

Maximising learner success in Scotland's colleges

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**A thematic aspect report on provision in Scotland's
Colleges by Education Scotland on behalf of the
Scottish Funding Council**

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1. Introduction

The Scottish Government has identified the success of learners in the post-16 education system as critical in developing the workforce and the Scottish economy. The recently-published report of the Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce, *Education Working for All!*¹, stressed the important role that Scotland's colleges play in preparing learners for employment and success in later life. Within *Putting Learners at the Centre: Delivering our ambitions for Post-16 education* (September, 2011)² the Scottish Government identified the importance of equipping young people with the critical skills they require to be successful in every sphere of their lives. The report recorded that 65% of college learners studying further education programmes successfully complete them. Most learners progress successfully to further study or in to employment. However, within these statistics, there is considerable variation and many learners in the post-16 landscape face substantial barriers to success and successful progression.

The college sector has many examples where low learner success in specific subject areas has been identified and tackled successfully. In several colleges, programmes receiving attention through *special measures* based on careful self-evaluation often make marked improvements in a short period, with significant improvements in outcomes for learners.

At this time of considerable change across the college sector, it is appropriate to focus on the reasons why some learners fail to achieve and to identify the conditions that promote success. This report evaluates how well colleges are providing and/or enabling those conditions. We identify examples where colleges have been particularly adept at this and also the processes and elements of change that lead to notable improvements in outcomes for learners.

This aspect report evaluates current practice and identifies important areas for discussion and further development amongst practitioners. It identifies effective practice found by inspectors and sets out recommendations for improvement.

In preparing this report, inspectors surveyed colleges in the sector and visited five colleges listed in Appendix 1. They also drew on the findings of other relevant publications and reports. They consulted with key stakeholders, including employers.

Education Scotland's publication, *External quality arrangements for Scotland's colleges, September 2013*, specifies that HM Inspectors (HMI) will produce a number of thematic aspect reports over the four-year period 2012-16. This report is one of a suite of reports by Education Scotland commissioned by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to evaluate provision in colleges for supporting learner success.

¹ *Education Working For All! Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce Final Report* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2014/06/4089>

² *Putting Learners at the Centre: Delivering our ambitions for Post-16 education* <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/357943/0120971.pdf>

2. Methodology

Each college in the sample was visited once during the fieldwork. Inspectors discussed issues with managers, teaching staff and learners. The views of stakeholders were obtained through face-to-face interviews and through telephone contact.

Questionnaires were sent out to all Scotland's colleges. Sixteen colleges responded and these responses were used to provide qualitative data.

Inspectors undertook desk analysis of relevant documents. This included a review of performance indicators (PI), programme information and other external reports. In addition to the evidence obtained from the five colleges that participated in the fieldwork, reviewers also examined the evaluations contained in annual engagement visit (AEV) reports for 2012-13 and in college external review reports published between April 2012 and June 2013.

3. Summary of key findings

Strengths

- Learner success has steadily improved in colleges over a four-year period. The most significant factor in this improvement has been a reduction in learner withdrawals.
- Learner success for full-time learners has improved over a four-year period in almost all subject areas.
- Almost all colleges have effective processes in place for the recruitment of learners. They provide comprehensive and practical advice to potential learners. Almost all colleges have adopted selection criteria that ensure that learners are placed on programmes that meet their aspirations and are suitable in terms of their prior attainment and personal circumstances.
- Teaching staff in colleges are increasingly using college's virtual learning environment (VLE) effectively to reinforce learning and study at times and in places that suit their circumstances, reducing the incidence of learners withdrawing from their programmes by increasing flexibility and options for study.
- Colleges use performance indicator (PI) data and learner feedback effectively to evaluate learner success and plan for improvement.
- Learners are increasingly engaged in evaluating their success.

Areas for development

- Colleges are not fully and effectively addressing the support needs of younger full-time learners and those from the most deprived areas.
- There is a lack of consistency across the sector in recognising *distance travelled* and in capturing relevant employment outcomes.
- Many colleges fail to identify at an early stage the risk factors, particularly those associated with multi-deprivation, that may predispose learners to withdraw from college.
- Most colleges make limited use of attendance patterns in identifying and supporting learners who may be at risk of failing to achieve.
- The evaluation of learning and teaching by colleges is not consistently and clearly linked to learner success.

4. Context

Trends in college population

Across the college sector, the profile of the learner population has changed in important ways since 2009-10. There has been a decrease in enrolment numbers in all age categories over this period. This has been most marked in those under 16 years (predominantly school learners) and those aged 41 and over. As a result of these changes, the proportion of younger full-time learners has steadily increased. Since 2009-10, the proportion of learners aged 16 to 19 years has increased by five percentage points. There has also been a decline in the proportion of female learners who were in the majority in 2009-10. The learner population is now closer to an equal split between men and women.

The proportion of learners from areas of multi-deprivation has remained fairly constant over the period, as has the proportion from the other Scottish Index of Multi-Deprivation (SIMD) deciles.

With regard to mode of delivery and level of programme, there has been an increase in the proportion of full-time over part-time learners. The proportion of full-time further education (FE) learners has increased significantly and there has been a smaller increase in the proportion of full-time higher education (HE) learners. The largest change has been the declining proportion of learners on part-time FE programmes, where there has been a year-on-year decrease. For example, between 2010-11 and 2011-12, there was a five percentage point decrease.

Thus the current learner population, although smaller overall, contains a higher proportion of younger male learners and those studying full-time at FE level. Overall, success rates for FE learners are lower than for HE learners. Also, with the exception of learners under 16 years, success rates correlate with age. Success rates for learners in the 16 to 19 age group are lower. Colleges are confronting a changed demographic of learners with a reduced likelihood of success.

Defining learner success

The Education Scotland report, *Making effective use of the extensive data sets which underpin evaluative activities in Scotland's Colleges, in a regional context*³ considered the information available to colleges and how they use this. Since colleges are required to identify learner success against specific codes for funding purposes (see Appendix 3), most colleges use the SFC positive outcome codes to define learner success. Accordingly, successful learners are those who have either completed the programme and been assessed as successful or have successfully achieved 70% of the credits on the programme. Additional codes take account of successful progression and of learners who enrol on a Higher National Diploma (HND) programme and leave after year one with a Higher National Certificate (HNC).

³http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/EffectiveUseofDataApril13_tcm4-783039.pdf

Around half of Scotland's colleges make use of further measures, such as: achieving employment, where this is an explicit aim of the programme; attainment of essential skills; or completion of wider achievement undertakings such as voluntary or work experience. However, one college responding to the questionnaire was clear that achievement of a qualification was what learners identified as success.

