

**College  
Development  
Plan**

**2021/2022**

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# 1 Strategic Context

Northern Ireland Further Education (FE) Colleges are required under Article 20 of the Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 to produce and publish annual business plans (College Development Plans).

The six FE colleges (collectively the FE sector) are Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPB) and a key delivery arm of the Department for the Economy (DfE). The FE sector is unique in that it has a dual mandate, taking a pivotal role 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; and supporting social inclusion by providing those with low or no qualifications, or who have other barriers to learning, with the skills and qualifications needed to find employment and to become economically active.

It is vital that the Northern Ireland skills system supports economic growth that is socially inclusive and builds the skills base necessary to fulfil the [Executive's draft PfG](#) aspirations. The FE Sector directly contributes to the following draft PfG Outcomes –

- *Our children and young people have the best start in life*
- *Everyone can reach their potential*
- *Everyone feels safe – we all respect the law and each other*

The FE sector will support the 'New Decade, New Approach' deal which outlines a series of priorities and ambitions for a reformed Executive including the development of “an enhanced approach to careers advice, curriculum, training and apprenticeships to enhance employability and support economic growth” and the development of “a regionally-balanced economy with opportunities for all”. In addition, the sector plays a key role along with other education and training providers in helping to address the links between deprivation and lower educational outcomes. FE Colleges continue to contribute to the development of a more joined up approach to education and training provision for 14-19 year olds with the aim of enhancing the 14-19 education and

training landscape so that our young people reach their potential and maximise their contribution to our economy and society.

The global pandemic, COVID-19, has completely transformed the way we live, work and learn. The FE Sector quickly adapted to the pandemic with a move to on-line teaching and has developed and enhanced the existing digital platforms to provide learners with a flexible delivery model taking into consideration the capacity and capability of the learner and the needs of the specific course. This flexibility will allow the sector to respond quickly to future changes in restrictions.

Creating a dynamic ecosystem where Government, Industry and Education providers can work in partnership is a key priority. The FE Sector will support delivery of the Department's '[Economic Recovery Action Plan](#)' which sets out a range of actions to kick-start economic recovery in Northern Ireland and build a more competitive, inclusive and greener economy. It reflects the colleges' contribution to raising skills levels and increasing productivity of the future workforce and aligning study to the needs of the economy in supporting a highly skilled and agile workforce'. This includes the introduction of the following new programmes from September 2021, replacing Training for Success:

- Skills for Life and Work programme, to help increase essential skills in English, Mathematics and ICT, together with technical and employability skills that participants need to progress to Traineeships, Apprenticeships, Further Education or employment; and
- The Northern Ireland Traineeship programme, a level 2 Vocational Education and Training programme delivering industry and / or sector relevant skills and knowledge, integrating work-based learning (WBL) along with core literacy and numeracy skills. The programme sets to provide learners with a solid foundation of skills, experience and qualifications that are recognised and valued by employers and relevant to opportunities in today's labour market, improving outcomes for up to 1,900 young people from its launch in September 2021 and the production of 20,000 traineeship places in Northern Ireland over the next seven years.

The following visions and strategies have been published by the Department, building on the 'Economic Recovery Action Plan' which the FE Sector is a key partner in taking forward:

- [A 10x Economy](#) – an economic vision for a decade of innovation in delivering a ten times better economy that will ultimately result in a 'positive impact on our economy, societal and environmental wellbeing' 'creating jobs', 'increase incomes', 'improve productivity levels' and 'provide opportunities for all'.

Through focusing on the five priority clusters identified in '10x Economy', the FE Sector will support the Department's economic vision to 'recover, rebuild and rebound back stronger than ever', meaning 'better jobs with better wages, in a more flexible working environment and a better overall quality of life'. The five priority clusters identified are:

- Digital, ICT and Creative Industries (e.g. Cyber Security);
  - Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering (e.g. Composites);
  - Agri-Tech;
  - Life and Health Sciences (e.g. Personalised Medicine); and
  - Fintech / Financial Services.
- [Trade and Investment for a 10X Economy](#): focus on equipping individuals and business with the information and skills to exploit emerging trade and investment opportunities in the priority clusters and in providing 'a world class talent offering'.
  - '[Tourism Recovery Action Plan](#)': The FE sector supported the development and continues to support the implementation of phase two of the action plan to support the development of a solid foundation for the recovery of the Northern Ireland tourism industry and hospitality industry, and the development of Northern Ireland as a sustainable and competitive tourism destination that meets the needs of both future visitors and local communities alike.
  - [Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, - Skills for a 10X Economy](#): is currently out for consultation. This strategy replaces "Success through Skills – Transforming Futures", addressing the skills needs across Northern Ireland over the next decade. FE Colleges have played a key role in the development of the strategy.

Despite the change in economic circumstances and uncertainty created by the pandemic, the underlying key policy objectives over the next period remain consistent:

- Investing in our Digital skills across all sectors of our economy;
- Creating a culture of learning for all ages to include upskilling and reskilling in addition to innovation; and
- Reducing the skills imbalances in the workforce, with a particular focus on those with low or no skills.

Aligned with the 'Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – Skills for a 10X Economy', the FE Sector will deliver Skill Up – The Flexible Skills Fund (Skill Up) across multiple levels and sectors, focused on the priority sectors and accredited qualifications at level 3, 4 and 5 where there is the greatest need, as highlighted by the Skills Barometer. Through Skill Up, we aim to upskill and reskill individuals to meet the needs of the economy as we emerge from the pandemic and continue to grow the economy whilst also boosting participation in lifelong learning and reduce key skills imbalances in areas such as digital, leadership and healthcare.

In full support of the priority clusters, the Department's establishment of the seven Curriculum Hubs in key occupational areas (Engineering & Advanced Manufacturing, Digital IT, Construction, Health & Social Care, Life Sciences, Hospitality & Tourism and Entrepreneurship) focussed on priority skills and growth sectors of employment. The Curriculum Hubs concept aims to ensure as a result of the activity driven by the Hub Action Plans, the curriculum delivered is high quality, consistent, current and responsive to the needs and demands of each industrial area thereby increasing opportunities for economic development and performance in each field.

The FE Sector will continue to contribute to the Department's ongoing review of Level 4 and 5 provision and HE in FE via representation on the Stakeholder Advisory Group and membership on task and finish groups which includes ensuring that HE in FE

qualifications and progression pathways through HE remain appropriate for meeting the needs of learners and the economy.

The FE Sector is represented on the recently established Tertiary Education Sector Senior Leaders Forum. The core purpose of the Forum is to foster greater collaboration between all those involved in education post-compulsory school-age and to help move towards a unified tertiary education sector in Northern Ireland. The Forum seeks to advance the principal aims of supporting all learners to reach their potential and in doing so, support the skills needs of the Northern Ireland economy.

Throughout, the FE Sector will provide support to those who face particular challenges and barriers to engaging in education. This includes learners with a learning difficulty and or disability and learners in the 3 prisons in Northern Ireland.

Aligned to the Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership statement “Safeguarding is everyone’s business” colleges’ Safeguarding, Care & Welfare Policies are built upon a foundation of ‘zero tolerance’ and have a shared objective to keep children, young people, adults at risk of harm and adults in need of protection safe from harm. The FE sector is committed to ensuring that all students, staff and stakeholders of the Colleges experience an inclusive, enjoyable and safe environment, in which they feel respected and valued.

The Department is investing £223 million in delivering seven new Further Education (FE) campuses providing modern facilities from which to deliver new and evolving curriculum provision addressing the needs of learners, industry and the wider economy with new campuses at Armagh, Banbridge, Ballymena, Craigavon, Coleraine and Enniskillen along with expansion of existing Newry East campus via re-development of the former Newry Sport Centre. The new iconic Erne campus in Enniskillen is being constructed to the highest environment standard of Passiv Haus Premium, a world first for an educational building.

In conjunction with City Deals programme, capital projects are being taken forward for North West Regional College and South West College.

The FE sector is an essential component to supporting delivery of the Executive's PfG Outcomes and the Department's vision and strategies outlined above. We remain committed to maintaining standards and will contribute towards the recovery of the NI economy through developing a highly skilled, motivated and agile workforce that will be at the core of Northern Ireland's economic recovery through the provision of the highest quality, economically relevant professional and technical education and training.



