

# Further Education Leavers Survey

## Academic Year 2014/15

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**The Further Education Leavers Survey 2014/15 (FE Leavers Survey)** is the second annual survey to assess the destinations, and potential benefits to students, on completing and achieving a regulated qualification at a Further Education College in Northern Ireland.

Destinations and potential benefits to students were assessed approximately six months after FE Course completion and achievement.

Findings indicate a range of FE Leaver destinations, including progression into employment or additional learning, and a range of benefits for different groups of FE Leavers.

### **KEY POINTS:**

Approximately six months after FE Course completion:

- The proportion of FE Leavers who said their main activity was **paid or self-employment had increased** from 36.7% before starting the course to 46.7% after FE Course completion and achievement.
- Over two-thirds (68.8%) of the FE Leavers in employment were **using the skills and knowledge acquired in their FE Course** at least to some extent in their job.
- Of the FE Leavers who progressed to further learning after their course, **most continued their learning at a FE College** (71.5%).
- For almost two-thirds (63.1%) of the FE Leavers in learning, **their further learning was only possible because of the FE Course** completed and achieved in 2014/15.
- Most FE Leavers in learning (81.8%) were **studying at a higher level** than their FE Course.
- Almost all respondents (95.5%) said that their course probably/definitely has had a **positive impact** on them.

## Reader Information

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Purpose             | Monitor and report on the destinations of students and potential benefits after completing and achieving a regulated qualification at a Further Education College in Northern Ireland during 2014/15.  |
| Authors             | Nicoli Morrison, Allan Nesbitt, Brian French.  |
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| Feedback            | <p>The report has been designed to provide the information required by key stakeholders. As we want to engage with report users, we invite you to feedback your comments on this publication. For information, in response to <a href="#">Northern Ireland Civil Service Department restructuring</a> and the new <a href="#">Programme for Government</a> we are planning to review the purpose, design and content of the FE Leavers Survey in early 2017. First points of contact for each include:</p> <p>Nicoli Morrison - <a href="mailto:Nicoli.Morrison@economy-ni.gov.uk">Nicoli.Morrison@economy-ni.gov.uk</a><br/>(Tel: 028 9025 7519)</p> <p>Allan Nesbitt - <a href="mailto:Allan.Nesbitt@economy-ni.gov.uk">Allan.Nesbitt@economy-ni.gov.uk</a><br/>(Tel: 028 9025 7428)</p> |
| Acknowledgement     | We would like to thank all the FE Leavers who took part in the survey. Without your help this report would not have been possible.   |

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## Key Findings

## Six Months After Completing and Achieving a Regulated Qualification from a Further Education College in Northern Ireland

### Overall

- There was a significant increase in the percentage of respondents who said their main activity was employment.**

Before their FE Course, 36.7% of respondents said employment was their main activity. Six months after FE Course completion, this had increased to 46.7%, a ten percentage point increase.
- There was a significant decrease in the percentage of respondents who said their main activity was further learning.**

Before the FE Course, 44.6% of respondents said learning was their main activity. Six months after FE Course completion, this had decreased to 35.2%
- FE Leavers' experiences have largely been positive.**

Almost all FE Leavers (98.1%) would recommend completing a course in further education to a friend.

### FE Leavers in Employment

- Almost one third of the FE Leavers in Employment had moved into employment from other main activities.**

Although 67.8% of the FE Leavers in Employment had also been employed before their FE Course, 32.2% had moved into employment from a different main activity. Of these, 24.3% had been in learning while 4.8% were previously unemployed. Those remaining had been doing other activities.
- FE Leavers who stayed with the *same employer* after their FE Course have benefitted from FE Course completion:**

Almost three-fifths (59.5%) said they were better at their job since completing their FE Course. Of these, 73.0% said they would probably/definitely not have been better at their job without their FE Course.

Almost one-quarter (23.2%) said they were doing a job with more responsibilities since completing their course. Of these, 62.1% said they would probably/definitely not have been doing a job with more responsibility without their FE Course.

One-twelfth (8.7%) said they had been promoted. Of the 73 who had been promoted, 67.1% said they probably/definitely would not have been promoted without their FE Course.

Of those whose pay was higher after their FE Course, almost three-fifths (58.0%) attributed the increase, at least to some extent, to their FE Course.
- The workplaces of FE Leavers in Employment have also benefitted from their FE Course completion.**

Over two-thirds (69.7%) of FE Leavers in employment before *and* after their course said they are using the skills and knowledge acquired in their FE Course in their job at least to some extent.

## FE Leavers in Learning

- Most (83.6%) FE Leavers in Learning had also been in learning before their FE Course.**  
Of those who had moved into additional learning from a different main activity, 8.3% had been in employment before their FE Course while 4.5% had previously been unemployed. Those remaining (3.6%) had been doing other activities.
- Most FE Leavers in Learning had returned to the FE Sector to undertake their further learning.**  
Almost three-quarters (71.5%) of the FE Leavers in Learning have continued their learning at a FE College, while over one-quarter (26.1%) moved to a university.
- Most are undertaking learning in the same subject as the FE Course they had completed.**  
Almost three-quarters (73.3%) have continued their learning in the same subject area as the FE Course they had completed in 2014/15, and most are studying towards a qualification at a higher level (81.1%).
- Further learning was only possible because of the FE Course completed and achieved in 2014/15.**  
Almost two-thirds (63.1%) of FE Leavers in Learning said they probably/definitely could not have done their further learning without their FE Course.

## Unemployed FE Leavers

- There was no real change in the proportion unemployed.**  
Of the FE Leavers unemployed after their FE Course, 43.9% had previously been in learning and 43.4% unemployed.

## Non-Economic Benefits

- FE Leavers are experiencing a range of positive non-economic benefits as a result of FE Course completion and achievement.**  
Most (95.5%) FE Leavers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that their course has had a positive impact on them.  
The top three gains from FE Course completion include: boosted confidence (84.0%); making new friends/meeting new people (81.7%); and increased self-esteem (66.6%).
- FE Course completion has also enabled personal development.**  
Most (83.7%) FE Leavers reported becoming more enthusiastic about learning.  
Over two-thirds (68.9%) have a better idea of what they want to do in life.  
Three-fifths (60.7%) have an improved quality of life.  
Over four-fifths (84.0%) agreed that as a result of their course they are more likely to undertake further learning and training with 76.3% agreeing they are more likely to do so at a higher level.