We recently included several questions about "success" in our student survey to find out what their definition of success was. The overwhelming response (89% out of a survey return of over 1100 learners) confirmed that achievement of their qualification was the most important factor for a student being at college. The results also indicated that students judge their own success on whether or not they have achieved their qualification.

South Lanarkshire College

Most colleges offer a number of programmes that do not lead to a qualification or lead to non-recognised qualifications⁴. On these programmes, several colleges use a range of measures to determine learner success, such as: the *Rickter Scale*⁵; distance travelled measures; achievement of personal goals recorded in personal learning plans (PLP); progression to a relevant programme; participation in the wider work and life of the college; or completion of a piece of work on certain short programmes.

Evaluating learner success

The report, *Making effective use of the extensive data sets which underpin evaluative activities in Scotland's Colleges, in a regional context* identified that colleges also collect and use a range of data to evaluate learner success. They use data drawn from applications and enrolments, learner attendance, learner withdrawals, success and progression. They also access data from Skills Development Scotland (SDS) and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Learner satisfaction surveys provide another useful source of information.

Most obviously, colleges make use of their own PI data and this has become more accessible to staff as information technology has developed. PI data now captures all enrolments, and learner success can be filtered by age, disability and ethnicity. Colleges also make use of first destination statistics. Increasingly, they are making use of college performance against specific regional outcome agreement (ROA) targets. Many colleges use other measures such as learners achieving additional awards. A few colleges made reference to quantifying learner success against personal goals. However, for the purposes of benchmarking across the sector, the measures understood consistently in all colleges are PI data collated by the SFC and first destination information.

⁴ Non-recognised qualification: i.e. programmes that do not lead to a qualification that is certificated by a national awarding body and/or is recorded on the SCQF database.

⁵ *The Rickter Scale* is a commercial tool intended to measure *soft outcomes* and distance travelled. It has been widely used particularly in less formal learning and in youth work.

Colleges use this data at the levels of programmes and individual learners to assess learner success. At programme level, data provides a basis for colleges to benchmark performance internally and in programme areas across the sector. College managers share and discuss data with teaching teams who use this for the purposes of self-evaluation and setting targets for improvement. At individual learner level, staff record unit achievement and progress made towards unit completion, along with achievement of individual goals, in order to identify learner progress.

All colleges engage learners in evaluating learner success. Most colleges make use of PLPs, particularly with full-time learners, to enable learners to evaluate their own progress. Learners are able to comment on their success and factors that have had an impact on this through satisfaction surveys and focus groups. Learners can also comment on their achievement at programme level through their representation on programme and Board of Management committees. A few colleges make increasingly effective use of peer evaluation to obtain more informed learner feedback.

All colleges have mechanisms in place to identify and take appropriate remedial action with learners who are not on track to succeed. Most colleges stress the importance of ongoing formal and informal monitoring by teaching staff and curriculum leaders in identifying learners who are at risk of not achieving. For these colleges, this is the most important and effective mechanism in identifying learners who are at risk of not achieving or completing. There is also timetabled provision such as individual guidance time and group tutorials in place to assist in remediation.

All colleges monitor learner attendance. A few colleges have utilised live attendance systems as an early warning system, alerting staff to learners who may be at risk of failing to attain. Here, staff take prompt action to contact learners and identify their requirements, providing additional support as appropriate. The remedial actions taken by colleges in response to attendance issues are wide-ranging but most colleges stress the positive role of learner support mechanisms. One college summed this up:

Remedial actions are determined relative to identified need. This may include extended learning support (ELS), other student development inputs, tutor support, or in some cases transfer to another programme or to an individual learning plan. The key approach is assessing and identifying needs and creating the appropriate support strategies to meet these needs.

Dundee and Angus College

However, most colleges make limited use of attendance patterns in order to identify at an early stage groups of learners who may be at risk of failing to achieve and better target appropriate support.

Evaluating programme success

Colleges identify highly successful programmes using programme data and agreed targets. Most colleges stress the importance of context in setting targets and propose that targets should not be uniform across the college.

Several colleges make use of a *traffic light* system in order to distinguish between high and low performing programmes.

Most colleges use three-year trend data on enrolments, early withdrawal, further withdrawal and learner success rates, although a few commented on the difficulties in doing this in recently-merged colleges. In all colleges that responded to the questionnaire, staff who have programme management responsibility are provided with support to use PI data and evaluate programmes. The majority of colleges use real-time data, in order to ensure effective and timeous action is taken by teams. A few colleges also use data on learner recruitment and success in the context of protected characteristics. Programme managers use this data in self-evaluation, in intervention strategies, and planning for improvement, particularly in recruitment and support of learners. Other colleges plan to have such measures in place from 2014-15 onwards.

Colleges identify programmes that are *at risk* in order to ensure that remedial action is taken. Most colleges recognise that being *at risk* requires more analysis than simply considering PIs.

Again, a number of factors would be used to identify whether a course is at risk. These include:

- *demand, from students and employers*
- *low recruitment*
- *attendance*
- *low retention*
- *low achievement*
- *student feedback (questionnaires and complaints, as appropriate)*
- *financial performance*

City of Glasgow College

Once identified, colleges adopt a range of methods to address programmes *at risk*, often using different terms to describe very similar processes, such as *accelerated improvement plans*, *special measures*, and *professional dialogue with the quality team*. Such measures invariably engage the wider college, particularly senior managers, and quality staff.

The methods that most colleges find particularly successful are those that ensure transparency; they engage staff in taking positive actions; and they ensure that there is recognition of success. Such approaches are successful because staff value the support from senior managers and their recognition of contextual issues. A few colleges have introduced peer review approaches that also ensure that teams share good practice through working together to find solutions.

Assessing distance travelled

The main mechanism colleges employ to assess distance travelled is the PLP or similar methods. Colleges also use other personal development measures.

For example, a few colleges cite the approach taken on Prince's Trust programmes; Dundee and Angus College makes use of *measuring and assessing soft skills* (MASS); and Perth College has adapted and uses the SQA Skills for Life unit.

Colleges evaluate skills for employability in measuring learner success. This is generally assessed through post-course destinations but also success in obtaining work experience placements, and performance on such placements. A few colleges use work-based units to assess employability skills.

A few colleges use personal goals and assess distance travelled to evaluate learner success in programmes that do not lead to nationally recognised qualifications. Such measures include progression to mainstream programmes and/or employment. However, the majority of colleges have a commitment to reduce the number of programmes that do not lead to a nationally recognised qualification.

