

## Update on Student Numbers

Analysis of our current position in relation to student numbers relates directly to two of the key risks on our risk register – failing to achieve allocated HE student number targets and/or not meeting allocated FE credit targets. Each of these risks have potentially very significant financial implications with potential clawback and possible reduction in future grants.

		<b>28/1/2022</b>	Total AY enrolment figures			
			2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
FE	Full time (FT)	<b>72</b>	76	90	94	89
	Part time (PT)	<b>1430</b>	2235	2197	3348	3584
HE	Full time (FT)	<b>131</b>	163	117	112	117
	Part time (PT)	<b>232</b>	255	254	278	220

*Shetland UHI enrolments at 28/1/2022 (data extracted from Metis)*

Full time FE course enrolments have not altered significantly since my report in late September and the current figure is expected to remain constant. As previously noted, numbers are only marginally reduced from 2020/21, however they are around 20% less than average pre-pandemic FT FE enrolments. This continuing decline in FT FE student numbers is a trend that is being replicated in many colleges across Scotland. There is increasing concern that this is a pattern across a wide range of sectors and is not restricted to specific subject areas.

HE full time figures have risen since last reporting to the committee, but we do not expect the numbers to rise further. The current figure sits at significantly lower than last year, however it remains substantially higher than average HE FT enrolments prior to 2020. It is unclear at this point whether we are continuing to see the impact of the pandemic in student choices around HE courses, with more students choosing to remain close to home and undertake courses of shorter duration rather than go directly into degree programmes. If this is the case, there is a risk that we will see a return to lower enrolment numbers next year. Unfortunately, this is a likely scenario, given that in most colleges across the partnership HE FT numbers have already returned to pre-pandemic figures.

Part time FE enrolments have risen slowly, and it is expected that this trend will continue. However, we had hoped to be somewhat closer to our target numbers by this point in the academic year. We anticipate that part time HE enrolments will increase slightly over the remainder of the AY, but we do not expect a steep rise.

COVID restrictions have continued to impact on student numbers, with class capacity being reduced and certain courses postponed due to restrictions. It is recognised nationally that uncertainty around the proportion of on campus teaching time and a lack of availability of work placement opportunities has negatively impacted recruitment. It is therefore essential that we provide on campus opportunities for learning, particularly for FE students, where practicable, and that we provide as much clarity as possible on the likely study situation for incoming students. Conversely, some students have benefitted from and been attracted by the ability to study flexibly, so we will maintain this breadth of opportunity and continue to improve the remote learning experience.

Our latest credit monitoring report showing the current position for student numbers and credits (data from SITs at 25/1/2022) is attached. We currently have a further 1315 credits to achieve to meet our credit target: the target being higher this year than in AY 2020/21. Unlike most partners, Shetland UHI depends heavily on part time students to achieve credits, with over two thirds of our target being met with such students in a typical year. Relying on students completing SVQ units and embarking on shorter part time courses makes it very difficult to predict what our final student and credit total is likely to be. But, if the prediction for additional credits and student numbers is based on last year's figures for semester two, we are likely to be in the region of 500 credits short of our meeting our 2021/22 credit target.

However, we continue to take action to minimise the shortfall. We have had recent successes with new courses and are working to utilise the increased flexibility in the updated SFC guidance to maximise credit numbers. We continue to review our existing offer to ascertain where programmes can become more modern, efficient, and attractive. Increased cross campus and partnership working within UHI is offering new opportunities for growth, whilst the UHI Curriculum Review presents both opportunities and challenges for the future.

Our school partnership vocational pathways programmes remain popular and achieve high attainment rates. However as previously noted, we did not meet our targets for enrolment of Foundation Apprenticeships this year, although some areas of our S5/6 offer were successful. We are working with the local authority and schools to review the senior phase offering to ensure that it is sustainable and desirable. Nevertheless, significant changes are unlikely to be implemented until 2023, and the differing pressures of the various parties involved may impact on the options available to us.

Demand for industry mandated short courses has been sustained in the first part of the year, with many individuals seeking courses that were postponed during restrictions, and almost all these courses running at maximum capacity. We remain restricted in some areas by instructor availability and qualifications but are working to narrow this training gap and develop new courses where appropriate.

	<u>No. of courses</u>		<u>No. of delegate places filled</u>		<u>No. of days of training</u>	
	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>
Scalloway	78	14	547	117	141.5	22.5
Lerwick	35	30	253	176	44.5	40.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>63</b>

*Short course numbers at 18/1/2022*

At the end of December, we had started 63 modern apprentices from a target of 94. There are several ongoing challenges with the apprenticeship programme, with some students struggling to complete due to the inability of assessors to access workplaces, along with a significant recent and unexpected change to the payment system.

We have significant work to do across Shetland UHI to get as close as possible to our targets, and to ensure that we are in the most a robust position possible in future years. We are focusing on making Shetland UHI attractive to potential students by strengthening and diversifying our offer, and making sure that the courses meet their needs, whilst also aiming to retain current students by making sure that they have a quality experience and that we have clear progression pathways. There are some exciting opportunities currently being explored that will hopefully provide new directions to broaden and reinvigorate our portfolio.