

**College Development Plan 2025/26**

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## 1. Executive Summary

The six FE colleges in Northern Ireland (collectively the FE sector) are Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) and are a key delivery arm of the Department for the Economy (DfE). Under Article 20 of the Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997, FE colleges are required to produce and publish annual business plans (College Development Plans) which reflect the sector's dual mandate of:

- 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.

This College Development Plan 2025/26 reflects Northern Regional College's (the College's) response to that requirement and is set in the context of our 2022/23 - 2024/25 Strategic Plan which articulates the College's Vision, Values and Strategic Priorities to 2025 as below.

Figure 1: College Vision, Values and Strategic Priorities



The previous Strategic Plan can be read in full at [Strategic Plan | Northern Regional College](#).

The 2025/26 - 2027/28 strategy development process has commenced and the updated strategy will be in place during the academic year. Engagement with a range of stakeholders has taken place including Governors, Senior Management Team and Wider Management Team, in consideration of Council objectives and the Minister's Economic Priorities. The College is committed to supporting the Department's [Business Plan for 2025/26](#), which continues to underscore the Minister's commitment to FE, particularly in investing in the right skills, in the right places, and will incorporate this document into further strategy development. The strategy development and curriculum development processes for 2025/26 onwards have been slowed due to anticipated significant budget cuts which will impact the level of ambition.

The College planned individual student activity for 2025/26 is 8,287, this represents a 2% increase from the 2024/25 planned activity of 8,105. The College increased its activity by 6% from 2023/2024 to 2024/2025. The College anticipates enrolments to remain broadly in line with the 2024/25 target. Planned enrolment activity for 2025/26 is 14,163 compared with that planned for 2024/25 which was 14,084. The College however remains committed to maintaining flexibility and ensuring responsiveness to emerging opportunities throughout the academic year, pursuing funding opportunities as they arise.

The Governing Body fully endorses the 2025/26 College Development Plan and the planned activity set out for 2025/26. The draft College Development Plan for 25/26 and associated targets were presented and endorsed by Education Committee on the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2025 and Governing body on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2025. College development plan progress is presented to Governors throughout the academic year. The Governing Body, hold the College to account for all performance metrics included in the College Development Plan reflected through minutes. Performance against the CDP is reported to DfE and addressed at Accountability Review meetings.

## 2. Strategic Context

### Programme for Government 2024-2027: Doing What Matters Most

#### **Grow a Globally Competitive Economy**

**Proposed Action:** Through a series of multi-million-pound committed investments, we will make this a more vibrant and inclusive place to live, work, invest and visit. Central to every part of our plan for a globally competitive and sustainable economy will be employers and workers. Supporting them to build the skills needed both now, and in the future, will be vital if we are to harness our economic potential.

#### **Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs**

**Proposed Action:** We will work to transform the Education system to provide high quality, efficient and sustainable services for children with SEN and disability. Systemic transformation will take time and will require significant investment but it is vital that we respond meaningfully to make sure our education system works for all learners.

#### **Minister's Economic Vision**

The College is a key delivery partner in taking forward the Minister's priorities set out in her Economic Vision to:

- Increase the proportion of working-age people in **Good Jobs**;
- Promote a more **Regionally Balanced** economy;
- **Raise Productivity** of businesses; and
- **Reduce Carbon Emissions** in the transition to a greener and more sustainable economy.

Taking into consideration the Department's [Business Plan for 2025/26](#), published in June 2025.

#### **Strategies / Priorities**

- [Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland](#)
- [Trade and Investment Strategic Priorities](#)
- [Climate Change Act \(NI\) 2022](#) and [The Climate Change \(Reporting Bodies\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2024](#)
- FE Transformation
- [Developing a More Strategic Approach to 14-19 Education and Training - a Framework to Transform 14-19 Education and Training Provision](#)
- [Skills Barometer 2023 - 2033](#)
- DfE Business plan
- [DfE Sectoral Action Plans](#)
- [DfE Sub Regional Economic Plans](#)
- [DfE Digital Skills Action Plan 2024 - 2034](#)
- [Tourism Vision & Action Plan – 10 Year Plan](#)
- Review of Post School Education, Skills and Training Provision

### 3. Financial Performance/Position

#### 2025/26 Forecast Position

The tables below set out the College **resource and capital requirements of £33,057k and £7,088k** for 2025/26, respectively.

PROGRAMME / ACTIVITY						
	A	B	C	D	E	
	Further Education	Higher Education	Apprenticeships / Traineeships	Business Development	Social Inclusion	Totals (£000's)
	EL - Level 3 (not under B – F)	Level 4+	Programmes up to Level 3 including AppsNI; Traineeships; Skills for Life and Work	InnovateUs; Skills Focus; Assured Skills Academies; Flexible Skills; International Programmes; Innovation Voucher Scheme	Access NI; Essential Skills; ESOL; College Connect; NI Prisons Service; VEP; Princes Trust; UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Step Up	
Direct Teaching Costs - Pay	9,690	1,413	4,040	1,010	4,040	20,193
Direct Teaching Costs - Non Pay	1,561	277	763	174	694	3,469
Non-Direct Costs*	6,241	1,110	3,056	695	2,778	13,880
<b>Total Delivery Cost</b>	<b>17,492</b>	<b>2,800</b>	<b>7,859</b>	<b>1,879</b>	<b>7,512</b>	<b>37,542</b>
Non-Grant in Aid Income	994	338	947	895	1,311	4,485
<b>Net Requirement</b>	<b>16,498</b>	<b>2,462</b>	<b>6,912</b>	<b>984</b>	<b>6,201</b>	<b>33,057</b>

\* Includes total support service/non-front-line activity overheads apportioned based on delivery hours.

<b>TOTAL RESOURCE REQUIREMENT (£000's)</b>	<b>33,057</b>
Capital Expenditure – Major capital projects	6,778
Capital Expenditure – Minor Works	500
Capital Expenditure – DfE Energy – Invest to Save	0
Capital Receipts	-190
<b>Net DfE Capital Requirement (£000's)</b>	<b>7,088</b>
City Deals Capital Expenditure	0

Staff numbers control has been provided by Northern Regional College and evidenced by the targets provided in the following Reform to Save table:

Staff numbers FTE	Staff Type	Actual 31st July 2023	RtS Leavers	Actual 31st July 2024	RtS Leavers	Target 31st March 2025	Actual 31st March 2025	Actual 31 July 2025
	Teaching	320.0	-1.2	283.7	-13.1	300.0	300.6	309.9
	Non Teaching	266.0	-12.8	263.8	-5.4	284.0	248.4	242.4
	Sub Total FTEs	<b>586.0</b>	<b>-14.0</b>	<b>547.5</b>	<b>-18.5</b>	<b>584.0</b>	<b>549.0</b>	<b>552.2</b>
Externally funded posts								
	Vacant posts	38.0		57.5		5.0	37.5	34.7
	Total FTE Staffing	<b>624.0</b>	<b>-14.0</b>	<b>605.0</b>	<b>-18.5</b>	<b>589.0</b>	<b>586.5</b>	<b>586.9</b>

Notes:

1. The above will be impacted by movements of leavers/joiners during the year, along with the strike action and use of average FTEs.
2. Staffing figures are now tracked on a monthly basis from October 2024.
3. The July 2024 figures are draft and still subject sign-off.
4. The RtS leavers link back to approved business case and final approved numbers.

## **4 2025/26 College Planned Delivery**

The College takes into account its profile and Sub-regional Operating Context to prioritise resource utilisation to areas of greatest need, aligned to the Strategic Context.

### **a. College Profile for 2025/26**

From the start of the 2025/26 academic year the College will operate out of four campuses. Causeway Campus saw the amalgamation of Coleraine and Ballymoney campuses in 2024/25 and the new Ballymena Campus, opening for students in September 2025/26, will see the amalgamation of three locations, Trostan Avenue, Farm Lodge and Lamont Building. The College has delivered 11,961 enrolments during 2023/24 across four Council Areas: Antrim & Newtownabbey; Causeway Coast & Glens; Mid & East Antrim; and Mid Ulster with an anticipated increase for 2024/2025. (Figure 2)

Both new build capital projects represent significant investment of £103m, from the Department for the Economy, into Further Education facilities. The College has transitioned from a six-campus model to a four-campus operating base. The four campuses will be aligned to the four councils outlined above i.e.: Causeway with Causeway Coast & Glens; Magherafelt with Mid Ulster; Ballymena with Mid & East Antrim; and Newtownabbey with Antrim & Newtownabbey. The College has commenced further projects to support the redevelopment of Magherafelt and Newtownabbey.

The College employs approximately 720 staff across four campuses injecting over £22m in salaries and wages into the local economy. The breakdown of the staff profile is 549 FTEs, 300.6 FTE Teaching Staff and 248.4 FTE Support Staff.

### **Campus Priority Areas:**

#### **Digital and Creative Industries**

Digital and Creative Industries are priority areas at both the Causeway and Newtownabbey campuses. The College has established strategic partnerships such as with NI Screen to strengthen curriculum alignment, with career pathways from Level 3 through to Higher Education. Enrolments in these areas have increased at both campuses, particularly at Level 3. In response, the College will launch a distinctive Open University Foundation Degree in *Creative Industries Production and Professional Practice* in September 2025/26. Additionally, the Digital and Computing curriculum continues to expand, offering programmes from Levels 2 to 6.

#### **Advanced Manufacturing – Ballymena Campus**

The Ballymena campus is designated as a Centre of Specialism for Advanced Manufacturing, recognised for its leading expertise in robotics systems integration and its growing capabilities in green technologies. This specialism is further supported by the state-of-the-art facilities and advanced equipment housed in the newly developed Ballymena building.

#### **Life and Health Sciences- Newtownabbey Campus**

The College is expanding provision in Life and Health Sciences, including Health and Social Care. New Higher-Level Apprenticeships (HLAs) will be introduced in Health and Social Care Management, alongside apprenticeship programmes in Health and Social Care and Dental Nursing. The College also plans to increase enrolments in the *Healthcare Practice* programme, delivered in partnership with the Open University and the Northern Trust, which launched in 2024/25.



