

Enrolment Information

Shetland UHI enrolments at 27/9/2021 (data extracted from Metis)

		28th Sept 2021	Total AY enrolment figures			
			2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
FE	Full time (FT)	69	76	90	94	89
	Part time (PT)	406	2235	2197	3348	3584
HE	Full time (FT)	116	163	117	112	117
	Part time (PT)	150	255	254	278	220

Please note that these figures will continue to change as further enrolments are completed, and part time students join courses later in the academic year.

Full time FE course enrolments are slightly less than this time last year and are certainly likely to be less than pre-pandemic numbers. There has been a steady and significant decline in the number of total FE enrolments across almost all the UHI partners since 2018/19. The national demographic with fewer young people in the normal target age group has contributed to this overall decline.

There is also a suggestion from college leaders across the country that there needs to be a redefining of the college sector to clarify the purpose of tertiary education. There is currently research being undertaken by CDN to determine the most appropriate forms of promotion and messaging that can be utilised to attract students for the next academic year.

We are aiming to help to reduce the shortfall by increasing our offer and marketing of FE PT courses in the second semester. Whilst numbers for this time of year for FE PT are not dissimilar to the situation in September last year, our credit target is higher this year, and we will require sustained momentum in recruitment and enrolment to achieve our projected targets. This is also an area where there is opportunity for growth with the potential for additional courses to start at the beginning of 2022.

Additionally, embracing more cross campus and partnership working should enable us to make our current programmes more attractive, and to increase the variety of our offering.

HE full time figures will be down on last year but remain consistent with previous years of activity. It is notable that there was an upturn in HE FT enrolments across the partnership last year, with many demonstrating a notable peak across HE enrolments. It appears that

many students chose to study at a college taking on a shorter HE programme, as opposed to go to university to undertake a degree during the uncertainty of the pandemic.

Nationally colleges are experiencing a drop in application and enrolment numbers for both FE and HE. Whilst recruitment in certain specialist areas is faring well, most colleges are recording a reduction of between 10-20% in their overall enrolments comparative to previous years. This can be attributed, at least in part, to the effects of higher school exam attainment rates and increased university places during the COVID pandemic resulting in students going directly to university. Another contributing factor is the high availability of employment for young people which does not necessarily require them to undertake a FE/HE qualification prior to entry.

Certain colleges are noting the directive by the SFC to prioritise older learners over engagement with younger school learners as one reason why their intake is reduced. Whilst we have been fortunate to be able to continue our school partnership programmes, this highlights how important such engagement is, and raises the question as to whether we should be looking at additional engagement with children at an earlier stage. A recent report produced by CDN on school/college partnerships noted that 16% of all school pupils, and 20% of all senior phase pupils take part in a school/college programme, and in Shetland we see evidence of high progression rates from such programmes onto other FE and HE pathways within our college.

Demand for MA programmes is positive this year, and there has been a notable increase in the number of Aquaculture apprentices enrolling over the past few years. There is also continued high demand for industry mandated short courses, with courses quickly filling to capacity. We currently have a substantial waiting list which we hope to meet the requirements of during the remainder of the academic year. However, delivery capacity in some areas is restricted by COVID social distancing requirements and by instructor availability and qualifications. We are working on increasing our number of appropriately trained instructors and developing new courses where required.