Below are examples where assessing distance travelled has been particularly useful to colleges in describing and improving learner success:

Mindfulness project

In the mindfulness pilot project...participants in the 10-week mindfulness course were asked to complete two questionnaires...They rated themselves on Likert scales across a range of questions, producing an overall 'score' for anxiety and an overall score for wellbeing.

Students then took part in the 10-week mindfulness programme, attending one hour of mindfulness training each week supported by MP3 practises on a VLE.

At the end of the 10 week course, students undertook the questionnaires a second time and the scores were compared.

Results showed that the majority of students demonstrated a reduction in anxiety (with a small minority showing no change in the quantitative data) and, similarly, the majority of students demonstrated increases in wellbeing...Qualitative interviews were additionally undertaken with each of the student participants and feedback across the group revealed that the most common experiences were those of reduced anxiety, increased concentration and a greater sense of control over emotional reactivity.

City of Glasgow College

The Prince's Trust programmes

Princes Trust programmes capture distance travelled in a very cohesive way, and this is used to support transition programmes for these learners. The Princes Trust programme in Dumfries and Galloway College has some of the highest retention and outcomes across Scotland.

Dumfries and Galloway College

5. Trends in learner success: 2009-10 to 2012-13

Sector trends in learner success

Overall, learner success has improved in colleges across the sector, in all modes of delivery. The data in table 1 in Appendix 4 shows the proportion of learners by mode and level who completed their FE or HE programme successfully over the last four academic years. In full-time FE programmes, learner success has improved from 60% in 2009-10 to 65% in 2012-13. In full-time HE programmes over the same period, learner success has improved from 64% to 70%.

For learners on programmes with a part-time mode of delivery, the progress is less marked but still represents an overall improvement. In part-time FE programmes, learner success has improved from 76% in 2009-10 to 77% in 2012-13. In part-time HE programmes, learner success has improved from 73% to 76%.

These improvements have been accompanied by moderate improvements in each of early and further withdrawal rates and partial success rates. Overall, learner withdrawals on full-time HE programmes are lower than learner withdrawals on full-time FE programmes. Also, learner withdrawals in part-time programmes are lower than in full-time programmes. In many colleges, learner withdrawal and attainment issues exist within specific subject areas rather than across the board.

There is considerable variation and no discernible pattern in learner success rates across the 18 subject areas used by Education Scotland and SFC to group curriculum areas (see Appendix 4, Table 4). Nautical Studies recorded the highest learner success in all four modes, full-time FE, full-time HE, part-time FE and part-time HE. Social Studies recorded the lowest learner success rates in full-time FE, part-time FE and part-time HE. However, in other subject areas, high levels of learner success in one mode were not necessarily associated with high levels of success in other modes. For example, learner success in Business, Management and Administration varies between 61% and 80% across modes.

In full-time FE programmes, half the subject areas made year-on-year improvements. In the remainder, performance fluctuated over the period but there had been an overall improvement in all subject areas with the exception of Nautical Studies which was the only area to experience a decrease in learner success. However, this is a decrease in the highest performing subject area, from 85% to 82% in full-time FE over the four year period. In most subject areas, improvements in learner success have either been modest, between one and five percentage points, or moderate, between six and ten percentage points. Three subject areas have made significant improvements of ten or more percentage points, Computing and ICT, from 53% to 63%; Education and Training, from 59% to 72%; and Languages and ESOL, from 64% to 75%.

Within full-time HE programmes, a similar pattern emerged over the period 2009-10 to 2012-13. The majority of subject areas have made year-on-year improvements with the remainder making an overall improvement. In almost all

subject areas, improvements in learner success have either been modest or moderate. Special Programmes was the only subject area to experience a decrease in learner success. Five subject areas have made significant improvements of ten percentage points or more: Construction, from 54% to 67%; Engineering, from 53% to 63%; Performing Arts, from 69% to 79%; Nautical Studies, from 46% to 82%; and Science, from 57% to 70%.

There is considerably more variation within programmes with part-time modes of delivery. Within part-time FE programmes, learner success has either failed to improve or has declined in five subject areas: Construction; Engineering; Land-based Industries; and Performing Arts. The majority of subject areas have seen modest improvements, and no subject area experienced a significant improvement. Within part-time HE programmes, learner success has declined or failed to improve in seven programme areas: Art and Design; Care; Education and training; Land-based Industries; Languages and ESOL; Media; and Social Subjects. Around half the subject areas have experienced a modest or moderate improvement. Within one subject area, there has been a significant improvement in learner success: Nautical Studies, from 70% to 98%.

Some subject areas, such as Social Subjects do have consistently lower success rates in particular modes than others and Nautical Studies has consistently higher success rates. However, the subject areas differ considerably in the nature of the subject and the programmes, the background of learners, and their vocational aspirations. For example, within full-time FE Social Subjects, many learners with few or no previous qualifications enter as mature learners under Scottish Wider Access Programmes (SWAP)⁶. They undertake a demanding programme with the aim of entering an HE programme at college or university. In contrast, the NC Shipping and Maritime Operations requires a minimum of four National Certificate Level 5 passes including Mathematics, English and a physical science.

Some colleges record higher levels of success in certain subjects and lower levels in others. For example, in full-time FE Construction in 2012-13, the lowest success rate among colleges was 58% and the highest was 84%.

Factors affecting withdrawal and learner achievement

Within full-time programmes, learner withdrawal accounts for over half of learners who do not succeed. This has been recognised by the sector and there is a considerable body of research into learner withdrawal in further and higher education.

⁶ <http://www.scottishwideraccess.org/national-home>

From early influential work by such researchers as Paul Martinez (2001)⁷, colleges learned that learners withdraw from their programmes because of lack of satisfaction with certain aspects of their college experience:

- Suitability of their programme of study;
- The intrinsic interest in their programme;
- Timetabling issues;
- The overall quality of teaching;
- Help and support received from teaching staff; and
- Help in preparing to move on to a job or higher qualification.

These findings have been reflected in external review reports and Scottish Government priorities in subsequent years and colleges have responded positively. All colleges routinely seek learner feedback on these aspects of their programmes and take appropriate actions in response to learner feedback in most instances. The steady decrease in learner withdrawal demonstrates that colleges have taken effective actions.

Significance of learner factors in learner success

Age

(see Appendix 4, Table 2)

Within FE and HE programmes, learner success is closely associated with age. While learner success has increased in all age bands over the period, the rate of success is consistently higher within older age groups. With the exception of under 16s, success rates increase steadily with age.

