



# **College Development Plan 2022-23**

## **CONTENTS**

- 1. STRATEGIC CONTEXT**
- 2. CURRENT OPERATING ENVIRONMENT**
- 3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**
- 4. REGIONAL OPERATING CONTEXT - CHALLENGES**
- 5. 2022/23 PLANNED ACTIVITY**

# 1. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

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

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

It is vital that the Northern Ireland skills system supports economic growth that is socially inclusive and builds the skills base necessary to fulfil the [Executive's draft Programme for Government \(PfG\)](#) aspirations.

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

The global pandemic, COVID-19, completely transformed the way we live, work and learn. The FE sector digital platforms provide learners with a flexible delivery model taking into consideration the capacity and capability of the learner and the needs of the specific course. This flexibility will allow the sector to respond quickly to any future restrictions. [The Northern Ireland Skills Barometer 2021 update](#) provides a detailed understanding of the future skills needs and skills gaps by qualification level, subject area and sector for Northern Ireland covering the period up to 2030. This helps form the basis of future curriculum plans in the FE Sector.

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

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

- A [10X Economy](#) – an economic vision for a decade of innovation in delivering a ten times better economy that will ultimately result in a 'positive impact on our economy, societal

and environmental wellbeing', 'creating jobs', 'increase incomes', 'improve productivity levels' and 'provide opportunities for all'.

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

- Digital, ICT and Creative Industries (e.g. Cyber Security);
  - Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering (e.g Composites);
  - Agri-Tech;
  - Life and Health Sciences (e.g. Personalised Medicine); and
  - Fintech / Financial Services.
- [Trade and Investment for a 10X Economy](#): focuses on equipping individuals and business with the information and skills to exploit emerging trade and investment opportunities in the priority clusters and in providing 'a world class talent offering'.
  - [Tourism Recovery Action Plan](#): The FE sector supported the development and continues to support the implementation of phase two of the action plan to support the development of a solid foundation for the recovery of the Northern Ireland tourism industry and hospitality industry, and the development of Northern Ireland as a sustainable and competitive tourism destination that meets the needs of both future visitors and local communities alike.
  - [Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland - Skills for a 10X Economy](#): This strategy replaces "Success through Skills – Transforming Futures", addressing the skills needs across Northern Ireland over the next decade. FE colleges have played a key role in the development of the strategy. Despite the change in economic circumstances and uncertainty created by the pandemic, the underlying key policy objectives over the next period remain consistent:
    - Investing in our [digital skills](#) across all sectors of our economy;
    - Creating a culture of learning [for all ages](#) to include upskilling and reskilling in addition to innovation; and
    - Reducing the skills imbalances in the workforce, with a particular focus on those with low or no skills.

The NI Traineeship is the new flagship Level 2 vocational education programme that delivers the commitments set out within 'Generating our Success' the NI Strategy for Youth Training for a non-employed route. The programme aims to create a pathway through vocational education that offers participants the opportunity to achieve qualifications equivalent to five GCSEs through a combination of vocational training, structured work placement and numeracy and literacy qualifications, to support an individual's progression into employment or higher levels of education and training. An Advanced Technical Award at level 3 is being piloted, which will build on the Traineeship model and assist to deliver a consistent full time vocational pathway at this level. Both programmes will prioritise those skills that are most

economically relevant and contribute to increasing the proportion of working age population with qualifications at level 2 and level 3.

Aligned with the 'Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland – Skills for a 10X Economy', the FE sector has begun delivering Skill Up – The Flexible Skills Fund (Skill Up) across multiple levels and sectors, focused on the priority sectors and accredited qualifications at level 3, 4 and 5 where there is the greatest need, as highlighted by the Skills Barometer. Through Skill Up, we aim to skill, upskill and reskill individuals to meet the needs of the economy as we emerge from the pandemic and continue to grow the economy whilst boosting participation in lifelong learning and reduce key skills imbalances in areas such as digital technologies, advanced manufacturing, leadership and healthcare. As Skill Up prepares to enter Year 2 of the programme, proposal requests for Year 3 are also being sought from course providers.

Developing a highly skilled and motivated workforce will be at the core of our economic recovery and the FE sector plays a key role by providing high quality learner education and training. The establishment of seven Curriculum Hubs in key occupational areas focused on priority skills and growth sectors of employment, fully supports these goals.

The FE sector will continue to contribute to the Department's review of Level 4 and 5 provision and Higher Education (HE) in FE and as the review concludes, work towards implementation of agreed recommendations via representation on the Stakeholder Advisory Group and membership on task and finish groups. This includes ensuring that HE in FE qualifications and progression pathways through HE remain appropriate for meeting the needs of learners and the economy. In addition, input from colleges will be vital to ongoing work looking at the reform of vocational qualifications and responding to developments across the UK in this area.

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

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

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

The Department is investing £224 million in delivering seven new FE campuses providing modern facilities from which to deliver new and evolving curriculum provision addressing the needs of learners, industry and the wider economy, with new campuses at Armagh, Banbridge, Ballymena, Craigavon, Coleraine and Enniskillen along with expansion of existing Newry East campus via re-development of the former Newry Sport Centre. The new iconic Erne campus in Enniskillen is constructed to the highest environment standard of Passiv Haus Premium, a world first for an educational building. In addition a major £10 million refurbishment of North West Regional College's Springtown campus has recently been completed.

In conjunction with the City Deals programme, further capital projects are being considered at North West Regional College and South West College.

The FE sector is an essential component to support delivery of the Executive's PfG Outcomes and the Department's vision and the strategies outlined above. NI's future economic and social success is predicated on its ability to access a highly skilled, talented and flexible workforce to deliver a vibrant economy and inclusive society. FE colleges will play a crucial role in supporting NI to move through the Recovery to the Renewal Phases.

In order to carry out that role effectively, the FE sector needs to be able to flex delivery to adapt to the changing economic and strategic environment in which it operates. While the current six-college model does provide the ability to adapt provision to meet the skills need of specific areas, the associated governance required can constrain the sector's ability to act quickly and cohesively to meet the challenges it faces including its increasing cost base and the recent decline in enrolments.

The Minister has therefore approved the initiation of the first stage of a Review of the current FE Delivery Model which will seek to develop an evidence base on current delivery in the sector and to bring forward alternative delivery models to help inform how the Review will be taken forward. An external contractor, Tribal has been commissioned to carry out a benchmarking exercise as part of this initial stage which is expected to be completed by Summer 2022. A submission will then be developed to the Minister summarising the current position and seeking approval for proposals on how the Review should be taken forward. The Department has been meeting with Colleges to seek their initial views and that engagement will intensify if the Minister decides the Review should progress to the next stage.

## 2. CURRENT OPERATING ENVIRONMENT

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This College Development Plan has been progressed against a backdrop of a non-functioning Northern Ireland Executive, absence of longer-term budgets, a world-wide recession, a cost-of-living crisis, and rising energy costs, ongoing turmoil within the UK Government, and continued uncertainty on the world stage emanating from the Ukrainian crisis. This creates uncertainty in NI generally, significant financial pressures for government, businesses and citizens and impacts on the services required from the FE sector.

Expert analysis for the recovery of the NI economy reflects the following:

- Ulster Bank Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) June 2022 reported a sharp decrease in output and new orders as severe price pressures caused demand to contract. Business confidence also fell, but companies continue to expand staffing levels.
- Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (Spring 2022) noted NI growth prospects are still relatively good with anticipated growth of 4.2% in 2022, although global uncertainties remain a challenge for the NI economy. The inflation projections for 2022 are 5.9%. The issue of the Northern Ireland Protocol provides opportunities and challenges, giving NI manufacturers access to both UK and EU markets, however import of goods from GB is causing significant challenges for many firms and adding to costs.

Despite these uncertainties it is recognised that Northern Ireland's future success is predicated on its ability to access a highly skilled, talented and flexible workforce, giving people access to better jobs across different sectors by: providing more opportunities through Lifelong Learning; supporting personal development; addressing the issues that lead to underachievement; and strengthening links between industry and academia. The future demand for skills is particularly relevant to Colleges across Northern Ireland as the skills barometer highlights that delivering on Northern Ireland's economic potential will require a significant uplift in the number of people undertaking professional and technical qualifications.

The demand for skills in NI will outstrip supply but the nature of the skills gap varies across NQF levels. The largest gaps are likely to emerge in the mid-tier skills levels across most subject areas, linked primarily to a supply issue. NQF level 4-5 qualifications represent only 7% of the overall supply of labour from the education system. The skills barometer also suggests that addressing this undersupply could be met by either increasing the course offering and participation in mid-level qualifications at FE or increasing the number of apprenticeships which achieve at least mid-level qualification. A significant majority of the jobs which supported our economy during the lockdown were vocational, and remain essential to continued growth, particularly at levels 3-5, across all sectors of the economy. These sectors will be central to economic recovery and are dependent on the FE sector to provide their talent pool. This CDP details how the FE Sector will capitalise on the achievements to date to ensure the needs of students, employers and communities are met as NI responds to, recovers from and renews itself following the pandemic.

The drive for higher skills and relevant professional and technical qualifications is also being progressed by Colleges through the delivery of a new Vocational Education and Training

system (VET). The new VET system includes the well-established apprenticeship pathway and a non-employed pathway based on Level 2 Traineeships and Level 3 Advanced Technical Awards. The implementation of this non-employed pathway is central to the transformation of the VET landscape of Northern Ireland. The FE sector is committed to developing qualifications that will underpin the new VET system in Northern Ireland. The introduction of the new Traineeships/Advanced Technical awards are based on a new pedagogy underpinned by Project Based Learning that aims to create a new system of learning that will:

- Simplify the overly complex vocational offer;
- Reduce the number of vocational qualifications;
- Establish clear pathways based on apprenticeships (employed) and non-employed routes – providing seamless transition and progression for learners;
- Address the risks created by change across the qualifications market and ensure the availability of qualifications which meet our needs; and
- Address the forecasted skills shortfall at Level 3

The Further Education Colleges successfully adjusted to the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic over recent years including shifting to new delivery models, centre assessed grading and assessment and enhanced support for learners. However, the downward trend in full time further and higher education enrolments remains a significant concern across all Colleges. Whilst recognising that the number of school learners at 16 years of age has dropped, the extent of the decline is attributed to the outworking of education policy across NI and in particular the growth in 6<sup>th</sup> form provision and a funding model that has incentivised schools to retain learners leading to increased levels of duplication of provision across schools and colleges.

The joint DE and DfE 14-19 Framework was approved by both DE and DfE Ministers in June 2022. It is critical that the Framework, 'Developing a More Strategic Approach to 14-19 Education and Training', progresses a range of actions to deliver a more effective partnership delivery model between schools and FE Colleges that provides value for money and addresses the shortage of vocational skills at mid-tier levels. The Colleges are committed to progressing any actions that may emerge from the 14-19 Framework to ensure that the needs of all young people are met.

A further challenge which will impact College delivery is the cessation of EU funding in particular in the area of social inclusion. Over a number of years, Colleges have secured funding for substantial programmes to support disadvantaged young people to progress to education, training and employment. As a result of EU Exit, there is risk of a reduction in this provision if no replacement funding is secured through new schemes such as Peace Plus and the Shared Prosperity Fund.