## 2 Current Operating Environment in Light of COVID-19

The FE Sector has been hugely impacted by COVID-19: social distancing has changed the delivery of college provision. However, the FE sector has demonstrated its agility in responding to shifting economic demands and employers' need. While not without its challenges, the FE sector moved swiftly to online delivery and more than 75% of FE students engaged in remote learning.

A significant majority of the jobs which supported our economy during the lockdown were vocational, and remain essential to continued growth, particularly at levels 3-5, across all sectors of the economy.

These sectors will be central to economic recovery and are dependent on the FE sector to provide their talent pool. This CDP details how the FE Sector will capitalise on the achievements to date to ensure the needs of students, employers and communities are met as NI responds to, recovers from and renews itself following the pandemic.

Expert analysis for the recovery of the NI economy is currently optimistic:

- Ulster Bank Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) July 2021 reported a further increase in output and new orders although rates eased from June. The rate of job creation also accelerated due to a pick-up in hiring within retail and manufacturing.
- Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (Summer 2021) noted NI growth prospects still relatively good with anticipated growth of 5.8% in 2021, following a contraction of 10.4% in 2020, and a return to pre-COVID levels of GVA in 2023 and a return to pre-COVID employment in 2024.

This CDP is set in the context of the **Recovery** phase, focusing on ensuring the skills 'infrastructure' is maintained as has been the case over the past 18 months.

NI's future economic and social success is predicated on its ability to access a highly skilled, talented and flexible workforce to deliver a vibrant economy and inclusive society. Further Education Colleges will play a crucial role in supporting NI to move through the Recovery to the Renewal Phases. We will realign delivery models and adopt a digital first approach that will maximise reach, provide value for money and close potential inequality gaps.

### 3 Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles have been developed to set the direction for the 2021/22 CDP in light of the current operating environment:

1. Social distancing will be maintained as far as is possible to reduce the impact of track and trace/self-isolation of close contacts. Delivery will be structured to reflect this. Classes will be balanced across the college week to optimise opportunities for students to enjoy face to face learning in a safe environment, in line with the agreed set of principles and guidelines developed through the work of the Departmental Advisory and Oversight Group on the safe resumption of onsite delivery.
2. The FE Sector will deliver the planned curriculum to the maximum number of students that is achievable in the current circumstances and will adopt a range of approaches including face to face.
3. Level one and Level two programmes will take place through on-campus delivery where possible. However, all programmes will include some online delivery to prepare students for progression and to help prepare students for a return to alternating models of delivery should this be needed during the year.
4. Level three and Higher Education programmes will adopt a blended model of delivery for year 1 and year 2 where possible and suitable.
5. High quality and accessible on-line delivery will continue, where appropriate, to be used during the return of on-site provision to deliver teaching and learning, provide student pastoral support, provide support to businesses, and upskilling programmes for individuals who wish to retrain or upskill.
6. Work with local employers will continue to provide apprenticeship and placement opportunities whilst ensuring the safety of staff and students.
7. We will engage with businesses to:
  - Support employers through the provision of fully funded, tailored solutions through the Skills Focus Programme and Flexible Skills Initiative to increase the skills levels of the workforce; and
  - Facilitate small businesses in acquiring the skills to innovate, by delivering up to three InnovateUs upskilling projects per business,

through which they work on developing new products, services or processes.

8. The FE Sector recognises that every student will not have the same access to broadband and IT facilities to support remote learning from home and as such we will explore appropriate interventions to ensure that these students are not disadvantaged.
9. The FE Sector will continue to support the most disadvantaged in communities across NI by ensuring access to learning opportunities that lead to sustainable career pathways.
10. The FE sector will continue to support local schools in the delivery of the Entitlement Framework through on-site delivery and in accordance with DfE guidelines on safe resumption.
11. The Curriculum Hub Action Plans, if required, will be reviewed and revised in agreement with DfE, to ensure that actions are reflective of the most pertinent needs of the economy in each curricular area. The quarterly reporting of progress against targets will continue to provide the Department with robust assurance of each Hub's performance.

## 4 Regional Operating Context - Challenges

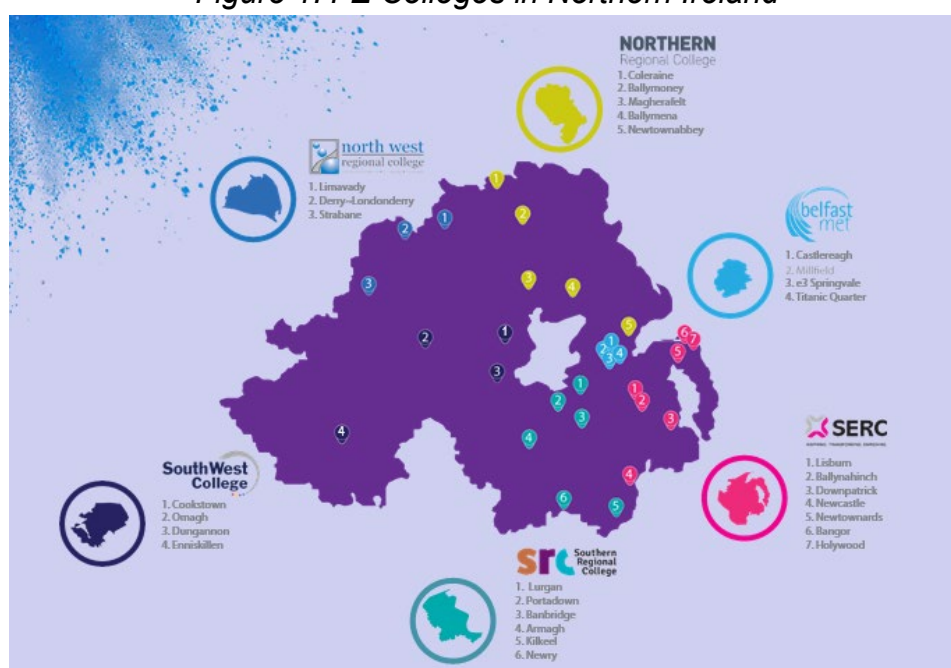
### 4.1 Background

Northern Regional College offers a wide range of courses resulting in approximately 15,500 annual regulated enrolments (including Essential Skills) [Department of Economy Further Education Statistics 2019-20](#). These courses are delivered in the College's six campuses in Ballymoney, Ballymena (Farm Lodge and Trostan Avenue), Coleraine, Magherafelt and Newtownabbey. In addition, we deliver community-based education in several outreach centres and have significant digital online learning capability.

### 4.2 Catchment Area

Our footprint stretches from the Causeway Coast in the north, through mid-Ulster to the outskirts of the Belfast Metropolitan area.

*Figure 1: FE Colleges in Northern Ireland*



The diverse geographical catchment area of the College has a population of approximately 577,000 (NISRA, Population Estimates Bulletin 2020). According to [NINIS Population Projections](#), the population in the College's catchment area is due

to increase (by 1.1%) up to 2025; its projected increase is broadly similar to Northern Ireland as a whole (1.4%). In terms of 15-19-year olds, the College's catchment area population is due to increase by 9.5%, slightly less than Northern Ireland as a whole (11.7%). It is notable that within the 15-19 age group a slightly higher increase is anticipated in both Mid Ulster (13.0%) and Antrim and Newtownabbey (12.6%).

#### 4.4 Vision, Mission and Values

NRC's ambition is to make our College a partner of choice for students, staff, industry and other stakeholders. To help us achieve this, our vision, mission and core values are outlined in Figure 2.