### Hospitality and Tourism – Causeway Campus

Hospitality and Tourism remains a key focus at the Causeway campus, aligned with the economic priorities of the Causeway Coast and Glens area. The College plans to expand HLAs in this sector to meet local demand.

### Magherafelt Campus – Skills Centre for Adult Education, Health, Innovation, and Enterprise

For 2025/26, the College will introduce new programmes aligned with campus specialisms; these include Computer-Aided Design (CAD), management qualifications aimed at adult returners, Dental Nursing apprenticeships, and expanded Health and Social Care offerings from Level 2 to Level 5.

### Student Profile

#### Enrolment vs Individuals

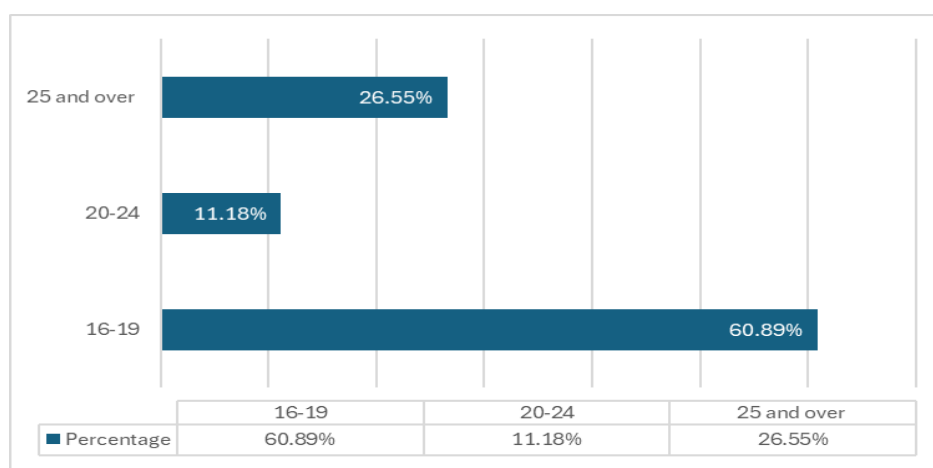
The data below illustrates the number of individuals studying at Northern Regional College during the past three academic years, to note 2024/25 figures represent to end of March 2025.

Year	Individuals	Enrolments
2021/22	8,040	14,770
2022/23	8,290	14,870
2023/24	7,805	11,961
2024/25	7,995	14,459

### Gender and Age

Our learner profile is relatively balanced in terms of gender with 49% female and 51% male. 72% of learners are aged 16-25 with the remainder over 25, as detailed in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: Student Age Profile



### How well did we do?

As per previous years, student surveys indicate a positive experience with 98% overall satisfaction rates. Furthermore, in accordance with the most recent NISRA FE Outcomes Dashboard, accessed 13/05/25, 97% of students rate their experience as positive at the

College, with 98% indicating they are on the right course, 88% of College leavers are in learning or employment six months after leaving their course, the positive statistics are a testament to the College's staff.

### **Learner and Staff Achievements**

Throughout the 2024/25 academic year, learners and staff at the College celebrated remarkable achievements, reflecting their dedication and the College's commitment to excellence.

Recognising the value of competition in developing technical and personal skills, the College applied for 2025 to be a World Skills Centre of excellence. The College significantly increased participation in skills competitions across all vocational areas. This effort led to 108 learners progressing to national finals, an impressive increase compared to previous years. The College will seek to maximise engagement in competitions within the available budget.

At the prestigious WorldSkills competition in Lyon 2024, two students earned a Medallion of Excellence in Robotics, marking a major milestone for the College. In the area of Joinery, three students were selected to attend WorldSkills UK squad bootcamps. One student successfully secured a place on the UK team and will represent the country at WorldSkills Shanghai 2026 and EuroSkills Herning 2025 in Denmark.

Students from Level 3 Construction, Computing, and Hair & Beauty participated in a two-week international study programme at the Irish College in Leuven, Belgium. This was funded by the Turing Scheme.

A student from the Level 5 Leadership in Health & Social Care programme was named a finalist in the Learner of the Year category at the NCFE Aspiration Awards, recognising their outstanding progress and commitment.

The College also saw success in enterprise and digital skills:

- Computing students were awarded Best Start-Up Company of the Year at the 2025 Young Enterprise Northern Ireland (YENI) Awards; and
- Two Level 3 Computing students from Ballymena and Magherafelt qualified for the MOS Irish Finals hosted by Microsoft in Dublin, demonstrating the strength of digital skills training within the College.

Northern Regional College was shortlisted in two categories at the Causeway Coast & Glens People Awards, winning the Next Generation Initiative award, thus highlighting the College's dedication to student support and innovation.

### **College Achievements**

In 2024/25, the College made significant progress in academic and industry engagement as noted below.

- The average class size increased from 8 in 2023/24 to 13 in 2024/25, improving class viability. Plans are in place to continue this upward trend into 2025/26.
- The College provided bespoke business support to over 59 companies, delivering 121 tailored training programmes. Industry-focused academies were successfully delivered in Business Administration, Engineering, Hospitality, Manufacturing,

Welding, Clean Tech, Phlebotomy, Childcare, and Tour Guiding, in collaboration with local council partners and The Gallaher Trust.

- Additionally, the College's new build projects at Causeway and Ballymena were shortlisted as finalists in the 'Social Value' category at the UK Government Go Awards.
- The opening of the College's new £46m Causeway Campus in Coleraine for the 2024/25 academic year has seen a very positive impact on enrolments, with a 14% increase in FE enrolments reported in September 2024 and an increase of 27% of distinct individual students (Full and part-time) as at 31 March 2025 compared with the previous period. There are ongoing benefits being felt by our students, staff, and local community.

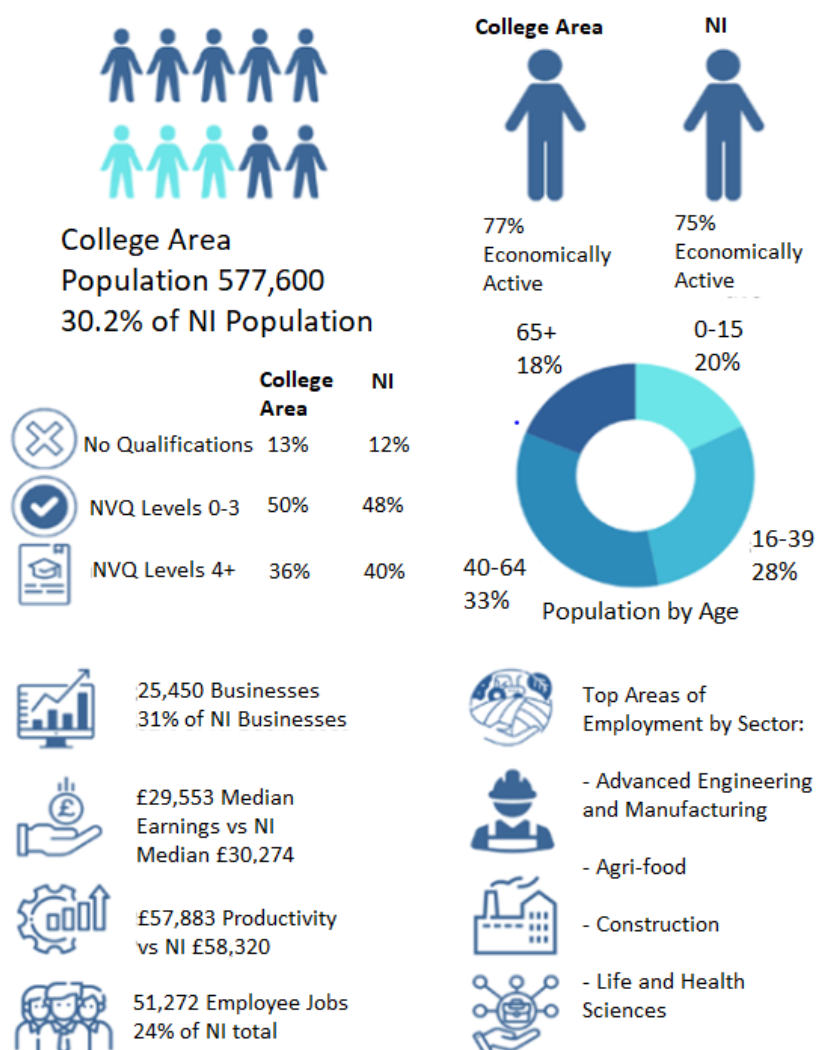
## b. Sub-regional Operating Context

### Population and Industry Profile

The College operates across four council areas, covering a population that equates to 30.2% of the Northern Ireland total, equating to 577,600 people. Figure 3 gives an overview of the population and industry profile across the College's catchment area. Further information by local council area can be viewed in [Invest NI Sub-regional Economic Plan Technical Annex](#) and [Invest NI Council Briefing Statistics](#). The College aims to provide opportunities for the 13% of the local community without formal qualifications, through delivery of Essential Skills and targeted programmes such as Step Up, CALL and ESOL. Whilst the local area sits above the Northern Ireland average for economic activity, the College continues to work with partners to deliver focused academies which create employment opportunities for those currently not in work. With an ageing population, the College is increasing lifelong learning opportunities, including the continued delivery of bespoke Women Returner Programmes.

Through business engagement, the College works with local businesses and industries, such as manufacturing; engineering; hospitality; and services, which are the most prevalent across the four council areas.