---

## Abbreviations

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| BMC    | Belfast Metropolitan College                          |
| CITBNI | Construction Industry Training Board Northern Ireland |
| CSU    | Central Survey Unit (of NISRA)                        |
| DEL    | Department for Employment and Learning                |
| DfE    | Department for the Economy                            |
| FE     | Further Education                                     |
| NDPB   | Non Departmental Public Body                          |
| NI     | Northern Ireland                                      |
| NIE    | Northern Ireland Executive                            |
| NISRA  | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency       |
| NRC    | Northern Regional College                             |
| NWRC   | North West Regional College                           |
| SERC   | South Eastern Regional College                        |
| SRB    | Statistics and Research Branch                        |
| SRC    | Southern Regional College                             |
| SWC    | South West College                                    |

## Commonly Used Terms

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| FE Colleges                | This includes the six FE Colleges in Northern Ireland (BMC, NRC, NWRC, SERC, SRC and SWC).  |
| FE Course                  | A regulated qualification completed and achieved at a FE College in the 2014/15 academic year.  |
| FE Leavers                 | The FE Leavers who completed and achieved a regulated qualification during the 2014/15 academic year at a FE College in NI.   |
| FE Leavers in Employment   | The 1,727 FE Leavers in paid or self-employment after their FE Course. This includes 6 individuals waiting to start a confirmed job.  |
| FE Leavers in Learning     | The 1,301 FE Leavers in learning after their FE Course. This includes 57 individuals in training and 5 waiting to start a confirmed scheme/training scheme.   |
| FE Sector                  | Includes the six FE Colleges in Northern Ireland.   |
| Six Months After FE Course | Approximately six months after FE Course completion and achievement.  |
| Statistically Significant  | Through a statistical technique the main activity results have been tested for statistical significance, that is, to indicate if the results based on the sample are 'real' and that any difference found would appear in the population of interest. Results are tested at the 95% level which implies a 1 in 20 possibility that differences have occurred by chance.   |
| Stratification Variables   | These are the variables used to ensure the FE Leavers Survey sample (the 5,993 individuals invited to take part in the survey) was representative of the population of interest (the 43,388 individuals who achieved and completed at least one regulated qualification from a FE College in the Northern Ireland in the 2014/15 academic year). The five variables included: FE College, Age Band, Gender, Mode of Attendance (Full-/Part-time) and Level of Course. |
| Unemployed FE Leavers      | The 244 FE Leavers unemployed and looking for work after their FE Course.   |

## **Section One: Background and Introduction**



## About the Department for the Economy

The Department for the Economy is one of nine new departments created under [The Stormont House Agreement](#). Responsibilities of the Department for the Economy include:

- economic policy
- higher and further education
- employment and skills programmes
- enterprise
- innovation
- energy
- telecoms
- tourism
- skills training
- promoting good employment practice
- consumer affairs
- health and safety at work
- Insolvency Service
- labour market and economic statistics services

The **vision** of the Department is a globally competitive economy that works for everyone.

For additional information on the Department:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/>

## Further Education in Northern Ireland: Policy and Operational Context

Further Education (FE) colleges in Northern Ireland (NI) deliver high quality, economically relevant, professional and technical provision and will play a unique and distinct role in the delivery of the [NI Economic Strategy](#) and in developing a globally competitive economy.

Six regional colleges deliver FE:

- Belfast Metropolitan College (BMC)
- Northern Regional College (NRC)
- North West Regional College (NWRC)
- South Eastern Regional College (SERC)
- Southern Regional College (SRC)
- South West College (SWC)

The six FE colleges are Non Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) of the Department for the Economy and operate across 40 campuses. The six colleges have a turnover of approximately £260 million and a professional workforce of almost 3,500. Engaging 90,000 learners in the 2014/15 academic year and working with over 10,000 businesses across NI, FE colleges have a significant footprint in our economy.

The strategy for further education, [FE Means Success](#), sets out the current vision to develop a world class professional and technical education system and support employers through upskilling and innovation. The courses offered cover a wide variety of subjects and levels which range from entry level up to level 8. Colleges will also have a vital role to help fight poverty and support social inclusion by providing those with low or no qualifications, or who have barriers to learning, with the skills and qualifications they need to find employment. The strategy will enable further education to be recognised as an equal and valued pillar of the education system, alongside higher education and the statutory school system.

Within the Northern Ireland Executive (NIE), responsibility for the FE colleges rests with the Minister for the Economy. The Minister is also accountable to the NI Assembly (NIA) and Assembly's Committee for the Economy, which undertakes a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the DfE and plays a key role in the consideration and development of legislation.

For additional information on FE in Northern Ireland:

<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/topics/further-education>

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/further-education>

## Why has this survey been carried out?

The [NI Economic Strategy](#) requires the Northern Ireland Executive to rebuild the economy in the medium term by improving employment opportunities and promoting jobs.

A key strand of this strategic approach within FE is monitoring the performance of FE Colleges in terms of the quality and relevance of the curriculum to the needs of the NI economy and the learner. Therefore, there is a need to identify what happens to the thousands of students who complete and achieve their regulated further education courses. In particular it is hoped that information on the destination of leavers following successful completion of a programme of study will provide evidence of the relevance of this learning in achieving positive outcomes. This research will inform that process by measuring the impact and outcome of student learning in terms of progression into further learning and employment. The research also forms a key part of the underpinning evidence for the development of future policy and the FE curriculum in terms of:

- the progression of learners to and within employment
- the progression of learners to higher levels of study
- the development of skills of use within the workplace
- the impact of the FE Course on non-economic outcomes

## FE Leaver Research in England, Scotland and Wales

For information on FE Leaver data in England, Scotland and Wales:

<http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/16213/1/121102scopingfedestinationsdataen.pdf>

## How to Use this Report

The FE Leavers Report 2014/15 provides an overview of the findings from Northern Ireland's second survey of FE Leavers who completed and achieved a regulated qualification during the 2014/15 academic year at a FE College in NI.

The report is divided into three main sections:

- [Section 1:](#) Background and Introduction
- [Section 2:](#) Methodology
- [Section 3:](#) Main Findings

Main Findings are divided into four sub-sections:

[Section 3.1](#) provides a summary overview of how all FE Leavers heard about their FE Course, their reasons for doing their FE Course, their main activities before and after their FE Course, and non-economic benefits of doing their FE Course.

[Section 3.2](#) presents findings for the FE Leavers whose destination was [Employment](#).

[Section 3.3](#) presents findings for the FE Leavers whose destination was further [Learning](#).

[Section 3.4](#) presents findings for the FE Leavers who were [Unemployed](#).

At the end of each section are an academic year summary and cross year comparisons.

Each section of the report should be read in conjunction with the [Methodology](#), and particularly the section on [Interpretation](#). It is also recommended that the report findings are read in conjunction with annual FE data publications. These publications provide additional information about the students enrolled on regulated FE Courses in the 2014/15 academic year. Annual FE Activity publications are available at <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/further-education-activity-fe-colleges-northern-ireland-201415>.

The following terms are used throughout the report to abbreviate phrases:

- '*FE Leavers*' will be used to describe the FE Leavers who completed and achieved a regulated qualification during the 2014/15 academic year at a FE College in NI
- '*FE Course*' will be used to denote a regulated qualification completed and achieved at a FE College in the 2014/15 academic year
- '*After FE Course*' will be used to denote approximately six months after FE Course completion and achievement

Where appropriate, hyperlinks are provided. Additional information on definitions and technical aspects of the survey is available in [Annex A](#) (Definitions) and [Annex B](#) (Technical Notes). Supplementary tables (denoted by the prefix 'A') are available on the [FE Leaver Survey web page](#). These tables enable quick comparison of the different FE Leaver groups presented in this report.

