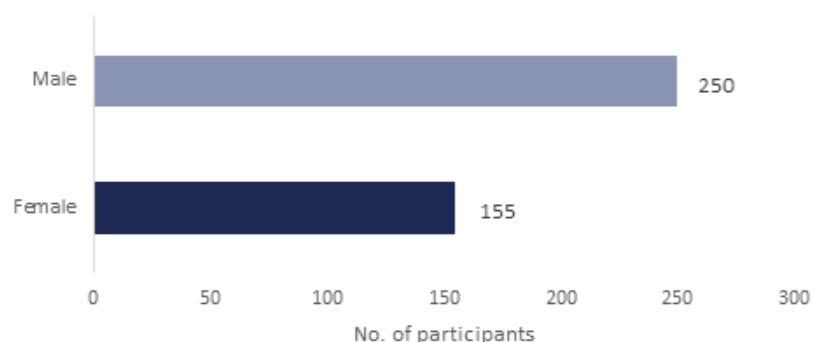


Source: HESA

Note: Data has been rounded to the nearest 5. Percentages may not add due to rounding.

In 2020/21, approximately four in ten (38%) HLA participants at NI HEIs were female; there were 155 female participants and 250 males (Figure 2.3, Table B3).

Figure 2.3: HLA participants at HEIs by gender, 2020/21



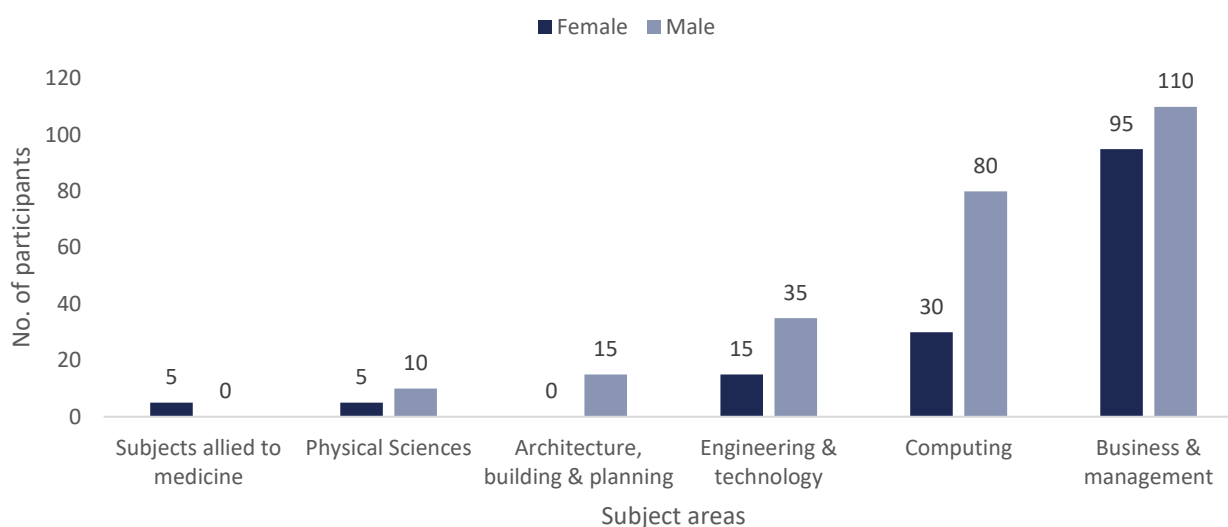
Source: HESA

Note: Data has been rounded to the nearest 5.

The most popular subject area for level 6/7 HLAs was 'Business and management', just over half (52%) of the participants were completing an HLA in this subject area. Business and Management' was also the most popular subject area across all female (95, 61%) and male (110, 44%) HLA participants. (Figure 2.4, Table B3).

Subject Area

Figure 2.4: HLA participants at HEIs by subject area and gender, 2020/21



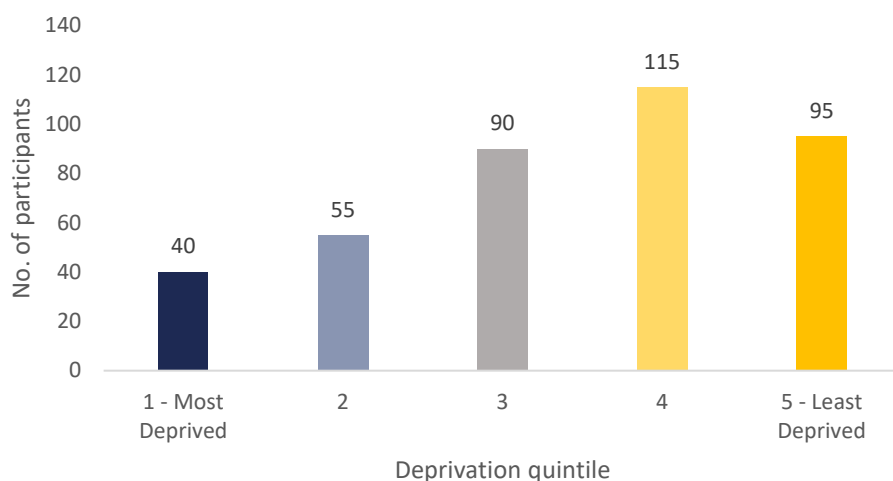
Source: HESA

Notes: Data is rounded to nearest 5.