In 2009-10, HE programme success rates in each age band were lower than success rates for FE programmes. However, in 2012-13, success rates in HE programmes were higher than FE programmes in each age band. The rate of increase for HE success rates has been greatest for the 16 to 19 year old age group. However, because of higher withdrawal and partial completion rates, the success rates for younger learners still remains below rates for older age groups.

Scottish Index of Multi-Deprivation

Deprivation is a significant factor in learner success. Living in the 20% most deprived SIMD bands has a significant negative impact on learner success. Success rates are consistently higher for learners living in the 80% least deprived areas, compared to those learners living in the 20% most deprived. Although success rates have increased year on year from 2009-10 to 2012-13 for learners in both these categories, success rates for learners in the 20% most deprived areas remain around seven percentage points lower. Over the four years, success rates for learners living in the 10% most deprived areas have remained around ten percentage points lower than those living in the least deprived areas.

⁷ Learning and Skills Development Agency, *Improving student retention and achievement: what do we know and what do we need to find out?* Paul Martinez 2001

Learners from the most deprived areas are consistently more likely to withdraw from their programmes than those from less deprived areas. However, learners from the most deprived areas who withdraw from the college are no more likely to leave at an early stage in their college programme than learners from less deprived areas. They do so once they are more than a quarter way through their programme. These patterns prevail across almost all colleges. The gap in withdrawal rates between learners from the most and least deprived areas has closed slightly by two percentage points between 2009-10, when the difference was 7%, and 2012-13, when it was 5%. This was due to a decrease in withdrawals from those learners from the 20% most deprived areas, suggesting that colleges have experienced a measure of success in identifying and tackling the reasons for withdrawal. However, such actions have not gone far enough in addressing this inequality.

Trends identified through annual engagement visits and external reviews

In the reports of external reviews of colleges carried out between April 2012 and June 2013, low attainment in specific subject areas was identified as a concern. Within this sample, just over half had main points for action relating to low attainment and almost a third had main points for action relating to improving learner retention. In a small number of instances, inspectors identified that a few colleges did not have fully effective arrangements for reducing learner withdrawals. In almost all AEV reports, inspectors identified improvements in learning and teaching and associated these with actions taken by the college. Inspectors identified programmes of study which had significantly improved learner success over the last three years. They also identified actions and solutions implemented by colleges that resulted in improved learner success rates.

Programme areas commonly cited as having experienced significant improvement over a three-year period are: Engineering; Business Management and Administration; Computing and ICT; Performing Arts; and Care. The actions and solutions most frequently put in place to address issues in learner success and withdrawal range from administrative solutions, improved arrangements for learner support, and developments in learning and teaching.

However, not all colleges are able to articulate clearly enough the impact of actions taken to improve learner success.

College use of trends in learner achievement and success

Most colleges make use of trend data, some more thoroughly than others, and use these in planning for improvement and also for promoting good practice internally.

Colleges have had limited success in using external benchmarking in evaluating learner success. For recently-merged colleges, systems are not yet sufficiently mature for useful comparisons to be made. In other colleges, there is increased use of benchmarking and some evidence that this is being used successfully. For example, Inverness College has benchmarked learner success on their Highers programme with sector success rates. The college has then put in place measures such as revising the curriculum and making the

examination component optional rather than mandatory, in order to improve programme performance. In South Lanarkshire College, benchmarking has been used successfully to consider the performance of programmes in the Faculty of Care. Recognition that the college performance compared unfavourably with the sector performance for this subject area prompted the faculty team to implement changes in recruitment and selection processes. This annual analysis of college data against sector data has enabled the college to take actions that have improved performance in this area.

Colleges recognise that benchmarking is a valuable approach that can highlight areas for further investigation:

...the Langside campus of (Glasgow Clyde) College identified a problem with the level of student success in national qualifications. Benchmarking with both schools and other colleges helped to identify the scale of the problem...research into recruitment and interviewing, attendance, delivery models and student guidance led to a series of actions which raised the percentage success by over 5% in a single year.

Glasgow Clyde College

Forth Valley College has made extensive use of benchmarking in past years:

(Benchmarking)...helps to identify whether lack of success is a local issue or a wider issue. In the past, (benchmarking) has supported us in making a case to the awarding body to make changes to frameworks that were not successful nationally...there has, in the past, been some very useful work as a result of informal benchmarking across colleges which led to joint problem-solving groups. This has not been as prevalent in the years since regionalisation commenced, but it is hoped that such activities will pick up again as things settle down.

Forth Valley College

Colleges experience difficulties in recording employment as a positive outcome and collecting accurate and meaningful information on learner progression once they leave college. Similarly, partial success rates do not provide colleges or the wider sector with sufficient information for self-evaluation purposes. Partial success rates encompass a wide range of levels of learner achievement, from no attainment to almost completion. Few colleges break this data down further and use it to inform improvement. There is no consistent measure for the sector for *distance travelled* and this only has meaning at the level of the individual learner.

6. Measures applied by colleges to improve learner success

Measures taken by colleges to improve learner success are considered under different stages of the learner journey:

- Helping learners choose the right programme;
- Providing effective induction and support;
- Improving learning and teaching;
- Help in preparing learners to move on; and
- Reviewing and evaluating performance.

Helping learners choose the right programme

Increasingly, colleges revise and put in place more effective and rigorous selection processes, aligning these closely to pre-programme guidance and information. Programme teams have introduced more discerning selection criteria and interviews to replace ‘*first come–first served*’ approaches⁸. Such practices ensure learners are placed on programmes that meet their aspirations and are suitable in terms of their prior attainment and personal circumstances this is what Martinez, 2001, described as ‘recruiting with integrity’. Programme teams have also given greater consideration to progression routes to ensure that learners can progress to higher levels of study, either within the college or at university, or are equipped to gain employment.

In most colleges, programme teams make effective use of assessing core and other essential skills as part of the selection processes. This helps ensure that learners are placed on appropriate programmes but also enables programme teams to identify the additional support learners require in order to be successful. Colleges have widened and improved the curriculum. They have introduced programmes at SCQF level 4, and sometimes SCQF level 3, in most subject areas. This has ensured that learners with low levels of prior attainment or achievement can enter at a level relevant to their needs and aspirations.