*Figure 2: Our Vision, mission and values*



Our strategic priorities and objectives through to 2022 are:

*Figure 3: Our Strategic Priorities and Objectives*

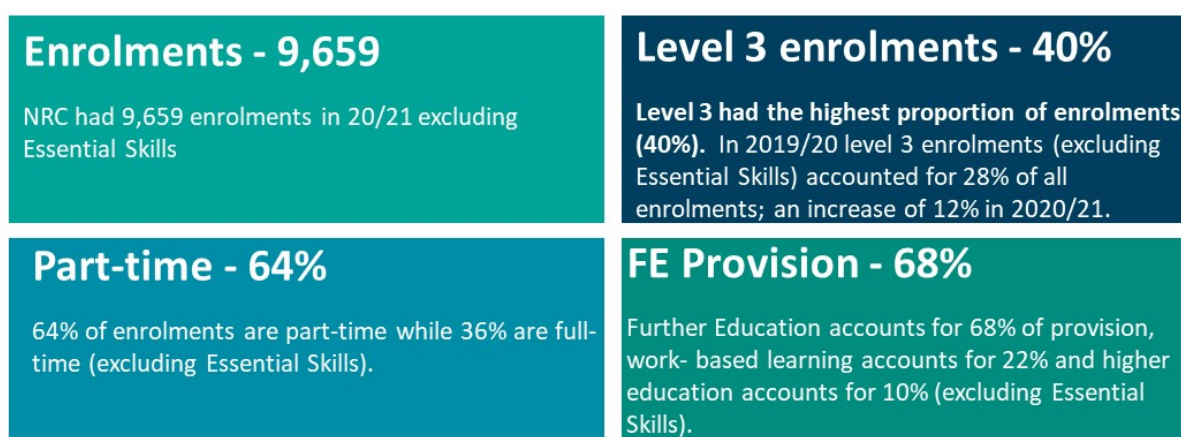


## 4.5 Curriculum Provision

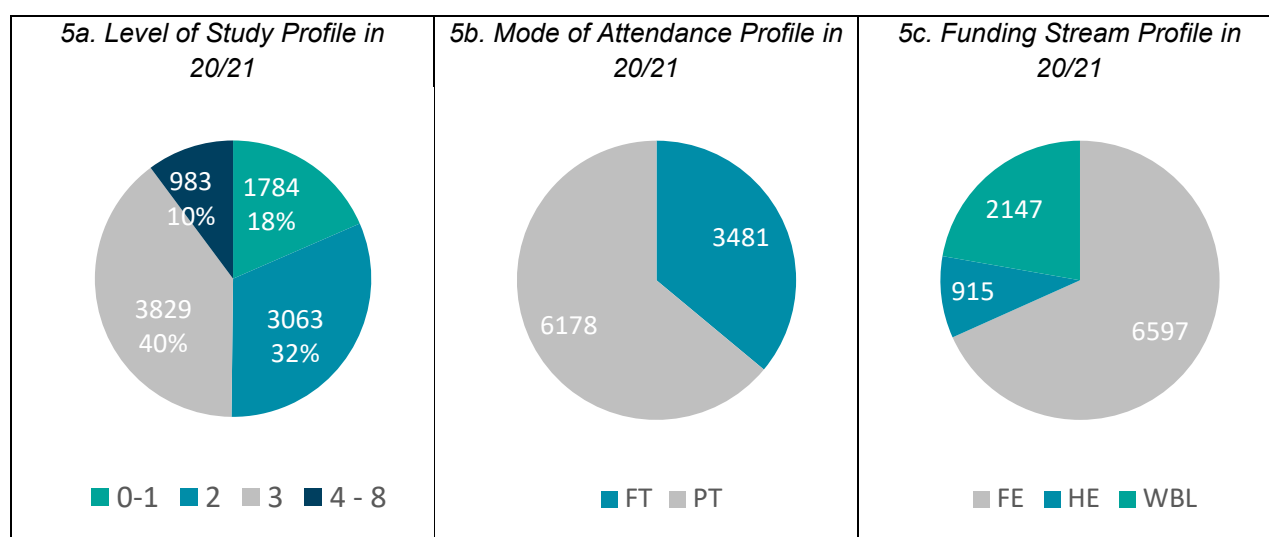
The College’s strategic priorities are supported by our Curriculum Strategy. We deliver a curriculum that is sustainable and relevant to stakeholder needs. For the 2021/22 academic year we will continue to align resources through planned provision and emerging economic requirements to ensure that the workforce in our catchment area contributes to the achievement of the draft PfG and the draft Industrial Strategy. These priorities are underpinned by a curriculum plan that is reviewed on an annual basis and allows for a quick response to changing and short term needs of the economy within the academic year.

The context for each report card in section 5 shows that a diverse curriculum is needed to meet the wide-ranging requirements of our catchment area. In terms of viable provision and class sizes, the College is constantly seeking new and flexible ways to deliver our provision. The establishment and success of our Digital Learning investment has raised capabilities and introduced new opportunities for staff and students alike.

Figure 4: 2020/21 Enrolment Figures



Source: CDP 30th June 2021



Source: CDP 30th June 2021

## 4.6 Operating Challenges and Opportunities in 2021/22

### 4.6.1 College Planning Cycle

The College planning cycle for the forthcoming academic year is finalised in October prior to opening applications in January. In October 2020 the College planning cycle could not have foreseen the effect of further restrictions that would be enforced from January to April 2021. The FE sector wide delay to the commissioning of the 2021/22 CDP has given the College the opportunity to revise projected enrolments and take account of the move to Stage 5 of the NI Executive's pathway out of restrictions. The challenges facing not only the College, but the FE sector, are different in 2021/22 from



those in 2020/21 and the effect of COVID will continue to impact planning, recruitment and delivery for the next two to three academic years.

#### 4.6.2 Opportunities

- **Responding to the Executive's Covid-19 Recovery Plan and NI Skills Strategy:** the publication of "Skills Strategy for NI: Skills for a 10X Economy" referenced in the Strategic Context above gives a clear indication of the key priorities for skills development across NI. This strategy has highlighted the undersupply of skills at level 3 and oversupply of individuals with low/no qualifications, as well as the clear need for skills development at levels 4 & 5. The priority sectors for recovering and growing NI's economy have been clearly articulated in this document and in the Executive's Covid-19 Recovery Plan (Digital, ICT and Creative Industries; Agrifood; Fintech and Financial Services; Advanced Manufacturing; Life and Health Sciences; Green Economy; Tourism) and together they provide a clear roadmap for all NI colleges to follow in developing their curriculum provision. In addition, the commitment in the Covid-19 Recovery Plan to growing apprenticeships across a wider range of sectors (including public sector) and the focus on development of innovation and employability skills presents real opportunities for the college. During 2021/22 we will work as a fully integrated partner in the new Local Labour Market Partnerships in our four Council areas to ensure that we respond to the skills needs arising from businesses in our area. We will also draw on the expertise made available to us through our newly created Economic Engagement Advisory Forum, chaired by Dr Norman Apsley (Chair of LEDCOM and former CEO of Catalyst Inc), to access sector specific knowledge of the skills gaps that need to be addressed in the short, medium and longer term. Recognising our dual mandate, we will also provide entry points for individuals with low or no qualifications at level 1 and 2. The College is currently piloting a Pre Access qualification in the Magherafelt Campus and will consider other opportunities for expanding this provision.
- **Opportunities for adult learners and upskilling:** The NI Executive's Covid-19 Recovery Plan has clearly demonstrated the need to provide upskilling and lifelong learning opportunities for those currently in employment as well as those who have

been impacted by the pandemic. The College sees huge opportunity in participating in the Department's Skills Up Programme which will provide flexible learning opportunities for those who wish to upskill on a part-time basis. The precursor to this programme (the Flexible Skills Programme) was an area of significant success for the College in 2020/21 (we had the highest number of enrolments in this programme across the FE and HE sectors in NI) and we want to build on this success in 2021/22. These short courses provide an opportunity for us to develop and refine our online provision; they result in additional enrolments for the College and enhance the diversification of our provision with new awarding organisations. They also provide an opportunity to reach audiences that may not have previously engaged with the College and may lead to further enrolments on mainstream provision. Further opportunities may also arise through Apprenticeships and HLAs when age restrictions are lifted, providing a new pool of potential. Graduate conversion programmes will also help to further diversify our offering.

- **Opportunity for growth in Higher Education & HLAs:** There is an opportunity in the next few years for the College to increase its provision of HE full-time and HE part time professional programmes to suit those who wish to continue their education whilst working and remaining close to home, while enhancing employability and career prospects. HLA programmes provide applicants the prospect of gaining qualifications whilst working and the College will seek to increase the breadth of vocational areas on offer.
- **Opportunities for new partnerships:** The College has sought and established new strategic partnerships with external stakeholders such as Harland and Wolff, the Gallaher Trust, MEGA, and the four District Councils in our area to develop scholarship and apprenticeship programmes. We have recently launched a new HLA in Logistics and Supply Chain in conjunction with industry bodies and whilst recruitment has proved challenging, the College continues to develop strategies to embed this programme. New opportunities have also been developed in hospitality and tourism and manufacturing with Gallagher Trust; we have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Mid & East Antrim Council, developed

opportunities to collaborate on Health & Social Care with Northern Trust, and introduced new apprenticeship opportunities with Translink. We will continue to grow our strategic alliances in 2021/22 and use these to expand our provision across all areas of the curriculum.