Deprivation quintile

The most deprived quintile (quintile one) recorded the least number (40) of level 6/7 HLA participants while quintile four recorded the highest number of participants (115). A higher number of participants are from the least deprived areas (quintiles 4 and 5) compared to the most deprived (quintiles 1 and 2) (Figure 2.5, Table B4).

Figure 2.5: HLA participants at HEIs by deprivation quintile, 2020/21



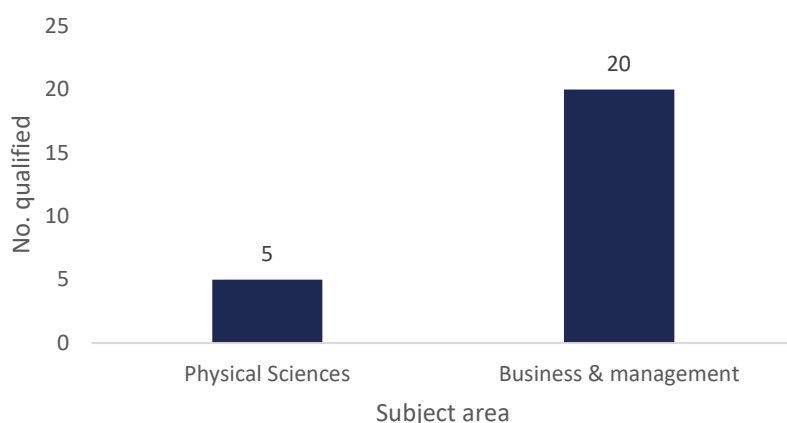
Source: HESA

Notes: Data is rounded to nearest 5.

3. Qualifications

The number of participants who achieved their HLA is reported for the first time in 2020/21. A total of 25 participants qualified with their HLA, 10 females and 15 males (Table C1). The two subject areas to report participants qualifying with their HLA were Physical sciences (5) and Business & management (20) (Figure 3.1, Table C2).

Figure 3.1: HLA qualifiers at HEIs by subject area, 2020/21



Source: HESA

Notes: Data is rounded to nearest 5.

More detailed tables providing further information on the HLA participants at HEIs in can be accessed at [HLA HEI Tables](#).

Notes

Data Collection

The information presented in this statistical fact sheet is based on data supplied by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). The HESA data relates to HLA participants at NI HEIs: Ulster University, Queens University Belfast and the Open University. A full set of tables for NI HEIs and all other publicly funded HEIs in the UK are published by HESA and are available to download from the [HESA website](#).

Starts

The sum of starts between 2018/19 to 2020/21 is higher than the figure for all participants in 2020/21, as some participants may not have continued their studies for the full duration or may have qualified.

Subject Coding

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, which has resulted in some minor changes to the categories.

CAH v1.3.4 was introduced to increase the usefulness and intelligibility of detailed subject groupings, but at the highest level of aggregation it provides similar insights to CAH v1.2. For more information, please refer to HESA's webpage on [HECoS and CAH](#).

STEM Indicator

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 v1.3.4 level 1 subject codes (derived from HECoS), with the exception of CAH26 (Geography, earth 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.

Broad STEM includes the following 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.

Narrow STEM is a subset of Broad STEM and includes the following subject areas: Biological and sports sciences; Psychology; Physical sciences; Mathematical sciences; Engineering and technology; Computing; and Geography, earth and environmental studies (natural sciences).

Data Rounding

To prevent the identification of individuals, figures throughout the report are rounded to the nearest 5, with 0, 1, and 2 rounded to 0. Due to rounding, the sum of numbers in each row or column may not match the total shown. Percentages are calculated based on rounded figures.

Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM 2017) and Local Government District (LGD)

NIMDM (2017) and LGD is only applicable to NI domiciled students. The 2018/19 figures in the HLA starts by deprivation quintile table were revised in 2019/20 to exclude non-NI domiciled students.

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Information on religion, marital status and dependents is only collected for NI domiciled students studying at NI HE institutions. Information on disability and ethnicity is collected on the basis of a student's self-assessment.

Higher Level Apprenticeships

Level 6 Apprenticeships are equivalent to a full Bachelor's degree and **Level 7** Apprenticeships are equivalent to a Master's degree. A list of the Higher Level Apprenticeships available can be accessed at [Higher Level Apprenticeships](#).

Contact details can be found in the statistical bulletin [Higher Level Apprenticeships \(level 4/5\) in Northern Ireland, academic year 2017/18 – 2020/21](#).