

NORTHERN Regional College

Northern Regional College College Development Plan 2024/25

Version: 0.4

Date: 14.11.24

Contents

1	Executive Summary	3
2	Strategic Context	5
3	Financial Performance / Position	6
4	2024/25 College Planned Delivery.....	7
4.1	College Profile for 2024/25.....	7
4.2	Sub-regional Operating Context.....	12
4.3	College Engagement/Collaboration.....	14
4.4	2024/25 Planned Activity	19
5	Key Challenges/Constraints	38

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 2024/25 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 follows:

Figure 1: College Vision, Values and Strategic Priorities



The Strategic Plan can be read in full at [Strategic Plan | Northern Regional College](#). The College's strategic goal of providing a responsive, sustainable curriculum, aligned to the Economy Minister's Economic Vision and local business and community needs, with a success metric of 100%, demonstrates the College's commitment to working in partnership to deliver skills and qualifications to support the wider Northern Ireland economy.

The College is committed to growing learner numbers across all provision, this is demonstrated with the planned activity for 2024/25, which is increasing by 6% from 7,625 in 2023/24 to 8,105 in 2024/25.

The Governing Body fully endorses the 2024/25 College Development Plan and the planned activity set out for 2024/25.

2 Strategic Context

Executive's draft PfG Outcomes Framework

Grow a Globally Competitive Economy

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.

Minister's Economic Vision

The College is a key delivery partner in taking forward the Minister's priorities set out in his 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.

Strategies / Priorities

- [Delivering the Economic Vision A three year forward look & 2024/25 Action Plan](#)
- [Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland](#)
- [Trade and Investment Strategic Priorities](#)
- [Climate Change Act \(NI\) 2022](#)
- Review of the FE Delivery Model
- [Developing a More Strategic Approach to 14-19 Education and Training - a Framework to Transform 14-19 Education and Training Provision](#)
- NI Skills Barometer ([Mid and East Antrim & Antrim and Newtownabbey](#)), ([Causeway Coast and Glens](#)) and ([Mid Ulster](#))

3 Financial Performance / Position

2024/25 Forecast Position

The table below sets out the College resource of £32,176,000 and capital requirements of £22,330,000 for 2024/25 as per budget letters of 5 and 11 June 2024, and 17 October 2024.

PROGRAMME / ACTIVITY (£000's)						
A	B	C	D	E	F	
Further Education	Higher Education	Apprenticeships / Traineeships	Business Development	Social Inclusion	Total	
EL - Level 3 (not under B – F)	Level 4+	Programmes up to Level 3 including AppsNI; Traineeships; Skills for Life and Work; TfS	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	9,360	1,365	3,900	975	3,900	19,500
Direct Teaching Costs - Non Pay	1,508	268	737	168	670	3,351
Non-Direct Costs*	6,028	1,072	2,947	670	2,679	13,396
Total Delivery Cost	16,896	2,705	7,584	1,813	7,249	36,247
Non-Grant in Aid Income	1,001	326	895	422	1,427	4,071
Net Requirement	15,895	2,379	6,689	1,391	5,822	32,176

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

TOTAL RESOURCE REQUIREMENT (£000's)	32,176
--	---------------

Capital Expenditure	22,330
Capital Receipts	
Net Capital Requirement (£000's)	22,330

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

Northern Regional College						
Staff numbers FTE	Staff Type	31st July 2023	RtS Leavers	31st July 2024	RtS Leavers	Target 31st March 2025
	Teaching	320.0	-1.2	283.6	-13.1	300.0
	Non Teach	266.0	-12.8	263.8	-5.4	284.0
	Sub Total FTEs	586.0	-14.0	547.4	-18.5	584.0
Externally funded posts						
	Vacant posts	38.0		57.5		5.0
	Total FTE Staffing	624.0	-14.0	604.9	-18.5	589.0

Notes:

1. The above will be impacted by movements of leavers/joiners during the year, along with strike action and the 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 to audit sign-off.
4. The RtS leavers link back to approved business case and final approved numbers.

4 2024/25 College Planned Delivery

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

4.1 College Profile for 2024/25

The College currently operates out of five campuses (including two in Ballymena) with the newly opened Causeway Campus seeing the amalgamation of Coleraine and Ballymoney campuses. The College delivered 14,659 enrolments in 2022/23 across four Council Areas: Antrim & Newtownabbey; Causeway Coast & Glens; Mid & East Antrim; and Mid Ulster, as seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Campus Locations



Next year (2025/26) the new Ballymena campus will open, merging three Ballymena campuses (Trostan Avenue/Lamont and Farm Lodge) into one campus of the future. Both new build capital projects represent significant investment of £97m from the Department for the Economy into Further Education facilities. By 2025 the College will have 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 is now commencing further projects to support the redevelopment of Magherafelt and Newtownabbey Campuses in the next five years.

Campus priority areas:

- Digital and Creative Industries, where the College will develop strategic partnerships through e.g., NI Screen, to strengthen curriculum alignment with career pathways from Level 3 to Higher Education, including apprenticeships (Newtownabbey/Coleraine Centres of Specialism)
- Advanced Manufacturing, where the College has an established reputation in robotics systems integration and emerging capability in green technologies (Ballymena Centre of Specialism)
- Life and Health Sciences, including Health & Social Care, where the College is working in collaboration with the curriculum hub to develop pathways up to Level 6, including HLA and where public sector/all age apprenticeships will offer significant growth potential (Newtownabbey Centre of Specialism) Hospitality

and Tourism (Coleraine Centre of Specialism), aligned to Causeway Coast and Glens economy and Coleraine new campus facilities/estates strategy.

- Skills Centre for Adult Education, Health, Innovation and Enterprise (Magherafelt Campus)

The College employs approximately 800 staff across six campuses injecting over £22m in salaries and wages into the local economy. The breakdown of the staff profile given in Figure 3 shows a total of 586 FTEs. During the 2023/24 academic year the FE sector opened a Voluntary Severance Scheme, this resulted in staff leaving the College from both teaching and professional services roles.

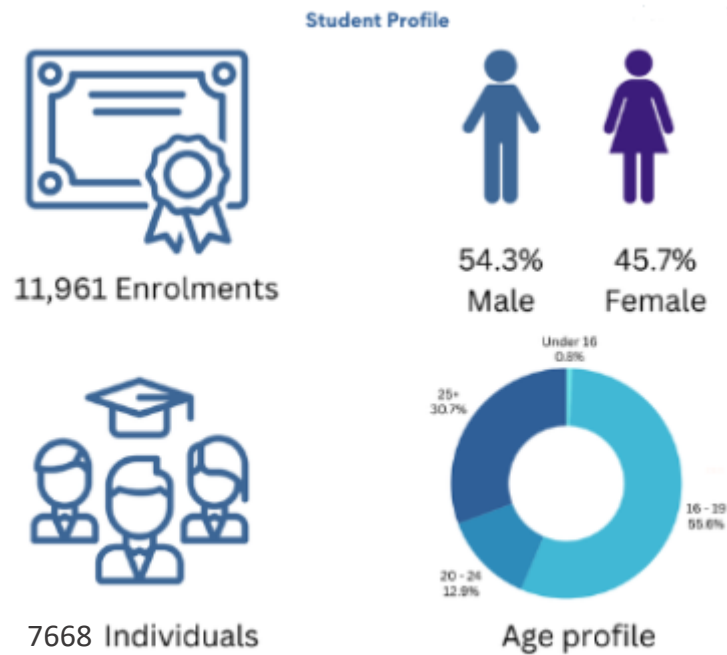
Figure 3: Staff Breakdown



The College delivered approximately 12,000 enrolments in 2023/24 to 7,668 individuals.

Figure 4 shows additional information on the student profile.

Figure 4: Student Profile



In 2024/25 the College will run Skills Competitions across all campuses for students, including entering students in WorldSkills in the following vocational areas:

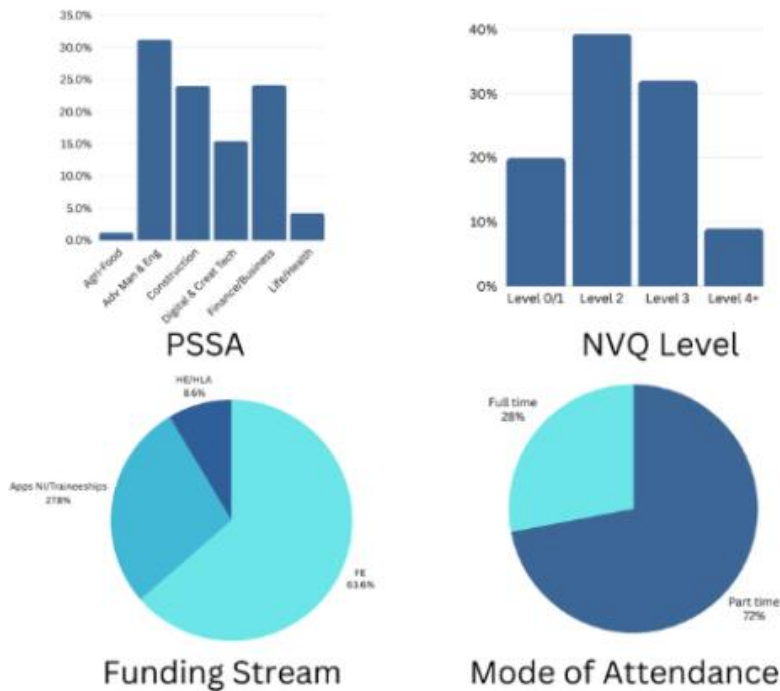
- Creative Media;
- Inclusive Learning;
- Construction;
- Computing;
- Robotics;
- CNC;
- Hair and Beauty;
- Health and Social Care; and
- Carpentry and Joinery.