- **Curriculum Hubs:** NRC is the entrepreneurship hub for the FE sector, and we will use this as a springboard to drive innovation and entrepreneurship with the FE student base right across the sector. We will use our entrepreneurship clubs and zones and hub industry links to full embed entrepreneurial attributes in our students and develop entrepreneurial competence with curriculum staff.
- The College also collaborates across the FE sector through curriculum hubs for Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing, Construction, Hospitality & Tourism, Life Sciences, Health & Social Care and Digital Information Technology. This collaboration has had a positive impact. Examples of developments achieved as a result of the work of the curriculum hubs include the following:

#### Engineering:

- ❖ Assisted with the development of new qualifications and apprenticeship frameworks e.g., reviewing the NOS standards, developing a railway apprenticeship.
- ❖ Created opportunities via sector specific groups e.g. industry 4.0, Hydraulics/Pneumatics etc.
- ❖ Raised opportunities for CPD events such as Robotics, PLCs, welding and visits to partnering institutions.

#### Hospitality & Tourism

- ❖ The Hospitality & Tourism hub has secured final approval and successful launch of Youth Traineeship frameworks with FDQ across L2 Commis Chef, L2 Production Chef and L2 Hospitality Team Member
- ❖ The Hospitality & Tourism hub has obtained approval with OCN to begin to develop the new Level 3 Hospitality programme to replace the out-of-date Pearson 2010 specification.

#### Digital Information Technology

- ❖ Centralised bidding for CPD funding which has resulted in extensive CPD in emerging areas such as cyber and AI. This is supporting the upskilling of staff in all the colleges.
- ❖ Centralised curriculum planning for RQF, Advanced Technical and Foundation Degree is developing unit and course teams across the six colleges. This includes workshops to support content, teaching materials and cross college assessments.
- **Growth Deals:** We will also use the opportunities presented by our role in the Belfast Region City Deal (which includes two of our Council areas: Mid & East Antrim and Antrim & Newtownabbey) to support the roll out of the Education & Skills pillar and work with Causeway Coast and Glens, and Mid Ulster councils to explore how we can provide greatest input to the growth deals currently being developed in their areas.
- **Level 2 Traineeships and Level 3 Advanced Technicals:** The 2021/22 academic year presents an opportunity to deliver Level 2 Traineeships and Level 3 Advanced Technicals across several curriculum areas in advance of a wider reach from 2022/23 onwards. With 72% of enrolments at level 2 and level 3, implementation of these sectoral strategies is key to the FE sector's market positioning going forward.
- **ESOL:** There may be further opportunity within the College to expand the ESOL programme for individuals who are settled within the College catchment area as part of the Afghan Resettlement scheme, however until more information is provided on timescales the targets do not reflect any potential activity.

#### 4.6.3 Challenges

- **Lost learning:** The lasting impact of the last two years on students enrolling with the College in 2021/22 is still not fully known. The issues caused by COVID range between emotional, financial, physical and educational. Students are entering level 3 provision with Teacher Assessed Grades for GCSE English and Maths, which in some circumstances may not reflect the grades they would have obtained if they

had sat external examinations. In the current academic year, all students will undergo initial diagnostic tests regardless of their numeracy and literacy entry grades to ensure additional educational support can be provided if required. The College will pilot a framework in 2021/22 to support students, led by newly appointed Achievement Coaches. The coaches will be best placed to provide individual support to students who are struggling with their vocational qualification and require additional assistance to fulfil their potential. The posts are fixed terms contracts and future provision will be considered in line with any demonstrated increase in retention and achievement.

- **Falling enrolments across the FE sector:** From 2015/16 to 2019/20 the enrolments in FE Colleges have decreased by 14% (153,817 to 132,354). The enrolments in 2019/20 fell by 10% from 2018/19, this can be linked to the impact of COVID and the introduction of restrictions from March 2020. In 2020/21 the College saw regulated enrolments, including essential skills, fall from 15,059 in 2019/20 to 11,608. This represents a decrease of 23% and is directly linked to the reduction in capacity due to 2m social distancing which capped enrolment numbers and reduced the ability to deliver some additional part time qualifications which enhance student employability. but could not be delivered online or through a blended delivery model (examples include First Aid, Sign Language or Food Safety). In 2021/22 it is anticipated the College will be able to offer these enhanced employability qualifications to the appropriate cohorts and will seek to deliver a range of additional qualifications through a blended model. There was also an impact on community provision as a result of lockdown restrictions. This equated to 600 Horizon enrolments, many of which are not regulated. In 2021/22, while physical capacity constraints are no longer in place, external factors (such as the increased intakes at schools and universities due to grade inflation) have impacted on the demand for places in FE Colleges and this is likely to constrain our enrolment numbers in the current academic year. This, along with smaller second year cohorts linked to the small first year cohorts from 2020/21 have resulted in a difficult enrolment environment this year.

- **Viability of classes due to low enrolment numbers:** In 2020/21 the first-year intake was significantly reduced, and this continues to impact the enrolment numbers in 2021/22. Smaller first year classes in 2020/21, due to social distancing, means the College has small second year cohorts in 2021/22. The consequence of this is realised in the viability of classes both in terms of financial cost and the student experience. The performance of a small cohort in terms of retention and achievement is more acute as losing one or two students will have a greater impact in a class of eight or ten than in a class of twenty. In 2021/22, the College continues to see reduced start of year recruitment and this has in some vocational areas resulted in small first year intakes. The College is mindful that students enrolling in smaller cohorts require a programme of study to either enter the workforce or upskill to gain a better opportunity, thus the reason for proceeding in a reduced class size. The outcome of this will continue to be experienced in 2022/23 with smaller than normal second year cohorts.
- **Post primary schools:** Direct competition with post primary schools continues to present challenges for the College. Within the College's catchment areas post primary schools are increasing their vocational provision with the delivery of BTEC qualifications. With teacher assessed grades, schools are increasing their retention of year 12 students who are progressing into year 13, where prior to the pandemic this route may not have been available to select cohorts of students, who would have achieved lower grades through formal examinations. The College is facing reduced recruitment opportunities at specific campuses due to increased intakes in year 8 and year 13 e.g. Rainey Endowed, Magherafelt [case for change \(eani.org.uk\)](https://eani.org.uk) and the Sperrin College, Magherafelt [School Development Proposal \(eani.org.uk\)](https://eani.org.uk).
- **HE in FE:** This funding stream is facing increasing challenges with difficulty recruiting and sustaining start of year enrolments. Increased MaSN allocation to universities means, even if applications convert to enrolments, the student may be offered a place at a local HEI up to mid-October, as the final date for adding clearing choices in UCAS for 2021 entry is 19 October with 20 October the last date for universities to accept applicants in clearing. For courses sitting on the

viability threshold this may result in course closure and subsequently this can lead to a further loss of HE enrolments.

- **Training for Success Extensions to November:** Recruitment of students currently enrolled on Training for Success programmes to Apps NI programme is further complicated this year with the 13-week extension given to all training providers to complete learner outcomes. Where the College would normally benefit from trainees transitioning from private training organisations in September, this is now unlikely to occur before December. The College is now considering recruitment opportunities for these trainees in January to not further disadvantage them by delaying their progression to Apps NI programmes.
- **Blended delivery model:** In 2020/21 a clear framework was established for the appropriate delivery model for each qualification level. For the 2021/22 academic year, the need to return to face to face delivery is clear, however the move to remote learning has accelerated opportunities to create innovative delivery methods. This year the challenge will be to be flexible in response to a changing environment and whilst main vocational qualifications will be delivered mainly through face to face, additional employability enhancement qualifications may be delivered through a blended or remote model, where appropriate.
- **Work placements:** There are expected challenges in securing work placement for health, social care and childcare students within these settings given the ongoing health care crisis. However, it is expected that the continued vaccine programme will facilitate more work placements in this academic year.
- **Traineeships and Advanced Technicals:** The College is piloting Level 3 Advanced Technicals in the following areas: Health and Social Care; Business; and IT. These programmes have enhanced work placement hours, which, as mentioned previously, may pose a challenge. Traineeships have been rolled out in those areas previously delivered under Training for Success. This may result in a loss of Essential Skills ICT enrolments as this was a requirement in the TfS framework. However, whilst it is not mandatory for Traineeships, ICT ES is a

requirement for Apps NI programmes and the College will consider the appropriateness of enrolling Trainees on ES ICT in preparation for Apps NI. Traineeship recruitment has also been impacted by the Apprenticeship Incentive Scheme, with more students than anticipated being recruited into Apprenticeship programmes to the detriment of Traineeship enrolments. However, recruitment to Apprenticeships must be viewed as a positive both for the student and the College as it represents successful employment and links with industry. In curriculum planning for 2022/23, the College will take account of those vocational areas in high demand – for example within carpentry and joinery and plumbing – and seek opportunities to expand provision aligned to demand, including workforce and facilities planning.