Through improved partnership working with local authorities and Community Planning Partnerships, colleges also prepare school learners for a smoother transition to college. For example, Inverness College has well-established vocational pathways and gears its support and advice to school learners accordingly. In working with school and SDS careers guidance staff, the college discusses with S3 learners their career choices and how these can be achieved. Within S4, the college advises how such choices can be realised through college routes at FE level. Within S5 and S6, college input to school learners focusses on consideration of HE options. The college assists transition through strong partnership working with schools and enhancing the school curriculum through the provision of online learning. By taking such measures, most colleges ensure that school learners are better acquainted with college provision and more likely to make a seamless transition from school. Dumfries and Galloway College has developed good partnership working with local schools, in anticipation of the recommendations from the Commission for

⁸See: *Meeting the needs of learners and employers through effective planning, application and admissions processes in Scotland’s colleges*, Education Scotland, February 2014
http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/MeetingtheNeeds280214_tcm4-827072.pdf

Developing Scotland's Young Workforce. This has enabled the college to develop HNC programmes in Care, Childcare, Sport and Engineering to be delivered in a unique way within the Senior Phase to school learners.

Providing effective induction and support

A frequently cited factor in maximising learner success is improving learner support and guidance. Colleges often improve pre-programme guidance in response to high early withdrawal rates. This ensures learners are well informed about the demands of their programme and able to make appropriate decisions. All colleges provide guidance and advice to potential learners, advising them of the requirements of their particular programme, including practical advice such as the purchase of equipment and financial help available.

The improvement in early withdrawal rates can be attributed to such pre-programme guidance and also to ensuring that learners receive an effective induction to college and to college life. Most colleges recognise the importance of making a clear and early commitment to learners and take action to ensure that vulnerable learners are made to feel welcome and safe within the college environment. For example, Newbattle Abbey College provides access to study for adults who are furthest from learning. The college makes an explicit commitment to learners, to treat each learner as an individual and with respect at all times.

Providing learners with well-informed support services ensures that once they are in college, learners are more like to remain on programmes as they have help and advice to deal with the barriers they encounter along the way. Effective teamwork between teaching teams and support teams ensures that learner support is well-informed, appropriate and available when it is needed. Improved communication also ensures that measures identified by support teams are fulfilled effectively within the classroom by teaching staff and learners. However, high further withdrawal rates continue to be an issue in many programmes. The evidence from SIMD areas suggests that learner support services fail to identify and address at an early stage the risk factors that may predispose learners from the most deprived areas to withdraw from college.

Glasgow Kelvin College recognises the importance of staff/learner relationships as a factor influencing learner retention and attainment. The college works very effectively to develop strong relationships at an early stage with its learners and build trust and a sense of belonging. This ethos supports learners well to stay on their programme, gain qualifications and achieve more widely. These two examples illustrate the college approach well:

Youth Access Programme

Certain groups of learners are more likely to withdraw than others, particularly younger learners and those who have faced additional challenges in their learning. Glasgow Kelvin College provides a very successful Youth Access programme which supports young people to develop positive relationships with lifelong learning in the context of other youth services. The Youth Access programme delivers 25 youth sessions per week within 16 community venues including two college campuses and has an average annual enrolment of 1200 young people. The programme has developed the use of non-traditional methods for recognising young people's achievements and includes *Dynamic Youth* and *Youth Achievement Awards*, Glasgow Kelvin College certificates and SQA units where there is demand. Young people are also encouraged to agree personal targets which are tracked by the college's Individual Learning Plans (ILP). The college has seen improved attainment levels for these learners and significant improvements in wider achievement such as reducing territorialism and anti-social behaviour. The young people gain in confidence and this has a positive impact on their interactions with their peers and adults in authority. The impact of the Youth Access Programme is also evident in the progression of young people who first attended the college through attending Youth Access. Twenty nine per cent of mainstream enrolments in the former John Wheatley College entered through this route.

Transitions to Learning and Work

This programme supports young people to make the transition from being looked after and accommodated children (LAAC) towards independent living. The programme adopts a youth work approach which supports learners to develop their social skills and confidence required to interact effectively with each other and adults in authority. The college records participation, distance travelled and learning undertaken through online tracking systems and recognises learners' achievement through various awards and certificates. Learners record personal learning targets and significant achievements on their ILP. They select a number of *vocational tasters* in which they can build positive relationships with teaching staff in their chosen subjects. Learners are supported to complete applications and prepare for interview for progression into further education, employment or training opportunities, with additional careers guidance provided by the college team and SDS careers staff. Social Work services, parents and schools have commented positively on sustained attendance by young people on the programme. Learners interacting confidently with teaching staff in *vocational tasters* have achieved relevant SQA units and successfully progressed into full-time college programmes and apprenticeships.

Several colleges now meet the standard for the *Buttle UK Quality Mark for Care Leavers*, in responding to the needs of young people who have been looked after and accommodated. Dumfries and Galloway College is one such college.

Through its work with the *Buttle Trust*, the college is supporting the sector to establish a basic standard for providing support to help learners from all backgrounds maximise success.

Inverness College offers a *Uniformed Services* programme that has proved very effective in promoting self-confidence and positive approaches to work and life aspirations for learners.

Improving learning and teaching

The most frequently cited measure for improvement of learner success rates addresses the delivery of programmes, including more effective scheduling of units and improved programme design. In most instances, these changes resulted from thoughtful self-evaluation and internal review processes that are well informed by feedback from learners.

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

The sport and golf department has been proactive in the development of a better learner experience. Having had several years where attainment and retention rates were well below sector average the department considered how these trends could be turned around. The department reorganised the delivery of the curriculum and also ensured learners were more engaged.

All programmes had elements of sports coaching, sports science and business/finance so the department designated staff as subject area specialists with the remit to look at all units within their area. Staff determined how the units linked, how they could be delivered more effectively and how they could reduce the assessment load for learners. They also improved how learners could enhance their engagement with the programme, their peers and the local community. Teaching staff also undertook a course on '*thinking for learning*' which improved classroom delivery through staff focusing on the need to engage better with learners at different levels and support them to think more for themselves.

Overall, teaching staff are increasingly and using effectively the college's VLE to reinforce learning. Innovative use of ICT-based material engages learners who are able to access subject material outwith the classroom and study at times that suit their circumstances. This helps reduce the incidence of learners withdrawing from their programmes by increasing flexibility and options for study. Colleges take steps to ensure that teaching staff develop and update their ICT skills. For example, Inverness College encourages and supports staff to undertake a Professional Development Award in e-learning.