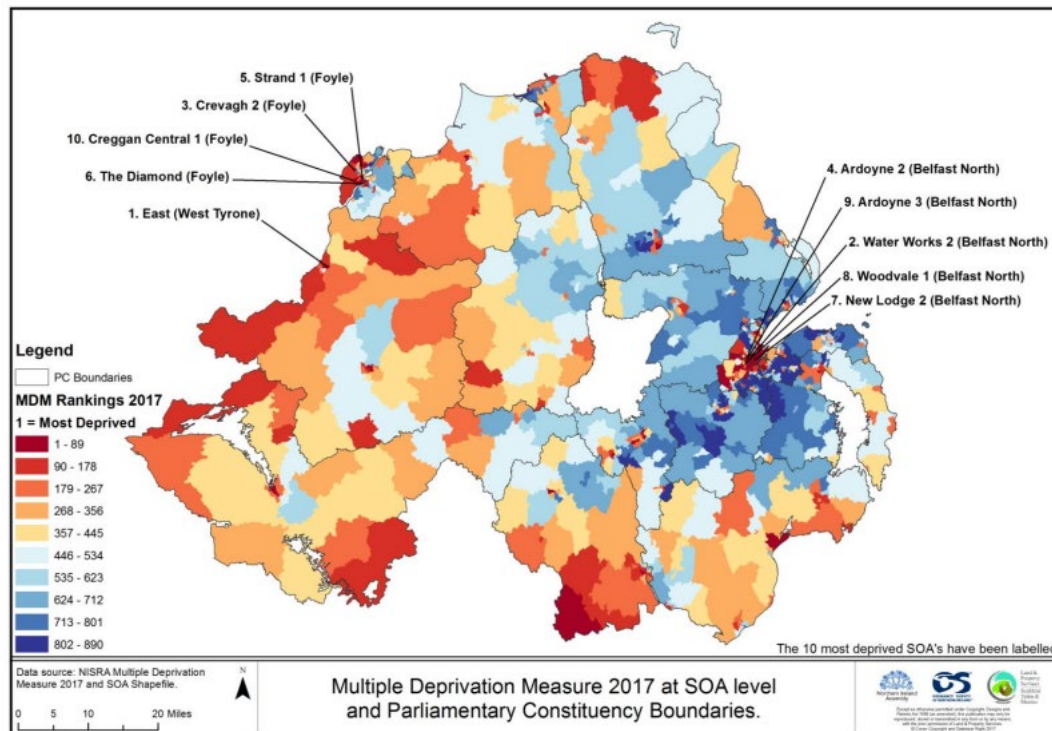
Figure 3: Population and Industry Profile



Data Source: Invest NI Council Briefings February 2025

The College operates across a wide geographical area which has pockets of areas with indicators of multiple deprivation. In particular, the North Coast, Ballymena and Newtownabbey, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Multiple Deprivation Heat Map



Source: NI Assembly Multiple Deprivation in Northern Ireland Research Paper 2017

## **c. College Engagement/Collaboration**

### **Embedding Entrepreneurship**

As of May 2025, the entrepreneurship agenda within the FE sector continues to gain strategic momentum, with significant progress made in embedding enterprise skills across qualifications. The Entrepreneurship Curriculum Hub has played a pivotal role in coordinating cross-hub collaboration, ensuring a consistent and sector-wide approach. Notably, the integration of Young Enterprise NI (YENI) programmes is advancing, with a strategic funding application submitted to Invest NI and an additional bid to DfE planned for June 2025. This initiative aims to ensure regional balance and full sector participation from September 2025. Strategic alignment with the Regional Entrepreneurship Acceleration Programme (REAP) group has also deepened, with the FE sector contributing to the broader NI Entrepreneurship Strategy. This includes embedding cultural entrepreneurship ambitions into education and leveraging REAP-linked opportunities for future CPD events. Skills development remains a cornerstone of the hub's activity, evidenced by the refreshed Project-Based Learning (PBL) competition, now streamlined and sustainability-themed, and the ongoing exploration of a Foundation Degree in Entrepreneurship. Whilst CPD events have faced funding constraints, the sector has successfully engaged with international networks such as the European Network of Networks (NoN), opening avenues for collaborative innovation, sustainability, and internationalisation. The Entrepreneurship Hub's efforts in resource sharing, cross-hub collaboration, and external stakeholder engagement continue to strengthen the entrepreneurial ecosystem across Northern Ireland's FE colleges. This momentum is further reinforced by the Council Outreach initiative, piloted by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, in partnership with Northern Regional College.

Through Inspire and Ideation sessions, Innovation Camps, and Meet the Entrepreneur events, the programme successfully engaged 970 students in entrepreneurial thinking and prototype development during induction. The initiative, aligned with PBL and Transversal Skills (TSkills), has demonstrated strong potential for sector-wide expansion, with plans underway to roll out delivery across all eleven council areas. This outreach not only enhances regional balance and stakeholder engagement but also directly supports the REAP Group's Must Win Battle II ambition and the development of the NI Entrepreneurship Strategy by embedding entrepreneurial skills early in the learner journey.

### **Employer Engagement**

#### **Industry Engagement and Workforce Development**

The College maintains strong, dynamic partnerships with employers to support skills development, innovation, and economic growth. Through a wide range of initiatives including Skills Focus, Innovation Vouchers, and tailored training delivered on a cost-recovery basis—the College plays a central role in enhancing the capabilities of both current and future employees.

Structured engagement with employers is facilitated through 9 Industry Engagement Forums, aligned with 29 Professional & Technical sectors. These forums enable regular dialogue, shaping curriculum development and business support initiatives while contributing to both internal self-evaluation and external quality assurance processes.

In addition, Employer Forums serve as a vital platform for gathering industry insights across 9 strategic priority areas. These forums ensure the College's offerings remain aligned with evolving labour market needs.

The College's collaborative relationships with local employers have directly contributed to the expansion of apprenticeship provision and curriculum enrichment. Highlights include:

- Harland & Wolff (Navantia): Over 100 apprentices recruited through this strategic partnership;
- Wrightbus: A growing number of apprentices engaged, with provision expanding to meet increasing demand;
- Caterpillar: Upskilling existing staff via college-delivered training programmes as a trusted delivery partner;
- Moore NI and IDS Accountants: Long-standing partners for apprenticeships on our HLA in Accountancy; and
- Belfast Harbour Commission, Woodside Logistics Group, McCulla Ireland and McConaghy Distribution: trusted partners for our HLA in Supply Chain and Logistics.

These partnerships exemplify the College's commitment to innovative, industry-responsive education and enhanced employment outcomes.

The College actively supports Labour Market Partnership (LMP) initiatives through local councils and continues to deliver a range of sector-specific academies. Plans for 2025/26 include:

- The delivery of an Assured Skills Childcare Academy, subject to DfE approval;
- Ongoing Manufacturing Academies in Ballymena in partnership with Wrightbus, Norbev, and other local employers; and
- Expansion of Hospitality Academies in collaboration with Galgorm and partners from the Northern Ireland Hospitality School.

### **Higher Education Expansion through Industry Co-Design**

As part of a wider strategy to broaden Higher Education provision, the College has introduced new programmes developed in direct response to employer feedback:

- Certificate in Health Care Practice developed with the Northern Health and Social Care Trust under the existing Memorandum of Understanding, this programme has recruited strongly, with the second cohort commencing in September 2025;
- Part-time Foundation Degree in Housing (co-designed with housing sector employers across Northern Ireland): Now recruiting a second cohort for delivery at the Newtownabbey Campus;
- Level 3 Dental Nursing Apprenticeship: Expanded to the Newtownabbey and Magherafelt campuses following industry demand;
- Level 6 Higher-Level Apprenticeship in Cloud Computing and Cyber Security: Launching in 2025/26 in response to regional digital skills needs; and
- Level 5 Foundation Degree in Creative Industries Production and Professional Practice with support of Northern Ireland Screen.

### **Partnerships with Councils**

The College actively participates in Labour Market Partnerships across four council areas, fostering strong ties with local councils and contributing to various initiatives, such as the Manufacturing Taskforce and the Hydrogen Academy project. The new Ballymena campus will complement the i4c Innovation Centre, promoting shared use of facilities. The College plays a strategic role in the Belfast Regional City Deal and the Causeway Coast & Glens City Deal, and maintains involvement with local chambers and community partnerships, ensuring FE's alignment with regional economic needs. The College is a member on Council Town Centre and redevelopment project boards providing oversight and alignment opportunities for college services.

At an operational level, business with councils is primarily through Labour Market Partnerships and takes the form of training programmes, academies and other funded initiatives, as well as through partnership opportunities for engaging with companies or prospective students. The College is also actively represented on the four Local Economic Partnerships. Councils are vital strategic partners for engaging with local companies. A senior manager is assigned as the lead College representative for each council area. A Business Development Officer is responsible for managing the relationship with each council and supports the senior manager with that relationship.

### **Schools**

Direct business with schools takes the form of Entitlement Framework (EF) courses (including Occupational Studies (OS), offered exclusively to schools in local Area Learning Communities. EF is delivered both on College premises and in partner schools and is paid for by the schools. Indirect business with schools includes recruitment of students to further and higher education provision, including from EF. There is also an opportunity to provide training to teachers and parents, and to deliver community education programmes on school premises. Whilst the College recognises valuable partnerships with local schools, the provision is decreasing year on year due to increased pressure on school budgets.

### **Community**

Community provision comprises Essential Skills (fully funded by DfE), the CALL Project (funded by DfC) and Step Up. A small number of full cost recovery courses are also delivered in the community. Relationships with community and voluntary groups are managed by the School & Community Officer. These relationships are important for support with recruiting to programmes aimed at widening participation and targeting those furthest from education and employment.

Insight provided through LMPs, Schools and Community organisations on the skills needs of local businesses and citizens is fed into our curriculum design and planning process via our Business Engagement Officers to ensure that our offering remains relevant to local employers and supports regional balance.

### **Sector Collaboration and Codesign**

The FE sector collaborates at all levels, and this collaboration has been further enhanced by formal Sectoral Partnerships and FE sector Hubs. The Sectoral Partnerships include employer representatives, DfE representatives, sectoral bodies, and FE representatives. There are currently 18 sectoral partnerships across a wide range of vocational areas. The college is the secretariat for the newly established Transport and Logistics sectoral partnership.

The College has been involved with the development of new qualifications at level 2, for the Traineeship programme, as well as preliminary work for the development of level 3 qualifications. As part of this development process, all new qualifications must be approved



through the Sectoral Partnerships. This is to ensure the curriculum is relevant and meets the needs of industry.

The Mid Ulster Rural Learning Partnership is enriching the College's lifelong learning strategy, particularly in specialist support work, thereby facilitating adult reskilling opportunities.

The sector has worked collaboratively on a range of Higher Education programmes with the most recent validation during 2024/25 in a Foundation Degree in Science in response to stakeholder feedback in partnership with Ulster University.