This CDP is set in the context of the **Recovery** phase, focusing on ensuring the skills 'infrastructure' is maintained. Further Education Colleges will play a crucial role in supporting NI to move through the Recovery to the Renewal Phases.



### 3. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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The following guiding principles have been developed to set the direction for the 2022/23 CDP in light of the current operating environment:

1. Social distancing will not be in place at the start of the academic year (however good practice and Covid hygiene measures will still be promoted) and recruitment capacity will return to pre Covid levels. However, the residual impact of Covid 19 will result in smaller class sizes for years 2 and 3. Delivery will continue to adhere to any updates from the Departmental Advisory and Oversight Group on the safe resumption of onsite delivery.
2. The FE Sector will use its allocated resource budget to maximise the curriculum offer across the region. We will be proactive in developing and delivering an innovative curriculum provision in line with a range of departmental funding streams to deliver on the 10X and Skills Strategy.
3. Colleges will engage appropriate strategies to reset themselves as 'face to face' institutions.
4. Colleges will use the experiences of the pandemic to build on the use of technology to support more flexible forms of learning to businesses, and for individuals who wish to retrain or upskill.
5. Work with local employers will continue to develop new apprenticeship and placement opportunities.
6. We will engage with businesses to:
  - Support employers through the provision of fully funded, tailored solutions through the Skills Focus Programme and use the Skill Up Initiative to increase the skills levels of the workforce; and
  - Facilitate small businesses in acquiring the skills to innovate, by delivering up to three InnovateUs upskilling projects per business, through which they work on developing new products, services or processes.
7. The FE sector will continue to work with relevant stakeholders in the development of a new Vocational Education and Training system through the further expansion of Traineeships, Advanced Technical and Apprenticeships.
8. The FE Sector will continue to support the most disadvantaged in communities across NI by ensuring access to learning opportunities that lead to sustainable career pathways.

9. The FE sector will continue to support local schools in the delivery of the Entitlement Framework through on-site delivery and in accordance with DfE guidelines on safe resumption.
10. The FE sector will play its role in implementing key policy initiatives and recommendations from;
  - The 14-19 framework 'Framework Developing a More Strategic Approach to 14-19 Education and Training'
  - Review of Level 4 and 5 Provision and HE in FE;
  - Vocational Qualifications Reform.
11. The FE Sector will continue to build on its programme of collaboration aimed at ensuring the delivery of a more coherent and responsive sector and making best use of existing resources and expertise.
12. The FE sector will use the ETI review of Curriculum HUBs to continue to build the effectiveness and responsiveness of all HUBs.
13. FE Colleges will continue to play a key role in supporting the work of City and Growth deals across Northern Ireland.
14. FE Colleges will support the work of local Labour Market Partnerships and other cross department initiatives.

## 4. REGIONAL OPERATING CONTEXT - CHALLENGES

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SERC has campuses located in the south eastern area of Northern Ireland (NI) in Bangor, Downpatrick, Hollywood, Lisburn, Ballynahinch, Newtownards and Newcastle plus a Professional Skills Centre (PSC) at Nutts Corner County Antrim. We draw students from across NI and engage with businesses, both north and south of the border.

### 4.1 Our Vision

By 2030, we will be recognised as an innovative and entrepreneurial world-class education provider.

### 4.2 Our Mission

Our mission is to shape our community, by promoting an innovative and entrepreneurial society through maintaining an inclusive learning environment, which will empower and enable individuals and businesses to fulfil their ambitions. In doing so we will contribute to the Programme for Government and associated strategies which are aimed at promoting social and economic wellbeing and the future prosperity of Northern Ireland.

### 4.3 SERC Approach

At SERC our approach is responsive, solution focussed, excellence driven and collaborative. As Northern Ireland responds to the impact of the pandemic and moves to recover, SERC and the FE sector has a crucial part to play.

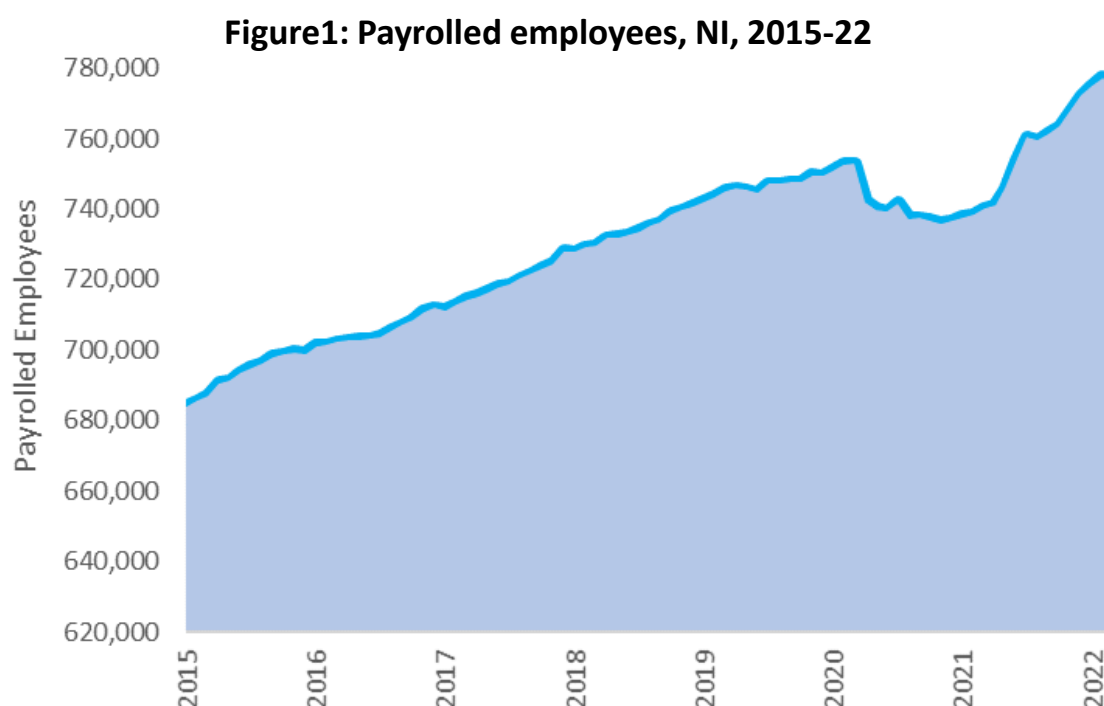
The College has demonstrated over the past decade our ability to understand and meet the needs of industry partners, providing innovation and development support. SERC has helped impact business productivity through upskilling employees with skills necessary to thrive in an increasingly technological environment. The College has intensively engaged with those who have thought themselves beyond education and whose experience at school may have made them reluctant learners, many of whom are labelled 'economically inactive'.

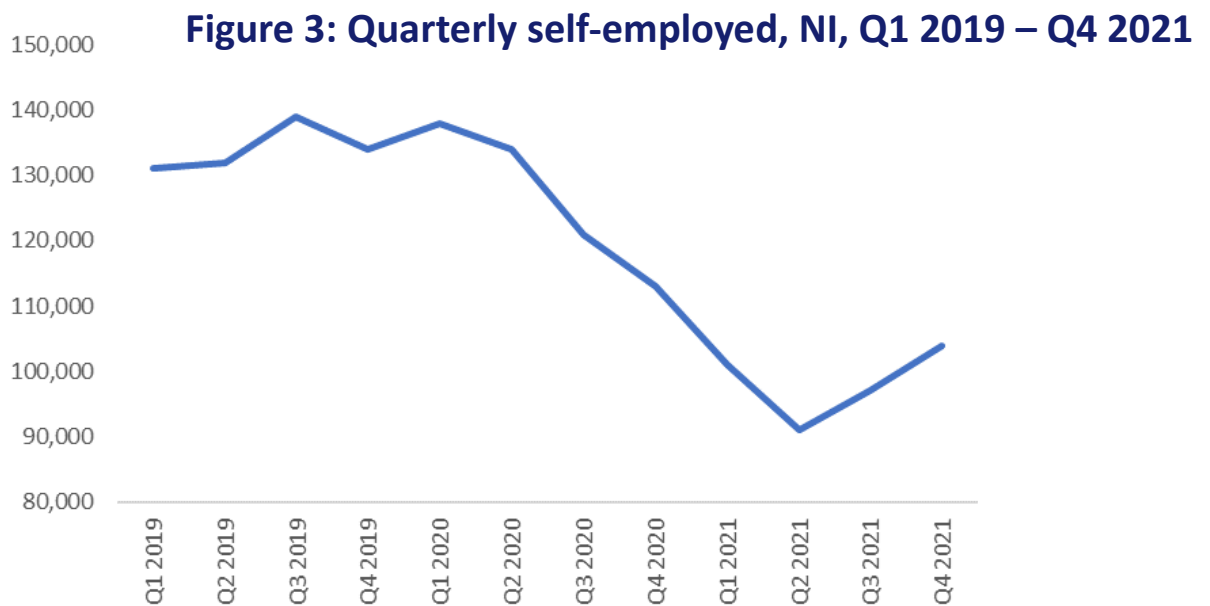
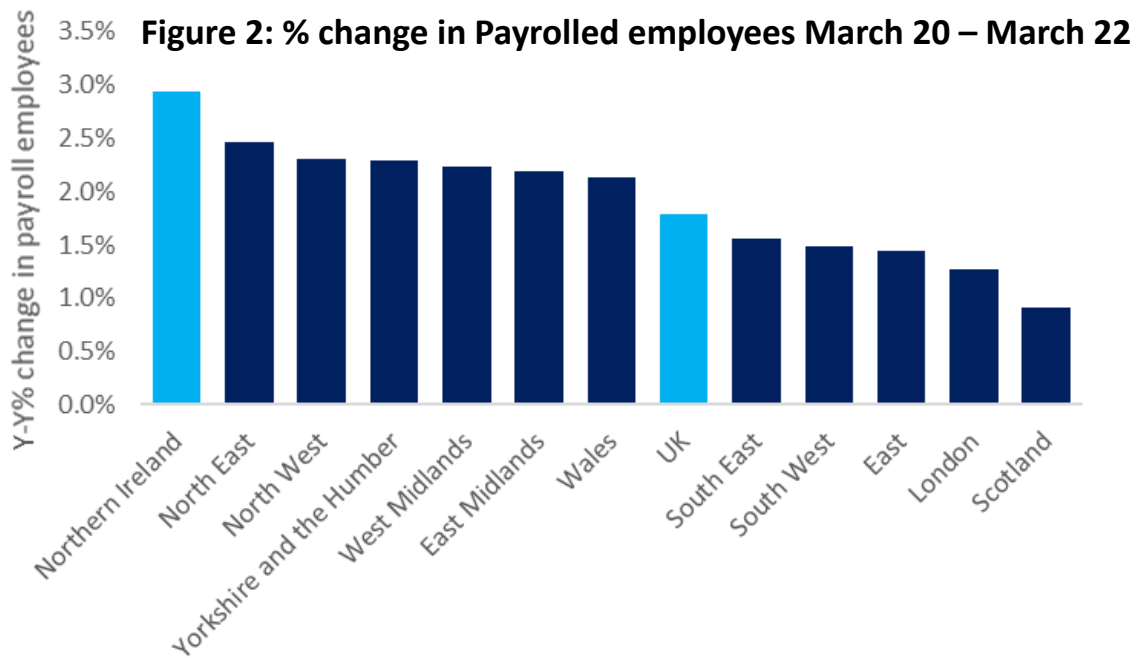
SERC recognises that one of the key elements underpinning change for individuals, businesses, our community and economy, is to understand the barriers faced.