All colleges have processes in place for sharing good practice in learning and teaching within the college. They are supported in this by the College Development Network (CDN) whose quality and subject networks enable relevant college staff to meet, often virtually, and share good practice to address issues. Most colleges provide in-house staff developments sessions that enable effective sharing of good practice. Colleges also use less formal

means, such as team meetings, and recognise the role these play in the dissemination of good practice. However, colleges do not always make clear links between sharing good practice and the improvement of practice across the college.

A few colleges use peer review and classroom observation processes, where an important outcome is the sharing of good practice in learning and teaching. Dumfries and Galloway College has introduced a *mentor* programme that is closely aligned to self-evaluation, in order to support high-quality learning and teaching. However, such practices are not consistent across colleges and most colleges opt for voluntary approaches that often fail to identify and address the weakest teaching.

A few colleges identify positive examples where sharing good or excellent practice has had a positive impact on learning and teaching within the college. Examples include: developing a shared vision of learning and teaching for the college; using photographic evidence in portfolios; developing social enterprise; health and wellbeing mentors; learning activity planning tool; and using I-pads effectively. However, most colleges do not monitor the effectiveness of such approaches or encourage staff engagement in self-reflection to ensure that there is a positive impact on practice and learner success.

Help in preparing learners to move on

In almost all colleges, learners develop employability skills through work placements and other work experiences such as voluntary work in the community. Although difficult to quantify, a recent Education Scotland report, *Essential Skills in Scotland's Colleges*⁹, September 2012, recognised the importance that colleges attach to this:

Increasingly, colleges have a growing number of work experience placements as part of learners' programmes. Learners make good use of these placements to develop their essential skills.

Many colleges have found ways of engaging employers and others working in vocational sectors to ensure that learners are introduced in a meaningful way to the world of work. A few colleges have engaged learners in 'real' work projects, in programmes where work experience is not a routine requirement. Inverness College has developed such an approach with their BSc Architectural Technology learners.

A few colleges identify the importance of career management skills within employability. Forth Valley College addresses this through the work of their Learner Development Workers and ensure all full-time FE learners benefit.

⁹ Essential Skills in Scotland's College, September 2012
http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/Essential%20Skills%20in%20Scotlands%20Colleges_tcm4-732347.pdf

Under employability, pre-project skills analysis may identify learners requiring CVs, training on how to complete application forms, mock interviews etc. All projects will then be based around these requirements and are all learner specific. Upon completion, learners will not only have increased their knowledge but will also have gained confidence in being able to further these when having moved away from education.

Forth Valley College

However, such approaches are not routine in all mainstream programmes across the college sector.

In almost all colleges, learners are well prepared for progression to more advanced levels of study through the development of core and essential skills. A few colleges recognise that this may be more demanding for specific groups of learners and provide the additional support they may require. City of Glasgow College recognises and responds to the challenges of its ESOL learners, taking a successful approach that could benefit other groups:

Many ESOL students at our lower levels have never attended school in their native countries and as result have little or no concept of how to be an effective learner and to take responsibility for their own studies... We aimed to challenge this and raise awareness of the elements required to be an organised and autonomous learner by piloting a series of study skills workshops with our Literacies and Access 2 levels, which covered basic areas such as how to keep an organised folder, what to bring to College and maintaining a homework diary.

Our classroom assistants prepared a short and humorous film demonstrating the values of being an organised learner and delivered a series of follow up activities covering the above areas. Each student was given a folder and dividers to organise class material. The visual impact of the film which contrasts the success of an organised learner and the confusion of a less organised resonated with our students as they recognised that they were also responsible for their success in the learning process.

City of Glasgow College

Reviewing and evaluating performance

Most colleges improve their self-evaluation processes through programme teams which have increasing autonomy in identifying and addressing issues. In particular, staff now have better access to PI data on a regular basis throughout the year. Consequently, they can compare performance with targets, enabling them to take appropriate actions in a more timely fashion. To support this, college managers ensure staff have a greater understanding of the data used by their college. Regular scrutiny and support by managers enables teams to address emerging issues in a positive way.

Increased engagement of college Boards of Management and senior managers in programme performance reinforces to staff and learners perceptions of collective responsibility. It also ensures that programme teams are given the support they require to tackle issues. Overall, colleges resolve issues of retention and attainment more effectively and faster where they have put in

place a programme of special measures and provide additional support to underperforming curriculum areas.

North East Scotland College recognises the importance of monitoring learner performance and making use of predictive PIs. The college has also adopted a learner-led approach in programme review. These measures combined to achieve a significant improvement in learner retention and attainment in 2012-13. Both examples have been recognised as examples of excellence by Education Scotland.¹⁰

In-Year PI Predictions

The college developed a *PI predictor tool* for 2012-13 that required teaching teams to agree and then revisit their PI predictions for learner retention and success. All staff were engaged in this process and the outcome was that learner withdrawal rates fell significantly and learner success increased overall. The success was not only seen in programmes with lower PIs but high performing programmes also improved their performance.

The project grew out of giving staff a better understanding of PI data and determining the actions required to improve learner outcomes in terms of success and retention. The impact that college teaching and support staff could have on student PIs was not fully appreciated. The process has contributed to members of staff gaining a better understanding of PI data and the effect that teaching and support staff play in improving learner outcomes. A collegiate approach has been developed to PI improvement.

Undoubtedly the systematic and comprehensive use of the PI Predictor Tool has helped support staff to identify 'at risk' learners and has been instrumental in supporting staff to make improvements for students. Systematic, regular and improved data management reporting has helped senior managers remain focused on the withdrawal rates of students. However, Curriculum Sectors and Teams have made continual and effective use of the PI Predictor Tool to make justified and targeted interventions to reduce student withdrawal and partial success. Work on refining and improving this process continues.

North East Scotland College

Peer-led Review

Within the college, learners had several opportunities to comment on their learning experience including at staff-led staff-student liaison panel. A number of students commented that they found it difficult to share issues with staff. Younger students felt awkward about commenting on learning and teaching, particularly where there were issues. Learners felt this might adversely affect the staff/student relationship.

¹⁰<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/inspectionandreview/sharingpractice/colleges/showcasebrowse.asp?iPage=4&strSubmit=True&strSearchText=&id=&bSortCD=0>

Students' Association officers believed peer-led sessions would result in rich feedback that staff could use to enhance the student experience. The Students' Association worked with college managers to ensure the learner voice truly was at the heart of the *Quality and Enhancement* processes.

With the *Student Engagement Officer*, Students' Association officers developed a tool they could use to gain feedback from students. From this feedback, the student officers compiled reports and shared these with staff, who discussed this in *Course Team Meetings* and fed back the outcomes.