Working collaboratively, the six Further Education colleges developed a suite of modules that supports skills and encourages participation in the childcare sector. The suite of materials has built a foundational resource, beginning at level 2 and working up to sector-specific skills at higher levels, developing pathways throughout. The content can be used to support individuals through Skill Up, businesses through Skills Focus, as well as the wider student base, including apprenticeships; units can be incorporated into curriculum delivery. In conjunction with Triangle Housing and Causeway Chamber, the College has been successful in contributing to the Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund. The College is designing a foundation Apprenticeship programme, providing opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in a programme that raises the awareness of apprenticeship opportunities with employers and students, provides wrap around support services, and delivers a regulated qualification to all participants.

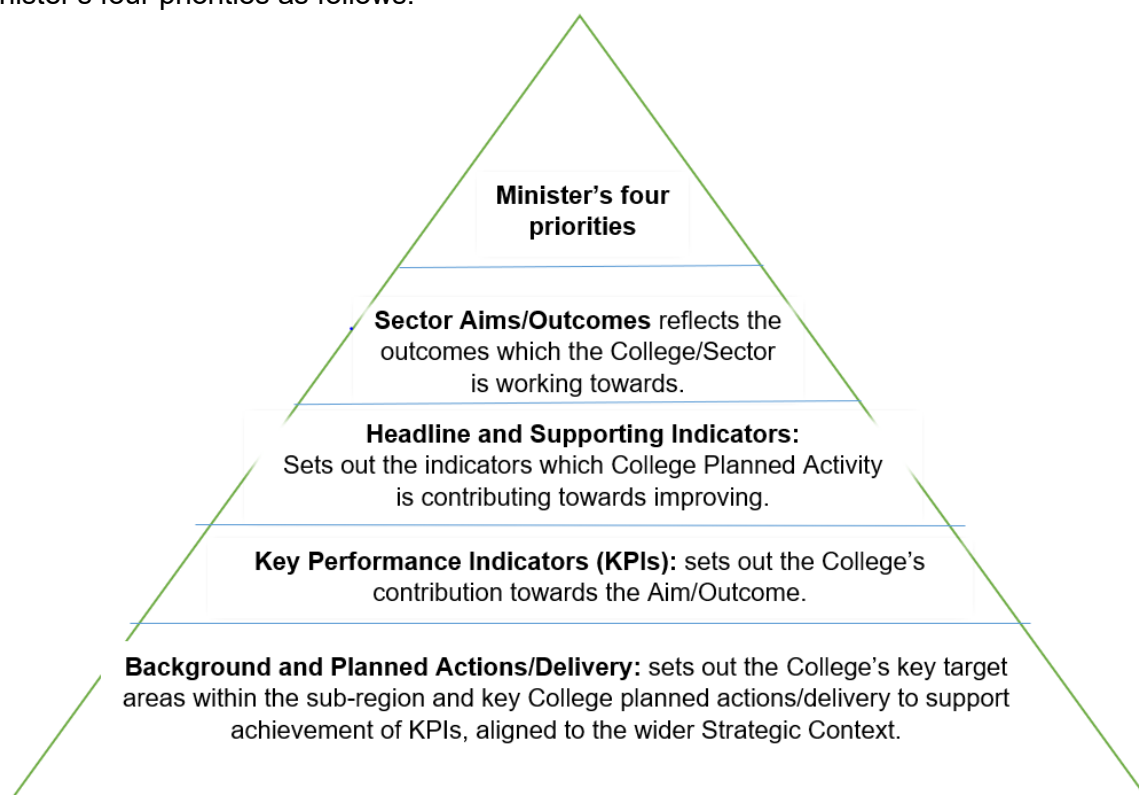
The College actively participates in curriculum hubs that span a variety of key vocational areas, including Engineering, IT, Construction, Healthcare, Science, Hospitality, and Entrepreneurship. These hubs play a crucial role in shaping the curriculum, ensuring it aligns with the evolving needs of growth sectors, they also contribute to relevant continuous professional development which is essential for the ongoing expansion of curriculum. By maintaining a high-quality, up-to-date, and industry-responsive curriculum, these hubs enhance the prospects for economic advancement and sectoral performance. The transfer of hub governance to the sector has enabled Principals and Curriculum Directors to have greater oversight of activities and key deliverables across all 7 hubs, ensuring alignment with Ministerial priorities.

### **Promoting Regional Balance**

The College footprint spans a broad area from North Belfast to Coleraine and the Antrim Coast to Mid-Ulster. Within this, the College works with four local councils and contributes to their Labour Market Partnerships and Local Economic Partnerships, which has resulted in a number of targeted skills interventions, including several academies. This engagement provides the opportunity to drive regional balance across a wide geographic area. The College is also an active partner in the Belfast City Growth Deal Skills Pillar and has contributed to a number of the skills assessments. The College is also working in partnership on the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal, as well as the Mid South West Growth Deal, both of which will see capital investment in those areas and will work to attract more businesses and regenerate rural economies.

#### d. 2025/26 Planned Activity

The College Planned Delivery has been set out to show the College contributes to the Minister's four priorities as follows:



In-year College Development Plan Progress Reports, tracking **'how well'** the College is performing, will be provided to the Department for the Economy. The Department for the Economy will publish reports on performance against Headline and Supporting Indicators, to show if actions are 'moving the dial' on the Minister's priorities i.e. **'anyone is better off'**, along with progress reports on the Department's Delivery Plan 2024/25.

The table below provides a summary of the Aims/Outcomes and associated KPIs are included in the proceeding tables.

Aim/Outcome		KPI	
1	To increase regional business productivity/ growth through the delivery of tailored/bespoke training programmes.	1.1	To increase delivery of innovation-based projects in SMEs from 59 in 2024/25 to 70 in 2025/26 financial year.
		1.2	To increase delivery of tailored training programmes from 121 in 2024/25 to 138 in 2025/26 financial year.  Deliver 1 Academy across Childcare (Subject to DfE approval)  Deliver 2 Manufacturing academies Deliver 1 Hospitality Academy in collaboration with Galgorm and partners

			from the Northern Ireland Hospitality School.
		1.3	To support 690 individuals and 900 enrolments via Skill Up in the 2025/26 financial year. 965 individuals supported in 2024/25.
2	To upskill/reskill individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to secure employment, meet employer needs for today and the future and support economic growth of the region.	2.1	To increase the total number of individuals enrolled in the College from 7,805 individuals in 2023/24 to 8,287 individuals in 2025/26 academic year. (Figure 5, Annex 1)
		2.2	To equip 750 individuals with key employability skills through participation in Skills Competitions in the 2025/26 academic year. (Subject to funding)
		2.3	By the end of the 2025/26 academic year, increase the number of individuals furthest from the labour market and with low or no formal qualifications supported by the College from 3,652 (2023/24) to 3,700, through targeted provision (ESOL, SLDD discrete programmes, Step Up, Foundation Apprenticeships) and effective use of CALL funding, ensuring inclusivity across all provision.
		2.4	To increase the retention rate within the College from 85% in 2023/24 to 89% in 2025/26 academic year, this will represent a 4% increase. (Figure 7)
		2.5	To maintain the achievement rate within the College at 84 % from 2023/24 to 84% in 2025/26 academic year. (Meaning a 2% increase in success rate when compared to 23/24)
		2.6	To increase the number of 25 to 64-year-olds participating in education and training from 3,650 individuals in 2023/24 to 3,700 individuals in 2025/26
3	To address the skills needs of the future workforce in green industries through upskilling and reskilling individuals in support of a net zero economy in Northern Ireland.	3.1	To train another 10% of College staff in delivery of green sustainable skills in the 2025/26 academic year.
		3.2	To achieve 380 individuals participating on green/sustainable courses in the 2025/26 academic year.
4	To deliver against the Public Body reporting duties of the Climate Change legislation delivering an energy efficient and sustainable estate.	4.1	To establish the key actions to improve/maintain energy efficiency in the College in 2025/26 academic year.

5	Support of Regional City and Growth Deals	5.1	To continue collaboration with City Deal programmes within the College's area
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Raise Productivity/Promote Regional Balance	
Aim/Outcome - 1	To increase regional business productivity/growth through the delivery of tailored/bespoke training programmes.
Draft Headline Indicator	Output per hour worked Regional Employment Rate
Draft Supporting Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innovative active businesses (including number of Innovation Recognitions)</li> <li>Business Support offered by Colleges to businesses</li> </ul>
Background	<p>The College's External Engagement Strategy established the targets and growth plan for delivering the College's objectives around business engagement and skills programmes for the last 5 years. Since the start of the strategy, diversified income has increased from £730k in 2019/20 to nearly £3.5m in 2024/25. Over the same period, InnovateUs actual spend has increased from £4,800 to £210,000 and Innovation Vouchers from £26,000 to £50,000. The Business Engagement team actively identify skills and funding for companies and manage the delivery of programmes by curriculum staff across the College. Curriculum teams are responsible for the delivery of qualifications and for ensuring the quality of provision is aligned to, and meets, the requirements of Awarding Organisations. The team also promote opportunities for innovation programmes to potential client companies.</p> <p>The External Engagement Strategy established the targets and growth plan for delivering the College's objectives around business engagement, including academies. An updated External Engagement Strategy will be developed following the completion of the new Strategic Plan.</p>
KPI 1.1	To deliver 70 innovation-based projects in SMEs in 2025/26 financial year. 59 delivered in 2024/25 financial year.
Planned Activity:	
With an available budget of £263,000 for InnovateUs	Complete 56 projects.
Subject to industry demand and funding for Innovation Vouchers	Complete 12 projects
Subject to industry demand for Innovation Boost	Support 2 projects
KPI 1.2	To deliver 138 tailored training programmes in 2025/26 financial year. 121 delivered in 2024/25 financial year.
Planned Activity:	

With an available budget of £175,000 for Skills Focus	Support 126 projects.
Subject to industry demand and funding for Productivity Boost	Support 8 projects.
Deliver academies across Hospitality, Childcare and Manufacturing	Support 4 academies.
<b>KPI 1.3</b>	<b>To support 690 individuals and 900 enrolments via Skill Up in the 2025/26 financial year. 965 individuals supported in 2024/25.</b>