How well did we do?

In 2023/24 the College delivered 40% of the enrolments at Level 3 or above in support of the Skills Barometer which identified the need for qualifications at Level 3-5 to support growth in the NI economy. An overview of qualifications can be seen in Figure 5. Through engagement with the College 8,929 regulated qualifications have been delivered across all provision including social inclusion programmes. The College has

engaged through social inclusion programmes with over 4,000 learners, addressing barriers to education such as language, disability and low previous educational attainments.

Figure 5: Qualification Overview 2023/24

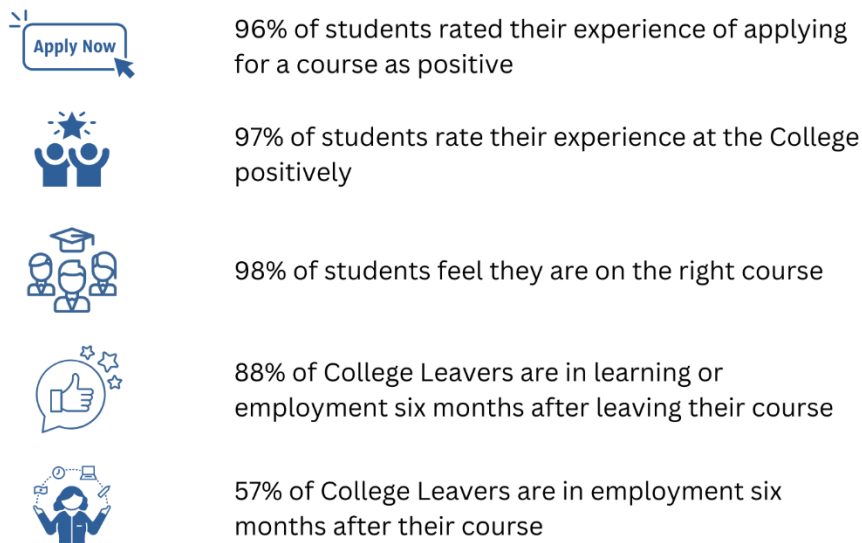


The College has delivered bespoke business support through innovative projects to over 60 businesses and delivered accredited training to 99 SMEs. In 2023/24 the College delivered an academy in Hospitality, one in Manufacturing and a Teaching Assistant academy working with local council partners and The Gallaher Trust. Through external engagement over 550 learners engaged in these programmes with a delivery spend of over £750k.

Results from internal College surveys and the DfE FE Leavers Survey show a very high rate of satisfaction with learner experience and a high level of learners progressing into further education or training as seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Student Feedback

Student Feedback



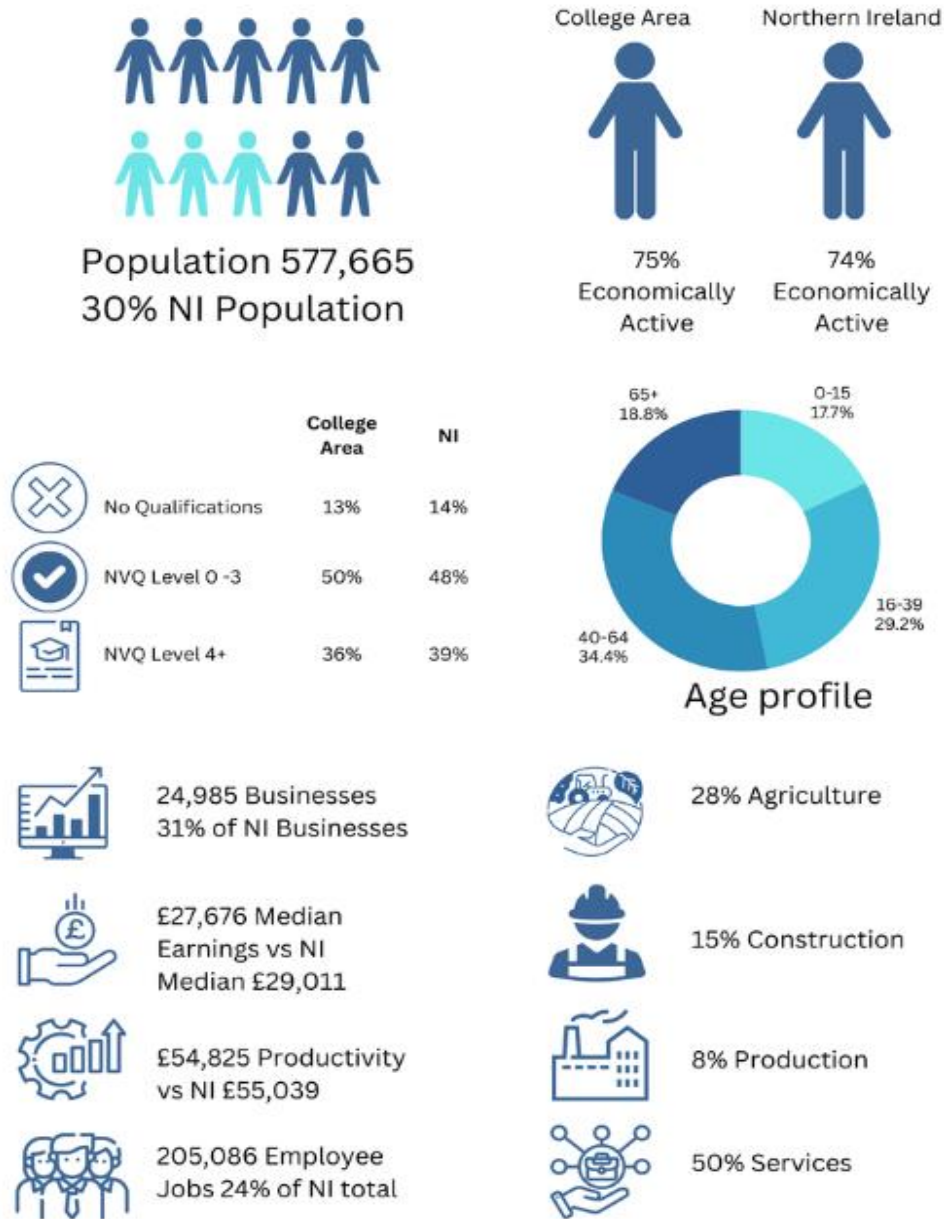
Data source: NISRA FE Outcomes Dashboard, accessed 11/09/24, Further Education Outcomes: Academic Year 2022/23 (nisra.gov.uk) and College Student Experience Survey October 2023.

4.2 Sub-regional Operating Context

Population and Industry Profile

The College operates across four council areas covering a population that equates to 30% of the Northern Ireland total. Figure 7 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 Council Briefing Statistics](#). The College aims to provide opportunities for the 12% of the local community without formal qualifications through delivery of Essential Skills, targeted programmes such as Step Up, Multiply and ESOL. Whilst the local area sits above the Northern Ireland average for economically active, the College will continue to work with partners to deliver focused academies which will 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 in industries such as manufacturing, engineering, hospitality and services which are the most prevalent across the four council areas.

Figure 7: Population and Industry Profile



Data Source: Invest NI Council Briefings June 2024

4.3 College Engagement/Collaboration

Embedding Entrepreneurship

The College continued to lead momentum and progress in the Entrepreneurship Hub, with a continued focus in 2024/25 on supporting curriculum development, staff professional learning and internationalising the curriculum across the six colleges. In curriculum development, the Level 2 Innovation and Enterprise saw a staged roll out of delivery across key curriculum areas, with the Level 4 Innovation and Enterprise nearing completion. Global Entrepreneurship Week included a range of workshops, guest speakers, and ideation sessions across all campuses, using available funding where possible. Partnerships with a range of entrepreneurs and local enterprise and industry continued in conjunction with Business Engagement, with key links supporting future planning for growth in this area. Engagement with Social Enterprises was ongoing throughout the year, supporting wider skills development and partnership working between curriculum teams, students and industry. The 4D Entrepreneurship Project was delivered in year, which strengthened vocational staff competencies in Design Thinking and applied methodologies to real-world challenges. The project concluded with the creation of a Design Thinking Teacher and Student guide. The FE sector Entrepreneurship Hub Manager attended key external events, to broaden ideas and network, improving links and sharing good practice, these events provided key learning and professional development opportunities for Hub members, allowing for further development of plans for embedding entrepreneurship within the sector across 2024/25. The FE Sector PBL competition continues to grow momentum, with an increased number of students and projects submitted to the internal competitions and with Northern Regional College students achieving commendations or awards at the sector event at NWRC. On International Entrepreneurship Education, a successful Turing scheme application allowed for students and staff to experience a study visit to Belgium, setting the baseline for increased Turing scheme applications in 2024/25. Following the success of this event, there are plans for future applications and collaborations with European partners.