- **Teacher assessed grades:** The award of Teacher Assessed Grades in summer 2021 has directly impacted the College's recruitment. A direct link can be established between the enhanced grade profile of 30% of GCSE students with A\* - C grades, with the reduction of College enrolments of approximately 21% decrease in enrolments from 2020/21 to the start of 2021/22. This enhanced grade profile will impact the College's full time Level 2 and Level 3 recruitment, as students will have the opportunity to progress to year 13 at school or enter a FE programme at a level that would not normally have been possible after external examinations. The College will as already described lose HE enrolments as students could secure, HE places. There is further potential for a negative effect on the College performance in 2021/22 as students may be enrolled onto a higher level of FE course based on teacher assessed grades than they are academically suitable for, thus impacting on achievement and success rates, although it is hoped that the introduction of the Achievement Coaches will offset this.



## 5 Planned Activity

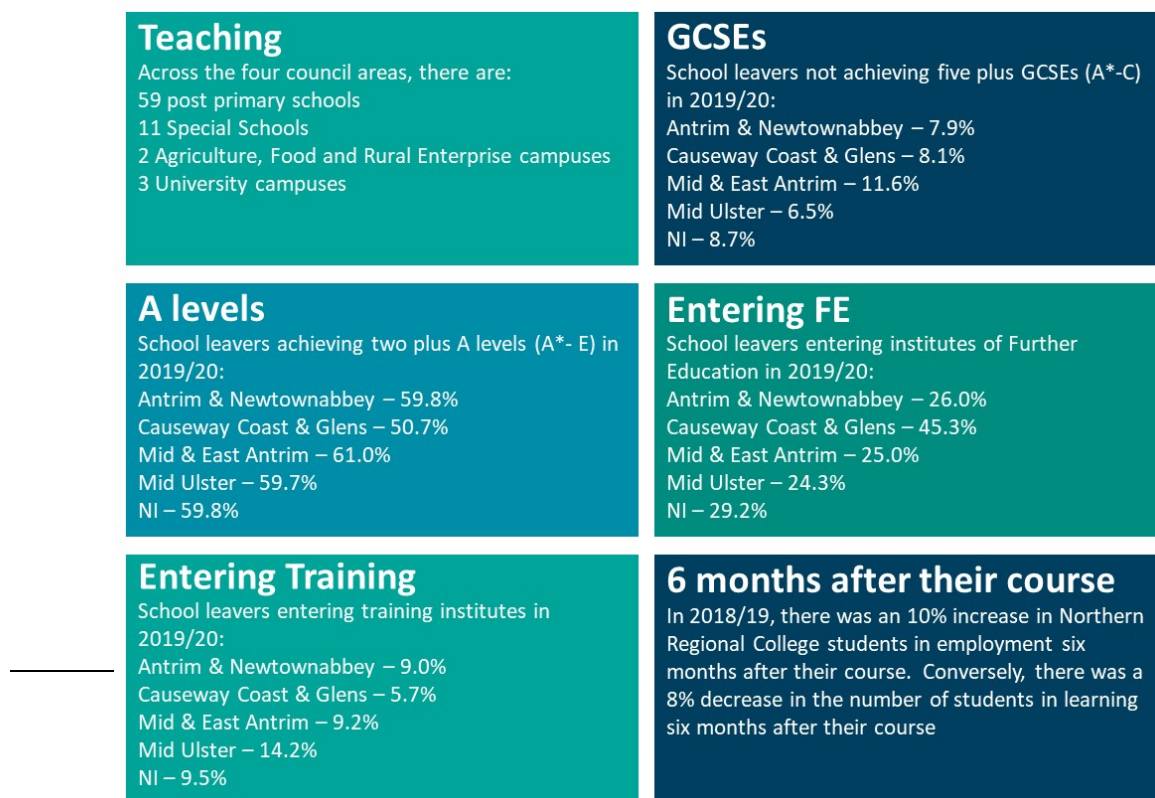
### 5.1 Qualifications – Report Card 1

Outlined below are the latest statistics relating to the educational profile of the College's catchment area.

While school leavers achieving two plus A levels (A\*-E) remained steady between 2017/18 and 2019/20, the percentage of students not achieving five plus GCSEs (A\*-C) decreased among all four council areas and Northern Ireland as a whole (NI – 15% in 17/18 to 8.7% in 19/20).

The number of school leavers entering an institute of further education decreased across Northern Ireland (34% in 2017/18 to 29% in 2019/20), however, out of the four council areas within the College's catchment area, Causeway Coast and Glens was the only council area with an increase (43% in 2017/18 to 45% in 2019/20). In addition, there was also a slight decrease in the number of students entering training institutes across Northern Ireland (10% in 2017/18 to 9% in 2019/20). The Mid Ulster council area was the only council area within the College's catchment area that saw an increase (12% in 2017/18 to 14% in 2019/20).

*Figure 6: Northern Ireland statistics relating to qualifications*

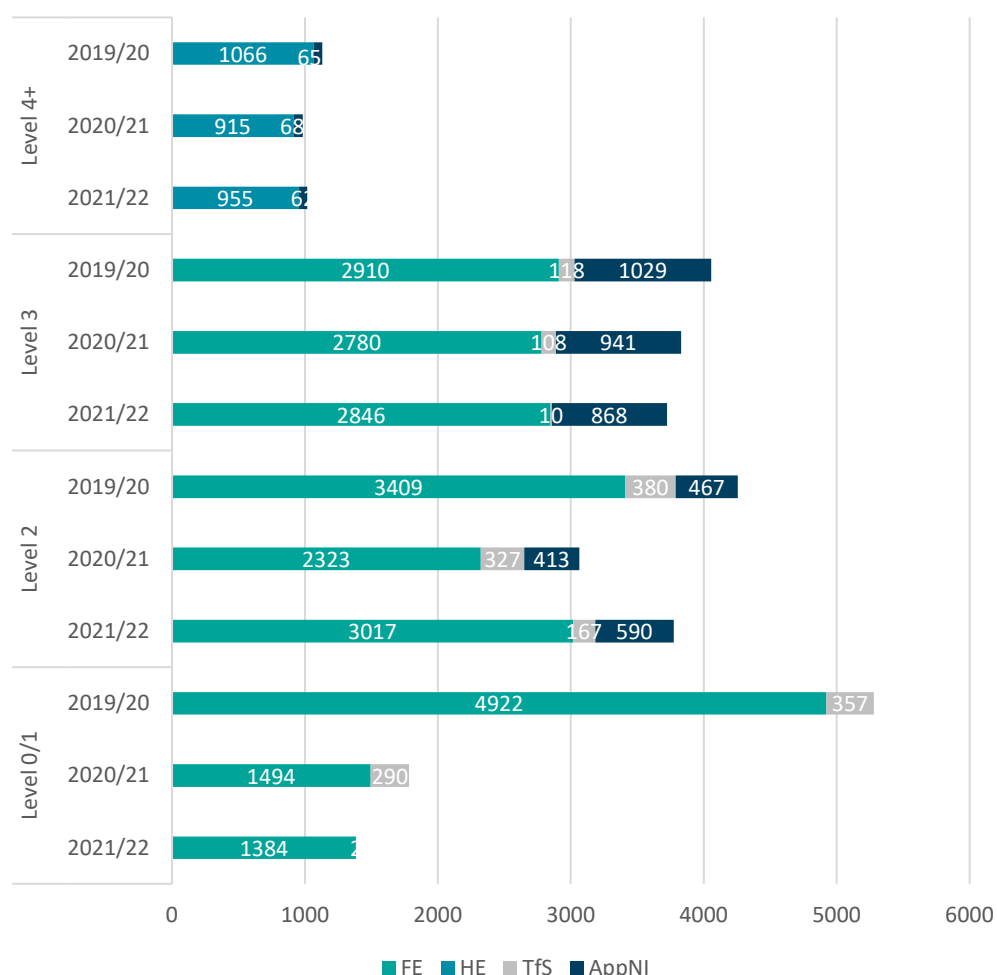


1 •Teaching - Department of Education, School Enrolment - School Level PPS data, 2020/21, published on 26th February 2021  
GCSEs/A levels/Entering FE or training - Department of Education, School Leavers Statistical Bulletin, 2019/20, published on 27th May 2021