Good Jobs/Promote Regional Balance/Raise Productivity	
<b>Aim/Outcome - 2</b>	<b>To upskill/reskill individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to secure employment, meet employer needs for today and the future and support economic growth of the region.</b>
<b>Headline Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Good jobs measure based on earning, permanent contracts and guaranteed hours.</b></li> <li>• <b>Regional Employment Rate</b></li> <li>• <b>Output per hour worked</b></li> </ul>
<b>Supporting Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Work Quality Indicators</b></li> <li>• <b>Proportion leaving NI HEIs with narrow STEM qualifications</b></li> <li>• <b>Qualifications by Level of Study</b></li> <li>• <b>Economic Inactivity Rate</b></li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<p>The College curriculum is developed in close collaboration with industry, ensuring that all new programmes planned for 2025/26 align with current sector needs. Employability skills are integrated throughout our courses, equipping every learner with the tools needed for future success. To support this, the College employs lecturers with the expertise and experience to inspire students, alongside robust student services and infrastructure that enhance the overall learning experience.</p> <p><b>Further Education (FE)</b> Full-time Further Education (FE) enrolments are projected to remain stable in 2025/26 relative to 2024/25. This stability in overall numbers represents underlying growth within the full-time FE provision, as it accounts for a reduction in Level 2 FE enrolments but an increase in traineeship enrolments.</p> <p>Part-time Further Education indicates a slight reduction of 3%, reflective of the reduction in funding initiatives which target those furthest from the labour market.</p> <p><b>Traineeships</b> In line with DfE and sectoral direction, the College has now fully implemented the Traineeship model for Level 2 full-time provision.</p>

Traineeships continue to be successful in terms of recruitment; the College is planning for growth for 2025/26 compared with 2024/25.

### **Apprenticeship**

Apprenticeship provision at Levels 2 and 3 currently accounts for approximately 979 unique learner enrolments. For 2025/26, the College plans to remain stable, given the increasing pressures reported by employers due to rising national insurance contributions and increased staffing costs, factors that particularly impact SMEs. Learners who do not secure an employer will be signposted to the Traineeship programme, which may, in turn, lead to an increase in projected enrolments in that area.

The College is launching new apprenticeships for the 2025/26 academic year in the following areas:

- Dental Nursing; and
- Health and Social Care.

These new programmes build on the successful introduction of Childcare apprenticeships in 2024/25, supporting the Curriculum Strategy's focus on expanding into non-traditional apprenticeship areas.

### **Higher Education and Higher-Level Apprenticeship (HLA)**

#### **Higher Education Full-time**

Northern Regional College seeks to grow this area of provision in response to demand. The plan therefore sets out to increase the full-time higher education enrolments from 176 (on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2024) in 2024/25 to meet its MaSN allocation of 213 in 2025/26. () Please note separate document as part of submission for further details.

Anticipated new and extended provision is outlined below which will contribute to reaching the target of 213:

- Level 4 Healthcare Practice;
- Level 5 Cloud Computing with Cyber Security;
- Level 5 Creative Industries production and professional practice; and
- Level 6 Cloud Computing with Cyber Security.

#### **Higher Education Part-time**

The College anticipates growth across part time Higher Education; this is attributed to new and extended provision across the following programmes:

- Cisco qualifications across a range of disciplines including data analytics, python, and computer operating systems;
- Level 5 Award in Green technologies;
- Level 5 Award in Hair and Beauty Management;
- Level 5 Award in Lecturers into Industry; and
- Expansion of level 4 Counselling Certificate.

#### **HLA**

The College has continued to increase enrolment across HLAs; there was an increase from 162 in 23/24 to 189 for 24/25, the College has received approval for 187 HLA enrolments for 25/26

Following engagement and positive feedback from industry, new proposed areas for 2025/26 are planned as outlined below:

- Level 6 Cloud Computing with Cyber Security;
- NCFE CACHE Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care Services NI Adult Residential Management;
- Higher Level Apprenticeship Engineering; and
- HLA Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management – new offering in tourism for 25/26.

### **Essential Skills**

- The planned activity for Essential Skills remains stable when compared with 2024/25.
- The projected 350 individuals included under KPI 2.1 are participants in discrete provision to account for capture of Essential Skills enrolments completed alongside vocational provision.
- To support progression, the College plans to pilot additional GCSE Maths classes in response to changes in equivalency for Essential Skills.

### **Social Inclusion**

- The College has achieved success in securing diversified income and is proud to have been awarded one of the 6 successful projects for the Apprenticeship Inclusion Challenge Fund and will continue to deliver this in 2025/2026. This aligns with our aspiration to increase the number of individuals supported by the College who are furthest away from the labour market.
- Many funded programmes have been effective in increasing enrolment and individual numbers in this area, the highlight being the Multiply initiative, which outperformed the 2024/25 enrolment target by 161%. Multiply funding has now concluded, however, the College will continue to embed numeracy skills across all provision.
- Whilst the College does not have the same levels of social deprivation present in other college catchment areas, there are pockets within several large towns that are served by College campuses. The rural populations can mean travel to local campuses is difficult with existing transport links. In these instances, the College endeavours to work with local community partners to offer provision off-campus in community facilities often through the DfC CALL project.
- Step Up funding allows the College to provide targeted programmes to individuals who have low educational attainment through College Connect +, for women who wish to retrain to re-enter the workplace, through the Women Returners Programme, and to offer provision to individuals with disabilities or long-term health conditions, through the DARE programme. Enrolments will decrease in this initiative for 2025/2026 due to predicted decrease of funding.
- To encourage and promote lifelong learning, during 25/26 the College will work closely with community organisations to identify educational needs and deliver courses in accessible locations and establish partnerships with at least five community organisations



	<p>to identify local learning needs and deliver a minimum of 10 courses in accessible venues across the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The College plans to expand Access pathways and will complete one validation to complement the current Social Science route.</li> </ul> <p>Northern Regional College is committed to delivering high-quality provision to learners with additional needs and providing an inclusive environment to ensure every learner reaches their full potential.</p> <p>Northern Regional College offers a range of programmes, including discrete provision and the Step-Up initiative—available both full-time and part-time—that focus on independent life skills, employability, and relevant vocational areas. Many of these programmes incorporate work-placement elements to offer practical, real-world experience.</p> <p><b>Retention and Achievement</b></p> <p>The outturn position for 2024/25 is not fully complete yet, however the College is targeting an increase in retention rate to 89% for 2024/25 from 85% 2023/24. The College is targeting an 82% achievement rate for 2024/25 which in turn will mean a success rate of 73% which is a 1% increase from the published statistics of 72% in 2023/24.</p> <p>For 2025/26 the College is targeting 89% retention and 84% achievement. This will mean a 2% increase in success rate to 75% evidenced in annex 1. The College has introduced robust pre-entry advice in respect of free short course provision, to better reflect active participation from learners. Careful planning of curriculum has addressed areas of underperformance. To improve success, the College has also focused on retention. At the end of March 2025, the retention rate is currently sitting across all provision at 92.2 %. The retention rate for part-time provision is currently at 92.57% and 90.23% for full-time. This reflects the increase in accuracy of e-register marking and timely interventions, holding coordinators to account following ASOS and reset. This has been aided by constant Head of Department monitoring and data driven conversations between Heads of Department and Curriculum Area Managers. Multiply funding provided additional support in numeracy preparation for exams, the impact of which will be known in July/August.</p> <p>Internally, the College remains dedicated to student support, enhancing the learning experience and outcomes, including retention, achievement, and success rates. In areas where outcomes need improvement, specific actions are identified and implemented, with progress being closely monitored. Through the Quality Improvement Planning process, specific programmes are highlighted for targeted support. The College will implement improvement and interventions as set out in the SER/QIP. Plans are detailed in KPI 2.4.</p>
KPI 2.1	<p><b>To increase the total number of individuals enrolled in the College from 7,805 individuals in 2023/24 to 8,287 individuals in 2025/26 academic year.</b></p>
<p><b>Plans to achieve in the 2025/26 academic year:</b></p>	

Level 0 - 3	No. of individuals on PT FE	3,221
	No. of individuals on FT FE	1,935
	No. of individuals on Skills for Life and Work programme	0
	No. of individuals on Traineeship programme	580
	No. of individuals on Apprenticeships NI programme	950
	No. of individuals on Essential Skills programme	350 <sup>1</sup>
Level 4+	No. of individuals on PT HE in FE	851
	No. of individuals on FT HE in FE	213
	No. of individuals on High Level Apprenticeship programme	187
KPI 2.2	To equip 750 individuals with key employability skills necessary through participation in international projects and Skills Competitions in the 2025/26 academic year. (Subject to budget)	
Planned Activity:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>750 students to participate in international activities including formal skills competitions such as World Skills, Skill Build, Project based learning and British Council activity, subject to budget.</li></ul>		
KPI 2.3	To support 3,700 individuals who are furthest away from the labour market and with low or no formal qualifications in the 2025/26 academic year.	
Planned Activity:		
No. of individuals Quintile 1 and 2		2500
No. of individuals declaring a disability/long term health problem		1500
No. of individuals on ESOL programmes		180
No. of individuals on Discrete SLDD provision		300
No. of individuals on the Foundation apprenticeship for the inclusion fund		50
No. of individuals on DfE CALL project		40
No. of individuals on Step up Programmes		164
KPI 2.4	To increase the retention rate within the College from 85% in 2023/24 to 89% in 2025/26 academic year.	
Planned Activity:		
<p>The College has an ambitious target to reach 89% retention for 2025/26 which represents a 4 percent increase from 2023/24 and will bridge the gap closer to the sector average. This increase is in line with the College strategic vision and direction as endorsed by Governing body.</p> <p>The College has developed a comprehensive three-year Plan with a clear focus on increasing key performance indicators (KPIs) across retention, achievement, and student success. This plan is underpinned by detailed action plans aligned to strategic priorities and broken down by specific areas including Essential Skills development, targeted support for Traineeships, and enhanced College-wide activities with a focus on increased retention and achievement.</p>		

<sup>1</sup> The number of Essential Skills (ES) Individuals reflects individuals solely completing ES, it does not include those individuals who are completing ES alongside their main programme of study.