Note: The naming convention for the FE Leavers Report has been refined. In the first year of the survey, the report name reflected the calendar year in which survey fieldwork was completed (2015). In the second year of the survey, and going forward, the report name reflects the academic year in which FE Leavers completed their qualification (2014/15).

## Section Two: Methodology

## Origins of first FE Leavers Survey

In September 2014, the Statistics and Research Branch (SRB) of the then Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) commissioned [Central Survey Unit \(CSU\) of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(NISRA\)](#) to conduct a follow-up survey of individuals who had completed and achieved at least one regulated qualification course at a FE College in the 2013/14 academic year.

The FE Leavers Survey was designed to capture information on the destinations and potential benefits to FE Leavers on completing and achieving a regulated qualification at a FE College in NI. Of particular interest were:

- progression into employment or further learning
- improving employment prospects, earnings and promotion
- potential non-economic benefits to the individual

Student destination was determined by main activity after FE Course completion. Main activity was defined as the thing most time was spent doing. For analyses purposes, destinations were grouped into four main activities: Employment, Learning, Unemployment and Other.

The first [FE Leavers Survey \(2013/14\)](#) was informed by a pilot study. The pilot study was conducted in June 2014 and provided an opportunity to both test the survey design and to address any issues encountered by interviewers when conducting the survey.

## What topics are covered in the FE Leavers Survey?

Questions include: how individuals have heard about their course; their reasons for taking the course; their main activity before their course; their main activity six months after completing their course; and their attitudes on potential non-economic benefits from their achievement.

## Who is included in the 2014/15 FE Leavers Survey?

The population of interest included all individuals who had completed and achieved at least one regulated qualification during the 2014/15 academic year at one of NI's FE Colleges. In the 2014/15 academic year, 43,388 individuals achieved at least one regulated qualification.

As the population was too large to interview each individual, a representative sample of 5,993 was selected to take part in a telephone interview. This sample was randomly selected and representative of the population of interest across five stratification variables. These variables are: FE College; Age Band; Gender; Mode of Attendance (Full/Part-time); and Level of Course.

[Table 1](#) provides a profile of all respondents for each of the stratification variables. This table also compares the proportions of survey respondents to the population of interest, across the stratification variables.

## How?

Interviews with selected FE Leavers were conducted over the telephone. Interviewers entered responses into an electronic version of the questionnaire. This information was collated by CSU and passed to Statistics and Research Branch Tertiary Education for analysis.

## When?

All telephone interviews were conducted approximately six months after course completion (4th January - 8th April 2016). The interview workload was spread evenly over the three months. Over this period, approximately 6,000 interview contacts were allocated to 56 CSU interviewers. Each month, during the fieldwork period, CSU sent out letters to the sample of randomly selected respondents. The letter contained background information about the survey and let them know that an interviewer would be phoning them to invite them to take part in a brief telephone interview.

## Response Rate

The overall response rate was 70.2%. Although down slightly from last year (2013/14: 72.5%), for a survey of this nature (telephone) a response rate of this level was considered excellent.

To calculate the response rate, any individuals with an invalid phone number were subtracted from the representative sample (n=5,993). Ineligible cases were also removed, leaving a Total Eligible Sample of 5,271 (see [Box One](#)). The final response rate was calculated as follows:

$$(3,700 / 5,271) \times 100 = 70.2\%$$

## Weighting

Weighting of the responses was not required. Any differences in the distribution between the sample and population were not considered large enough to justify weighting the data.

## Changes since the 2013/14 FE Leavers Survey

A small number of changes were made to the questionnaire used in the second FE Leavers Survey (2014/15). Additional information is available in [Annex B](#). Changes were minimised to ensure consistency and enable comparison across years.

## Cross Year Comparison

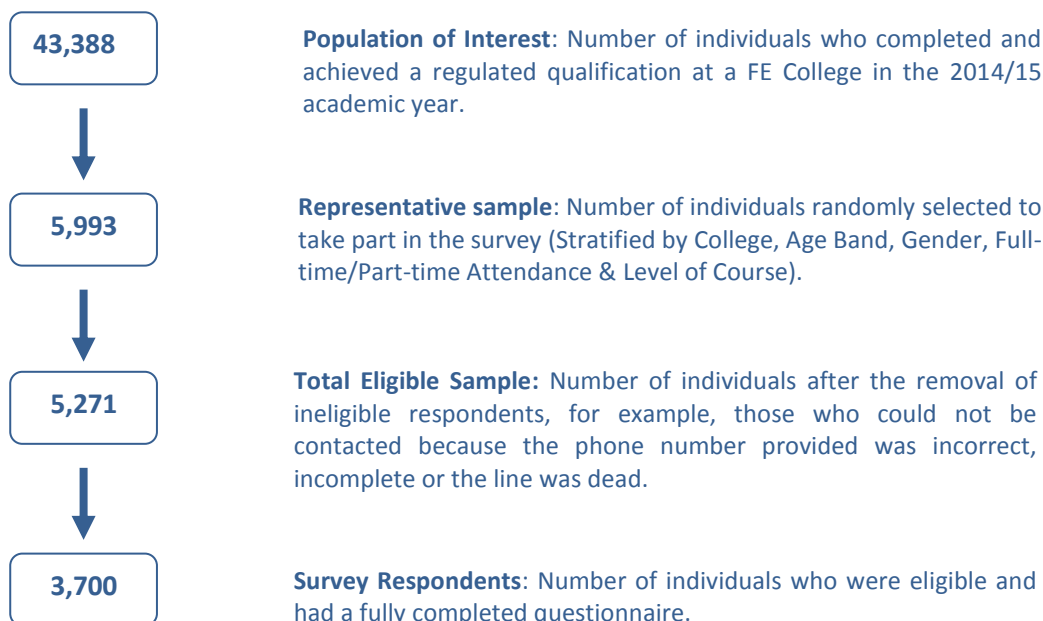
As this is the second year of the FE Leavers Survey, comparison of findings across two years has been possible. This will develop annually. Cross year comparison tables are presented at the end of the [Employment](#), [Learning](#) and [Unemployment](#) sections. Cross year findings for questions are available in the [FE Leavers Survey 2014/15](#) Excel tables.