6 months after their course - DfE FE Leavers survey, 2018/19, published on 5th November 2020

The NI Skills Barometer Summary Report (2019) shows the average weekly wage of employees is directly related to educational attainment. Those at Level 3+ earning on average £500 per week by the age of 40, compared to less than £400 per week for those with educational attainment at Level 2 and below. The higher the level of education, the higher the level of earnings and the ability to contribute to the local economy. Opportunities to retrain, develop new skills, diversify, and change career are paramount to lifelong wellbeing and fulfilling our potential. Life-long learning opportunities are essential to allow individuals to upskill and progress to higher level opportunities. According to the NI Skills Barometer, the workforce in Northern Ireland is expected to grow by around 84,000 by 2026. Of this growth, it is expected that 28,600 jobs will be filled from the education sector and/or from migration at the following levels: L6+ = 8,700; L4-5 = 3,352; L3 = 6,905; L2 = 6,403; ≤L1 = 3,197.

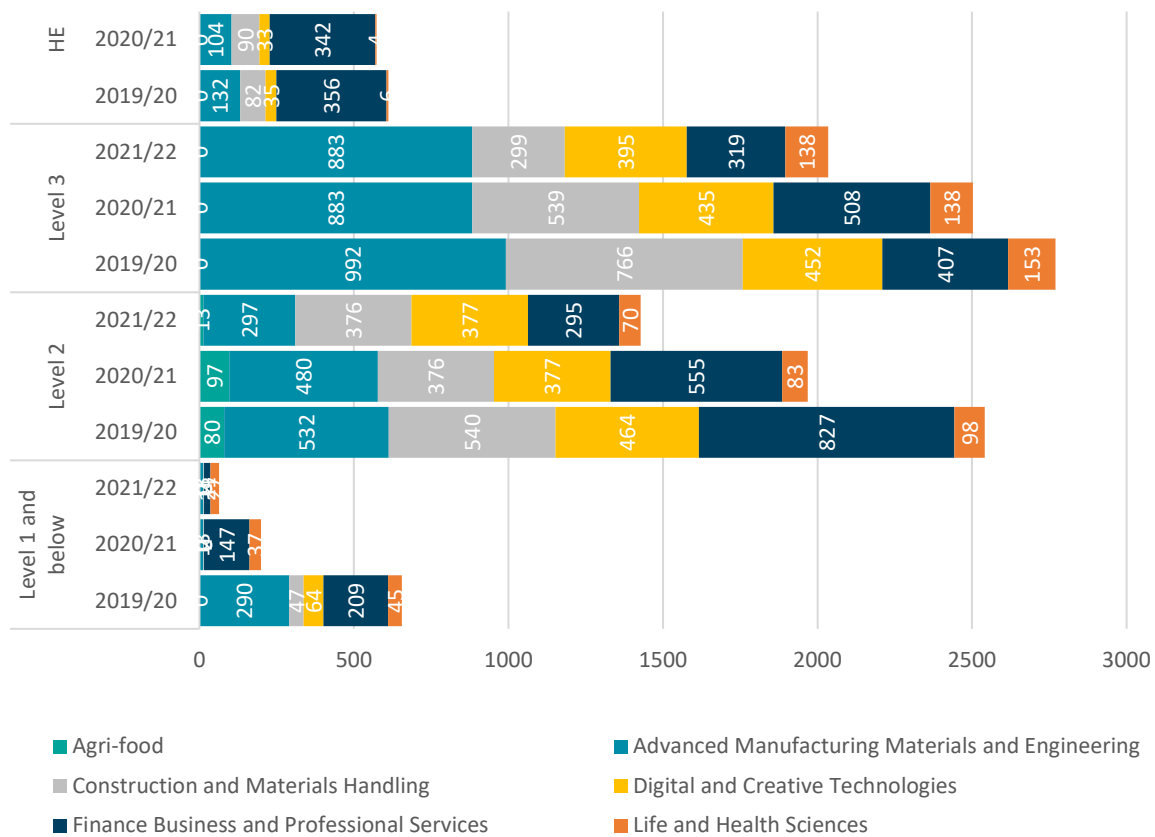
*Figure 7: Enrolments at the College (2019/20 and 2020/21 actuals and 2021/22 targets)*



Please note: 2020/21 actuals do not include those students returning to complete their 2019/20 qualifications.

Data captures: 21/22 – Targets, 20/21 - 30th June 2021 and 19/20 – 30th June 2020

*Figure 8 - Priority Skills and STEM Enrolments by Level and Year*



Source: College Development Plan Dashboard

21/22 – Targets

20/21 – 30th June 2021

19/20- 30th June 2020

While the impact of COVID-19 on the labour market is not yet fully understood, Chapter 2 above has indicated that expert analysis for the recovery of the NI economy is optimistic. This outlook is further supported by the evidence below:

- The NISRA Index of Services Q2 2021 bulletin reported services output in NI saw a quarterly increase of 5.5% in Quarter 2 2021, and an increase of 29.2% over the year, while the UK IOS output increased over both the quarter (5.8%) and the year (21.0%).
- The InterTrade Ireland Business Monitor Survey (Q2 2021) reported that 50% of businesses in Northern Ireland have seen growth in business in quarter two of 2021, compared with 29% in quarter one of 2021.

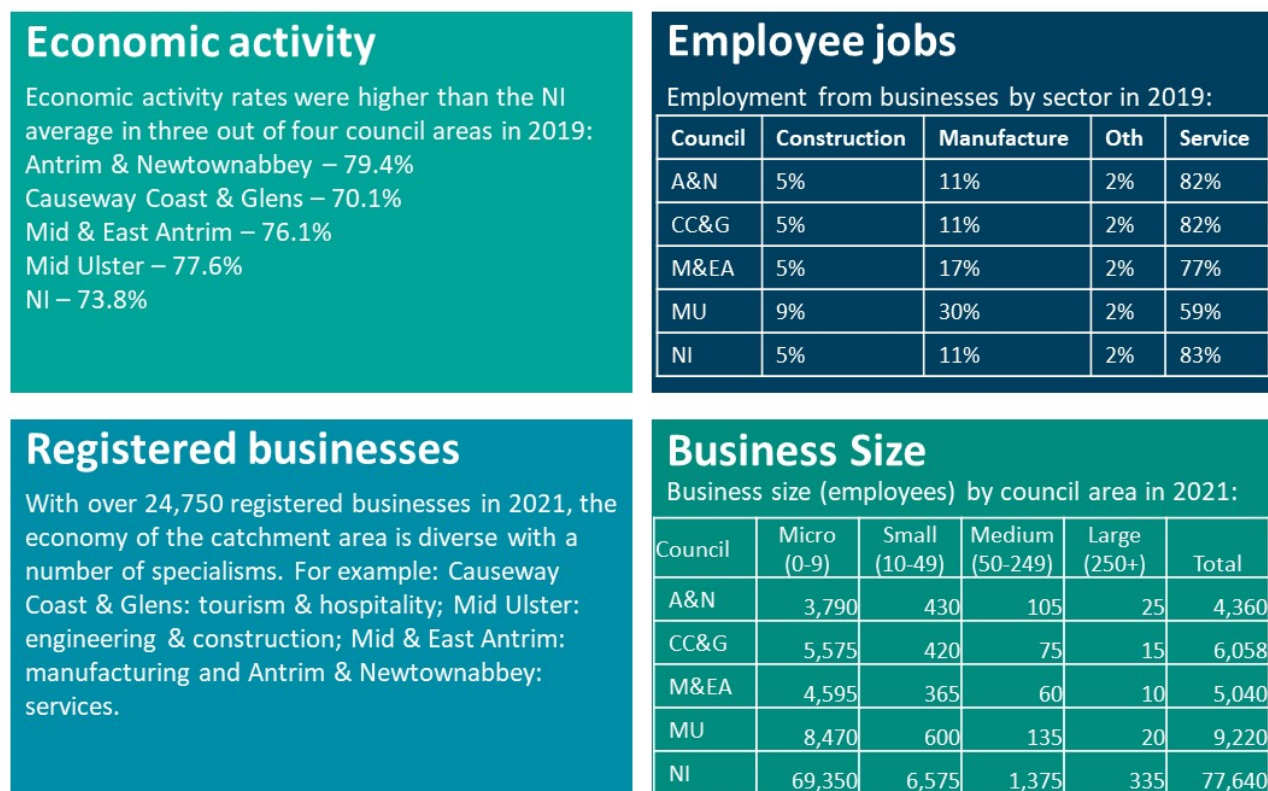
On the flip side, the University of Ulster Impact of Covid-19 on Northern Ireland Business Activity Final Report (November 2020), indicates that during the initial stages of lockdown the two largest sectors in terms of number of businesses (Wholesale and Retail, and