Planned Activity: Following publication of the ETI evaluation of the Traineeship Programme, College Action Plans for Improvement (API) for Traineeships to be submitted by 26 August 2025 and Whole Sector API to be provided by 23 September 2025. APIs to be submitted to ACVED. Regular implementation and impact updates against APIs to be provided to the Traineeship Project Board and progress checks sought as part of CDP updates.

Planned Activity: Following publication of the ETI evaluation of the Traineeship Programme, College Action Plans for Improvement (API) for Essential Skills to be submitted by 26 August 2025 and Whole Sector API to be provided by 23 September 2025. APIs to be submitted to Quality Improvement Team. Regular implementation and impact updates against APIs to be provided to QIT against which updates will be provided to the Traineeship Project Board and progress checks sought as part of CDP updates.

Each area is assigned measurable goals, responsible leads, timelines, and progress monitoring mechanisms to ensure effective implementation and impact. The College will also implement the following specific actions to increase retention and achievement:

- Quarterly KPI Dashboard Reviews with Departmental Heads of Department including withdrawal dashboard allowing improvements to be made when course related;
- Mid-year progress audits of in year data including attendance and offering;
- Establishment of an internal Traineeship Implementation Group led by Head of WorkBbased Learning that will monitor both collegen and Sectoral action plans to address findings of ETI evaluation;
- Achieve an overall learner satisfaction rating for 90% or above in 2025/26; and
- In 2025/26 develop whole College strategies to support retention specifically on part time provision building on positive impact of 2024/25.

#### KPI 2.5

**To maintain the achievement rate within the College from 84% in 2023/24 to 84% in 2025/26 academic year.**

#### Planned Activity:

The College target for 2024/2025 is 82% therefore while the KPI indicates maintaining the achievement rate, an increase of 2% is planned from 2024/2025target. The outturn of 2024/2025 will not be known until September 2025. The combined increased retention rate target for 2025/26 and 84% achievement rate target indicates an ambitious increase in success to 74%.

- Develop a new Curriculum strategy by 2026, setting a suitable framework for curriculum going forward.
- Ensure 90% of learners express satisfaction in student experience surveys for support provided for assessments
- Implement effective and timely interventions to support as appropriate utilising the student engagement department

#### KPI 2.6

**To enrol 3,700 individuals in the 2025/26 academic year, who are between 25 and 64 years old to participate in education and training.**

#### Planned Activity:

**The College plan to increase enrolments by the following methods:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing all age apprenticeships from 25 in 24/25 to 50 in 25/26 across extended provision for 2025/26 including Childcare, Health and Social Care and Dental Nursing.</li> <li>Targeting 350 25–64-year-olds utilising Skill Up provision.</li> <li>Collaborate with Local Employers to offer three tailored training programs that meet local employment needs.</li> <li>The College will deliver woman returner programmes to 58 individuals in 25/26</li> </ul>
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Reduce Carbon Emissions	
<b>Aim/Outcome - 3</b>	<b>To address the skills needs of the future workforce in green industries through upskilling and reskilling individuals in support of a net zero economy in Northern Ireland.</b>
<b>Headline Indicator</b>	<b>CO<sup>2</sup> Emissions per Capita</b>
<b>Supporting Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Proportion of electricity consumption generated from renewable sources</b></li> <li><b>Energy Intensity</b></li> <li><b>Energy Efficiency</b></li> <li><b>Circular economy material and carbon footprint</b></li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	<p>The College has made a clear commitment in its Strategic Plan to "provide facilities that support the delivery of our refreshed curriculum and achieve environmental sustainability." This is in direct response to Ministerial priorities outlined in the Economic Vision and in line with the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.</p> <p>Northern Regional College is playing a proactive leadership role in the development and delivery of skills for a green economy. A new Principal Lecturer for Sustainability has been appointed to lead curriculum transformation, stakeholder engagement, and the development of new green skills pathways. A cross-College sustainability working group is now in place to support this.</p> <p>The Northern Ireland Skills Council has recently formed a Green Skills Delivery Group in which the FE Sector is represented, this group will lead the future development of green skills qualifications.</p> <p>All UU Foundation Degrees have the UU Sustainable Development Goals embedded within the programme.</p> <p>The Sustainability Programme content developed includes a cross-sectoral, common, introductory strand that will form the foundation of knowledge for all businesses and will include topics such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding the different terminologies and their relationship to each other – Sustainability, Green Technology, Net Zero, Embodied Carbon, Circular Economy etc;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UN Sustainable Development Goals &amp; Economic Strategies – breaking down the strategic goals at local, national, and international levels to show relevance and impact that can be achieved through changes to business practices; and</li> <li>• Pathways to Success – Opportunities to review business strategies and processes, assess goals, implement available tools, and develop roadmaps.</li> </ul> <p>The College will provide a wide range of green curriculum provision for 2025/26 to support the development of green skills. These courses contribute to building workforce capacity to support NI's net zero targets, with progression pathways from Level 2 to Higher Education and employment.</p> <p>The College will also support the upskilling of its own workforce through a series of internal CPD courses on sustainability. These will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshops on Net Zero, Circular Economy, and Low Carbon Design; and</li> <li>• Integration of sustainability-focused teaching approaches into existing curriculum.</li> </ul> <p>In addition, staff will be encouraged to engage with external upskilling opportunities, including postgraduate certificate programmes, Lecturers into Industry placements, and short courses aligned with green skills priorities and training needs identified through the staff appraisal process. The College are delivering a CPD programme to all first year Further Education Learners on Green Skills and Sustainability during induction. This will educate learners in sustainability and enables them to implement eco-friendly practices in various sectors and support Net Zero Goals.</p>
<b>KPI 3.1</b>	<b>To train another 10% of college staff in delivery of green sustainable skills in the 2025/26 academic year.</b>
<b>Planned Activity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a Sustainability Awareness CPD programme to at least 72 staff (10% of staff base) commencing August 2025;</li> <li>• Pilot 4 subject-specific sustainability integration sessions across 4 departments</li> <li>• 1000 learners to complete a module in <i>Sustainability in Practice: Skills for College and Careers</i> during 2025/26</li> </ul>	
<b>KPI 3.2</b>	<b>380 individuals participating on green/sustainable courses in the 2025/26 academic year.</b>
<b>Planned Activity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver 10 green skills courses across campuses.</li> </ul> <p>Examples include:</p>	

- L5 Award in Green Technologies
  - L3 Hydrogen Applications and Technologies
  - L2 Hydrogen Applications and Technologies
  - L2 Retrofit
  - L2 Award in Sustainability and the Green Environment
  - GCE A2 Environmental Technology
  - GCE AS Environmental Technology
  - L2 & L3 Award Hybrid Electrical Vehicle Maintenance
  - L2 Electric/Hybrid Vehicle Routine Maintenance Activities
  - Electric Metering Operatives Training – delivered exclusively for NIE
  - L2 Diploma in Electrical Power Engineering - Distribution & Transmission
  - L2 Diploma in Smart Metering – Power
- Expand green enrolments through the new Ballymena campus advance technologies specialism, targeting 100 individuals

Reduce Carbon Emissions	
<b>Aim/Outcome - 4</b>	<b>To deliver against the Public Body reporting duties of the Climate Change legislation delivering an energy efficient and sustainable estate.</b>
<b>Headline Indicator</b>	<b>CO<sup>2</sup> Emissions per Capita</b>
<b>Supporting Indicators</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Proportion of electricity consumption generated from renewable sources</b></li> <li>● <b>Energy Intensity</b></li> <li>● <b>Energy Efficiency</b></li> <li>● <b>Circular economy material and carbon footprint</b></li> </ul>
<b>Background</b>	The College opened Causeway Campus, Coleraine, the first of its two major new build projects, in August 2024, completing phase one of transitioning from a six-campus College to four campuses. Causeway Campus is the first part of the £101m capital investment programme to create sustainable College facilities that support delivery of skills and qualifications, aligned to the Economy Minister's Economic Vision and the 2024/25 Action Plan. The Causeway Campus has been built to BREEAM standards.



The second phase will see the new build campus in Ballymena open in September 2025.

The new build projects at Coleraine and Ballymena, represent a major commitment by DfE in the efficiency-driven rationalisation of the College's estate, replacing outdated inefficient facilities with modern energy efficient facilities.

BREEAM assesses achievement against environmental sustainability goals and improving energy efficiency of buildings. The Causeway Campus is assessed by the design team as EXCELLENT and is currently being assessed by BRE – certification anticipated in Summer 2025. The Ballymena campus, currently in progress is similarly on target to achieve BREEAM EXCELLENT certification.

### **Renewable Energy Production**

There is an extensive array of Photo Voltaic (PV) panels on both new campuses, providing energy from solar/daylight renewable source, providing potentially an estimated 110MW hours of renewable energy on site.

Ballymena 450m<sup>2</sup> panels should provide an estimated 76,000 KW hours of energy per annum; Causeway 220m<sup>2</sup> panels provide an estimated 37,000 KW hours of energy per annum.