**Table 1: Comparison: Stratification variable proportions for the survey respondents (3,700) and population of interest (43,388) (2014/15)**

| Variable           | Variable Categories            | Respondent Profile |              | Comparison with the Total FE College population of Interest |                             |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|---|-----------------------------|
|                    |                                | Survey Respondents | %            | % of Population of interest (n=43,388)                      | Percentage point difference |
| College            | Belfast Metropolitan College   | 834                | 22.5         | 23.0  | -0.5                        |
|                    | Northern Regional College      | 580                | 15.7         | 14.3  | 1.4                         |
|                    | North West Regional College    | 542                | 14.6         | 14.9  | -0.3                        |
|                    | South Eastern Regional College | 521                | 14.1         | 16.9  | -2.8                        |
|                    | Southern Regional College      | 667                | 18.0         | 17.1  | 0.9                         |
|                    | South West College             | 556                | 15.0         | 13.7  | 1.3                         |
|                    | <b>Total</b>                   | <b>3,700</b>       | <b>100.0</b> | <b>100.0</b>  | <b>0.0</b>                  |
| Gender             | Female                         | 1,998              | 54.0         | 53.1  | 0.9                         |
|                    | Male                           | 1,702              | 46.0         | 46.9  | -0.9                        |
|                    | <b>Total</b>                   | <b>3,700</b>       | <b>100.0</b> | <b>100.0</b>  | <b>0.0</b>                  |
| Age (years)        | 19 and under                   | 1,586              | 42.9         | 42.5  | 0.4                         |
|                    | 20-24                          | 518                | 14.0         | 15.4  | -1.4                        |
|                    | 25 and over                    | 1,596              | 43.1         | 42.1  | 1.0                         |
|                    | <b>Total</b>                   | <b>3,700</b>       | <b>100.0</b> | <b>100.0</b>  | <b>0.0</b>                  |
| Mode of Attendance | Full-Time                      | 871                | 23.5         | 23.4  | 0.1                         |
|                    | Part-Time                      | 2,829              | 76.5         | 76.6  | -0.1                        |
|                    | <b>Total</b>                   | <b>3,700</b>       | <b>100.0</b> | <b>100.0</b>  | <b>0.0</b>                  |
| Level of Course    | Entry Level                    | 288                | 7.8          | 8.1   | -0.3                        |
|                    | 1                              | 307                | 8.3          | 9.0   | -0.7                        |
|                    | 2                              | 1,513              | 40.9         | 42.0  | -1.1                        |
|                    | 3                              | 1,187              | 32.1         | 30.5  | 1.6                         |
|                    | 4 and above                    | 405                | 10.9         | 10.2  | 0.7                         |
|                    | <b>Total</b>                   | <b>3,700</b>       | <b>100.0</b> | <b>100.0</b>  | <b>0.0</b>                  |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

## Box 1: Population of Interest to Survey Respondents (2014/15)



## Interpretation

When interpreting the findings presented, it is important to be aware of the following points:

- Individuals in FE Colleges can enrol and achieve on multiple courses simultaneously. The methodology used to determine the population of interest was to select the highest level of regulated qualification achieved for each individual, which resulted in 43,388 individual FE Leavers.
- Although the sample (n=5,993) was designed to be representative of the 2014/15 FE College Leavers population, there is variation in the total number of responses provided for some questions. This affects the statistics derived from the survey when trying to infer patterns within the population of interest. To assist interpretation, **Table A14** in the supplementary tables, [available online](#), presents an upper and lower limit for each statistic. The upper and lower limits indicate the range of values for which there can be 95% confidence that the real value in the population of interest will occur.
- Inferences/statements about the population of interest can be made because the profile of survey respondents by the stratification variables (FE College, Age Band, Gender, Mode of Attendance and Level) was broadly similar to the profile of the population of interest (Refer to [Table 1](#)), that is, the 43,388 individuals who had completed and achieved a regulated qualification in the 2014/15 academic year.



- Comparison of percentages should be considered with caution when base numbers (the number of valid responses to a particular question) are small (<100). Base numbers (n) are included in charts and tables.
- Due to rounding to one decimal place: some totals may not add to 100.0%; differences reported may not equate to the difference between the two figures shown in the text; and summing of proportions may not equate to the value reported.
- [The report and accompanying Excel tables](#) present significant and non-significant findings. Statistical techniques were used to test for statistically significant differences in proportions across the main activity options before and after the FE Course. [Statistically significant](#) findings are denoted by '\*' in the tables and are reported at the 5% level, that is, there is a 1 in 20 likelihood that these differences have occurred by chance. Non-significant findings are included for descriptive purposes and to illustrate trends.
- The FE Leavers Survey has been refined for the 2014/15 academic year. Additional information on these refinements is available in [Annex B](#) (Technical Notes).
- The reader is reminded that complementary data are available in excel and comma separated value (CSV) files at:  
<https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/further-education-activity-fe-colleges-northern-ireland-201415>

## **Section Three: Main Findings**

### 3.1 All FE Leavers

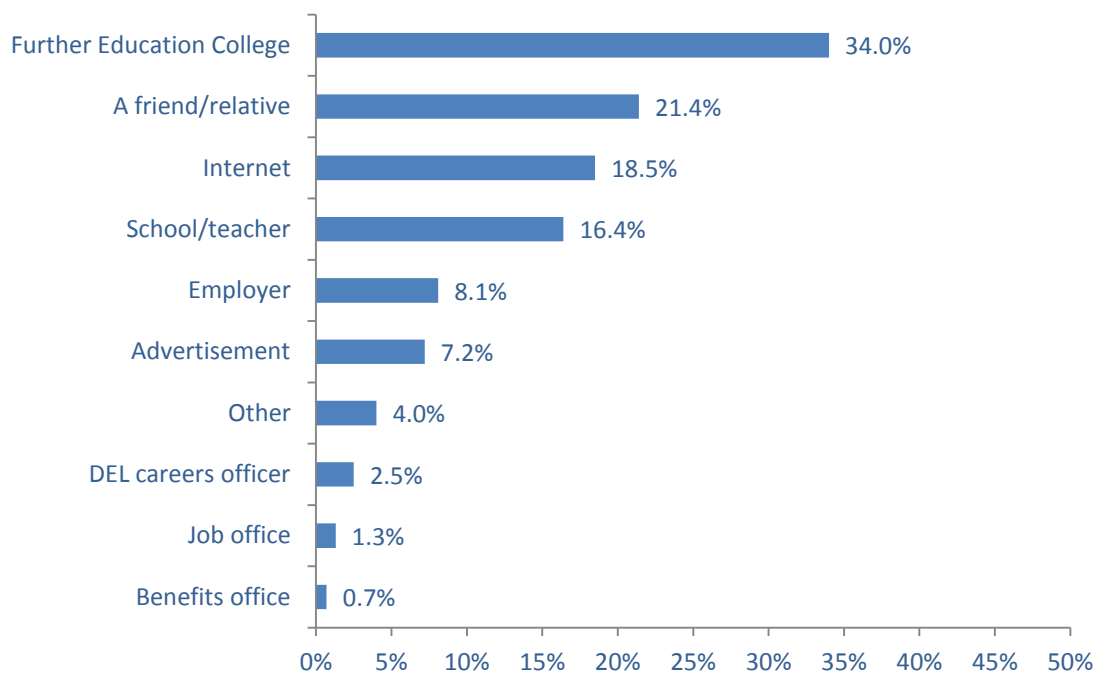
This section presents findings on all the FE Leavers who took part in the FE Leavers Survey 2014/15 and includes:

- how they had heard about the FE Course they recently completed and achieved
- main reasons for doing their FE Course
- main activities before and approximately six months after their FE Course
- perceived non-economic benefits of the FE Course to the individual

#### How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. The top three ways of hearing about their course were: through the 'FE College' itself (34.0%); through 'a friend/relative' (21.4%); and via the 'Internet' (18.5%) (**Figure 1** and **Table A01** in the supplementary tables).

**Figure 1** All FE Leavers: How individuals had heard about their FE Course (2014/15)



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 3,697

#### Recommend a FE Course to a friend?

Almost all (98.1%) FE Leavers said they would recommend completing a further education course to a friend. This level of recommendation is consistently high across all FE Leaver sub-groups (**Table A60**).