We understand lack of skills and/or qualifications may prevent an individual from advancing at work but also recognise that an unskilled workforce can hinder innovation and productivity for businesses. Effective solutions have required us to collaborate with those impacted and those with the ability to work alongside us to address the barriers preventing change. This has often meant labour intensive activity, involving nuanced engagement activity and effort outside of what is perceived as 'normal' activity for an FE College.

### **Key Challenges for the Economy**

Evidence from the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre, shows an increase in 'payrolled' employees in NI from 2015 to 2022. In addition, there is an increase in 'payrolled' employees from March 20 to March 22 and a greater increase in Northern Ireland than in the other UK regions as demonstrated below in Figures 1,2 and 3. This would suggest a transition of self-employed individuals, impacted by the pandemic, into employment.

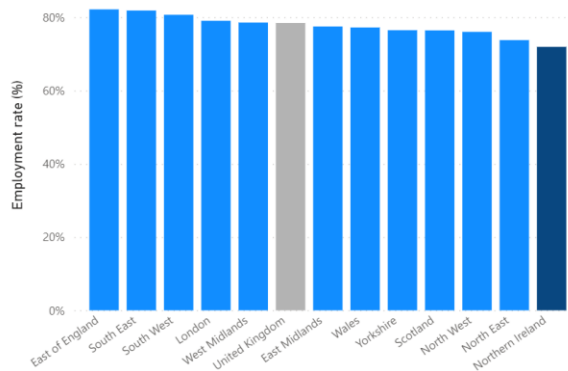




While NI has high levels of employment, the employment rate in NI is still lower than the UK average with male employment being the lowest in the UK as shown below in Figures 4 and 5.

**Figure 4: Male employment rate**

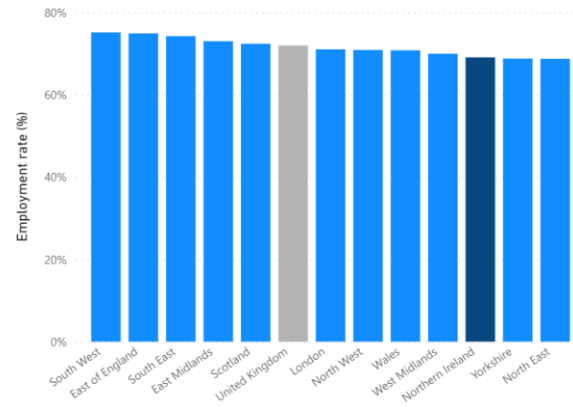
Male employment rate (% aged 16-64), UK regions



Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey, UUEPC

**Figure 5: Female employment rate**

Female employment rate (% aged 16-64), UK regions



Source: ONS, Labour Force Survey, UUEPC

With the business sector reporting skills shortages, there is an imperative to support and progress those classed as economically inactive into education and work which will require concentrated and coordinated effort across the statutory sector and business sectors.

## Key Challenges for SERC

Due to 'stronger performance', as evidenced in the graphs below, learners aged 16-18 are being retained by the post primary sector post age 16 rather than progressing to FE. A lack of understanding by students and parents of Further Education opportunities and progression routes contributes to the students remaining within the post primary sector.

Figure 6: Achievement of 5 GCSEs including English and Maths 2003/04-2019-20

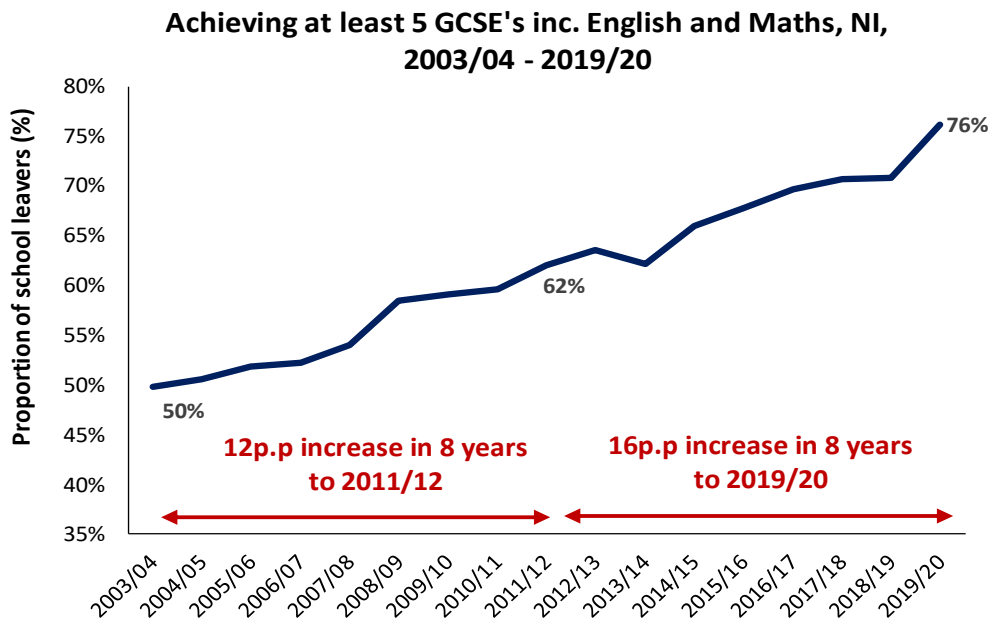
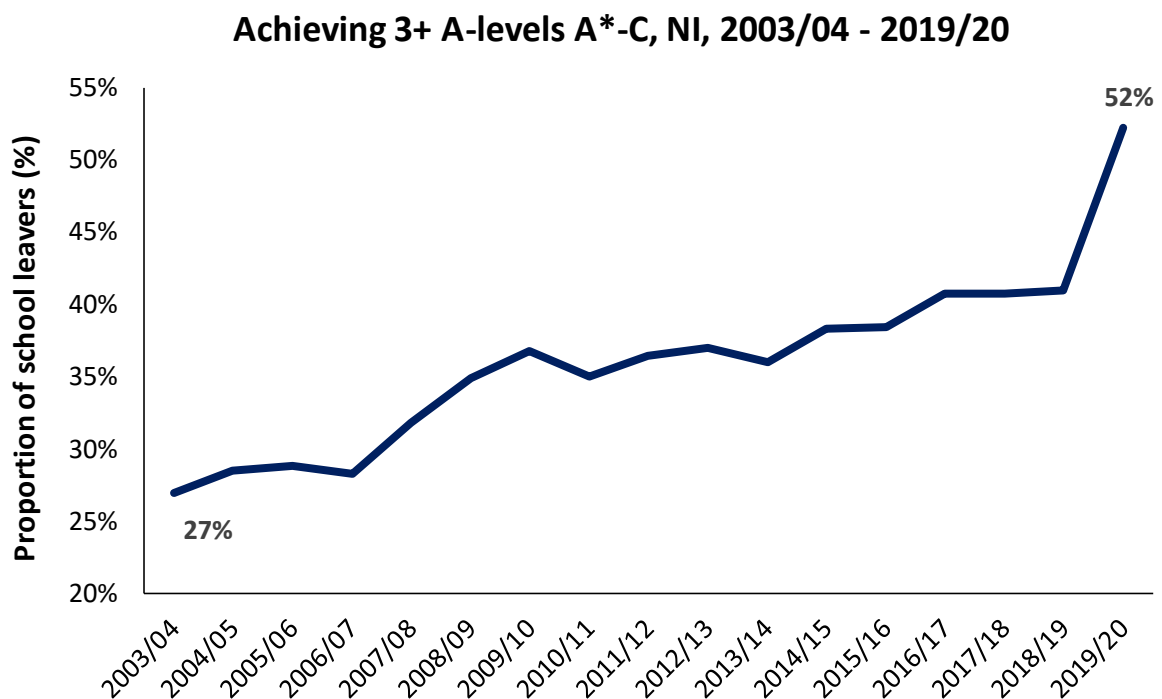
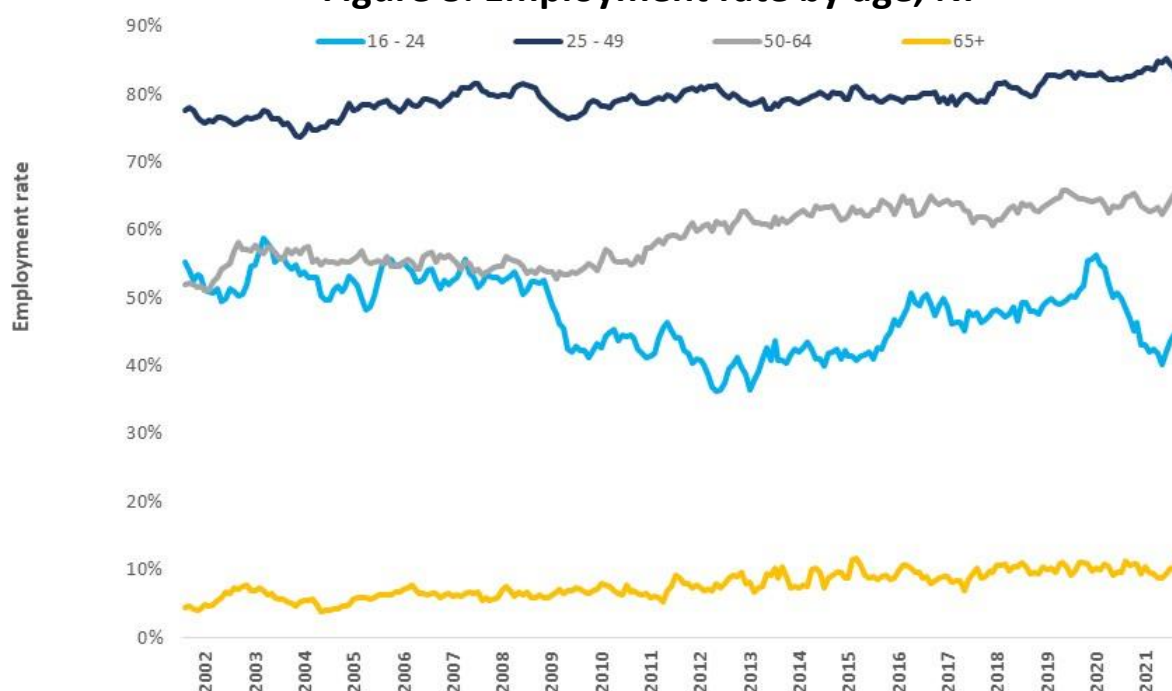


Figure 7: Achievement of A Levels A\*-C 2003/04-2019-20



Yet young people are more likely to be unemployed as shown in figure 8 below.