This pilot was well received by all. For the following session, senior management proposed that the Students' Association carry out a number of reviews with learner groups identified by them from PI data. They held fourteen sessions and shared reports with staff, as well as senior management and support managers. Staff found the feedback of high quality and used peer led reviews as a helpful evaluation tool.

The excellent qualitative information derived from these reviews has afforded staff and students a valuable insight into student experiences. In addition undertaking the reviews has led to an increase in meaningful student engagement in quality improvement. During 2013-14 the Student Association and Student Engagement Officer also intend to revisit the programme groups previously reviewed in 2012-13 in order to ensure that actions identified have been addressed.

North East Scotland College

7. Recommendations

SFC should:

- Within regional outcome agreements, identify indicators that capture *distance travelled* and *value added*.
- Set specific targets for the college sector and for individual colleges for groups at risk of non-completion, particularly those from areas of greatest deprivation.
- Further improve tracking of learners across the sector.

Colleges should:

- Build on established good practice to identify and address *risk factors* at an early stage, using this information to target learner support more effectively, giving particular support at key points where withdrawal is more likely.
- Ensure staff better understand absence patterns and their significance for withdrawal, in identifying and supporting learners who may be at risk of failing to achieve.
- Increase the rigour of methods used to identify and improve the weakest teaching.
- Make more effective and consistent use of individual learning plans and ensure prompt, regular and constructive feedback to learners on their performance and support them in setting targets.
- Monitor the effectiveness and impact on learner success of actions and interventions aimed at reducing withdrawals or raising attainment.
- Involve staff fully in investigating and addressing learner partial success.

Regional Boards should:

- Identify the profile of potential learners and monitor college performance in maximising their success rates.

Education Scotland should:

- Make clear links between actions taken by colleges to improve withdrawal and/or attainment rates and impact on learner success.
- Support colleges in identifying actions to maximise learner success.
- Investigate in a future aspect report the reasons for and implications of partial success.

The College Development Network (CDN) should:

- continue to take a proactive role in sharing and disseminating good practice between and within subject areas.

Appendix 1

Colleges involved in fieldwork:

Dumfries and Galloway College

Glasgow Kelvin College

Inverness College UHI

Newbattle Abbey College

North East Scotland College

Colleges responding to questionnaire:

Ayrshire College

Dumfries and Galloway College

Dundee and Angus College

Fife College

Forth Valley College

Glasgow City College

Glasgow Clyde College

Glasgow Kelvin College

Inverness College UHI

Moray College UHI

Newbattle Abbey College

North East Scotland College (as Banff and Buchan College and as Aberdeen College)

Shetland College UHI

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

South Lanarkshire College

West Highland College UHI

Appendix 2

Glossary of terms

AEV	Annual Engagement Visit
CDN	College Development Network
ELS	Extended learning support
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
ILP	Individual learning plan
IT	Information technology
LAAC	Looked after and accommodated young people
PI	Performance Indicators
PLP	Personal Learning Plan
ROA	Regional Outcome Agreement
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multi-Deprivation
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SWAP	Scottish Wider Access Programme
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

Appendix 3

SFC positive outcome codes

08 - Completed programme/course, student assessed and successful.

14 - Completed programme/course, student not assessed as programme/course not designed to be assessed.

18 - Student has progressed to next year and has achieved 70% of the credits undertaken.

20 - Student has achieved 70% of the credits undertaken but has chosen not to progress onto the next year.

22 - Student completed first year of an HND but has chosen to leave with an HNC.

Appendix 4

Performance indicators

Table 1

Learner success 2009-10 to 2012-13

(The PIs discount those programmes not leading to a recognised qualification.)

Full-time FE				
	Early withdrawal	Further withdrawal	Partial Success	Completed successfully
2009-10	10%	18%	13%	60%
2010-11	10%	17%	11%	62%
2011-12	9%	16%	11%	64%
2012-13	9%	15%	11%	65%
Full-time HE				
2009-10	7%	15%	14%	64%
2010-11	6%	14%	13%	67%
2011-12	6%	12%	12%	69%
2012-13	6%	12%	12%	70%
Part-time FE				
2009-10	4%	7%	13%	76%
2010-11	4%	7%	12%	77%
2011-12	3%	6%	12%	79%
2012-13	4%	6%	12%	77%
Part-time HE				
2009-10	5%	6%	16%	73%
2010-11	4%	6%	15%	75%
2011-12	4%	6%	14%	75%
2012-13	4%	6%	14%	76%

Table 2

Age as a factor in learner success

	2009-10		2010-11		2011-12		2012-13	
	FE	HE	FE	HE	FE	HE	FE	HE
Under 16	73%	-	75%	-	74%	-	70%	-
16 - 19	65%	64%	66%	67%	69%	70%	69%	72%
20 - 25	70%	66%	72%	69%	72%	69%	72%	72%
26 - 40	75%	70%	76%	72%	77%	73%	77%	72%
41 and over	79%	72%	80%	75%	82%	73%	82%	74%

Table 3
 Area of multi-deprivation as expressed through SIMD as a factor in learner success

Year	Deprivation Category	Early Withdrawal	Further Withdrawal	Partial Success	Learner Success
2009-10	20% most deprived	8%	13%	14%	65%
2009-10	80% least deprived	5%	9%	13%	73%
2009-10	unknown	6%	10%	11%	74%
2010-11	20% most deprived	8%	12%	13%	67%
2010-11	80% least deprived	5%	9%	12%	74%
2010-11	unknown	5%	5%	9%	81%
2011-12	20% most deprived	7%	12%	13%	69%
2011-12	80% least deprived	5%	9%	12%	75%
2011-12	unknown	5%	8%	10%	77%
2012-13	20% most deprived	7%	12%	13%	68%
2012-13	80% least deprived	5%	9%	12%	75%
2012-13	unknown	5%	10%	13%	72%