In terms of how respondents had heard about their FE Course, there was some variation across FE College, Gender, Age Band, Mode of Attendance and Level (the stratification variables).

#### **FE College:**

Across FE colleges, the most common way individuals had heard about the course was through the college itself. This ranged from 31.2% of all respondents in BMC to 38.5% in SERC. The other most common methods varied across colleges. For example, for BMC and NRC the 'Internet' was the second most common way, with 'a friend/relative' in third place. In the remaining colleges, 'a friend/relative' was second, with 'School/teacher' in a very close third place. Common to the overall FE Sector, the lowest placed ways of hearing about the course included the 'Job office' and 'Benefits office', with all percentages around or below one percent (**Table A01**).

#### **Gender:**

Overall, the pattern by gender was broadly similar to the FE sector. By category, two slight variations from the FE Sector were found: a higher proportion of males (19.6%) than females (13.7%) had heard about their course from their 'School/teacher' whereas a lower proportion of males (16.8%) than females (20.0%) heard via the 'Internet' (**Table A02**).

#### **Age Band:**

Only the FE Leavers aged 25 and older shared the same top three ways of hearing about the course as the overall FE sector. For those aged 19 and younger, 'School/teacher' was the second most common way to hear about the course (34.4%); for those aged 20-24 the 'Internet' was second (24.9%) (**Table A03**).

#### **Mode of Attendance:**

The top three ways the FE Leavers who had attended their FE Course on a part-time basis had heard about the course was the same as for the FE Sector. In contrast, of the FE Leavers who had attended their FE Course full-time, the second most common way to hear about the course was through their 'School/teacher' (30.8%), which was almost as high the proportion who said 'FE College' (34.3%) (**Table A04**).

#### **Level:**

Only those at Level 3 shared a similar top three profile to the overall FE sector. Unlike all other stratification variable responses, 'FE College' was not the most common way for those who completed a course at Entry Level (Level 0) to hear about the course. For this group, 'a friend/relative' was first (35.4%), the 'FE College' second (23.6%) and 'Other' third (12.5%). Also varying from the overall FE Sector profile were those who had studied at Level 2, who had 'School/teacher' in their top three (16.8%) (**Table A05**).

## Main reasons for undertaking the course

The three most popular reasons for undertaking the course were: 'to learn something new/gaining new skills' (70.3%); 'personal interest in the course' (63.8%); and 'to gain a qualification' (59.2%). Almost three-fifths (58.7%) of respondents also said 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' (Table 2).

**Table 2 All FE Leavers: Main reasons for undertaking FE Course (2014/15)**

| Reason  | %     |
|---|-------|
| To learn something new/gain new skills                  | 70.3% |
| I have/had a personal interest in the course            | 63.8% |
| To gain a qualification                                 | 59.2% |
| To improve my job prospects or get a new job/career     | 58.7% |
| To go on to further or higher learning                  | 46.3% |
| Because it was at a time/place that suited me           | 42.8% |
| To meet new people and build my self confidence         | 36.5% |
| To improve my ability to do my current job              | 20.0% |
| Because I did not have to pay for it                    | 19.7% |
| To get more job satisfaction                            | 19.2% |
| To increase my income                                   | 15.2% |
| To improve my job security                              | 13.9% |
| To get a promotion                                      | 7.5%  |
| I was required to attend course by my employer          | 6.6%  |
| It was mandatory  | 6.0%  |
| To help/support my children/grandchildren with homework | 2.5%  |
| Other reason  | 1.1%  |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 3,700.

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Across the stratification variables, there was some variation:

### **FE College**

For the most part, the three most common reasons for undertaking the course in the colleges reflected the overall FE sector. In NRC, SERC and SWC, the third most common reason was 'to improve my job prospects', closely followed by 'to gain a qualification' (**Table A07**).

### **Gender**

The pattern by gender was broadly similar to the overall FE sector (**Table A08**).

### **Age Band**

The top three reasons for FE Leavers aged 20-24 undertaking the course differed from the overall FE sector. For this group, the most common reason for undertaking a course was 'to improve my job prospects' (68.1%), followed closely by 'to learn something new / gain new skills' (67.2%). The third most common reason was 'personal interest in the course' (62.0%) (**Table A09**).

### **Mode of Attendance**

FE Leavers who had studied their course full-time had a slightly different profile to the overall FE Sector who had studied part-time. The top reason for this group was 'personal interest in the course' (74.3%) (**Table A10**).

### **Level**

Only at Entry Level (Level 0) and Level 1 were the top three reasons profiles the same as for the overall FE Sector. The top three profiles differed most for FE Leavers who had studied at Level 3 or Level 4 and above. In both groups, 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' featured among the top three reasons (Level 3 65.1%; Level 4 and above 67.4%).

Interestingly, an inverse relationship was found between level of course studied and the proportion of respondents who selected 'to go on to further or higher learning'. This increased from 29.2% at Level 0 to 53.8% at Level 4 and above (**Table A11**).

## Main Activity before and six months after FE Course

Those who completed the FE Leavers Survey 2014/15 were asked about their main activity before and approximately six months after the FE Course they had completed and achieved in the 2014/15 academic year. 'Main activity' was described to the individual as the activity they spent the most time doing. [Annex B](#) provides a list of eighteen main activity options.

For ease of analysis, interpretation and reporting, the eighteen main activity options are grouped into four main activity groups:

- Employment
- Learning
- Unemployed
- Other

[Table 3](#) provides an overview of how these four groups map onto all eighteen main activities. [Annex B Table B3](#) provides the numbers and proportions of FE Leavers within each main activity before and after the FE Course.

Table 3 indicates an increase of 10.0 percentage points in the proportion of FE Leavers classed as in Employment and a decrease of 9.4 percentage points in the proportion of those in some form of further Learning compared with before the FE Course. Both changes in proportion are statistically significant. Changes in the proportions of those categorised as Unemployed (a decrease of 0.7 percentage points) and Other (an increase of 0.2 percentage points) were not statistically significant, that is to say, there is no 'real' change.

**Table 3** *All FE Leavers: Grouped main activity before and six months after completing FE Course (2014/15)*

| Main Activity Grouped | Main Activity Ungrouped  | Before Completing Course |               | Six Months After Completing Course |               | Direction of % Change |
|-----------------------|--|--------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
|                       |  | Count                    | %             | Count                              | %             |                       |
| Employment            | Working in paid employment<br>Self-employed<br>Waiting to start a confirmed job  | 1,355                    | 36.7%         | 1,727                              | 46.7%         | ↑*                    |
| Learning              | On a scheme/training scheme<br>Waiting to start a confirmed scheme<br>At school aged 16 or below<br>At school in sixth form<br>At a FE College<br>At a university<br>Waiting to start a confirmed course at college/university | 1,648                    | 44.6%         | 1,301                              | 35.2%         | ↓*                    |
| Unemployed            | Unemployed and looking for work  | 271                      | 7.3%          | 244                                | 6.6%          | ↓                     |
| Other                 | In voluntary or unpaid work<br>Looking after the family or home<br>Travelling<br>Temporarily sick, injured or disabled<br>Long term sick or disabled<br>Retired<br>Other   | 421                      | 11.4%         | 428                                | 11.6%         | ↑                     |
| <b>Total</b>          |  | <b>3,695</b>             | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>3,700</b>                       | <b>100.0%</b> |                       |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

*n* = 3,700.