**Figure 8: Employment rate by age, NI**

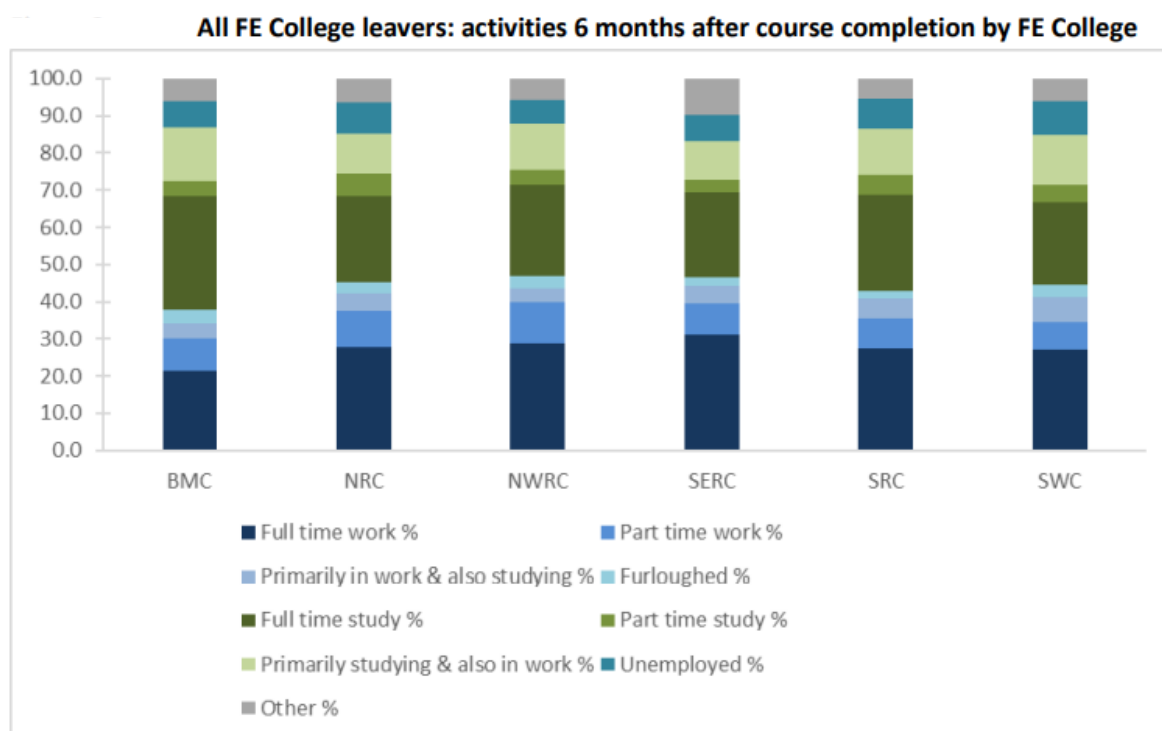


The 2019/2020 FE College Leavers Survey showed that only 7.7% of FE leavers were unemployed. While this percentage varied depending on level of study and subject, the majority of leavers from an FE College were in employment or further study.

As shown in the figure below, each cohort of FE College leavers is broadly similar in terms of the activities they move on to after completion of their course. Full-time work (27.1%) and full-time study (25.1%) are the most popular activities 6 months after course completion; however, there are some variations across the colleges. SERC (31.0%) and NWRC (28.9%) had the highest proportions of leavers engaged in full-time work.



**Figure 9: All FE Colleges leavers: activities 6 months after course completion by FE College**



Source: Survey of FE College Leavers 2019/20

n=5,604

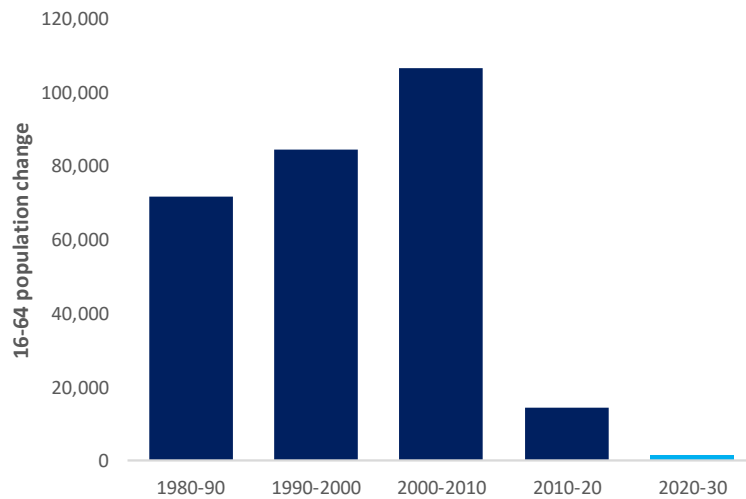
Note: 370 invalid responses were excluded.

A key challenge for SERC, FE Colleges and the economy is enabling young people to make informed choices about the best routes to employment. Access to Post Primary Schools to convey the alternative pathways available to students is now essential. Particularly as the technical and professional FE pathway is more likely to lead to employment, than remaining in sixth form due to the demand for skills at Level 4 and Level 5 from business.

Due to reductions in the population (as shown in Figure 10) and the reduction in non-UK nationals (Figure 11) entering the labour market, there is a need to address the skills shortage through a reduction in the level of economically inactive. We must engage and encourage the economically inactive into education and employment. This is a very challenging and labour intensive exercise, which requires adequate resourcing.

**Figure 10: Change in 16-64 age population by decade (NI)**

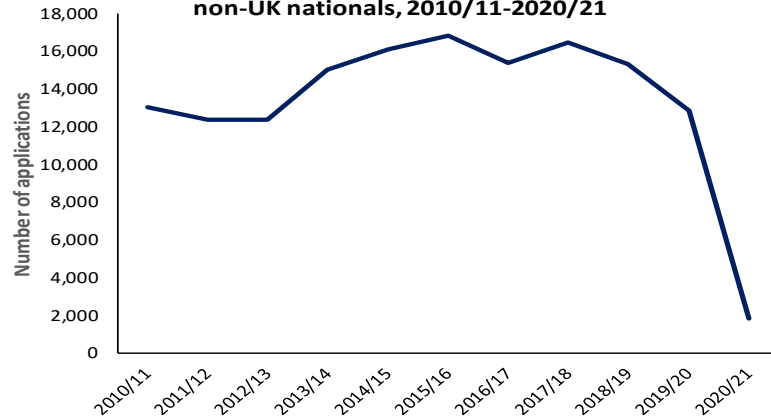
Change in 16-64 population by decade (NI)



Source: NISRA

**Figure 11: NI National insurance Number application by non-UK nationals 2010/11-2020/21**

NI National Insurance Number (NINo) applications by non-UK nationals, 2010/11-2020/21



Source: NISRA, DfC, DWP

## Other Challenges for SERC and the Economy

1. The level of unemployed men.

The majority of unemployed men have low or no skills or qualifications. They will be less likely to secure employment longer term unless they improve their qualification level as there will be limited employment opportunities for those with low or no skills. However, less than 10% of unemployed men return to education.

2. The growing level of over 65s requiring and being required to work.

The rate of employment in the over 65s is increasing year on year. In some cases this is due to increasing general personal debt and later in life mortgages. This is also due to a decrease in younger people in the traditional working age population (16-64).

3. Increasing number of learners with special educational needs as demonstrated in table 1 below.

Table 1: Number of students with special education needs 20/21 and 21/22

<b>Students coded 01, 02, 03 over past 2 Academic Years</b>		
	<b>AY20/21</b>	<b>AY21/22</b>
01	86	83
02	320	402
03	86	118
<b>Total</b>	<b>492</b>	<b>603</b>

**01 = Mainstream who do not require Learning Support**

**02 = Mainstream who do require Learning Support**

**03 = Discrete in College (eg Foundation Learning)**

4. Advances in Industry 4.0

Three quarters of businesses lack the confidence that they can fill highly skilled roles.

Significant workforce growth in skilled roles is anticipated in this area.

Advances in labour saving technology will result in less demand for a low skilled workforce.

5. Advancing needs of digitalisation in industry

In the past 10 years the numbers of computer science qualifiers have almost doubled

Computer science is the largest supply gap in NI

The World Economic Forum (WEF) expect automation to lead to the creation of new roles and by 2030, 21-33% (555-890 million) people in the global workforce could be in newly created jobs.

6. Addressing the requirements for green growth, net zero and the circular economy.

7. Meeting the requirements of the growing number of strategic partnerships operating within the skills and employability arena including Belfast Regional City Deal, Community Planning Partnerships, Labour Market Partnerships, Peace Plus Partnerships, and People and Place Locality Groups.

8. The increasing number of Ukrainian migrants arriving in Northern Ireland requiring ESOL courses.

SERC has hosted information and assessment events, in partnership with local Councils, for Ukrainian migrants and set up additional ESOL classes to accommodate these migrants. Planning for the academic year is difficult as migrants numbers coming to Northern Ireland are unknown. Budgetary constraints may restrict our ability to respond to any potential growth in demand as the year progresses.

However, our extensive experience enables us to actively contribute to the fulfilment of draft PfG Outcomes, Priority areas and objectives set out in the 10X Strategy and summarised in table 2 below, if supported to do so at policy level.

**Table 2: Summary of PfG Outcomes, Priority Clusters and objectives identified in the 10X Strategy.**

Draft PfG Outcomes	Priority Clusters identified in the 10X Strategy	DfE underlying key policy objectives over the next period remain consistent:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Our children and young people have the best start in life</i></li> <li>• <i>Everyone can reach their potential</i></li> <li>• <i>Everyone feels safe – we all respect the law and each other</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Digital, ICT and Creative Industries (e.g. Cyber Security);</li> <li>○ Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering (e.g Composites);</li> <li>○ Agri-Tech;</li> <li>○ Life and Health Sciences (e.g. Personalised Medicine); and</li> <li>○ Fintech / Financial Services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Investing in our <u>Digital skills</u> across all sectors of our economy;</li> <li>○ Creating a culture of learning <u>for all ages</u> to include upskilling and reskilling in addition to innovation; and</li> <li>○ Reducing the skills imbalances in the workforce, with a particular focus on those with low or no skills.</li> </ul>

SERC Strategic Priorities as outlined in the SERC Strategic Plan: Supporting People, Supporting the Economy 2030 sets out the practical means through which we will create an entrepreneurial, creative environment where all our staff, students and clients are encouraged and supported to fulfil their potential.

Through addressing our strategic priorities, included in Table 3, we can impact the draft PfG Outcomes, the Priority Clusters, the Green Circular economy and DfE policy objectives as outlined above. However, a recognition, of the positive impact of the FE Sector as the ‘engine room’ of the NI Economy is crucial to Northern Ireland’s economic recovery and relevant policy changes need to be introduced to support FE Sector activity including addressing awarding body status, sixth form policy and a more strategic approach to 14-19 education and training.