Employer Engagement

The College engages with employers to enhance workforce skills and innovation through various programmes and services, such as Skills Focus and Innovation Vouchers. These collaborations support the development of current and future employees, while also offering training on a cost recovery basis. Employer Forums serve as a key platform for structured

dialogue, allowing the College to gather industry feedback and shape its offerings across nine priority areas. Additionally, the College's nine Industry Engagement Forums, aligned with 29 Professional & Technical sectors, facilitate curriculum development and business growth, contributing to self-evaluation and external assessments. Active partnerships with local businesses, including Harland and Wolff and Wrightbus, enrich the College's curriculum and apprenticeship programs, demonstrating a commitment to innovative education and student advancement. The College aims to deliver an Assured Skills Welding Academy in 2024/25 pending DfE approval. The College has developed a chef academy with Galgorm group.

The College is actively collaborating with various accountancy firms, such as ASM and Moore Northern Ireland, to enhance the HLA in Accountancy program and create job opportunities. It also spearheads a sectoral partnership in Transport and Logistics, drawing insights from companies like Henderson's, Montgomery Transport, and Woodsides for the HLA in Supply Chain and Logistics. In construction, McAdams has engaged a placement student in Architecture and a Project Manager Graduate for the Ballymena New Build Project. Furthermore, the College is committed to running manufacturing academies with local Ballymena businesses, including Wrightbus and Norbev, and is expanding its hospitality academies in partnership with Galgorm and affiliates of the Northern Ireland Hospitality School. It is through the sectoral partnerships that the College has developed two new Higher Education programmes, both with the Open University, as part of the first phase of widening the Higher Education provision. The first programme is the Certificate in Health Care Practice in conjunction with Northern Health and Social Care Trust, this is recruiting strongly with the first cohort due to commence in September 2024. The second programme is a part-time Foundation Degree in Housing which again has been codesigned with employers from across Northern Ireland.

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. It plans to introduce more academies in diverse fields this year. The new Ballymena campus will complement the i4c Innovation Centre, promoting shared use of facilities. Collaborations include a new engineering apprenticeship with MEGA, a teaching assistant academy, and employability programs with NWRC. 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 further education's alignment with regional economic needs. Additionally, it collaborates on the OU Healthcare Practice programme with the Northern Health & Social Care Trust which is commencing in 2024/25. 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. 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.

Table 1: Priority skills within our Council Areas.

	Mid and East Antrim	Antrim and N'abbey	Mid Ulster	Causeway Coast and Glens
Sustainability/Net Zero	X	X	X	X
Engineering/ Manufacturing	X	X	X	
Agriculture (Agri-food)	X		X	
Construction			X	
Tourism	X		X	X
Environment			X	X
Cultural Heritage			X	X
Retail		X		
Wholesale		X		
Transportation		X		

Data Source: College's Engagement Strategy

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. In 2023/24, the College delivered bespoke professional development programmes to post-primary schools in Ballymena, with a view to increasing delivery in 2024/25 to a wider area.

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 Partnerships & Careers team. 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 Managers to ensure that our offering remains relevant to local employers.

The College has held numerous community engagement events, with the community day, to visit the new Causeway Campus, attracting over 800 people from the local area.

Sector Collaboration and Codesign

The Department for the Economy has initiated Sectoral Partnerships to enhance apprenticeship and traineeship programs, aligning them with industry needs. These partnerships serve as collaborative platforms for stakeholders to shape the curriculum and support traineeships. Currently, fifteen partnerships contribute to sectors such as Transport & Logistics, Engineering, and Health and Social Care, ensuring relevant and innovative curriculum development. For instance, the childcare sector is seeing advancements in

training for resilience and mental health. Similarly, the engineering sector is expanding its apprenticeship offerings, while the hospitality sector is instrumental in developing a new Foundation Degree. Additionally, collaboration with 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 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. Notably, the 2023/24 academic year saw the introduction of new qualifications in Housing and a specialised Foundation Degree in Computing, addressing cloud and cyber security skills in demand by employers. By maintaining a high-quality, up-to-date, and industry-responsive curriculum, these hubs enhance the prospects for economic advancement and sectoral performance.

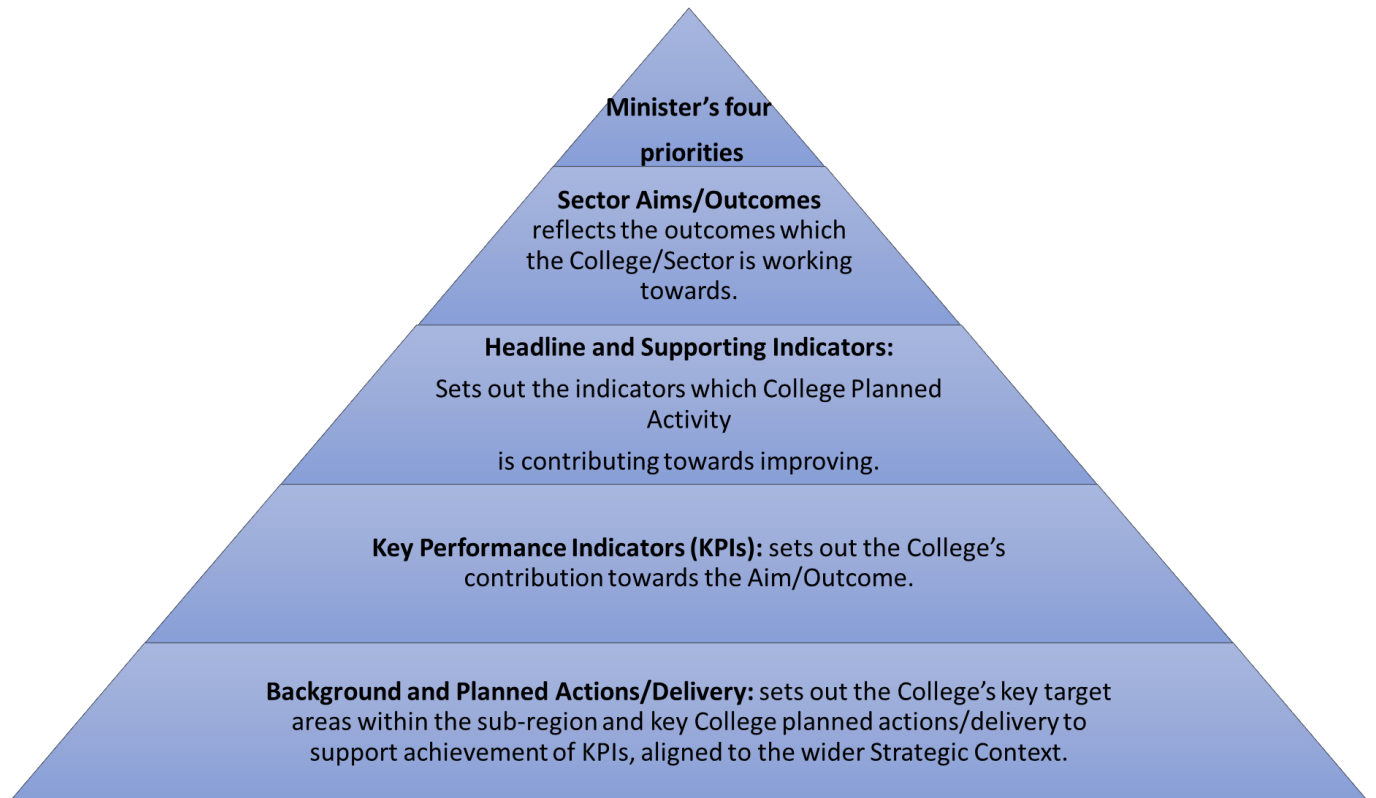
The College is leading on codesigning a sector wide programme to upskill staff and introduce Artificial Intelligence to each College, with the opportunity to bid for funding from DfE in the 2024/25 academic year.

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 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 work to attract more businesses and regenerate rural economies.

4.4 2024/25 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 below table provides a summary of the Aims/Outcomes and associated KPIs 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 50 no. in 2023/24 to 67 no. in 2024/25 financial year.
		1.2	To increase delivery of tailored training programmes from 75 in 2023/24 to 95 in 2024/25 financial year and to support 1,083 no. individuals via Skill Up in 2024/25 financial year.
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 7,625 no. individuals in 2023/24 to 8,105 no. individuals in 2024/25 academic year. To meet the target of recruiting 8,105 individuals in 2024/25 which will show growth of 6% from the 2023/24 individual activity of 7,625.
		2.2	To equip 750 no. individuals participating in international programmes with key employability skills necessary through participation in Turing and ¹ Skills Competitions in the 2024/25 academic year.
		2.3	To increase the number of individuals supported by the College who are furthest away from the labour market and with low or no formal qualifications from 3,652 no. in 2022/23 to 3,800 no. in 2024/25 academic year.
		2.4	To maintain the retention rate within the College at 89 % from 2022/23 in 2024/25 academic year.
		2.5	To increase the achievement rate within the College at 80 % from 2022/23 to 82% in 2024/25 academic year.
		2.6	To increase the number of 25–64-year-olds participating in education and training from 3,650 no. individuals in 2022/23 to 3,800 no. individuals in 2024/25

¹ The Skills Competitions Metrics reflects individuals in international, including feeder competitions such as National UK Finals

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 10% of College staff in delivery of green sustainable skills in the 2024/25 academic year.
		3.2	350 no. individuals participating on green/sustainable courses in the 2024/25 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 2024/25 academic year.