\* indicates that changes in proportions are proven to be statistically significant at 5% level.



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## Changes in proportions in Employment

### FE College:

Across all FE colleges, the proportion of FE Leavers in employment increased. The proportion in employment increased by over ten percentage points for four colleges: SRC increased from 33.9% to 47.5%; SERC from 30.9% to 43.0%; NRC from 36.8% to 48.6%; and SWC from 36.9% to 48.6% (**Table A15**).

### Gender:

For both males and females, the proportion of FE Leavers in employment increased; males by 11.9 percentage points (from 33.8% to 45.7%) and females by 8.4 percentage points (from 39.1% to 47.5%) (**Table A15**).

### Age Band:

Six months after FE course completion and achievement, the proportion of FE Leavers aged 19 years and under and in employment increased by 20.4 percentage points (from 6.0% to 26.4%)(**Table A15**).

### Mode of Attendance:

For those who had studied their FE course on a full-time basis, the proportion in employment increased by 18.4 percentage points (from 13.9% to 32.3%). The increase was 7.4 percentage points for those who had studied part-time (from 43.7% to 51.1%) (**Table A15**).

### Level:

Of all the stratification variable sub-categories, the only decrease was for the FE Leavers who had studied at Level 0 (from 36.2% to 34.4%). In contrast, for all other levels of study increases, of more than ten percentage points, were found. The largest increase was at Level 4 and above (48.5% to 61.0%). This was followed by Level 3, which increased from 31.3% to 43.6%, and Level 2, which increased from 38.1% to 48.4%). At Level 1, the proportion in employment increased by 7.2 percentage points (**Table A15**).

## Changes in proportions in Learning

### FE College:

Across all six FE colleges, the proportion of FE Leavers in learning decreased. The decrease ranged from three percentage points in BMC (38.0% to 35.0%) to 14.1 percentage points in SRC (46.3% to 32.2%) (**Table A15**).

### Gender:

For both males and females, the proportion of FE Leavers in learning decreased; males by 11.9 percentage points (from 51.9% to 40.0%) and females by 7.3 percentage points (from 38.3% to 31.0%) (**Table A15**).

### Age Band:

Six months after FE course completion and achievement, the proportion of FE Leavers aged 19 years and under and in learning decreased by 25.1 percentage points (from 90.4% to 65.3%). One of only two increases for FE Leavers in learning was for those aged 25 and over. For this group, the proportion increased from 2.6% before the FE course to 6.5% after the FE course (**Table A15**).

### Mode of Attendance:

The proportion of FE Leavers in learning decreased for both modes of attendance; part-time by 6.0 percentage points (from 33.7% to 27.7%) and full-time by 20.5 percentage points (from 80.0% to 59.5%) (**Table A15**).

### Level:

Of all the stratification variable sub-categories, the smallest increase was for the FE Leavers who had studied at Level 0 (Entry Level). The proportion in this group increased from 12.2% to 13.2%. Decreases for the other levels ranged from 6.5 percentage points at Level 1 (from 31.3% to 24.8%) to 12.9 percentage points at Level 4 and above (from 43.3% to 30.4%) (**Table A15**).

## Changes in proportions Unemployed

The proportion who said they were unemployed and looking for work decreased by 0.7 percentage points, from 7.3% before the FE course to 6.6% after. While this decrease was not statistically significant, there was movement into and out of unemployment across stratification variable categories (**Table A15**). Almost one-third (30.6%) of those unemployed before the FE course moved into employment after completing and achieving a regulated qualification and 21.4% moved into further learning. However, this also means that over two-fifths (43.4%) of those unemployed before the FE course remained unemployed after completing and achieving a regulated qualification (**Table 4**).

## Movement across Main Activities

**Table 4** illustrates the movement of FE Leavers across the four main activity groups. This includes their main activity before the FE Course and their destination approximately six months after.

While the majority of students remained in the same activity group six months after completing their FE Course, over one-quarter (1,017; 27.5%) changed activity (**Table 4**).

In particular, **Table 4** shows that:

- 1,171 (31.7%) remained in Employment
- 1,088 (29.4%) remained in Learning
- 106 (2.9%) remained Unemployed
- 313 (8.5%) remained as Other

**Table 4** All FE Leavers: Summary movement in main activity (2014/15)

| Main Activity Before FE Course | Main Activity Approximately Six Months After FE Course |              |            |            | Total        |
|--------------------------------|--|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|
|                                | Employment   | Learning     | Unemployed | Other      |              |
| Employment                     | 1,171  | 108          | 21         | 55         | 1,355        |
| Learning                       | 419  | 1,088        | 107        | 34         | 1,648        |
| Unemployed                     | 83   | 58           | 106        | 24         | 271          |
| Other                          | 52   | 46           | 10         | 313        | 421          |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>1,725</b>   | <b>1,300</b> | <b>244</b> | <b>426</b> | <b>3,695</b> |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

*n* = 3,695.

'Main Activity Before Completing Course' - Two respondents refused to provide an answer and three did not know.

## Subject Area Studied

Four subject areas accounted for the courses completed and achieved by almost three-fifths (57.8%) of all FE Leavers: 'Preparation for life and work' (20.0%); 'Information and communication technology' (13.9%); 'Health, public services and care' (13.5%); and 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (10.5%) (**Table A13**).

## STEM

Almost three-tenths (28.9%) of all FE Leavers had completed and achieved a course considered as [Broad STEM](#); just over one-fifth (20.1%) had studied in a [Narrow STEM](#) subject area (**Table A13**).

## Essential Skills

Just over one-sixth (17.2%) of all FE Leavers had completed and achieved a course considered as an [Essential Skills](#) course (**Table A13**).

## Non Economic Benefits

All respondents were asked a series of questions about the non-economic benefits of their FE Course. **Box 2** provides an overview of these findings.

### Box 2 All FE Leavers: Non economic benefits (2014/15)

#### Positive Impact? (n=3,696)

Most FE Leavers (95.5%) agreed that completing their course has had a positive impact on them; this included 76.7% who said their course has definitely had a 'positive impact' on them (**Table A46**).

In three of the stratification variable categories, over four-fifths of respondents said completing their course has definitely had a positive impact on them: those who had studied full-time (83.2%), at level 3 (81.9%) or at level 4 and above (80.2%) (**Table A47**).

#### Gain from Learning? (*more than one response could be provided*) (n=3,487)

The three most commonly reported gains from completing their FE Course included: 'boosted confidence' (84.0%); 'making new friends/meeting new people' (81.7%); and 'increased self-esteem' (66.6%) (**Table A48**).

#### Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=3,694)

Over four-fifths (83.7%) agreed that, as a result of completing their course, they have become 'more enthusiastic about learning' (**Table A50**).