**Table 3: SERC Strategic Priorities**

<p><b>Strategic Priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enhance student capabilities and enable them to fulfil their potential, through providing a professional, relevant curriculum; innovative learning and teaching approaches and supportive learning environment.</li><li>• Lead economic development through supporting business to improve efficiency and productivity.</li><li>• Address social inclusion, through community engagement and support, providing opportunities for the economically inactive to obtain a professional qualification and obtain employment</li><li>• Support and develop our staff, encouraging creativity and entrepreneurial culture.</li><li>• Develop International partnerships to enhance student, staff and business opportunities.</li><li>• Promote and support healthy and resilient students and staff through a range of wellbeing initiatives.</li><li>• Work with Department for the Economy and other Colleges to secure Awarding Body Status</li></ul>
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SERC leads the Construction Hub and supports the other Hubs in the FE Sector; Digital IT, Engineering, Health & Social Care, Life Sciences, Hospitality & Tourism and Entrepreneurship. The College is committed to driving curriculum development through the aggregate of increased employer engagement and stronger collaboration between NI Colleges. The College supports the other college Hub Managers across a broad range of work including the review of apprenticeship qualifications and cross-referencing to the outworkings of future scoping carried out in conjunction with the Business Services unit.

In the particular case of the Construction Hub, the college provides leadership in the development of high-quality Construction curriculum cognisant of construction technology innovation, enabling greater capacity to support economic engagement.

The College is also a FE representative on the Built Environment Sectoral Partnership and takes the lead in updating other colleges of Sectoral Partnership progress through

the Curriculum Hub. The College also provides the Secretariat to the Civil Engineering Sectoral Partnership and the Motor Vehicle Sectoral Partnership and again updates the other colleges of updates as required.

### Competitions

The College believes that competition is an essential element in developing a student's skills and abilities and annually organises a range of campus and intercampus competitions across a range of curriculum areas to give students the opportunity to raise their technical standards and improve their transversal skills set.

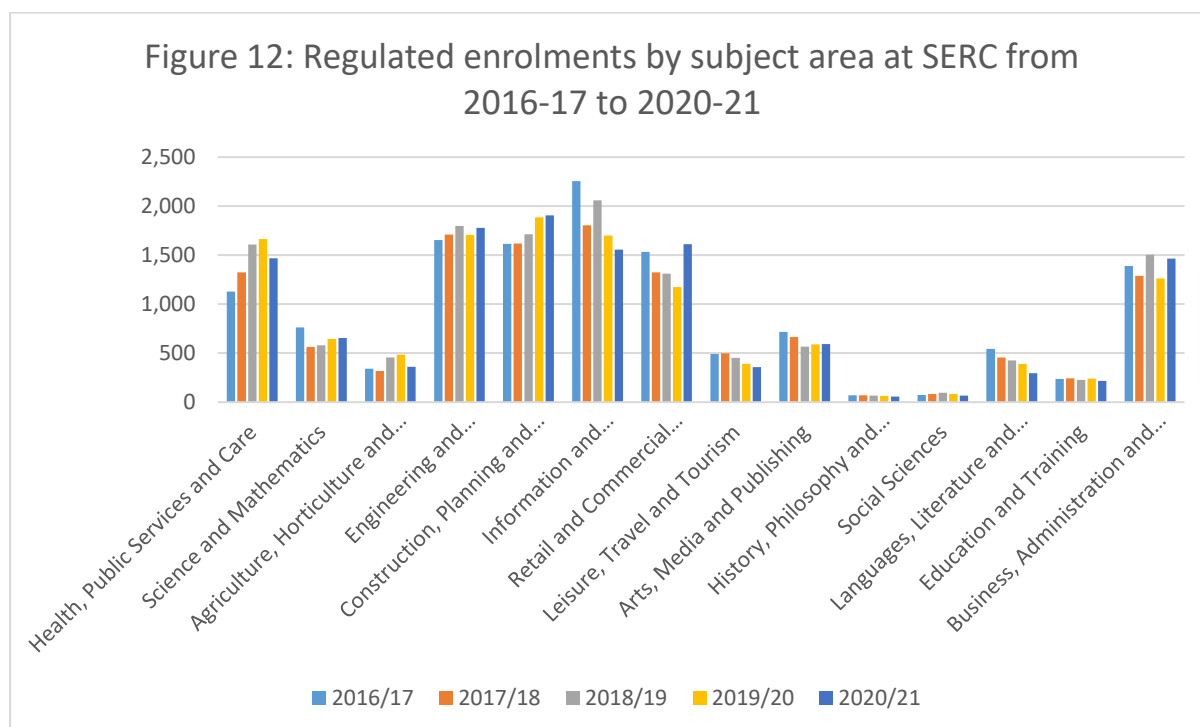
There are two types of competitions that students in Further Education can participate in - Project Competitions and Skills Competitions.

SERC endeavours to embed competitions into the core teaching and learning curriculum for students of all levels, and the college has been involved in internal competitions for many years, which have led to strong SERC competitors contributing to Northern Ireland FE's performance at UK, European and WorldSkills Levels.

While the details of SERC's activity are captured in a range of plans agreed by the Governing Body, a summary of key actions and achievements at SERC for the 2021-2022 academic year are captured below.

## Qualifications

While SERC enrolments have been impacted by falling demographics and stronger performance in schools over the past two years, enrolment in key sectors such as construction, science and mathematics, business administration and engineering are showing recovery.



Ongoing curriculum development and enhancement is key to SERC's responsiveness to the needs of industry. Having noted the gaps in our provision, SERC approached the Open University (OU) to become an OU partner institution.

The OU Administrative Audit and Institutional approval was completed in March 2022 with SERC being recommended to become an OU partner institution enabling delivery of the following programmes:

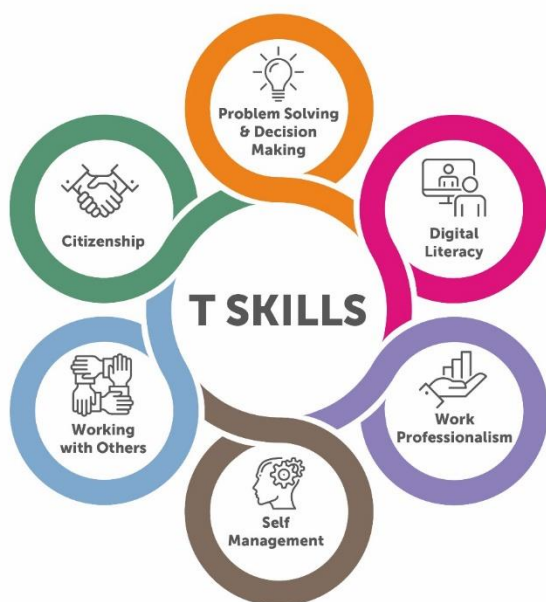
- FD Motorsport Engineering
- FD Culinary Arts
- FD and BSc top-up Cyber Security and Digital Forensics
- FD and BSc top-up Cloud Computing Technologies

Coordination and development of new course offering is taken forward through the Curriculum Hubs where appropriate.



Project Based Learning (PBL) continues to be embedded across all curriculum areas in association with the development of Transversal skills.

A growing body of research shows a gap between the skills learnt at school and those needed for life and work in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The Northern Ireland Skills Barometer (2021) highlights a lack of non-technical, 'soft' or 'transversal' skills, such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving, amongst graduates. Businesses need graduates with these skills to help drive growth and innovation.



Transversal Skills, or “T Skills”, are those typically considered as not specifically related to a job, task, academic discipline or area of knowledge but as skills that can be used in a wide variety of situations and work settings. These skills are increasingly in high demand for learners to successfully adapt to changes and to lead meaningful and productive lives.” UNESCO 2014.

SERC has led the development of a 'Blue Print' for the sector to develop and assess 'T Skills' across the curriculum.

Stranmillis University College undertook an evaluation of Project Based Learning (PBL) at SERC.

The Evaluation Concluded the following:

- Student survey results overwhelmingly demonstrate significant positive benefit attributed directly to the PBL experience across every category of transversal skills, as defined by UNESCO, and across every category of the 6 T-skills, as defined by SERC.
- The survey results showed that as a direct result of the PBL experience, 19% of students intended to start a business. This compares to the average rate for

total early-stage entrepreneurship of 6.5% in Northern Ireland, 9.1% in England, 6.3% in Wales, and 6.7% in Scotland (Hart *et al.*, 2017)

- Staff survey results showed significantly increased enjoyment of teaching and improved efficacy of student learning
- Staff considered PBL experiences to be very strongly supportive of transversal skill development and affirmed that transversal skills were more valuable for some 'real world' applications than traditional classroom practice.
- Staff confirmed that the assessment mechanism should be tailored to the nature of PBL, and endorsed application of a matrix to reflect progression, such as the SERC framework. Staff endorsed the use of the 'life-tracker' e-portfolio of video, photographic, written and peer evidence.
- Staff advocated traditional high-stakes assessment for theoretical elements of some courses, although a number of SERC courses are already entirely assessed through PBL.
- Students reported confidence in the accuracy of individual assessment meetings and requested that assessment would be continual. Students requested more time before the PBL experience to get to know their fellow team members and more explanation of the purpose of the PBL experience, along with their expected roles.
- Within the context of different subject contents, staff and students agreed that PBL cannot be a 'one-size-fits-all' across the range of courses studied by participating students.
- Staff and students agreed that, subject to pragmatic considerations, freedom to choose the nature of each project could enhance productive outcomes.

### Staff Development

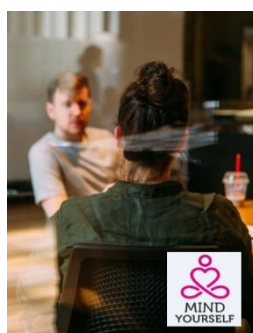
Continuous Professional Development of our staff is key to supporting a dynamic curriculum and staff are supported through the College's Learning Academy which facilitates ongoing staff development and training. The diagram below captures some of the key programme areas through which the Learning Academy supports staff development.

## LEARNING ACADEMY



In addition, the Construction Hub will support pedagogic excellence, using Learning Academy expertise to support lecturers. This will underpin the delivery of focused training, identified through co-operation with the Business Services Unit who will provide timely analysis of construction skills requirements.

### Staff and Student Wellbeing and Support



Staff and Student wellbeing is central to SERC's approach in supporting each to succeed. SERC provides an extensive programme of staff and student support; including referral mechanisms to pastoral care, counselling services, mental health champions and more.

SERC also enhances the learning experience of students through additional activities including Enterprise support and Entrepreneurs club, Duke of Edinburgh/Presidents Awards schemes, our extensive Careers programme and International programme.

## Enterprise and Entrepreneur Club

The Enterprise Club helps students to leverage their talents and tenacity to build a viable start-up business. The Club trains students in the skills and innovative thinking that allow founders to create successful companies, challenging them to take a real start-up from idea to execution and impact.

A total of 147 student companies have been created since September 2019, of which 56 have traded independently, 82 have traded externally and 136 have traded in any capacity (both independently or with mentoring support).



Each student company receives mentoring from an Innovation Advisor. The Advisors all hold CMI Level 5 Awards in Coaching and Mentoring and are therefore trained in supporting students in goal setting and self-reflection exercises for skills development.

The newly formed businesses are in the following industries: Catering & Hospitality, Science, Innovation Projects, Agricultural, Technology & Agri-food, Sport, Health & Social Care, Early Years, Art & Design, Performing Arts, Creative Arts, Engineering, Manufacture & Design, Computing, Software Development & Cyber Security, Digital Media, Film & Television, Apparel, Fashion & Textiles (eco versions too), Blacksmithing, Electrical Installation, Green energy, Motor Sport, Motor Vehicle, Hair, Beauty & Spa and Horticulture. Examples of businesses set up with the help of the Entrepreneurs club is included at Appendix 1.