4.4.1 Aim/Outcome 1

Raise Productivity	
Aim/Outcome - 1	To increase regional business productivity/growth through the delivery of tailored/bespoke training programmes.
Headline Indicator	Output per hour worked
Supporting Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Innovative active businesses (including number of Innovation Recognitions).

Background

The College's External Engagement Strategy has established the targets and growth plan for delivering the College's objectives around business engagement and skills programmes. Since the start of the strategy, diversified income has increased from £730k in 2019/20 to nearly £2.8m in 2023/24. Over the same period InnovateUs actual spend has increased from £4,800 to £175,200 and Innovation Vouchers from £26,000 to £40,000. The Strategic Plan identifies a target by 2025 of 15% of income generated through bids for funding, diversified income or where delivery involves engagement with employers. The Business Engagement team, overseen by a Business Engagement Manager, directly manages the identification and delivery of funded skills programmes in the College. The team actively identifies skills and funding for companies and manages 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 of Business Engagement Officers also promote opportunities for innovation programmes to potential client companies.

The External Engagement Strategy has established the targets and growth plan for delivering the College's objectives around business engagement, including academies.

KPI 1.1	To increase delivery of innovation-based projects in SMEs from 50 no. in 2023/24 to 67 no. in 2024/25 financial year.
Planned Activity:	
With an available budget of £210,000 for InnovateUs	Complete 55 projects ² .
With a budget of £50,000 for Innovation Vouchers	Work with 10 companies
KTPs	Deliver 1 project
With a budget of £27,000 for Innovation Boost (Fusion)	Deliver 1 project
KPI 1.2	To increase delivery of tailored training programmes from 75 in 2023/24 to 95 in 2024/25 financial year and to support 1,083 no. individuals via Skill Up in 2024/25 financial year.
Planned Activity:	
With an available budget of £250,000 for Skills Focus	Support 95 tailored training programmes.
Deliver funded academies through LMP and other funding sources	<p>Tour guiding Academy MEABC LMP X2 £6,000</p> <p>Business Administration Academy MEABC LMP £11,000</p> <p>Hospitality Academy X2 The Gallaher Trust £53,400</p> <p>Manufacturing Academy The Gallaher Trust £35,000</p> <p>Chef Academy The Gallaher Trust £42,000</p> <p>Special Support in Teaching & Learning Academy ANBC LMP £26,000</p> <p>Health & Social Care Academy CCGBC LMP £10,000</p> <p>Cocktail Making Academy CCGBC LMP £4,000</p>
To deliver £290,000 of Skill Up provision	Skill Up from 2023/24 to 2024/25 financial year to support 1,083 individuals up from 827 individuals.

² Calculated by number of businesses who completed a project (DER) minus those who completed more than one in the year

4.4.2 Aim/Outcome 2

Good Jobs/Promote Regional Balance/Raise Productivity	
Aim/Outcome - 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.
Headline Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good jobs measure based on earnings, permanent contracts and minimum guaranteed hours. • Regional Employment Rate • Output per hour worked
Supporting Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Quality Indicators • ³Proportion leaving NI HEIs with narrow STEM qualifications • Qualifications by Level of Study • Economic Inactivity Rate excluding students

Background

Further Education

- Full-time Further Education numbers are expected to remain stable when compared with 2023/24. This stability in terms of numbers shows growth within FT FE as there has been a reduction in Level 2 due to ongoing reform and transfer of vocational areas to Traineeships.
- Part-time Further Education will show marginal growth in 2024/25 with the delivery of new initiatives under the Multiply Programme. The College will deliver the following interventions and initiatives:
 - MSOL - English By Numbers
- Engaging Mature Learners - Making It Count Useful ways to manage your money
 - Counting on You - Industry Upskilling OCN Level 2 Award Digital Marketing
 - Numeracy Boot Camps - Feeding a Family
 - Numeracy Boot Camps - Online Selling
 - Vocational Math - Maths Tutorials
 - Vocational Math - GSCE Maths for Adult Learners
- Delivery of qualifications through Skill Up funding will continue with a high volume of individuals engaged through this area.

³ First degrees and postgraduate qualifications. Indicator to be updated to include narrow STEM qualifications via Further Education College and/or Higher Level Apprenticeship Route.

- Part-time Further Education will include the delivery of qualifications through Step Up including the targeted programmes of College Connect+, Women Returners and DARE.

Traineeships

- The College's Traineeship provision continues to grow in strength and numbers.
- There is particularly strong recruitment to Childcare, Beauty Therapy, Health and Social Care, Engineering, Animal Care, Barbering and ICT.
- New vocational areas such as Art & Design and Creative Media are also recruiting very well.

Apprenticeships

- The College's Apprenticeship offering remains a stable aspect of the provision at approximately 13% despite challenges recruiting staff to specialised areas. Staff retention and recruitment in areas such as Electrical Installation have posed difficult for not only the College but the FE Sector.
- The College has increased the number of Engineering Apprentices on the Newtownabbey campus from 25 to 89 as a result of the ongoing strategic partnership with Harland and Wolff.
- The introduction of the All-Age Apprenticeship model will see a new cohort of individuals engage with the College and increase overall numbers, providing key opportunities for employment that were not previously available.

Higher Education and Higher-Level Apprenticeships

- The College commences its new partnership with the Open University in 2024/25. The opportunity to deliver a range of Foundation Degrees and Higher Education qualifications complements the existing provision offered with our local Higher Education Partners, Ulster University and Stranmillis College.
- Higher Education full-time recruitment remains challenging; however, the College is hopeful of small incremental growth in 2024/25 and early signs are promising in terms of numbers.
- The College does not expect to meet the planned activity set through the MaSN process; however, it is anticipated that the achievement rate in 2024/25 will be close to 82% which is higher than in 2023/24 when the level was 75%.
- Higher Education FT activity must be viewed alongside Higher Level Apprenticeships, as overall the story is very positive.

- Enrolment to Higher Level Apprenticeships has seen exponential growth over the last number of years. The numbers from 2023/24 to 2024/25 are expected to grow from 162 to 200. This represents growth of 23% in one academic year. At 1 October 2024 enrolments total 189 however, the target of 200 is retained to account for further movement between part time HE and HLA on securing an employer.
- The College does not expect to meet the planned new intake set through the letter of offer due to conversion from employer expression of interest to recruitment.
- The College have introduced new HLA provision for 2024/25 which is recruiting well, this includes:
 - Business Management new course
 - Hospitality and Tourism Management
 - Cloud with Cyber security

Essential Skills

- The planned activity for Essential Skills remains stable when compared to 2023/24.
- The projected 400 individuals included under KPI 2.1 are participants in discrete provision to account for capture of Essential Skills enrolments completed alongside vocational provision.
- The opportunity to provide free GCSE Maths through Multiply may see a small displacement from Essential Skills enrolments.

Total Individuals Enrolled

- The College expects to show growth from 2023/24 to 2024/25 of 6%. This growth will be in the individual activity, i.e. more learners engaged with the College and not simply the same learners enrolled on more qualifications. The College has the second highest ratio of learners enrolled on regulated qualifications in the sector, therefore providing upskilling qualifications to address local skills needs and support individuals to avail of opportunities to gain employment or progress into further training or education.

Social Inclusion

- The College has received an additional £60k funding to provide digital skills qualifications to ESOL learners to complement their ESOL qualification. Plans are in development to roll this provision out across all campuses.
- Whilst the College does not have the same levels of social deprivation present in other College catchment areas, there are pockets within a number of large towns that are

served by College campuses. The largely 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. Feedback on these programmes is positive after initial delivery in 2023/24.

Retention and Achievement

- The outturn position for 2023/24 is not fully complete yet, however, early data analysis shows an expected decrease in retention from 89% in 2022/23 to 86% in 2023/24. This is linked directly to industrial action and staff disengagement with the Learner Management system, staff did not withdraw or cancel students in a timely manner before the key date which adversely affected the retention figures. The College has plans in place for 2024/25 to ensure that registers are marked, monitored and timely interventions are put in place to ensure accurate data.
- It is anticipated that the achievement rate will be broadly in line with 2022/23, this is despite media coverage of GCSEs and A levels returning to pre-pandemic levels. To hold the achievement rate stable is a positive position and one which allow the College to further enhance the rate in 2024/25.
- 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.

Student performance levels for 2022/23 can be found in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Performance Levels 2022/23



Retention 89%



Achievement 80%



Success 72%

2022/23 Performance Levels

KPI 2.1	<p>To increase the total number of individuals enrolled in the College from 7,625 in 2023/24, to 8,105 no. individuals in 2024/25 academic year.</p> <p>To meet the target of recruiting 8,105 individuals in 2024/25 which will show growth of 6% from the 2023/24 individual activity of 7,625.</p>	
Plans to achieve in the 2024/25 academic year:		
Level 0 - 3	No. of individuals on PT FE	3,105
	No. of individuals on FT FE	1,950
	No. of individuals on Skills for Life and Work programme	N/A
	No. of individuals on Traineeships programme	550
	No. of individuals on Apprenticeships NI programme	1,000
	No. of individuals on Essential Skills programme	400 ⁴
Level 4+	No. of individuals on PT HE in FE	675
	No. of individuals on FT HE in FE	225
	No. of individuals on High Level Apprenticeship programme	200
KPI 2.2	<p>To equip 842 no. individuals participating in international programmes with key employability skills necessary through participation in Turing and Skills Competitions in the 2024/25 academic year.</p>	
Planned Activity:		
To upskill 12 staff in the World Skills Educator Programme		
3 cohorts of 80 no. students to participate in the Turing Programme (Computing, Construction and Hair & Beauty)		
750 no. students to participate in formal Skills Competitions (World Skills, Skills Build, PBL. Across 25 vocational areas.) ⁵		

⁴ 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.