#### Better Idea What To Do in Your Life? (n=3,694)

Over two-thirds (68.9%) of respondents agreed that, as a result of completing their course, they have a 'better idea of what they want to do in their life' (**Table A52**).

Compared with the overall FE Sector, in three of the stratification variable categories, over four-fifths agreed they have a 'better idea of what they want to do in their life': 19 and under (82.1%), full-time (89.0%), and level 3 (82.1%). In contrast, much lower proportions of those who had studied at entry level (38.9%) or at level 1 (53.7%), or who were aged 25 and over (53.2%) agreed with this statement (**Table A53**).

#### Improved Quality of Life? (n=3,693)

Approximately three-fifths (60.7%) agreed that completing their course has 'improved their quality of life' (**Table A54**).

#### Undertake Further Learning & Training? (n=3,693); At a Higher Level? (n=3,690)

Over four-fifths (84.0%) of FE Leavers agreed that, as a result of their course, they were more likely to 'undertake further learning and training' (**Table A56**). Just over three-quarters (76.3%) agreed they were more likely to do so at a 'higher level' (**Table A58**).

*Findings by stratification variable categories are available in the [FE Leaver Survey Report Excel Tables 2014/15](#) [Tables A47, A49, A51, A53, A55, A57, & A59].*

*Findings by FE Sector, Employment sub-groups, Learning and Unemployment are available in the [FE Leaver Survey Report Excel Tables 2014/15](#) [Tables A46, A48, A50, A52, A54, A56, & A58].*

## Summary for all 2014/15 FE Leavers

The most popular way individuals had **heard about their FE Course** ([Figure 1](#)) was through the 'FE College' itself (34.0%). The second most common way was through 'a friend/relative' (21.4%). The third most common method was via the 'Internet' (18.5%). The popularity of these methods varied by: FE College, age, gender, mode of attendance, and level of course.

Three of the top four **reasons for undertaking the course** ([Table 2](#)) are employment-related, namely: 'to gain a new skill' (70.3%); 'personal interest in the course' (63.8%); or 'to gain a qualification' (59.2%). Another common reason was 'to improve job prospects or get a new job/career' (58.7%). Again, there was variation across the stratification variables, suggesting different reasons were more important to different groups.

The **main activity** ([Table 3](#) and [Table 4](#)) of nearly one third (n=1,017) of the FE Leavers who took part in the survey changed after course completion. Overall, there was a significant ten percentage point increase in the FE Leavers classed as in Employment. In contrast, the proportion in Learning significantly decreased by 9.4 percentage points. There was no 'real' change for those Unemployed or Other. Acknowledging that other factors might influence these changes, it might be suggested that gaining a regulated qualification through the FE sector has improved the employment and further learning prospects of FE Leavers. Findings also suggest different learner pathways, for example, from school to college/university and from college/university into employment. For these questions, some variation was found by stratification variable categories.

A range of perceived **non-economic benefits** ([Box 2](#)) were reported by a high proportion of FE Leavers. These are in addition to the benefits of completing and achieving a regulated qualification for an individual's employment and/or further learning opportunities.

## FE Leavers: Cross Year Comparison (Academic Years 2013/14 - 2014/15)

This section provides a cross year comparison of all FE Leavers who took part in the surveys. **Table 5** provides an overview of all FE Leavers by the five survey stratification variables. **Table 6** compares cross year findings on how FE Leavers heard about their course and reasons for doing their course. **Table 7** summarises the progression of the FE Leavers before and after their FE Course. **Table 8** overviews the non economic benefits of FE Course completion for all the FE Leavers in employment.

Data for each year are available in the [FE Leaver Survey Excel Tables](#).

**Table 5** Overview: FE Leaver Survey respondents (stratification variables) 2013/14 - 2014/15

| Stratification Variables           | Variable Categories            | Academic Year |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
|                                    |                                | 2013/14 (%)   | 2014/15 (%)  |
| College                            | Belfast Metropolitan College   | 23.0          | 22.5         |
|                                    | Northern Regional College      | 14.0          | 15.7         |
|                                    | North West Regional College    | 15.8          | 14.6         |
|                                    | South Eastern Regional College | 13.4          | 14.1         |
|                                    | Southern Regional College      | 20.3          | 18.0         |
|                                    | South West College             | 13.5          | 15.0         |
| Gender                             | Female                         | 55.5          | 54.0         |
|                                    | Male                           | 44.5          | 46.0         |
| Age (years)                        | 19 and under                   | 41.2          | 42.9         |
|                                    | 20-24                          | 14.1          | 14.0         |
|                                    | 25 and over                    | 44.7          | 43.1         |
| Mode of Attendance                 | Full-Time                      | 24.4          | 23.5         |
|                                    | Part-Time                      | 75.6          | 76.5         |
| Level of Course                    | Entry Level                    | 7.7           | 7.8          |
|                                    | 1                              | 9.7           | 8.3          |
|                                    | 2                              | 41.1          | 40.9         |
|                                    | 3                              | 30.9          | 32.1         |
|                                    | 4 and above                    | 10.6          | 10.9         |
| <b>Total Number of Respondents</b> |                                | <b>3,861</b>  | <b>3,700</b> |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15.

### Comment:

Across both years, the proportions for each of the five survey stratification variables were largely similar.

**Table 6 Comparison: FE Leavers 2013/14 - 2014/15**

| Employment after   | Academic Year   |  |
|--|---|--|
|  | 2013/14   | 2014/15  |
| <b>How did individuals hear about their FE Course? (top three ways)</b><br>[Table A06] | FE College (33.2%)  | FE College (34.0%)                                   |
|  | Friend/Relative (19.5%)                                     | Friend/Relative (21.4%)                              |
|  | Internet (17.3%)  | Internet (18.5%)                                     |
| <b>Main Reasons for undertaking FE Course? (top three reasons)</b><br>[Table A12]      | To learn something new/gain new skills (64.0%)              | To learn something new/gain new skills (70.3%)       |
|  | I have/had a personal interest in the course (60.4%)        | I have/had a personal interest in the course (63.8%) |
|  | To improve my job prospects or get a new job/career (58.6%) | To gain a qualification (59.2%)                      |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Note: Counts vary by question.

### Comment:

The same top three ways of hearing about the FE Course were found across both academic years. Of the three top reasons for undertaking a course, two were the same. Across years, there was some variation in the proportion of survey respondents selecting each response option.

Notable statistically significant changes in response proportions are presented below:

Compared with 2013/14, a **lower** proportion of the FE Leavers who took part in the 2014/15 survey said they had **heard about their FE Course** through a 'DEL Careers Officer' (2.5% compared with 3.8%) or 'Other' (1.0% compared with 5.4%).

Compared with 2013/14, **lower** proportions of FE Leavers who took part in the 2014/15 survey said their **reasons for doing their course** included: 'to improve my ability to do my current job' (20.0% compared with 21.7%); 'to improve my job security' (13.9% compared with 16.0%); 'to increase my income' (15.2% compared with 16.8%); 'to get more job satisfaction' (19.2% compared with 20.3%); and 'other' (1.1% compared with 1.8%).