### **Sustainable & Energy Efficiency Building Systems**

Specific measures to increase environmental sustainability in the new campus buildings include:

- Building Management System (BMS) – Intelligent BMS system to control centrally all aspects of the building heating, cooling, ventilation and utilities consumption. Managed on a central Estates software facility, this allows the Facilities management team to access and manage utilities data in real time to ensure the building is always operating efficiently;
- Multiple daylight and operational sensors endure the most efficient use of electricity, water and gas;



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LED lighting – extensive use of LED lighting systems providing a 90% more efficient use of resources;</li> <li>• Multiple systems metering and zoning to ensure energy and utilities resources are controlled in terms of optimum use;</li> <li>• Mechanical ventilation deployed heat recovery and low specific fan technology to improve operational efficiency and recycling;</li> <li>• Energy efficient gas boiler systems capable of operating on missed gas (Hydrogen mix) solution for futureproofing supply;</li> <li>• Increased levels of insulation on external envelop to improve heat retention and energy efficiency (Ballymena);</li> <li>• EV charging infrastructure installed in Coleraine and being installed at Ballymena to provide staff and students with accessible source of renewable power to promote more extensive use of Electric vehicles; and</li> <li>• Implementation of a Computer Aided Facilities Management (CAFM) system to ensure efficient facilities management &amp; operation of the new estates by inputting BIM asset information produced in design of new builds allowing efficient intervention and life cycle maintenance regimes.</li> </ul> <p>Through the College's Estates Strategy, there will be continued investment in both Newtownabbey and Magherafelt, with a project working group established to develop these plans in 2024/25: <a href="#">Campus Redevelopment   Northern Regional College</a>.</p> <p>In 2023/24 the College commissioned a Net Zero report into campus facilities, this report is now complete, and the College is using the report as the baseline from which an action plan is in development. The College has adopted the energy reduction &amp; green alternative proposals suggested in the baseline carbon footprint assessment, including ERM'S (energy reduction measures) and offsetting, subject to CAPEX funding.</p> <p>The College Climate Change Adaption report due for submission by 31 March 2026 will include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An assessment of the current and predicted impact of climate change in relation to functions;</li> <li>2. The organisation's proposal and policies for adapting to climate change in the exercise of its functions;</li> <li>3. Statement of the time scales for implementation of the proposals and policies; and</li> <li>4. An assessment of the progress towards implementing the proposals and policies set out in any previous climate change adaptation report.</li> </ol> <p>In addition, the climate change mitigation report will also have four key areas for the organisation to respond to:</p>
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A statement of the preceding three financial years of the volume and sources of the body's greenhouse gas emissions;</li> <li>2. A statement of proposals and policies for reducing those amounts and otherwise mitigating the effects of climate change in the exercise of its functions;</li> <li>3. Timescales for implementation of the proposals and policies; and</li> <li>4. An assessment of the progress made towards implementation of the proposals and policies set out in any previous reports.</li> </ol> <p>The first Climate Change Mitigation Report is required to be submitted to DAERA by 31 October 2025 and submitted every third year after the first report.</p>
<b>KPI 4.1</b>	<b>To establish the key actions to improve/maintain energy efficiency in the College in the 2025/26 academic year.</b>
<b>Planned Activity:</b>	
<b>In 2025/26 financial year, top-five Minor Works projects<sup>2</sup>, pending funding allocation, that contribute towards a sustainable College estate.</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. £80k EV chargers to be installed on Newtownabbey campus</li> <li>2. £150k warm roof upgrades on Newtownabbey campus</li> <li>3. £52k TREND heating control panel replacement &amp; software upgrade Newtownabbey campus</li> <li>4. £27k TREND heating control panel replacement &amp; software upgrade Magherafelt campus</li> <li>5. £27k warm roof upgrades on Newtownabbey campus</li> </ol>
<b>In 2025/26 academic year, to establish key actions to improve/maintain energy efficiency of College campuses.</b>	<p>Action 1: Publish carbon footprint baseline measurements &amp; action plan to reduce carbon footprint.</p> <p>Action 2: Establish cross-departmental net zero reporting and implementation plan to measure and report on carbon footprint reduction measures.</p> <p>Action 3: Develop proposals for significant development and improvement plans for existing Magherafelt &amp; Newtownabbey campuses to target carbon footprint reductions and energy use reductions.</p> <p>The above actions will be based on consultant's net zero baseline and target actions. Further operational internal action plans are in development.</p>

<sup>2</sup> Includes Energy Branch Invest to Save Funded projects.

<b>In 2025/26 academic year, improve baseline position for each College campus.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newtownabbey campus 10% reduction in energy use.</li> <li>• Magherafelt campus 10% reduction in energy use.</li> <li>• Measure, record and compare baseline carbon footprint reductions from the 6-campus model to the 4-campus model from August 2025.</li> </ul>
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<b>Regional Balance</b>	
<b>Aim/Outcome - 5</b>	<b>Engagement with City and Growth Deals in support of the Minister's priorities of regional balance and raising productivity</b>
<b>Headline Indicator</b>	<b>Regional Employment Rate</b>
<b>Supporting Indicators</b>	<b>Economic Inactivity Rate (excluding students)</b>
<b>Background</b>	The College is an active partner in the Belfast City Growth Deal Skills Pillar and has contributed to a number of the skills assessments. It is also collaborating with MEABC on plans for their i4C project under the deal. The College is also working in partnership on the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal for planned developments in the Coleraine area, as well as the Mid South West Growth Deal, both of which will see capital investment in those areas and work to attract more businesses and regenerate rural economies.
<b>KPI 5.1</b>	To continue collaboration with City Deal programmes within the College's area
<b>Planned Activity:</b> Continued collaboration with Mid and East Antrim Borough Council on plans for development of the i4C in Ballymena.	

## 5. Key Challenges/Constraints

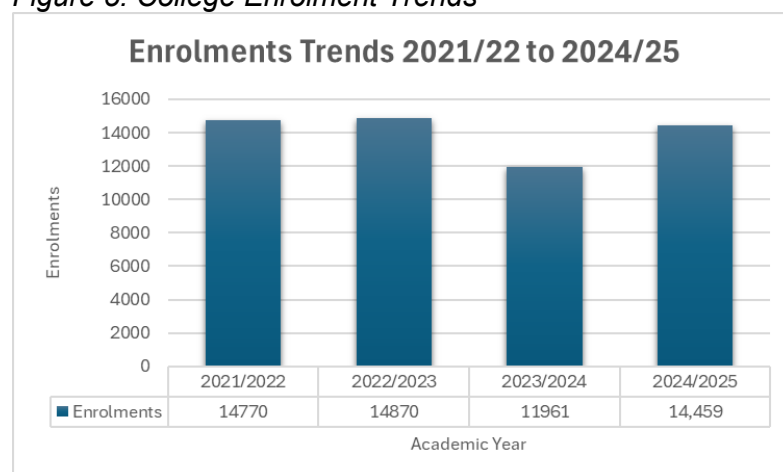
The below table sets out the challenges/constraints towards achievement of planned delivery set out in section 4 above.

Challenge	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions
<b>Industrial Relations Landscape –</b> Comparisons to teaching profession for parity in respect of pay aligned to contractual arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Action short of strike, withholding of grades impacting on students' ability to complete qualifications and progress.</li> <li>Continuous negative impact on FE activities which acts as a potential recruitment drive for post primary schools.</li> <li>Uncertainty leads to parents and students taking alternative pathways not within FE.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two year pay deal accepted by lecturing trade unions.</li> <li>Employer commitment to workload review in 2024/25.</li> <li>Employer commitment to pay parity review in 2025/26.</li> <li>Employer commitment to take forward FE transformation.</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Planning Complexity –</b> Pace of change of the key drivers for education and skills in FE Sector with new economic priorities and target actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenges in aligning College Development Plans with evolving indicators.</li> <li>Staff resources committed to existing curriculum delivery with limited flexibility.</li> <li>Work underway with Councils to integrate local College curriculum plans with regional LEP plans.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing engagement to refine performance indicators from FE programmes to link to Minister economic priorities.</li> <li>More clarity required on the approach to regional planning and LEPs and alignment with Council and InvestNI roles.</li> <li>Formal re-engagement with InvestNI commenced and ongoing via representations at LSPs .</li> </ul>
<b>Uncertainty and Complexity Around Funding Streams and Delays in LOOs –</b> impacts on ability of Colleges to include planned delivery in curriculum build and associated targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uncertainty on budgets, downward pressures coupled with a 3 year budget settlement with further savings anticipated.</li> <li>Late approval or visibility of additional funding streams becoming available can make it difficult to build into delivery planning which starts at different time-frames compared to the commencement of the academic year in September whilst requiring full-spend by March.</li> <li>Range and variety of funding pots and compliance and eligibility issues takes time to put in place and test learner eligibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More visibility through NIFON and Curriculum Directors on scale of opportunities.</li> <li>Holding back on recruitment and utilising full-time staff whilst supplementing with part-time lectures as required.</li> <li>Explore the opportunity to include a number of separate programmes over a central theme: Business and Innovation, Support for Inclusion.</li> <li>Wider consideration of the funding model requires NIFON input in terms of different rates to ensure consistency and viability.</li> <li>Work with funders for release of LoOs earlier in the year to enable full integration into</li> </ul>

		<p>curriculum planning and delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification earlier from funders of new or additional in-year allocations to enable building of capacity.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recruitment challenges Impacting on Enrolment –</b> Colleges not being able to attract lecturers/trainers in traditional trade and STEM areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trend for last 5 years of significant interest in trade and STEM areas which cannot be accommodated due to recruitment challenges.</li> <li>• Aging profile of the workforce may have longer term impact in key sectors with significant critical skills gaps.</li> <li>• Negative impact on curriculum offer, quality of service provision and learner success.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate review through HR sector working group of trends in applications and enrolments in last 3 years.</li> <li>• Implement pay parity to increase salary levels and consideration of specialist lecture grades.</li> <li>• Understand the opportunity for more flexible approach in terms of recruitment premium for agreed occupational areas.</li> <li>• Secure pay remit approval to progress towards salary expectations.</li> <li>• Industrial Relations review to commence, focusing on pay parity and terms and conditions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Investment in facilities (including IT and AI) and infrastructure to ensure competitiveness and to support action towards net zero targets in context of one year budgetary landscape</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability to be at the forefront of new advances in technology developments.</li> <li>• Failure to implement full obligations under the Climate Change Act and impact on net/zero/sustainability targets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further in-year bids to be placed to DfE to secure funding to deliver new initiatives.</li> <li>• Progress commenced with establishment of baselines and initial progress towards targets.</li> </ul>

## Annex 1 College Data Analysis

Figure 5: College Enrolment Trends



Data Source: 2021/22, 2022/23 & 2023/24 DfE FE Sector Activity Bulletin. 2024/25 @ 31<sup>st</sup> March CDP ERC

Figure 6: College Individual Learner Trends

	Academic Year				
	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
NRC	10,350	7,955	8,040	8,290	7,805

\* [Further education college statistics | Department for the Economy \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](#) – Table 6

Figure 7: Performance Levels from 2018/19 to 2023/24

<b>Retention Rate (%)</b>	<b>KPI 2.4 – To increase the retention rate within the College from x% in 2023/24 to x% in 2025/26 academic year.</b>							
	18/19*	19/20*	20/21*	21/22*	22/23*	23/24*	23/24 included in draft CDP	Projected 25/26 included in draft CDP
NRC	85%	91%	89%	88%	89%	85%	85%	89%
Total (Sector Average)	90%	91%	90%	89%	90%	91%		