## Educational Enhancement through International partnerships

SERC's international development strategy centres around developing mutually beneficial partnerships to support student and staff exchanges, share best practice pedagogy, facilitating teacher upskilling, and securing collaboratively funded or commercial projects. During the pandemic SERC strengthened existing international partnerships by continuing transnational projects and teacher training through virtual technology solutions. In 2021, SERC delivered online English Language training to 14 teachers from Tajik State University of Law, Business and Politics and online PBL

training to 110 teachers from the Hong Kong VTC. The College also delivered PBL training sessions to four small enterprises in South Africa, Ghana, Malaysia and India.

SERC has a well-established reciprocal relationship with the National Institute of Technology, Toyama College, Japan with regular student and staff exchanges, research projects, competitions, and events. Recent collaboration involved a virtual student exchange where Travel & Tourism students shared language and cultural experiences.

The College completed a virtual British Council project supporting the Dept of Higher Education and Training in South Africa to develop a Quality Assurance framework that will be implemented across the 50 Colleges. SERC has also secured British Council funding to mentor four enterprises in Pakistan to improve their private sector engagement strategies. The College is currently partnering in three transnational projects and leading one, bringing together partners from UK, Ireland, Greece, Finland, Netherlands, Denmark, Malta and Spain to develop innovative approaches to teacher digital skills, smart manufacturing and use of Artificial Intelligence. In an ongoing collaborative partnership since 2019 with Lahore Garrison University (LGU), Pakistan, two LGU staff have been seconded to SERC for an initial one-year period to support delivery on FD Computing programmes in emerging technologies such as Cyber Security, Mobile Application Development and Cloud Computing.

## How well did we do it?

DfE data shows that SERC had the highest achievement and success rates in 2020/21.

**Table A30: Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments by FE College (2020/21)**

Academic Year	FE College	Final Year enrolments	Final Year Completers	Retention Rate	Achievements	Achievement Rate	Success Rate
2020/21	Belfast Metropolitan College	15,332	13,989	91.2%	12,159	86.9%	79.3%
	Northern Regional College	8,977	7,972	88.8%	6,969	87.4%	77.6%
	North West Regional College	6,773	5,940	87.7%	4,926	82.9%	72.7%
	South Eastern Regional College	15,011	13,270	88.4%	12,260	92.4%	81.7%
	Southern Regional College	11,775	11,046	93.8%	9,558	86.5%	81.2%
	South West College	8,169	7,401	90.6%	6,127	82.8%	75.0%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>66,037</b>	<b>59,618</b>	<b>90.3%</b>	<b>51,999</b>	<b>87.2%</b>	<b>78.7%</b>

Ongoing monitoring of the quality of delivery is undertaken and the external surveys including the National Student Survey, Big 14 Survey and HESA survey reflect the positive contribution the College makes to the lives of our students.

## Big 14 Survey

Completion rates significantly increased across all internal Schools from 2020/21 to 2021/22

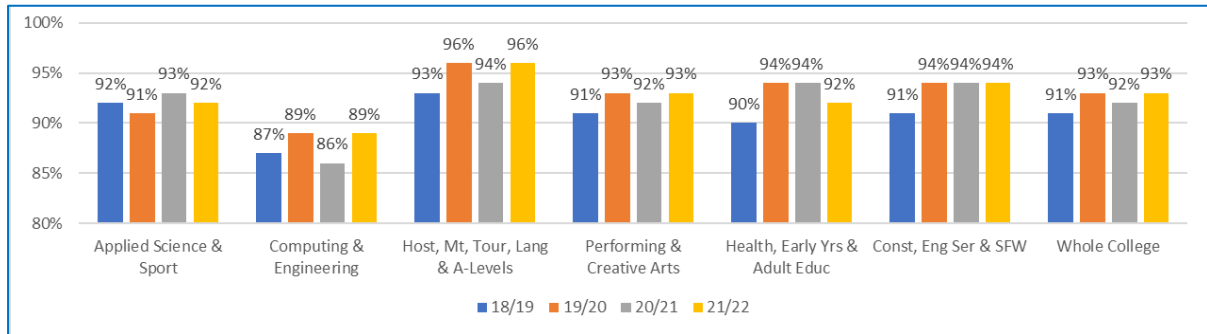
**Table 3: SERC School completion rates 2020/21 and 2021/22**

School/Completion Rate	2020/ 21	2021/ 22	% Increase
Performing & Creative Arts	60%	86%	<b>+26%</b>
Computing & Engineering	54%	84%	<b>+30%</b>
Applied Science & Sport	57%	82%	<b>+25%</b>
Health, Early Years & Adult Ed	32%	66%	<b>+34%</b>
Hospitality, Management, Tour, Lang & A-Levels	46%	64%	<b>+18%</b>
Construction, Engineering Services & Skills for Work	22%	49%	<b>+27%</b>

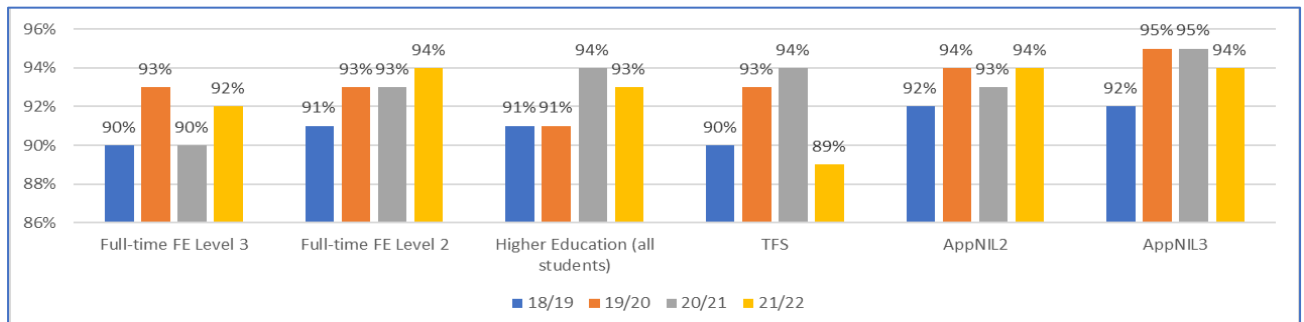
In 2021/22, 3,272 (67%) of students completed the survey.

The tables below show Student Satisfaction Ratings by internal 'School' at SERC and Student Type

**Figure 13 - Student Satisfaction Ratings (by School) 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22**



**Figure 14 - Student Satisfaction Ratings (by Student Type) 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22**



Teaching, Learning and Assessment across Further Education, Higher Education and Work Based Learning was rated highest, and consistently at 95% while resources including online learning materials was rated at 89%. This is perhaps reflective of the increased importance and reliance that students placed on online resources during periods of blended learning.



*Figure 4 – Student voice feedback analysed by theme*

Theme of Student Voice	Further Education	Higher Education	Work Based Learning	Overall Satisfaction Rating
Teaching Learning & Assessment	95%	95%	95%	95%
Course Enjoyment & Satisfaction	93%	94%	95%	94%
Skills Development for Real Life	93%	92%	93%	93%
Student Support	91%	91%	92%	92%
Resources	88%	89%	89%	88%
<b>Overall Satisfaction Rating</b>	93%	93%	93%	93%

### Skills Development for Real Life

The College places high value on developing skills to support student progression to work, higher education and in real life. The development of these skills is supported through Project Based Learning (PBL), Enterprise, and Transversal Skills (T Skills) initiatives.

In analysing the impact that students feel these initiatives have had on their learning two questions were considered:

1. The projects that I have worked on in college have helped me develop skills and knowledge that will be useful in the workplace
2. I am learning new skills that will help me in real life (Practical skills, interview skills, presentation skills, study skills)

Across the Whole College, 93% of students agreed or strongly agreed, that these initiatives were having a positive impact and that they are being equipped with skills that they can use in real life.

## Feedback on the Level 2 Traineeship Programme (introduced September 2021)

Positive feedback on the new Traineeship programme has been provided with overall satisfaction slightly higher than the College benchmark.

Theme of Student Voice	Overall Satisfaction Rating
Teaching Learning & Assessment	96%
Course Enjoyment & Satisfaction	96%
Skills Development for Real Life	95%
Student Support	94%
Resources	87%
<b>Overall Satisfaction Rating</b>	<b>94%</b>

**Figure 5 - New Traineeship programme student feedback**

A significant increase in the levels of student participation has been achieved in the Big 14 survey in 2021/22. Overall feedback confirms that student satisfaction levels have returned to pre pandemic levels. The feedback also confirms evidence that students across all levels of the College recognise and value the range of initiatives that have been developed to support them in developing real life skills which will support their progression to employment and higher education.

## Student development

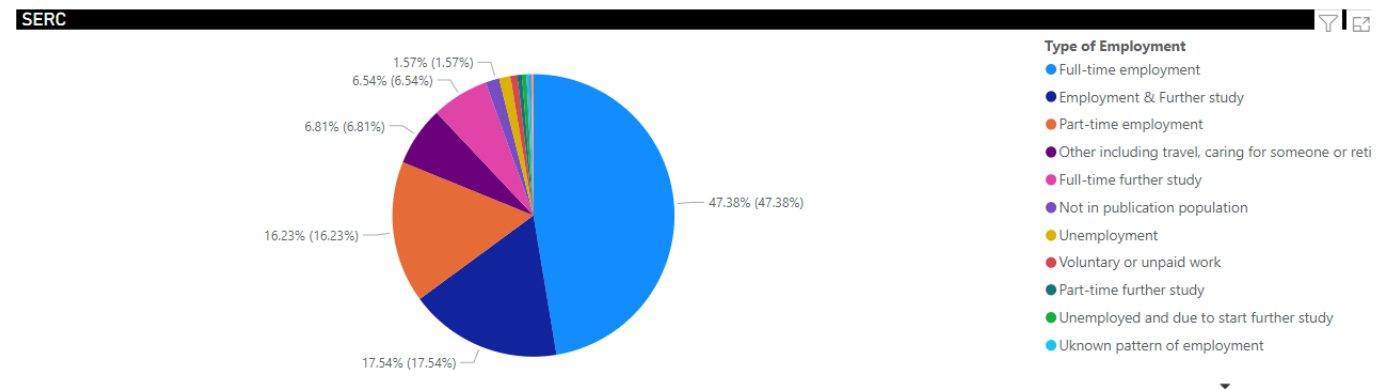
In 21/22 a total 149 FE students took part in International mobilities and 48 (32%) of those had a passport for the first time.