⁵ The Skills Competitions Metrics reflects individuals in international, including feeder competitions such as National UK Finals

KPI 2.3	To increase the number of individuals supported by the College who are furthest away from the labour market and with low or no formal qualifications from 3,652 no. in 2022/23 to 5,664 no. in 2024/25 academic year.
Plans to achieve in the 2024/25 academic year:	
No. of individuals Quintile 1 and 2	2,500
No. of individuals declaring a disability/long term health problem	2,600
No. of individuals on ESOL programmes	250
No. of individuals completing a Step Up programme <small>(Activity is based on financial year (1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025)).</small>	314
KPI 2.4	To maintain the retention rate within the College at 89 % from 2022/23 in 2024/25 academic year.
FE Retention Rate	Achieved Rate in 2022/23: 88.93% Expected Rate for 2023/24: 84.62% Planned Rate: 89%
HE in FE Retention Rate	Achieved Rate in 2022/23: 91.5% Expected Rate for 2023/24: 84.17% Planned Rate: 91.5%
Apprenticeship Retention Rate	Achieved Rate in 2022/23: 94.77% Expected Rate for 2023/24: 96.02% Planned Rate: 96%
Planned Activity:	
<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.</p> <p>The College will implement the College’s Quality Improvement Plan to achieve this activity. The following initiatives will be implemented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close monitoring of all curriculum areas on a weekly basis. • Monthly performance reviews, targeting programmes that have underperformed, support provided across wider college actions through student experience and teaching and learning excellence. Implementing case conferencing for all areas that require to recognise support required. • The College has already made the decisions not to deliver a selection of programmes that have underperformed over the last two years which would have had an impact on the data presented and are not delivering as a result. • The College has reestablished forums during 2024/25 to help monitor performance across Higher Education and Essential Skills with Heads of Department allocated cross-College roles to monitor this. • The College has implemented plans to strengthen the student voice from part-time learners. 	
KPI 2.5	To increase the achievement rate within the College at 80 % from 2022/23 to 82% in 2024/25 academic year.

FE Achievement Rate	Achieved Rate in 2022/23: 79.4% Expected Rate for 2023/24: 83.2% Planned Rate: 83% The College plans to maintain the 2023/24 expected rate which will demonstrate an increase from 2022/23.
HE in FE Achievement Rate	Achieved Rate in 2022/23: 91.5% Expected Rate for 2023/24: 88.5 % Planned Rate: 91.5% The College plans to maintain the 91.5% 2022/23 rate which will demonstrate an increase from the expected 2023/24 rate
Apprenticeship Achievement Rate	Achieved Rate in 2022/23: 81.2% Expected Rate for 2023/24: 81.5% Planned Rate: 82% The College plans to increase achievement to 82% which will demonstrate an increase from the 2023/24 expected rate.
Planned Activity:	If the College implements the above targets, this will result in an increased achievement rate from 2022/23 As noted under KPI 2.4
KPI 2.6	To increase the number of 25-64 year olds participating in education and training from 3,650 no. individuals in 2022/23 to 3,800 no. individuals in 2024/25
Planned Activity:	To recruit 25 individuals to All age Apprenticeships in 2024/25. Increase 25-64 year olds through initiatives such as Step up, Skill up and Multiply.

4.4.3 Aim/Outcome 3

Reduce Carbon Emissions	
Aim/Outcome - 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.
Headline Indicator	CO ² Emissions per Capita
Supporting Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of electricity consumption generated from renewable sources • Energy Intensity • Energy Efficiency • Circular economy material and carbon footprint

Background

The College has appointed a Principal Lecturer for Sustainability, this post has the focused remit of developing an action plan to increase the range of green and sustainable courses offered by the College. Their remit will include developing CPD courses to upskill staff across the College. The FE sector is awaiting accreditation of a range of courses developed in the last academic year, aimed with supporting knowledge and skills aligned to sustainability and to implement sustainability into everyday working practices.

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.

Working collaboratively, the six Further Education colleges have developed a suite of Sustainability modules and short courses that support skills and knowledge transfer across every industry. The suite of materials will build a foundational resource, beginning at level 2 and work up to sector specific skills at higher levels, developing pathways throughout. When accredited, the content can be used to support individuals through Skill Up, businesses through Skills Focus, as well as the wider student base, including apprenticeships, where sustainability modules and units can be incorporated into curriculum delivery.

All UU Foundation Degrees have the UU Sustainable Development Goals embedded within the programme.

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:

- Understanding the different terminologies and their relationship to each other – Sustainability, Green Technology, Net Zero, Embodied Carbon, Circular Economy etc.
- UN Sustainable Development Goals & 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
- Pathways to Success – Opportunities to review business strategies and processes, assess goals, implement available tools and develop roadmaps.

The College is leading on sustainable energy focusing on wind, solar, biomass, hydrogen and heat pumps. Figure 9 below indicates the range of areas where curriculum is required.

Figure 9: Sustainability Foundational Introduction



A number of stand-alone environmental programmes will continue to be offered by the College. In addition to a broad range of programmes with an environmental component, it is anticipated that Hairdressing, along with other vocational areas will offer a Level 2 Award in Sustainability and the Green Environment, as an additionality. Discrete programmes, which include progression from L2 to L3 are:

- L3 Hydrogen Applications and Technologies
- L2 Hydrogen Applications and Technologies (expected in 2025)
- L2 & L3 Award Hybrid Electrical Vehicle Maintenance
- L2 Electric/Hybrid Vehicle Routine Maintenance Activities
- A Level Environmental Technology
- Electric Metering Operatives Training – delivered exclusively for NIE
- L2 Diploma in Electrical Power Engineering - Distribution & Transmission
- L2 Diplomas in Smart Metering – Power.

The College has made a commitment within the Strategic Plan to increase sustainability, with the following goal: To provide facilities that support delivery of our refreshed curriculum and achieve environmental sustainability.

KPI 3.1	To train 10% of College staff in delivery of green sustainable skills in the 2024/25 academic year.
----------------	--

Planned Activity:	
Through the College’s planned L&D programme the following courses will be delivered to staff in the 2024/25 year, 60 staff to be trained:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City & Guilds Level 2 Award in Sustainability & the Green Environment • Sustainability Fundamentals • Sustainability Practices – Resource Orchestration and Re-institutionalisation • Greening the Workforce • Digital Sustainability - Role of Emerging Technologies • Environment Awareness in Safety Hub 	
KPI 3.2	350 no. individuals participating on green/sustainable courses in the 2024/25 academic year.
Planned Activity:	
The College aims to deliver green courses to 350 individuals in 2024/25 increasing from 297 individuals in 2023/24.	

4.4.4 Aim/Outcome 4

Reduce Carbon Emissions	
Aim/Outcome - 4	To progress towards the Public Body reporting duties of the Climate Change legislation delivering an energy efficient and sustainable estate.
Headline Indicator	CO ² Emissions per Capita
Supporting Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of electricity consumption generated from renewable sources • Energy Intensity • Energy Efficiency • Circular economy material and carbon footprint

The College opened Causeway Campus, the first of its two major new build projects in August 2024, completing phase one of transitioning from a six-campus College to four. This new campus is the first part of the £97m 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 2025. This will reduce consumption of energy/fuel/water. 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: [Campus Redevelopment | Northern Regional College](#).

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.

KPI 4.1	To establish the key actions to improve/maintain energy efficiency in the College in 2024/25 academic year.
Planned Activity:	
Fully operational new campus in Coleraine with low U-value to building envelope, high efficiency boilers, light movement sensors, increased occupancy and room utilisation, significantly reduced energy use and tracking data measurable against previous Coleraine and Ballymoney campus floor areas. EV charging stations, and solar panels to enhance use of energy and low carbon technologies.	
Launch of net zero base line data and setting realistic and achievable targets for 2028 to reduce carbon emissions.	
In 2024/25 financial year, to apply for monies towards minor works	£150k to provide assistance, specialist staff, and consultancy advice to set, monitor and achieve realistic and sustainable targets for net zero project

projects⁶ that contribute towards a sustainable College estate.	
In 2024/25 academic year, to establish key actions to improve/maintain energy efficiency of College campuses.	<p>Action 1: Monitor, report and compare energy use data for the new Causeway campus in Coleraine, to compare with previous 3-year energy use in the former campuses replaced by the new campus.</p> <p>Action 2: Develop feasibility studies for optional improvements including the thermal performance and energy use of the existing Newtownabbey and Magherafelt campuses, and rationalisation of room use to improve efficiency of use of existing facilities.</p>
In 2024/25 academic year, improve baseline position for each College campus.	Using the Causeway campus baseline for energy efficiency, the goal is to enhance improvements and performance to reduce energy use by 10% based on performance per sqm campus size/s replaced by new campus.