Construction), both had around a quarter of businesses temporarily closed. This equates to around 5,600 business in Northern Ireland. The report also says that the Arts, Entertainment and Recreation, and the Accommodation and Food Service sectors were most impacted in terms of their inability to operate. Four fifths of businesses in each of these sectors were temporarily closed, with just over 7,100 firms affected.

## 5.2 Employers <sup>2</sup>

Outlined below are key statistics relating to employers and economic activity across the College's four council areas:

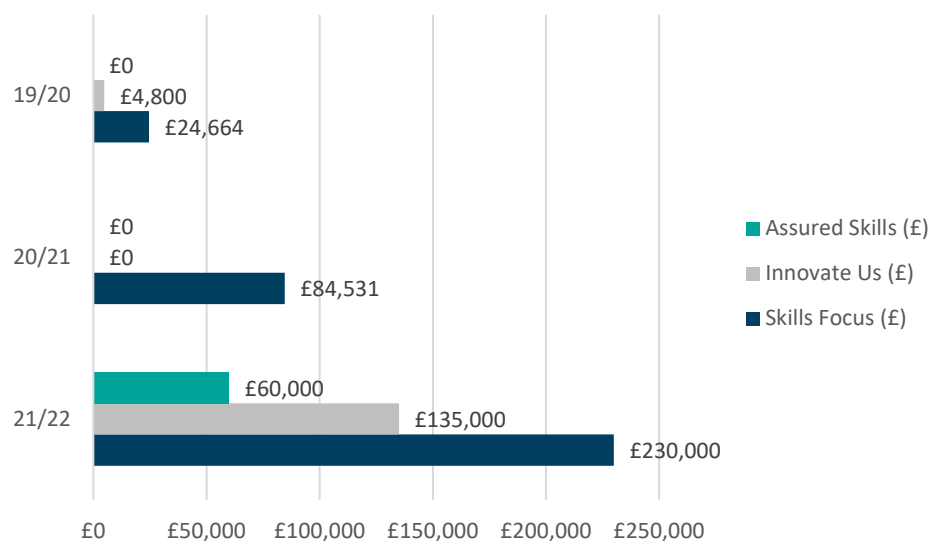
*Figure 9: Northern Ireland Statistics Relating to Employers*



<sup>2</sup> NISRA, Labour Force Survey, 2019, published on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020  
 Business Register and Employment Survey, 2019, published on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020  
 Inter Departmental Business Register, 2021, published on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021  
 Inter Departmental Business Register, 2021, published on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021

To grow the NI Economy, it is essential that businesses are supported to innovate and grow to provide more job opportunities. As business needs change, it is crucial that the workforce is able to support business expansion by having appropriate skills. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) also requires a skilled workforce to be available. Therefore, it is very important students are up-skilled in areas relative to demand (NI Skills Barometer, 2019) and that the existing workforce is developed to ensure local business can compete in a global market.

*Figure 10: Skills Focus and Innovate Us – 2019/20 – 2020/21 Actuals against 2021/22 targets*



Source: College CDP  
 21/22 – Targets  
 20/21 – 31st March 2021  
 19/20- 31st March 2020

## 5.3 Social Inclusion

Outlined below are key statistics demonstrating potential barriers to education and employment across the College's four council areas<sup>3</sup>:

*Figure 11: Northern Ireland Statistics Relating to Social Inclusion*

### No qualifications

No qualification rates (aged 16-64) are higher than the NI average in two out of four council areas in 2019:

Antrim & Newtownabbey – 9.6%  
Causeway Coast & Glens – 17.9%  
Mid & East Antrim – 9.8%  
Mid Ulster – 17.0%  
NI – 13.8%

### Unemployment

In 2019, unemployment rates (aged 16-64) were higher than the NI average in three out of the four council areas:

Antrim & Newtownabbey – 2.7%  
Causeway Coast & Glens – 3.6%  
Mid & East Antrim – 2.6%  
Mid Ulster – 2.9%  
NI – 2.6%

### Disabilities

Census 2011 predicted that the number of people with a long-term health problem or disability (bad or very bad health) is lower in all four councils areas when compared with the NI average:

Antrim & Newtownabbey – 5%  
Causeway Coast & Glens – 5%  
Mid & East Antrim – 5%  
Mid Ulster – 5%  
NI – 6%

### Deprivation

While the College's catchment area would have lower rankings than the NI average in relation to deprivation, one of the 37 measures of deprivation is the proportion leaving school aged 16, 17 and 18 not entering Education, Employment or Training:

Antrim & Newtownabbey – 3.2%  
Causeway Coast & Glens – 2.9%  
Mid & East Antrim – 3.7%  
Mid Ulster – 3.0%  
NI – 2.7%

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<sup>3</sup> NISRA, Labour Force Survey 2019, published on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020

NISRA, CENSUS, 2011

NI Multiple Deprivation Measures, 2017

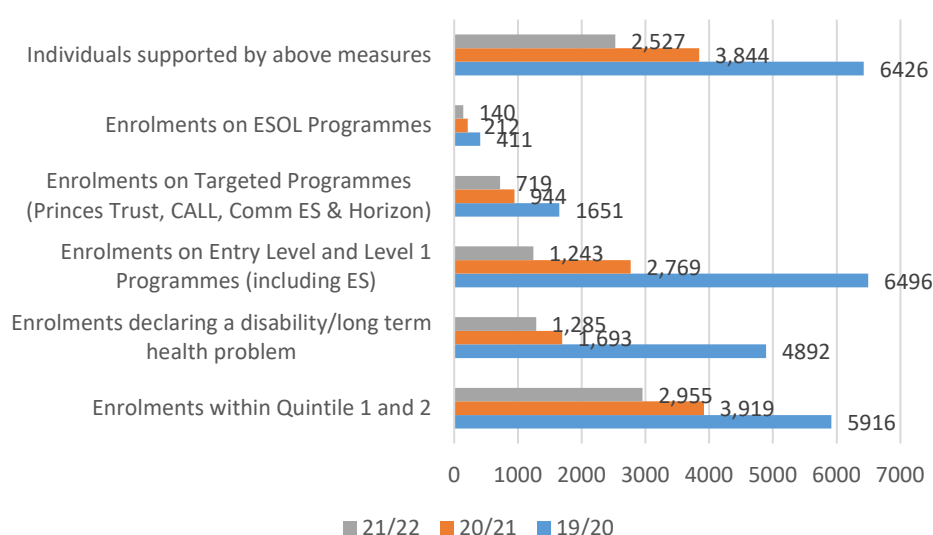


It is important to ensure that opportunity is open to everyone, wherever they live. It is also important to develop a workforce that has the right, high quality skills to meet the demands of employers now and in the future. This can be achieved by helping people to address barriers they face to accessing high quality employment, including low or no qualifications, disability, social or language.

Within the College the following programmes aim to address social inclusion barriers:

- Our Access courses provide a bridge for those without the appropriate level of qualifications to aspire to and achieve success in higher education;
- We offer skills-based courses that do not carry a qualification, but provide participants with either specialist skills such as advanced welding, or the opportunity to re-engage with learning as a step to further learning or employment;
- The College continues to work with the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme to provide ESOL courses to support their integration to life in NI; and
- The Inclusive Learning programmes establish qualification pathways for individuals with disabilities or long-term health problems.