<b>Erasmus</b>		
Animal Management	Spain	18
Bakery	Spain	16
Computing	Tenerife	10
Computing	Portugal	12
Construction	Malta	7
Science	Italy	14
Food Service	Spain	7
Performing Arts	Spain	12
Sport	Spain	24
Travel & Tourism	Spain	21
<b>Turing</b>		
Professional Cookery	USA	6
<b>Total</b>		<b>149</b>

## Is Anyone Better off?

### GRADUATE OUTCOMES SURVEY

This survey is commissioned by HESA which is the central source for the collection and dissemination of statistics about publicly funded UK Higher Education. Survey results for SERC are detailed below:



Full time employment 47.38%

Employment and further study 17.54%

Part time employment 16.23%

Other, including travel, caring for someone or retired 6.81%

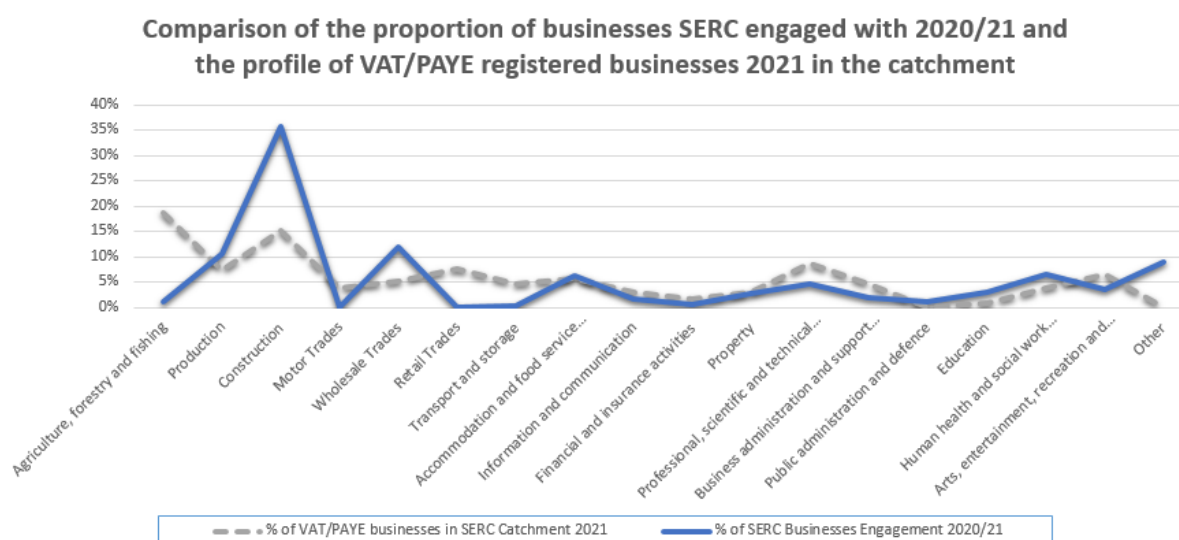
Full-time further study 6.81%

## Employers

SERC Business Services Team is at the forefront of course and mentoring provision in NI which address skills imbalances in key priority skills areas such as Trade & Export, Digital Innovation, Green Technologies, and Leadership & Management. The Team is committed to developing new industry courses and mentoring to support economic recovery post pandemic.

The Construction Hub will collaborate with the Business Services unit to identify emerging construction technologies and provide training solutions to future proof local SMEs linked to the College construction specialisms.

Analysis shown in the table below demonstrates the support provided by SERC is in line with the industry mix in the region.



SERC has embraced the funding opportunities for the 21/22 funding year and delivered training to a value of £3 million for Assured Skills Academies, Skill Up Flexible Skills Fund, Skill Up Flexible Skills Development Fund, Skills Focus, Innovate Us and Economic Recovery Action Plan (ERAP) Skills & Mentoring programmes to help individuals attain the knowledge needed to grow our economy and boost productivity, this has also led to curriculum development.

## **We will continue to support businesses to:**

- Develop technology for business growth
- Upskill existing employees
- Develop new products, services or markets in collaboration with Curriculum Hubs where appropriate.
- Innovate existing products, services or processes
- Employ the right people

## **How well did we do?**

The College closely monitors 'how well did we do it' through a number of measures, including the InnovateUs Delivery and Evaluation report. In 2021/22, the results of the InnovateUs evaluation report showed how well we have performed:

- 100% of businesses engaged believed/ felt the programme provided 'very good' or 'excellent' value for money.
- 100% of participants were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the delivery of their project.
- 97% of businesses engaged noted that greater innovation had been achieved within their business as a result of the project.
- 100% of the businesses engaged indicated that they felt they had an 'excellent' or 'very good' relationship with the College as a result of participation on the InnovateUs programme.
- 100% of businesses engaged said they would use the services of the College again

## **Is Anyone Better off?**

Through our work with businesses, and specifically our targeted work under InnovateUs, businesses and people are better off and have reported the following:

- Average increase in sales of 13%.
- Average cost saving of 20%.
- 29 new jobs were created.
- 376 jobs were safeguarded.
- 3.5% of businesses were able to export as a result.
- 89% of the businesses felt they would be in a position to scale up.
- 5.5% of the small business participants reported increased sales in other export markets such as Great Britain, America, and Europe.
- 20% of the businesses developed into new to market areas.

## Social Inclusion

Engagement over the past two years has been severely impacted by the pandemic. Despite this the SERC team has been proactive, attending multiple virtual events with statutory, voluntary and community sector partners. This has led to some new partnerships being developed.

Our extensive student support activities will continue to be developed and enhanced to enable individuals to return to education, build resilience while studying with us and progress to meaningful careers.

### How well did we do it?

Social inclusion programmes, Access, restart and ESOL recruited well  
111 Restart enrolments and  
268 Access enrolments and  
393 ESOL enrolments

Across all courses the College achieved 6085 of its enrolments from individuals in quintiles 1 and 2.

## Community Engagement

Through its Community Engagement programme of events SERC continues to engage with individuals in deprived communities to advise and support them to re-enter education. We have worked with a range of community and voluntary organisations to address barriers to education and our Community Engagement Officer facilitated events and on-going links with a wide range of community and voluntary organisations. SERC continues to develop strong working relationships with community planning partners in the area of Ards & North Down, Lisburn and Castlereagh, and Newry, Mourne and Down.

## **Establishing Newcastle Campus as a Community Education Hub.**

The initiative aimed to increase the number of adults returning to education within the Newcastle area by establishing Newcastle Campus as a Community Education hub.

SERC works hard to deliver its vision of supporting lifelong learning through inclusive and supportive programmes. In May 2022 SERC won the Beacon award for Widening Participation as a result of the work engaging adult returners and supporting the transformation of their lives.

The College's established structure of support services for students includes:

### **Learning Support**

The Learning Support unit provides assistance for students who have disabilities, learning difficulties and/or long-term medical conditions and have additional educational needs. The team provides a range of tailored support to our students including:

- Specialist support from Learning Support Assistants and Lecturing staff
- Provision of physical resources and technology for example laptops with specialist software, reader pens, adjustable height desks.
- Access arrangements for examinations for example extra time or the provision of a scribe or reader

Within the Learning Support team, support which was traditionally provided to students with additional learning needs on a face-to-face basis has successfully moved to online support. This has provided an opportunity to upskill staff in the use of online technology as a means of providing this support. The use of online support has also facilitated the sharing of support staff between campuses allowing the College to better match staff skills and experience to specific student need regardless of geographical constraints.

## Pastoral Care, Welfare and Safeguarding

The Pastoral Care, Welfare and Safeguarding processes within the College are centred on promoting the personal and social development of our students as they complete their qualifications.

SERC operates a wide range of initiatives and programmes including:

- The provision of a **Personal Tutor** who students can talk to for advice and support in relation to any concerns or worries and who will signpost students to other support services as appropriate.
- **Case Conferences** take place bi-monthly to monitor student progress and identify anyone who may be falling behind and who might need some additional help or support. If necessary, a plan is then put in place to assist them to get caught up.
- In conjunction with the **SERC Student Union** the College has developed an annual programme of events which are detailed in the **Wellbeing and Resilience Framework**. These include social and health related events, talks and workshops led by specialist external organisations as well as some social activities.
- Our **Cause for Concern** system means that any member of staff can quickly raise a concern regarding the wellbeing of a student at any time. Such concerns may relate to a wide range of issues including health and mental health issues, financial worries, homelessness, caring responsibilities or family issues. When such a concern is raised one of the Pastoral Care Managers will review the situation and arrange appropriate actions in a supportive and empathetic manner.
- In partnership with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust there is a qualified nurse available to support students with health-related issues including general health, mental health, diet, exercise, smoking and sexual health issues. This confidential, non-judgemental service is known as the [Youth Health Advice Service](#)



- The College works in partnership with **Inspire Students** who provide a 24/7 helpline (0800 389 5362) for all students as well as a face-to-face Counselling Service.

## **Careers**

Our team of Careers Advisors provide a professional, impartial and confidential service, to help young people and adults make informed choices about their future career and next step. SERC Careers staff have ongoing contact and referrals from a range of sources, including EA Youth Workers, AMH, People 1<sup>st</sup>, the Now Group, MACS, Extern and the Cedar Foundation, regarding pathways for people they are supporting.

## **Student Carers**

In early April SERC became the first of the NI Colleges to be awarded the Quality Standard in Carer Support (QSCS) by the Carers Federation. This recognises the work that the College has done in developing policy/SOP documentation, raising awareness through staff training. As part of these procedures the College has actively identified young students who act as carers, has facilitated them to get access to additional support and will monitor their progress (adapting support arrangements as appropriate) and review the outcomes for this group of students on an ongoing basis, so that support strategies can be further developed and refined.

## Little SERC

Little SERC is our onsite creche at the Newcastle Campus which opened in November 2020 with support from the Coastal Communities Fund. Little SERC helps parents who enrol on a course at our Newcastle Campus and need access to professional childcare, thus strengthening our efforts to reduce and eliminate barriers to education.

## Is Anyone Better off?

Despite many challenges the adult returners in the Access programme have been supported to attend and achieve. The table below demonstrates the retention and achievement levels.

**Performance rates of final year regulated enrolments of Northern Ireland domiciled students by relative deprivation quintile and FE College in 2020/21**

FE College	Deprivation Quintile	Final Year Enrolments	Final Year Completers	Retention Rate	Achievements	Achievement Rate	Success Rate
South Eastern Regional College	Quintile 1 Most Deprived	1,721	1,480	86.0%	1,347	91.0%	78.3%
	Quintile 2	3,375	2,943	87.2%	2,716	92.3%	80.5%
	Quintile 3	3,032	2,663	87.8%	2,436	91.5%	80.3%
	Quintile 4	3,195	2,829	88.5%	2,634	93.1%	82.4%
	Quintile 5 Least Deprived	3,574	3,254	91.0%	3,030	93.1%	84.8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>14,897</b>	<b>13,169</b>	<b>88.4%</b>	<b>12,163</b>	<b>92.4%</b>	<b>81.6%</b>

## **5. PLANNED ACTIVITY**

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### **2022/23 Financial Position**

SERC received confirmation of its “Contingency Planning Allocation” for 2022/23 on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2022. This allocation of £38,820k (including “assumed to be funded” elements) was designed to facilitate completion of the College Development Plan for 2022/23. On 14<sup>th</sup> September this funding total was updated via “June Internal Planning” correspondence to read £41,563k.