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
<p>Economic Planning Complexity – Pace of change of the key drivers for education and skills in FE Sector with new economic priorities and target actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in aligning College Development Plans to evolving indicators. Staff resources committed to existing curriculum delivery with limited flexibility. Work required to integrate local College curriculum plans with regional LEP plans. Differential levels of engagement between College, Councils and FE in developing regional plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDP working group now established between DfE and Colleges. Ongoing engagement to refine performance indicators from FE programmes to link to economic priorities. More clarity required on the approach to regional planning and LEPs and alignment with Council and InvestNI roles. Formal re-engagement with InvestNI commenced September'24

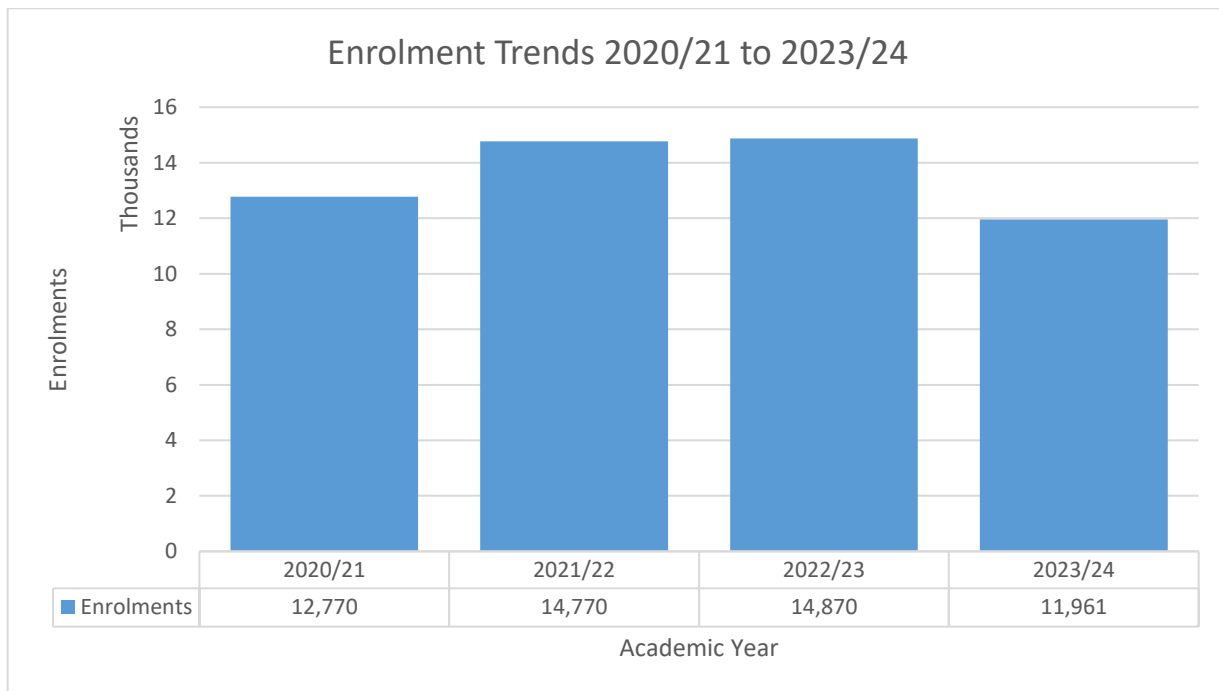
⁶ Includes Invest to Save Funded projects.

Challenge	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions
<p>Uncertainty and Complexity Around Funding Streams and Delays in LOOs – impacts on ability of Colleges to include planned delivery in curriculum build and associated targets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Range and variety of funding pots and compliance and eligibility issues takes time to put in place and test learner eligibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More visibility through NIFON and Curriculum Directors on scale of opportunities • Explore the opportunity to pull a number of separate programmes in over a central theme : Business and Innovation, Support for Inclusion • Wider consideration of the funding model requires NIFON input in terms of different rates to ensure consistency and viability. • Work with funders for release of LoOs earlier in the year to enable full integration into curriculum planning and delivery • Identification earlier from funders of new or additional in-year allocations to enable building of capacity
<p>Recruitment challenges Impacting on Enrolment – Colleges not being able to attract lecturers/trainers in traditional trade and STEM areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trend for last 5 years of significant interest in trade and STEM areas which cannot be accommodated due to recruitment challenges. • Aging profile of the workforce may have longer term impact in key sectors with significant critical skills gaps. • Negative impact on curriculum offer, quality of service provision and learner success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate review through HR sector working group of trends in applications and enrolments in last 3 years • Understand the opportunity for more flexible approach in terms of recruitment premium for agreed occupational areas • Secure pay remit approval to progress towards salary expectations • Industrial Relations review to commence following reestablishment of the CEF, focusing on pay parity and terms and conditions
<p>Investment in facilities (including IT and AI) and infrastructure to ensure competitiveness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to be at the forefront of new advances in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 year bids placed to DfE to secure funding to deliver new initiatives

Challenge	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions
<p>and to support action towards net zero targets in context of one year budgetary landscape</p>	<p>technology developments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to implement full obligations under the Climate Change Act and impact on net/zero/sustainability targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-year bids and realignment to cover emerging pressures • Progress commenced with establishment of baselines and initial progress towards targets