<b>Achievement Rate (%)</b>	<b>KPI 2.5 – To increase the achievement rate within the College from x % in 2023/24 to x% in 2025/26 academic year.</b>							
	<b>18/19*</b>	<b>19/20*</b>	<b>20/21*</b>	<b>21/22*</b>	<b>22/23*</b>	<b>23/24*</b>	<b>23/24 included in draft CDP</b>	<b>Projected 25/26 included in draft CDP</b>
<b>NRC</b>	79%	77%	87%	82%	80%	84%	<b>84%</b>	<b>84% (to maintain)</b>
<b>Total (Sector Average)</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>87%</b>		

[Further education college statistics | Department for the Economy \(economy-ni.gov.uk\) – Table A30](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/further-education-college-statistics)

### Other Data Analysis

The trends below have been sourced from the Further Education Sector Activity report 2019/2020-2023/24 published by DfE.<sup>[1]</sup>

All enrolments 2019/20-2023/24

<b>FE College</b>	<b>Academic Year</b>				
	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
<b>NRC</b>	18,625	12,770	14,770	14,870	12,360

Higher Education enrolments

<b>FE College</b>	<b>Academic Year</b>				
	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
<b>NRC</b>	1,160	1,020	1,045	1,065	1,070

All enrolments by age band

<b>FE College</b>	<b>Age Band</b>	<b>Academic Year</b>				
		<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
<b>Northern Regional College</b>	19 and under	11,235	7,630	8,840	8,185	7,000
	20-24	1,880	1,625	1,940	2,000	1,575
	25 and over	5,270	3,445	3,975	4,660	3,765
	Unknown	240	65	15	25	25
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18,625</b>	<b>12,770</b>	<b>14,770</b>	<b>14,870</b>	<b>12,360</b>

All enrolments by gender

College		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Northern Regional College	Female	8,700	5,830	6,940	6,950	5,680
	Male	9,925	6,935	7,830	7,925	6,680
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18,625</b>	<b>12,770</b>	<b>14,770</b>	<b>14,870</b>	<b>12,360</b>

All enrolments by mode of attendance

FE College	Mode of Attendance	Academic Year				
		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Northern Regional College	Full-time	3,735	3,520	3,340	3,140	3,325
	Part-time	14,890	9,245	11,430	11,730	9,035
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18,625</b>	<b>12,770</b>	<b>14,770</b>	<b>14,870</b>	<b>12,360</b>

Enrolments in other funding streams by regulated status

FE College	Regulated Status	Funding Stream					Total
		Assured Skills	Student Self Funded	Skills Focus	Skill Up - Flexible Skills Fund	Other	
Northern Regional College	Non-Regulated	0	155	0	5	10	175
	Regulated	0	0	190	925	0	1,115
	<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>930</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1,285</b>

Essential Skills enrolments

FE College	Provision Area	Academic Year				
		2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
	Further Education	10,865	8,460	9,735	9,970	8,180

<b>Northern Regional College</b>	Higher Education	1,160	1,020	1,045	1,065	1,070
	Essential Skills	3,455	2,590	2,125	2,255	2,200
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15,480</b>	<b>12,070</b>	<b>12,905</b>	<b>13,295</b>	<b>11,455R</b>

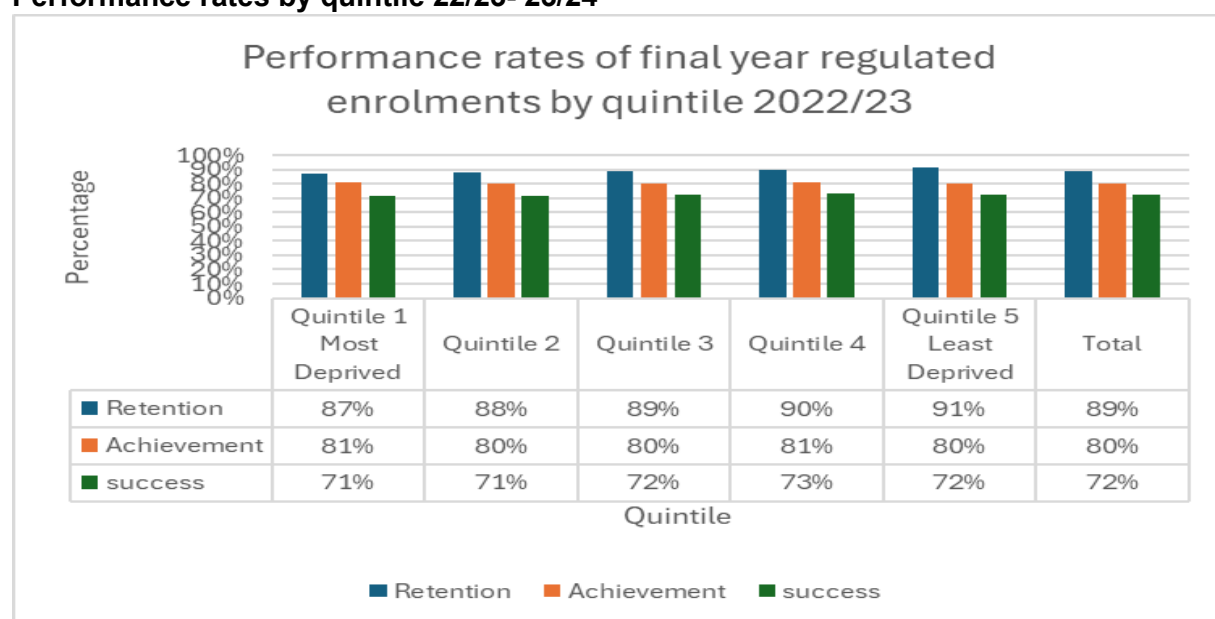
Regulated enrolments by level of study

<b>FE College</b>	<b>Level of Study</b>	<b>Academic Year</b>				
		<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>
<b>Northern Regional College</b>	Entry and Level 1	4,045	2,375	2,125	2,410	1,760
	Level 2	6,415	4,855	5,740	5,610	4,695
	Level 3	3,860	3,820	3,990	4,205	3,925
	Level 4 and above	1160	1020	1045	1065	1070
	<b>Total</b>	<b>15,480</b>	<b>12,070</b>	<b>12,905</b>	<b>13,295</b>	<b>11,455</b>

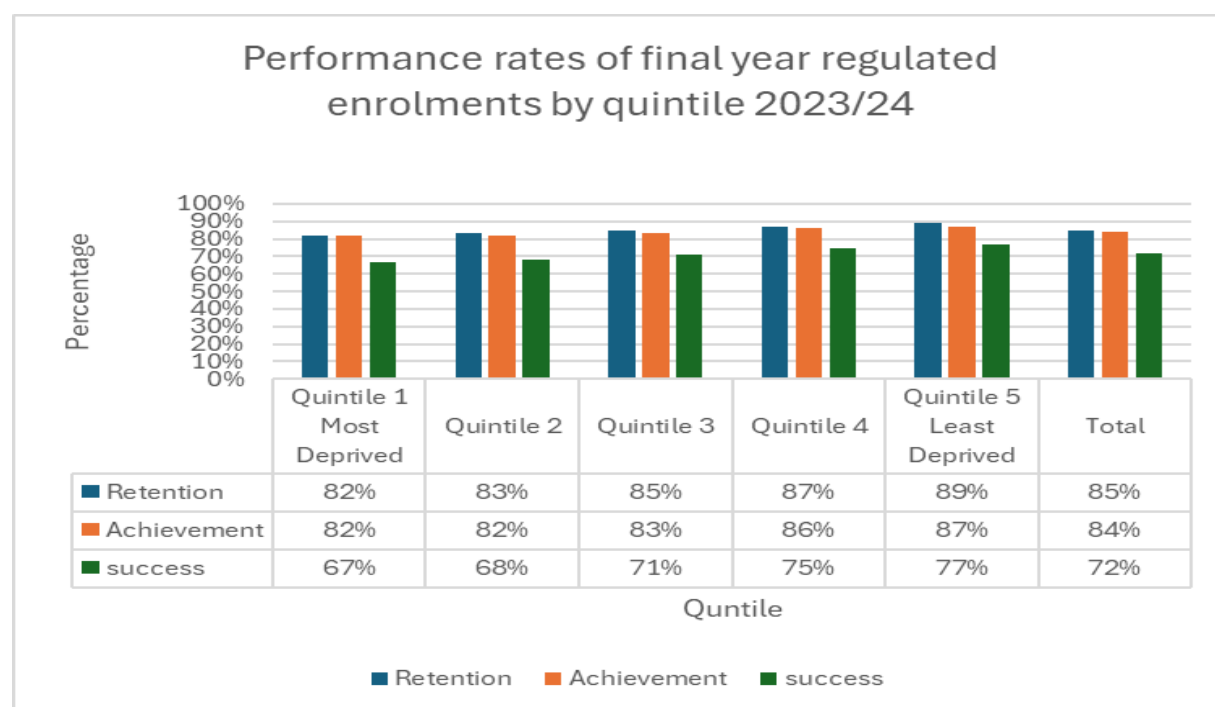


## Performance

### Performance rates by quintile 22/23- 23/24



Data Source: 2021/22, 2022/23 & 2023/24 DfE FE Sector Activity Bulletin



Data Source: 2021/22, 2022/23 & 2023/24 DfE FE Sector Activity Bulletin

**Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by mode of attendance 2022/24  
2022/23**

<b>FE College</b>	<b>Mode of Attendance</b>	<b>Retention Rate</b>	<b>Achievement Rate</b>	<b>Success Rate</b>
<b>Northern Regional College</b>	Full-time	88%	91%	79%
	Part-time	89%	78%	70%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>72%</b>

**2023/24**

<b>FE College</b>	<b>Mode of Attendance</b>	<b>Retention Rate</b>	<b>Achievement Rate</b>	<b>Success Rate</b>
<b>Northern Regional College</b>	Full-time	86%	92%	79%
	Part-time	85%	82%	70%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>72%</b>

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/further-education-sector-activity-northern-ireland-201920-202324>