*Figure 12: Social Inclusion targets (21/22) and actuals (19/20 & 20/21)*



Source: College Development Plan Dashboard

21/22 – Targets

20/21 – 26th July 2021

19/20- 30th June 2020

## 6 Budget

REVISED CDP BUDGET FOR 2021/22 - Northern Regional College						
	Description	Draft Outturn Expenditure 2020/21		Note	2021/22 DfE Allocation following October Monitoring letter dated 30 Sept.	
	Income	- 4,921		Note 1	- 5,029	
	Grant Income (Non EU)	- 178		Note 1	- 207	
	NILGOS	1,150			1,151	
	Other Operating Expenses	7,103		Note 2	8,352	
	Staff Costs	23,007			23,318	
	Covid-19 related	3,849		Note 3		
	<b>Total DEL Resource Budget</b>	<b>30,010</b>			<b>27,585</b>	
	Remove C-19 related for comparison	- 3,849				
	<b>Total DEL Resource Budget</b>	<b>26,161</b>			<b>27,585</b>	



Note 1	This figures includes the revised estimates for external engagement. There will be pressure on external income due to Covid-19 and other factors, and these have been factored into a bid to DfE.
Note 2	This figure reflects additional budget for external engagement work.
Note 3	The College has submitted bids for Covid-19 funding and Lost Learning for the 2021-22 year. There is still some degree of uncertainty around the full costs for Covid-19 in the 2021-22 year. The College will continue to work closely with NIFON and the Department on all funding bids as outlined in previous correspondence.

## 7 Planned Activity – Report Cards

The tables below set out the College's planned activity for the 2021/22 (in-light of a DfE budget allocation of £27,585k) year in support of the draft PfG Outcomes.

Residual Qualifications			
Area of Planned Activity (Data source: CDR)	Residual Activity x enrolments impacted by COVID-19, x enrolments will be progressed through to completion within the 2021/22 academic year		
	2019/20	2021/22	
<b>FE Activity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L0-3</li> <li>FT &amp; PT</li> <li>Excluding Essential Skills</li> </ul>	<b>Level &amp; MoA</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals to complete in 21/22</b>
	Level 2	504	0
	PT	345	0
	FT	159	0
	Level 3	289	0
	PT	218	0
	FT	71	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>793</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>HE in FE – Full time</b> L4-6	<b>Level &amp; MoA</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals to complete in 21/22</b>
	Level 4+ FT	9	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>HE in FE:- Part Time</b> L4-6	<b>Level &amp; MoA</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals to complete in 21/22</b>
	Level 4+ PT	48	16
<b>TfS:</b> L0-3	<b>Level &amp; MoA</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals to complete in 21/22</b>
	Level 2	63	9
<b>AppsNI:</b> L2 - 3	<b>Level &amp; MoA</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals to complete in 21/22</b>
	Level 2	127	0
	Level 3	173	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>HLAs</b> L4-5	<b>Level &amp; MoA</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals to complete in 21/22</b>
	Level 4+	2	0
<b>Essential Skills</b> Whole College Provision	<b>Funding Stream</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals</b>	<b>19/20 Residuals to complete in 21/22</b>
	ES	0	0

2021/22 Qualifications		
Area of Planned Activity (Data source: CDR)	Planned Activity For 21/22	20/21 In-Year Activity
<b>FE Activity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L0-3</li> <li>FT &amp; PT</li> <li>Excluding Essential Skills</li> </ul>	<b>7,247</b> enrolments equating to <b>5,666</b> Individuals	<b>6,597</b> enrolments equating to <b>4,657</b> Individuals
<b>HE in FE – Full time<sup>4</sup>:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L4-6</li> </ul>	<b>250</b> enrolments equating to <b>250</b> Individuals	<b>206</b> enrolments equating to <b>206</b> Individuals
<b>HE in FE – Part time:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L4-6</li> </ul>	<b>705</b> enrolments equating to <b>705</b> No. of Individuals	<b>709</b> enrolments equating to <b>708</b> No. of Individuals
<b>TfS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L0-3</li> </ul>	<b>179</b> enrolments equating to <b>95</b> No. of Individuals	<b>725</b> enrolments equating to <b>224</b> Individuals
<b>Skills for Life and Work</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L0-2</li> </ul>	<b>0</b> enrolments equating to <b>0</b> Individuals	N/A
<b>Traineeships:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L2</li> </ul>	<b>96</b> enrolments equating to <b>96</b> Individuals	N/A
<b>AppsNI:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L2-3</li> </ul>	<b>1,657</b> enrolments equating to <b>959</b> apprentices registered for training  <b>97%</b> of AppsNI apprentices who remain on the programme for at least 4 weeks after initial registration and go on to remain on the programme for more than 52 weeks.	<b>1,354</b> enrolments equating to <b>734</b> apprentices registered for training  <b>97%</b> of AppsNI apprentices who remain on the programme for at least 4 weeks after initial registration and go on to remain on the programme for more than 52 weeks.
<b>HLAs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L4-5</li> </ul>	<b>62</b> enrolments equating to <b>62</b> HLA	<b>68</b> enrolments equating to <b>68</b> individuals
<b>Essential Skills</b>	<b>1,861</b> enrolments equating to <b>890</b> Individuals.	<b>2,669</b> enrolments equating to <b>1,850</b> Individuals.

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<sup>4</sup> As advised by DfE in 2020/21 the College has included the MaSN target of 250, current HE FT enrols are 186.

2021/22 Qualifications		
Area of Planned Activity (Data source: CDR)	Planned Activity For 21/22	20/21 In-Year Activity
<b>Priority Sector Areas and / or STEM (PSSA)<sup>5</sup>:</b>	<b>4,000</b> PSSA enrolments equating to <b>3,643</b> individuals enrolled in one or more PSSA subjects  <b>2,517</b> of final year students enrolled in one or more PSSA subjects	<b>5,243</b> PSSA enrolments equating to <b>4,475</b> individuals enrolled in in one or more PSSA subjects.  <b>1,678</b> of final year students enrolled in one or more PSSA subjects

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<sup>5</sup> The Priority Sector Area and / or STEM performance measure incorporates not only the Priority Sector Areas as previously measured, but also STEM subjects

Employers		
Area of Planned Activity	Planned Activity for 21/22	20/21 Activity
<b>InnovateUs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022</li> </ul>	<b>25</b> projects delivered through the InnovateUs programme  <b>£135,000</b> of projects completed (budget spend)	<b>0</b> No. of projects delivered through the InnovateUs programme  <b>£0</b> of projects completed (budget spend)
<b>Skills Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L2+</li> <li>1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022</li> </ul>	<b>500</b> enrolments undertaking a Level 2 (and above) qualification through the Skills Focus Programme <b>£230,000</b> of projects completed (budget spend)	<b>152</b> enrolments undertaking a Level 2 (and above) qualification through the Skills Focus Programme  <b>£84,531</b> of projects completed (budget spend)
<b>Assured Skills:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L0-8</li> <li>1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022</li> </ul>	To deliver <b>1</b> Assured Skills Academies	<b>0</b> Assured Skills Academies delivered
<b>Other Programmes</b>		
<b>Fusion Projects</b>	<b>£30,000</b> Fusion projects completed (budget spend)	<b>£29,000</b> Fusion projects completed (budget spend)  <b>1</b> project delivered
<b>Bridge to Employment Programme</b>	N/A	N/A
<b>Innovation Voucher Scheme</b>	<b>£35,000</b> of projects completed (budget spend)	<b>£0</b> of projects completed (budget spend)

Social Inclusion		
Area of Planned Activity (Data source: CDR)	Planned Activity for 21/22	20/21 In-Year Activity
Enrolments within Quintile 1 and 2	2,955	3,919
Enrolments declaring a disability / long term health problem	1,285	1,693
Enrolments on Entry Level and Level 1 Programmes (including Essential Skills)	1,243	2,769
Enrolments on Targeted Programmes (College Connect, Prince's Trust, Community ES, Horizons, CALL project)	719	944
Enrolments on ESOL Programmes	140	212
Overall number of individuals supported by above measures	2,527	3,844

Overall College Performance		
Performance Indicator	Planned Performance Rate for 21/22	19/20 Performance Rate
<b>Retention Rate:</b> The proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study to the number of final year enrolments.	88%	91.1%
<b>Achievement Rate:</b> The percentage of the number of enrolments who completed their final year of study and achieve their qualifications to the number of enrolments who completed their final year of study.	84%	77.1%
<b>Success Rate:</b> 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.	74%	70.2%