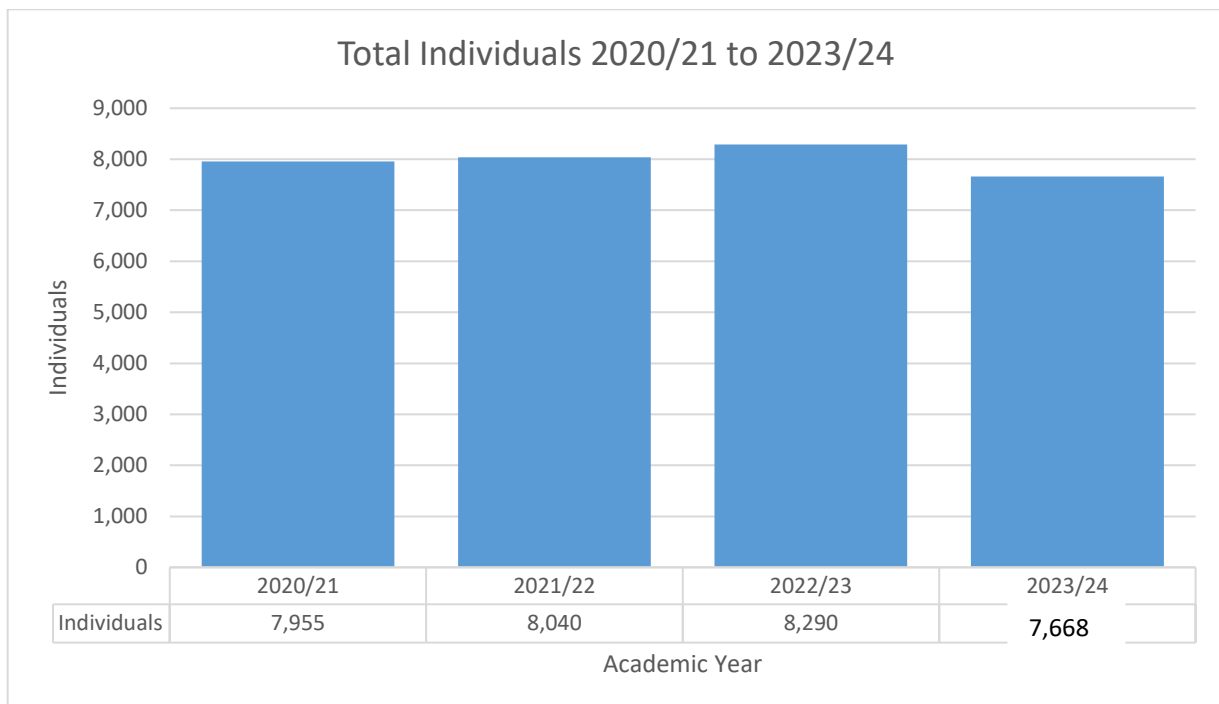
6 Annex 1 College Data Analysis

Figure 20: College Enrolment Trends



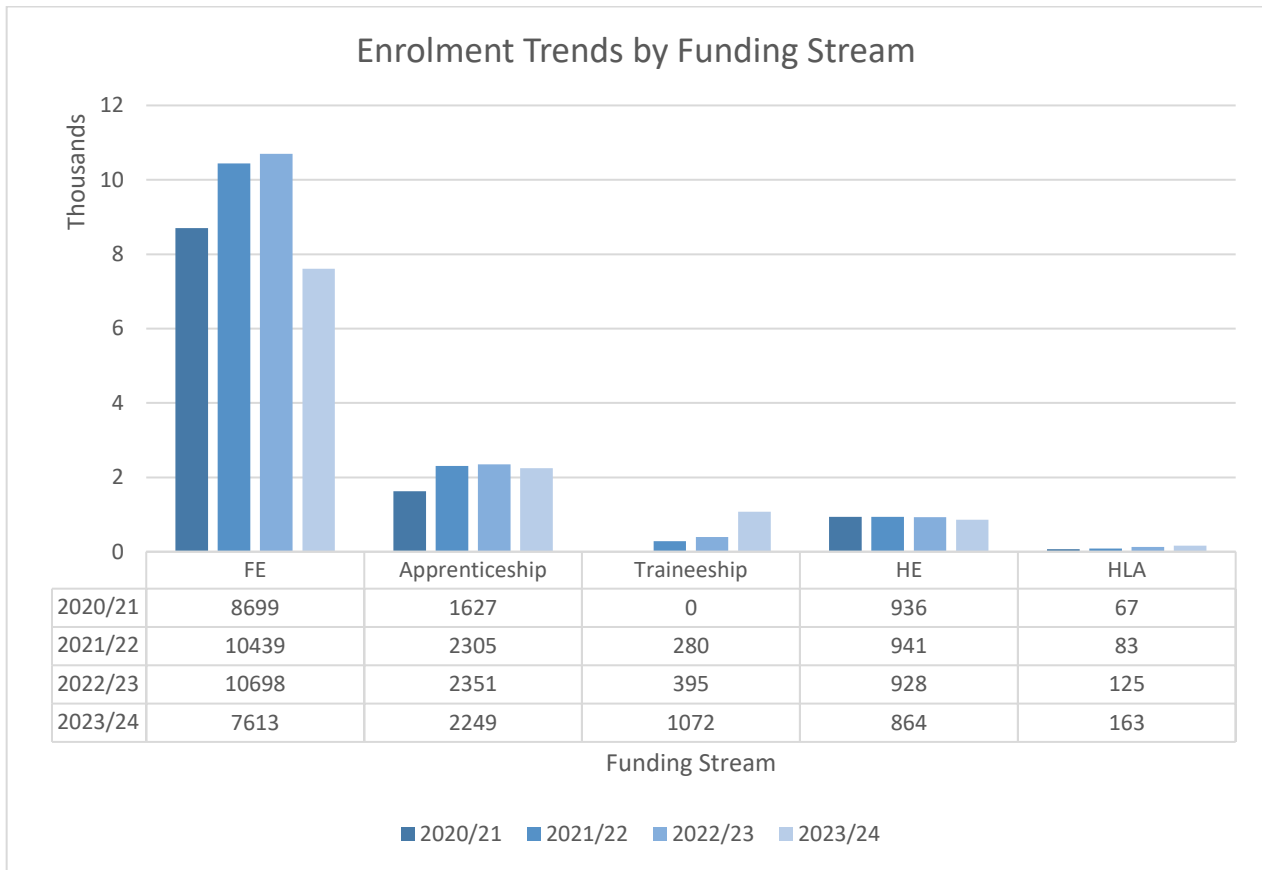
Data Source: 2020/21, 2021/22 & 2022/23 DfE FE Sector Activity Bulletin. 2023/24 Internal College CDR 31.7.24

Figure 31: College Individual Trends



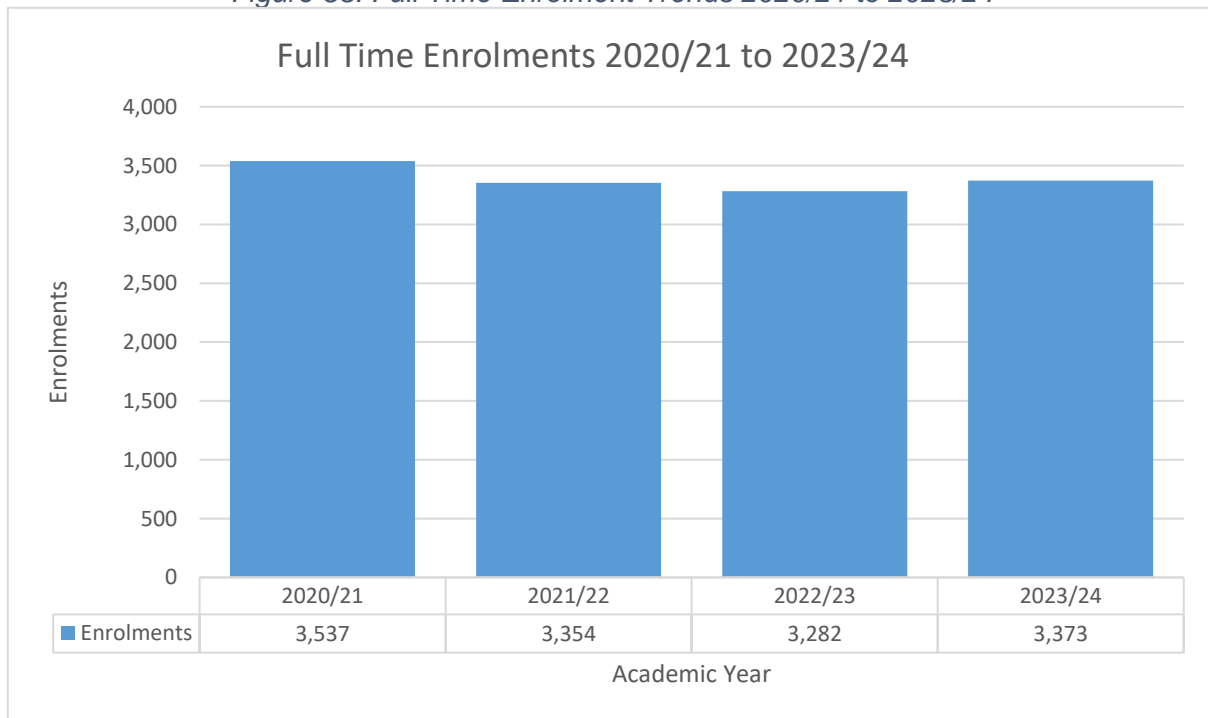
Data Source: 2020/21, 2021/22 & 2022/23 DfE FE Sector Activity Bulletin. 2023/24 Internal College CDR 31.7.24

Figure 42: Enrolment Trends by Funding Stream from 2020/21 to 2023/24



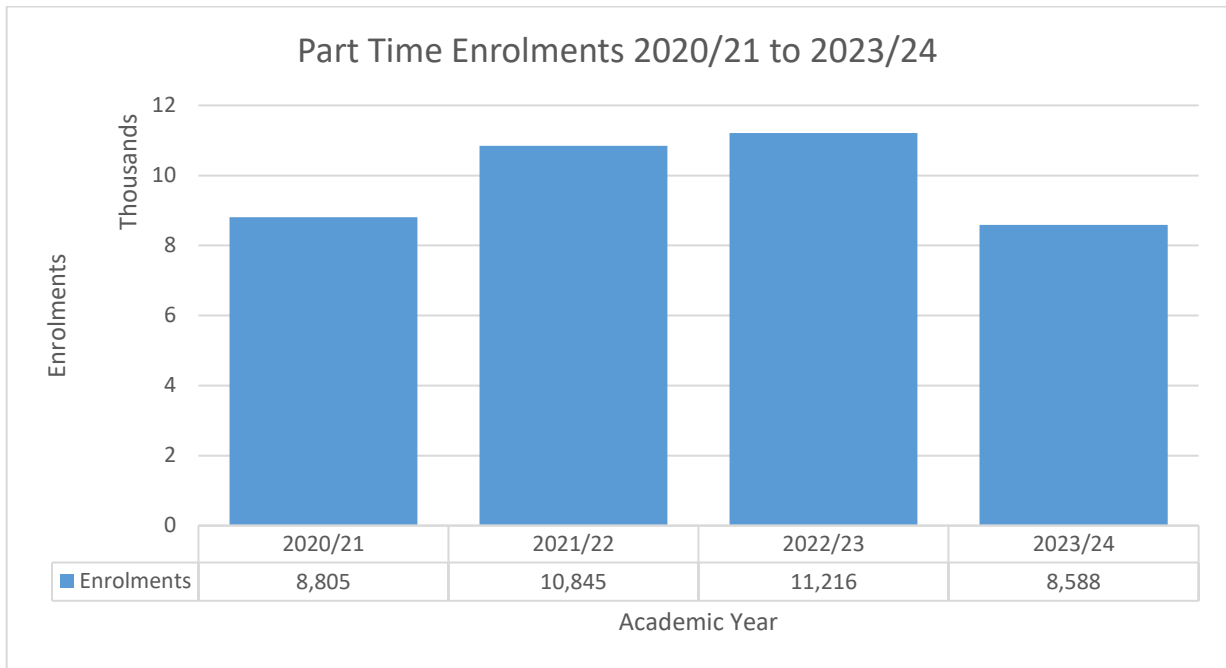
Data Source: Internal CDR data, 2020/21 – 15th October 2021, 2021/22 – 14th October 2022 and 2022/23 – 13th October 2023, 2023/24 – 31st July 2024.