The College is actively working towards this allocation and has taken a number of steps to mitigate the overall financial challenges it is facing, including:

- A long term environmental investment plan designed to reduce energy consumption. This plan has been ongoing for a number of years and includes installation of PV panels, double glazing, insulation, led lighting etc. It will continue in 22/23 with further development of these schemes and of battery storage facilities.
- A year-on-year reduction in IT equipment spending and Estates maintenance. Although this has reduced College expenditure plans by nearly £900k for the coming year compared to the average over the previous 3 years, it is only a temporary spend reduction and is not sustainable beyond the 22/23 year.
- Ongoing monitoring of staffing structures. Any recruitment in the College (including that of replacement posts) must go through an assessment and approval process by the College Management Team. This includes an analysis of the cost and potential impact of not filling the post and is designed to ensure that only required posts are filled.

Nevertheless, some residual pressure is likely due to the ongoing inflationary challenges in the UK labour, materials and energy markets. The College’s most recent financial forecast for 2022/23 highlights a Resource Requirement of £43,122k which

equates to a likely pressure of £1,559k. This can be broken down into 3 main elements as follows:

- £455k of additional Grant-in-aid to align the College's resource allocation with the actual Traineeship Program activity which the College expects to deliver. This amount reflects 30% of funding which is being retained by DfE until actual enrolments and activity are confirmed. The associated costs are already factored into SERC's financial planning and will be removed if not required.
- £287k non-staff inflationary pressure for utilities. DfE FE Finance have submitted a bid for this extra cost of living pressure as part of their October internal planning process.
- £817k pay pressure for lecturers and senior staff. The Department is holding funding in respect of this and has indicated that the allocations will be made when pay proposals have been firmed up.

The College will continue its financial performance monitoring with a view to meeting its allocation and will report all progress to DfE FE Finance.

The tables below set out the College's planned activity for the 2022/23 year in support of the draft PfG Outcomes.

2022/23 Qualifications		
Area of Planned Activity (Data source: CDR)	Planned Activity For 22/23	21/22 In-Year Activity
<b>FE Activity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L0-3</li> <li>FT &amp; PT</li> <li>Excluding Essential Skills</li> </ul>	11827 No. of enrolments equating to 8276 No. of Individuals	11,698 No. of enrolments equating to 9185 No. of Individuals
<b>HE in FE – Full time:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L4-6</li> </ul>	490 No. of enrolments equating to 490 No. of Individuals	398 No. of enrolments equating to 398 No. of Individuals
<b>HE in FE – Part time:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L4-6</li> </ul>	888 No. of enrolments equating to 800 No. of Individuals	1020 No. of enrolments equating to 1007 No. of Individuals
<b>TfS:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L0-3</li> </ul>	91 No. Of enrolments equating to 20 No. of individuals	452 No. Of enrolments equating to 168 No. of individuals
<b>Skills for Life and Work</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L0-2</li> </ul>	431 No. of enrolments equating to 124 No. of Individuals	381 No. of enrolments equating to 99 No. of Individuals
<b>Traineeships:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L2</li> </ul>	469 No. of enrolments equating to 357 No. of Individuals	196 No. of enrolments equating to 149 No. of Individuals
<b>AppsNI:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L2-3</li> </ul>	<p>2178 No. of enrolments equating to 1241 No. of apprentices registered for training</p> <p>80% of AppsNI apprentices who remain on the programme for at least 4 weeks after initial registration and go on to remain on the programme for more than 52 weeks.</p>	<p>2642 No. of enrolments equating to 1223 No. of apprentices registered for training</p> <p>80% of AppsNI apprentices who remain on the programme for at least 4 weeks after initial registration and go on to remain on the programme for more than 52 weeks.</p>
<b>HLAs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L4-5</li> </ul>	157 No. of enrolments equating to 157 No. of HLA	174 No. of enrolments equating to 174 No. of HLA
<b>Essential Skills</b>	2820 No. of enrolments equating to 1599 No. of Individuals.	2302 No. of enrolments equating to 1575 No. of Individuals.

2022/23 Qualifications		
Area of Planned Activity (Data source: CDR)	Planned Activity For 22/23	21/22 In-Year Activity
<b>Priority Sector Areas and / or STEM (PSSA)<sup>1</sup>:</b>	<p>9194 No. of PSSA enrolments equating to 5323 No. of individuals enrolled in in one or more PSSA subjects</p> <p>4851 No. of final year students enrolled in one or more PSSA subjects</p>	<p>12,213 No. of PSSA enrolments equating to 11,811 No. of individuals enrolled in one or more PSSA subjects</p> <p>6468 No. of final year students enrolled in one or more PSSA subjects</p>

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<sup>1</sup> The Priority Sector Area and / or STEM performance measure incorporates not only the Priority Sector Areas as previously measured, but also STEM subjects

<b>Employers</b>		
<b>Area of Planned Activity</b>	<b>Planned Activity for 22/23</b>	<b>21/22 Activity</b>
<b>InnovateUs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022</li> </ul>	130 proposed No. of projects delivered through the InnovateUs programme  £ 500k currently allocated	159 No. of projects delivered through the InnovateUs programme  £576,200 of projects completed (budget spend)
<b>Skills Focus</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L2+</li> <li>1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022</li> </ul>	760 of enrolments undertaking a Level 2 (and above) qualification through the Skills Focus Programme  £818K funding allocated	1241 enrolments undertaking a Level 2 (and above) qualification through the Skills Focus Programme  £ 1,150,000k was funding allocation
<b>Assured Skills:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>L0-8</li> <li>1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022</li> </ul>	To deliver 7 Assured Skills Academies  3 x Deloitte 3 x Asos 1 x EOS	9 No. of Assured Skills Academies delivered  6 x Deloitte 2 x ASOS 1 x EOS
<b>Other Programmes</b>		
<b>Innovation Boost</b>	4 to be fully delivered within academic year	2 fully delivered – activity reduced due to Covid
<b>Bridge to Employment Programme</b>	Programme has now been discontinued by DfE	No activity due to Covid
<b>Innovation Voucher Scheme (Invest NI &amp; Enterprise Ireland)</b>	16 to be fully delivered within academic year	7 fully delivered – activity reduced due to covid
<b>Flexible Skills Fund / Skills Intervention</b>	£ 720k allocated with a target of 700 learners for course delivery  £344k for Development Fund for curriculum development in the areas of Engineering and Retrofitting	£ 508k allocated and 523 enrolments
<b>ERAP funding</b>	No ERAP Funding has been approved	£663K allocated and 164 enrolments

Social Inclusion		
Area of Planned Activity (Data source: CDR)	Planned Activity For 22/23	21/22 In-Year Activity
Enrolments within Quintile 1 and 2	5000	6541
Enrolments declaring a disability / long term health problem	1451	1407
Enrolments on Entry Level and Level 1 Programmes (including Essential Skills)	1900	2284
Enrolments on Targeted Programmes e.g. College Connect, Prince's Trust	College Connect – 52 Enrolments Restart – 110 Enrolments Access – 218 Enrolments	College Connect – 27 Enrolments Restart – 105 Enrolments Access – 268 Enrolments
Enrolments on ESOL Programmes	384 Enrolments	403 Enrolments
Overall number of individuals supported by above measures	7664 Enrolments	11,035 Enrolments



Overall College Performance		
Performance Indicator	Planned Performance Rate for 22/23	20/21 Performance Rate
<b>Retention Rate:</b> The proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study to the number of final year enrolments.	Maintain current rate	88.4%
<b>Achievement Rate:</b> The percentage of the number of enrolments who completed their final year of study and achieve their qualifications to the number of enrolments who completed their final year of study.	Maintain current rate	92.4%
<b>Success Rate:</b> The proportion of the number of enrolments who complete their final year of study and achieve their qualification to the number of final year enrolments.	Maintain current rate	81.7%

## Entrepreneur Club Business Examples

Here are some examples of businesses that have formed with support from the Entrepreneurs Club:

- **Books By Stellar for primary schools to help children understand autism** - Business Studies student was named the top Entrepreneur Under 20 in Europe and awarded £10,000 of angel investment to publish her books. <https://booksbystellas.com/>
- **Golden Memories Social Activity Centre** – is a Day Care Centre for isolated older people and run as a social enterprise company.
- **ANCPOS** - Computer programme to protect fishing trawler personnel from injury – they provide a computer programme that automatically casts fishing nets and so negates the need for manual net casting, an inherently hazardous activity. With support, the company secured £1000 angel funding from Seafish NI and NIFPO to develop a desk-based prototype. A further £3000 was awarded by West of Morecambe Fisheries LTD to develop the project.
- **Slurry Safe** - A sensor to alert farmers to methane emissions. This product sends a text warning and cuts the ignition on farm vehicles when levels are unsafe. The company won the Youth & Future Talent Award for Innovation.
- **The Water Boys** - product provides a filter to remove nitrates and phosphates from polluted water. The prototype for this product took the company to the finals of Eco-UNESCO Young Environmentalist Award and of Student Invent.
- **Junk to Jewellery** - Repurposes discarded aluminum drinks cans into jewellery.
- **KMS Designs** - This company produces a selection of handmade ceramic pieces that replicate Ireland's iconic landmarks.
- **Sprout** – a web-based platform dedicated to supporting young people in making informed choices about their futures. Utilising gamification, digital technology, data, and psychology, the platform nurtures and guides the future talent pool to a fulfilling career, one suited to the skills and interests of the individual.
- **E Torque NI** – Produces bespoke battery packs for electric bikes and offers a service converting standard bikes to electric ones.
- **Threadbear** - Provides a fresh, alternative up-cycled clothing brand
- **Lydia Bell Art** - is an artist working in a range of mediums. She has completed 25 commissions and she has launched an exhibition of her recent series of works entitled, 'Matter of Heart'.
- **Lean to Mean Personal Training** - provides high-quality personal training tailored to both the everyday client and elite athletes training for various sports.
- **Honar Technology** - has designed a product to go to market and it measures and tracks balls in a snooker match.

- **Soup Dragon Kitchen** - delivers healthy soups with an emphasis on flavour.
- **Travel Hub** - provides a 'pocket-friendly planner' service comprising travel advice about places, attractions, restaurants, entertainment, and local history for service users for any place in the world that they plan to visit.
- **FixIT** – provides a computer fixing service
- **Healthy Bites to Go** - is a one-stop shop for healthier breakfast and lunch options, including snacks and drinks
- **Standout Hair** – is a hairdresser service offering a range of treatments suitable to meet individual customer requirements
- **In The Mix** – provide tasty, attractive, and reasonably priced baked goods
- **Cutting Edge** – produce a range of innovative giftware
- **Hallowed Grounds** - creates coffee-based exfoliating soap from used coffee grounds, sourced from local businesses, that would otherwise be going to landfill.
- **Hutchinson Art** – provides unique art printed on to bags, clothing and various household items.
- **Girls Who Cycle** - designs bespoke, funky, bright, and fun cycling clothing for women, with added features.
- **Secure IT** - offers various services such as the diagnoses of a potential cyber security threat as well as preventing them from ever happening.
- **Behind the Stable Door** - is a social enterprise farm supporting social needs participants to have meaningful employment experiences.
- **Support You** – is launching an app to help migrants and asylum seekers navigate the Northern Ireland healthcare, welfare, housing, travel and other support service system.