Table 4
Learner success 2009-10 to 2012-13 by subject area

Subject area	Mode	Level	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	
Art and design	FT	FE	62%	65%	67%	67%	+5
Art and design	FT	HE	71%	74%	75%	75%	+4
Art and design	PT	FE	71%	77%	77%	78%	+7
Art and design	PT	HE	77%	76%	73%	73%	-4
Business, management and administration	FT	FE	56%	56%	61%	61%	+5
Business, management and administration	FT	HE	61%	66%	68%	69%	+8
Business, management and administration	PT	FE	78%	76%	80%	80%	+2
Business, management and administration	PT	HE	71%	74%	73%	72%	+1
Care	FT	FE	55%	59%	60%	63%	+8
Care	FT	HE	66%	68%	71%	71%	+5
Care	PT	FE	79%	80%	82%	80%	+1
Care	PT	HE	77%	76%	75%	74%	-3
Computing and ICT	FT	FE	53%	58%	62%	63%	+10
Computing and ICT	FT	HE	60%	63%	68%	67%	+7
Computing and ICT	PT	FE	69%	75%	75%	73%	+4
Computing and ICT	PT	HE	62%	74%	71%	77%	+5
Construction	FT	FE	63%	62%	65%	67%	+4
Construction	FT	HE	54%	56%	62%	67%	+13
Construction	PT	FE	82%	81%	81%	81%	-1
Construction	PT	HE	81%	80%	82%	83%	
Education and training	FT	FE	59%	57%	62%	72%	+13
Education and training	FT	HE	73%	74%	78%	74%	+1
Education and training	PT	FE	73%	76%	71%	73%	0
Education and training	PT	HE	78%	82%	83%	78%	0
Engineering	FT	FE	63%	63%	65%	68%	+5
Engineering	FT	HE	53%	57%	62%	63%	+10
Engineering	PT	FE	84%	84%	87%	84%	0
Engineering	PT	HE	74%	75%	77%	79%	+5
Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies	FT	FE	66%	68%	66%	68%	+2
Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies	FT	HE	73%	76%	76%	77%	+4
Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies	PT	FE	71%	71%	75%	74%	+3
Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies	PT	HE	77%	81%	77%	80%	+3
Hospitality and tourism	FT	FE	59%	59%	64%	64%	+5
Hospitality and tourism	FT	HE	59%	59%	63%	66%	+7
Hospitality and tourism	PT	FE	88%	89%	90%	89%	+1
Hospitality and tourism	PT	HE	67%	59%	78%	68%	+1
Land-based industries	FT	FE	64%	64%	68%	70%	+6
Land-based industries	FT	HE	65%	66%	67%	74%	+9
Land-based industries	PT	FE	81%	83%	86%	80%	-1
Land-based industries	PT	HE	67%	76%	70%	67%	0
Languages and ESOL	FT	FE	64%	67%	72%	75%	+11
Languages and ESOL	FT	HE	57%	49%	-	0%	n.a.
Languages and ESOL	PT	FE	62%	67%	68%	67%	+5
Languages and ESOL	PT	HE	81%	67%	64%	72%	-9
Media	FT	FE	54%	55%	61%	61%	+7
Media	FT	HE	66%	69%	71%	69%	+3
Media	PT	FE	59%	61%	55%	63%	+4
Media	PT	HE	71%	75%	63%	67%	-4
Nautical studies	FT	FE	85%	86%	78%	82%	-3
Nautical studies	FT	HE	46%	69%	74%	82%	+36

Nautical studies	PT	FE	91%	93%	94%	95%	+3
Nautical studies	PT	HE	70%	69%	91%	98%	+28
Performing arts	FT	FE	61%	65%	65%	64%	+3
Performing arts	FT	HE	69%	72%	76%	79%	+10
Performing arts	PT	FE	80%	75%	79%	71%	-9
Performing arts	PT	HE	71%	78%	62%	78%	+7
Science	FT	FE	52%	54%	54%	58%	+6
Science	FT	HE	57%	64%	65%	70%	+13
Science	PT	FE	71%	72%	73%	74%	+3
Science	PT	HE	66%	70%	70%	75%	+9
Social subjects	FT	FE	50%	51%	51%	53%	+3
Social subjects	FT	HE	65%	68%	68%	69%	+4
Social subjects	PT	FE	58%	56%	55%	59%	+1
Social subjects	PT	HE	60%	64%	53%	52%	-8
Special Programmes	FT	FE	63%	71%	70%	72%	+9
Special Programmes	FT	HE	-	81%	68%	67%	-14
Special Programmes	PT	FE	76%	78%	75%	74%	-2
Special Programmes	PT	HE	66%	78%	86%	87%	+21
Sport and Leisure	FT	FE	61%	62%	64%	61%	0
Sport and Leisure	FT	HE	65%	68%	67%	69%	+4
Sport and Leisure	PT	FE	77%	79%	85%	80%	+3
Sport and Leisure	PT	HE	59%	70%	77%	68%	+9
College: all subject areas	FT	FE	60%	62%	64%	65%	+5
College: all subject areas	FT	HE	64%	67%	69%	70%	+6
College: all subject areas	PT	FE	76%	78%	79%	77%	+1
College: all subject areas	PT	HE	73%	75%	75%	76%	+3

Over a four-year period:

Significant improvement (\geq greater than 10 percentage points)

No improvement

Declining performance

Appendix 5

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

SCQF Levels	SQA Qualifications			Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions	Scottish Vocational Qualifications
12				DOCTORAL DEGREE	
11				INTEGRATED MASTERS DEGREE / MASTERS DEGREE POST GRADUATE DIPLOMA POST GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	SVQ5
10				HONOURS DEGREE GRADUATE DIPLOMA GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	
9			PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AWARD	BACHELORS / ORDINARY DEGREE GRADUATE DIPLOMA GRADUATE CERTIFICATE	SVQ4
8		HIGHER NATIONAL DIPLOMA		DIPLOMA OF HIGHER EDUCATION	
7	ADVANCED HIGHER	HIGHER NATIONAL CERTIFICATE		CERTIFICATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION	SVQ3
6	HIGHER				
5	INTERMEDIATE 2 CREDIT STANDARD GRADE				SVQ2
4	INTERMEDIATE 1 GENERAL STANDARD GRADE	NATIONAL CERTIFICATE	NATIONAL PROGRESSION AWARD		SVQ1
3	ACCESS 3 FOUNDATION STANDARD GRADE				
2	ACCESS 2				
1	ACCESS 1				

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework brings together all Scottish mainstream qualifications into a single unified framework. The framework includes: degree provision, HNC and HND, SQA National Qualifications, and SVQs. There are 12 levels ranging from Access 1 at SCQF level 1 to Doctoral degree at SCQF level 12. Each qualification whether a unit, group of units or larger group award has also been allocated a number of SCQF credits. Each credit represents 10 notional hours of required learning. Doctoral degrees based on a thesis are an exception to this.

Other learning may be credit rated and included in the framework provided it leads to a clear set of learning outcomes and has quality-assured learner assessment. All of Scotland's colleges were awarded SCQF Credit Rating powers in January 2007.

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