Figure 53: Full Time Enrolment Trends 2020/21 to 2023/24



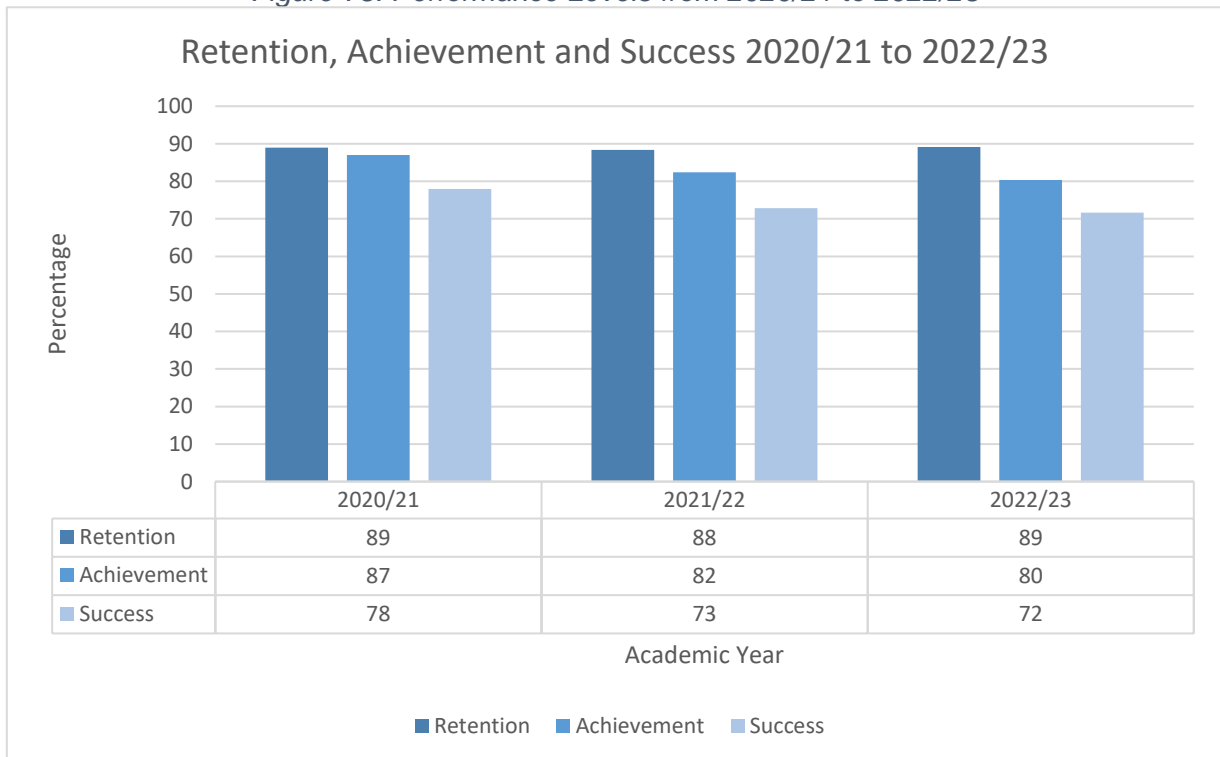
Data Source: Internal CDR data, 2020/21 – 15th October 2021, 2021/22 – 14th October 2022 and 2022/23 – 13th October 2023, 2023/24 – 31st July 2024.

Figure 64: Part Time Enrolments 2020/21 to 2023/24



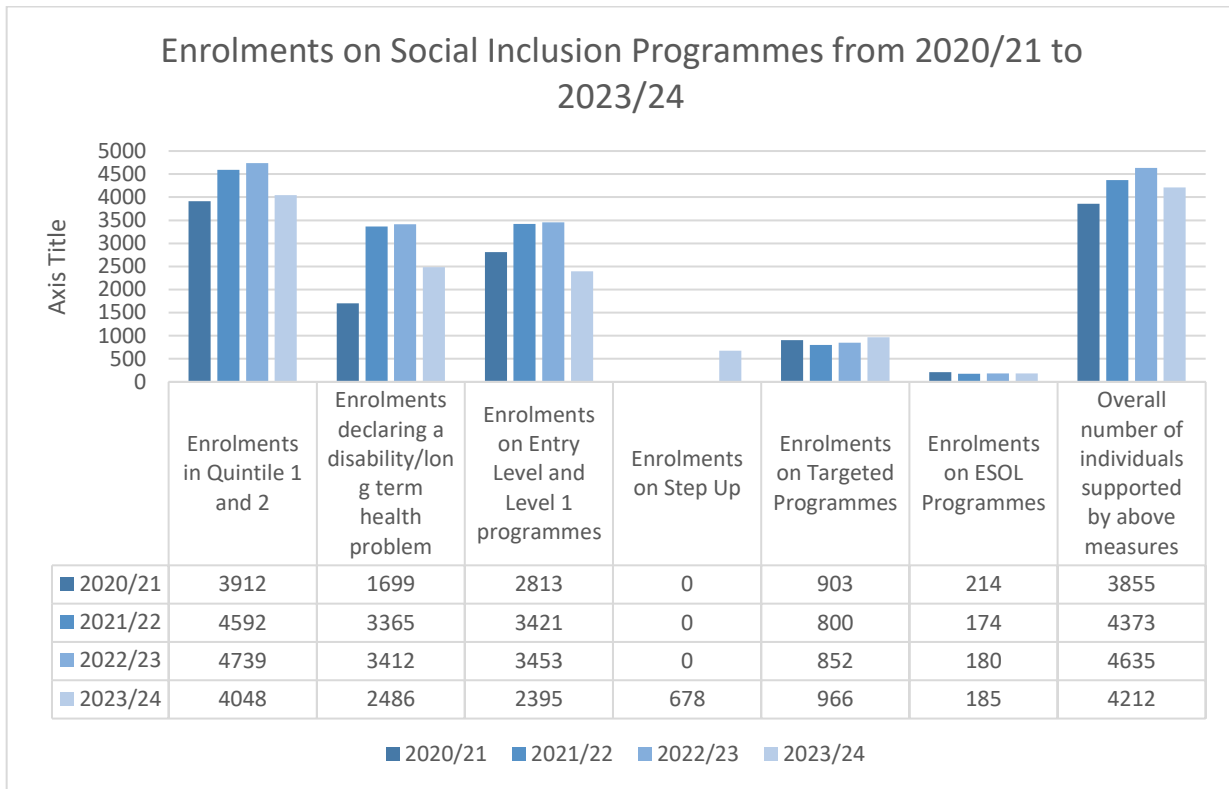
Data Source: Internal CDR data, 2020/21 – 15th October 2021, 2021/22 – 14th October 2022 and 2022/23 – 13th October 2023, 2023/24 – 31st July 2024.

Figure 75: Performance Levels from 2020/21 to 2022/23



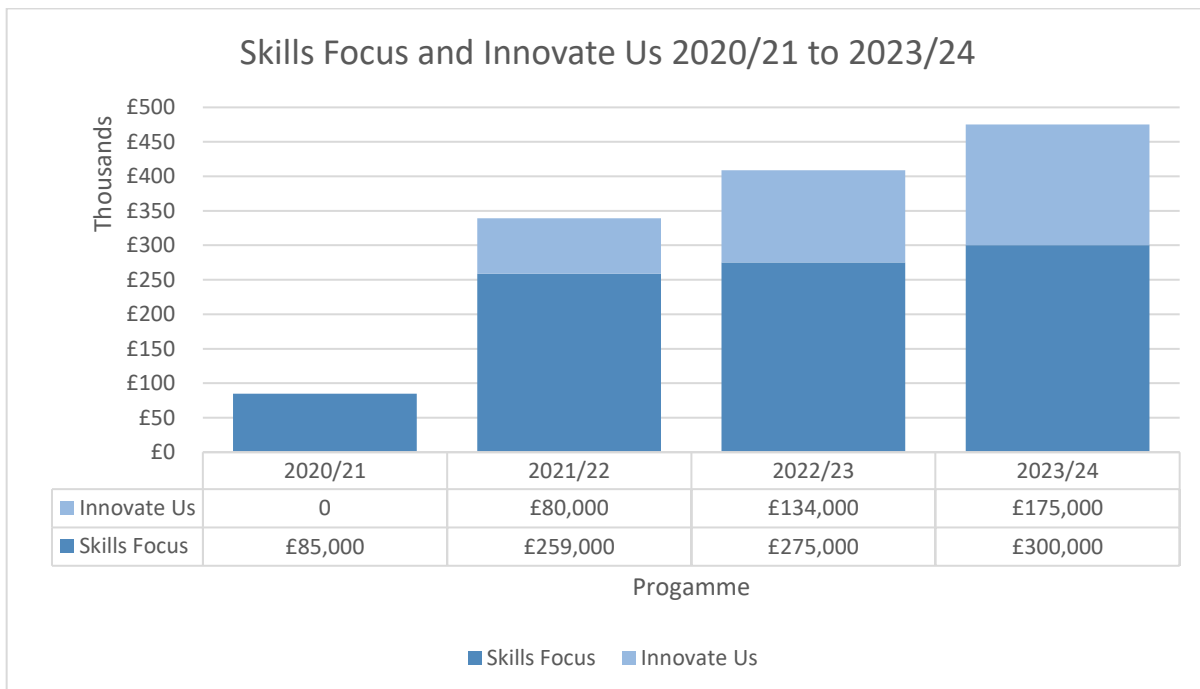
Data Source: 2020/21, 2021/22 & 2022/23 DfE FE Sector Activity Bulletin

Figure 86: Enrolments on Social Inclusion Programmes



Data Source: Internal CDR data, 2020/21 – 15th October 2021, 2021/22 – 14th October 2022 and 2022/23 – 13th October 2023, 2023/24 – 31st July 2024.

Figure 17 Business Engagement Budget 2020/21 to 2023/24



Data Source: CDP Progress Report 3 from 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24