In contrast, compared with 2013/14, **higher** proportions of FE Leavers who took part in the 2014/15 survey said their **reasons for doing their course** included: 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' (58.7% compared with 58.6%); 'to go on to further or higher learning' (46.3% compared with 40.4%); and, 'because it was at a time/place that suited me' (42.8% compared with 35.1%).



**Table 7** *Main activity (grouped) before and after completing FE Course 2013/14 - 2014/15*

| Main Activity (Grouped)            | Before Completing Course (%) |              | After Completing Course (%) |              |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
|                                    | Academic Year                |              | Academic Year               |              |
|                                    | 2013/14                      | 2014/15      | 2013/14                     | 2014/15      |
| Employment                         | 38.0%                        | 36.7%        | 47.5%                       | 46.7%        |
| Learning                           | 42.5%                        | 44.6%        | 34.1%                       | 35.2%        |
| Unemployed                         | 7.9%                         | 7.3%         | 7.6%                        | 6.6%         |
| Other                              | 11.6%                        | 11.4%        | 10.9%                       | 11.6%        |
| <b>Total Number of Respondents</b> | <b>3,861</b>                 | <b>3,695</b> | <b>3,861</b>                | <b>3,700</b> |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Notes:

Counts vary by question.

In the 2014/15 academic year, 'Main Activity Before Completing Course': two respondents refused to provide an answer and three did not know.

**Comment:**

Across academic years, proportions for each main activity group before and after completing their FE Course were broadly similar.

**Table 8** *Non economic benefits for FE Leavers 2013/14 - 2014/15*

| Employment after   | Academic Year                             |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | 2013/14                                   | 2014/15                                   |
| Probably/definitely positive impact [Table A46]                                      | 94.3%                                     | 95.5%                                     |
| Gains (top three) [Table A48]  | Boosted my confidence (79.4%)             | Boosted my confidence (84.0%)             |
|  | I made new friends/met new people (74.5%) | I made new friends/met new people (81.7%) |
|  | Increased my self-esteem (66.2%)          | Increased my self-esteem (66.6%)          |
| More enthusiastic about learning [Table A50]   | 85.1%                                     | 83.7%                                     |
| Better idea what to do in life [Table A52]   | 71.2%                                     | 68.9%                                     |
| Improved quality of life [Table A54]   | 61.9%                                     | 60.7%                                     |
| More likely to undertake further learning and training [Table A56]                   | 85.3%                                     | 84.0%                                     |
| More likely to undertake further learning and training at a higher level [Table A58] | 78.7%                                     | 76.3%                                     |
| Recommend completing a course in further education to a friend [Table A60]           | 98.1%                                     | 98.1%                                     |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Note:

Counts vary by question.

#### Comment:

Findings are broadly similar across academic years. However, across years, there was some variation in the proportions of survey respondents selecting each response option.

Notable statistically significant changes in response proportions are presented below:

#### **Positive Impact?**

Compared with 2013/14, **higher** proportions of the FE Leavers who took part in the 2014/15 survey said that their course has definitely had 'a positive impact' on them (76.7% compared with 73.7%) or were unsure of the impact of their course (1.5% compared with 0.9%).

#### **Gains**

Compared with 2013/14, **higher** proportions of the FE Leavers who took part in the 2014/15 survey said that, as a result of the course they had completed: they had 'made new friends/met new people' (81.7% compared with 74.5%); it had 'helped them to do something useful with their spare time' (53.9% compared with 49.2%); it had 'helped them keep active' (41.9% compare with 37.2%); or had 'helped them with their health problems/disability' (8.4% compared with 6.6%).

#### **Enthusiasm about learning**

Compared with 2013/14, a **lower** proportion of the FE Leavers who took part in the 2014/15 survey 'strongly agreed' that as a result of completing their course they had become more enthusiastic about learning (30.5% compared with 38.2%).

***Better Idea what to do in life?***

Compared with 2013/14, a **lower** proportion of the FE Leavers who took part in the 2014/15 survey 'strongly agreed' (27.2% compared with 32.3%) that as a result of completing their course they had a better idea what to do in their life.

***Improved Quality of life?***

Compared with 2013/14, a **lower** proportion of the FE Leavers who took part in the 2014/15 survey 'strongly agreed' (13.3% compared with 17.8%) that as a result of completing their course they have improved their quality of life.

***Undertake Further Learning and training?***

Compared with 2013/14, a **lower** proportion of the FE Leavers who took part in the 2014/15 survey 'strongly agreed' (32.6% compared with 40.7%) that as a result of completing their course they were more likely to undertake further learning and training.

***Undertake Further Learning and training at a higher level?***

Compared with 2013/14, a **lower** proportion of the FE Leavers who took part in the 2014/15 survey 'strongly agreed' (36.5% compared with 41.2%) that as a result of completing their course they were more likely to undertake further learning and training at a higher level.

### 3.2 FE Leavers in Employment

This section presents findings for the FE Leavers in Employment (paid employment and self-employed) six months after their FE Course.

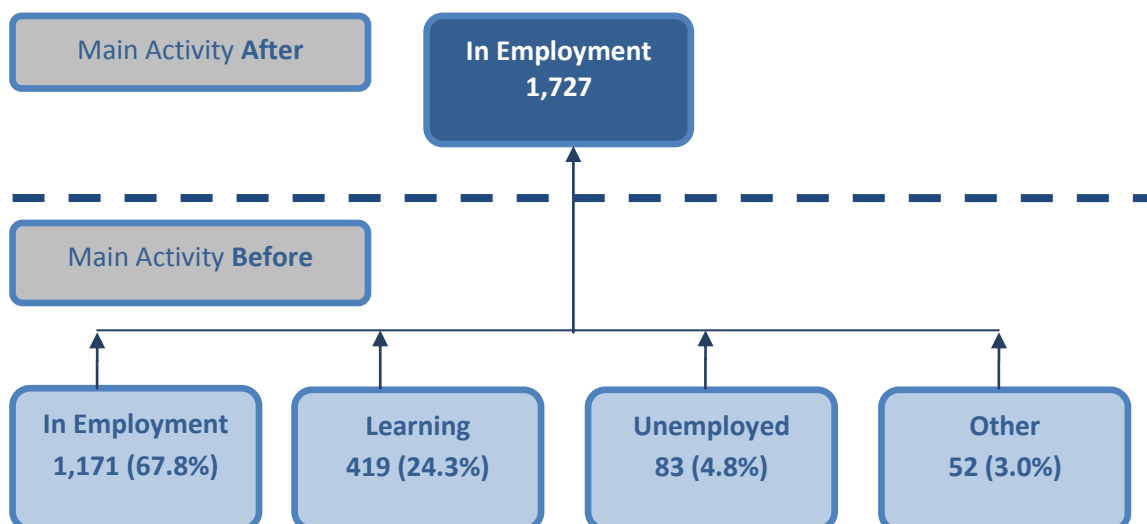
After an overview of their main activities before the FE Course, this section presents findings on: how FE Leavers in employment had heard about the course; their reasons for undertaking the course; if they are using the skills and knowledge acquired from the course; the subject area they had studied in; if their job is in the same subject area as their course; their earnings; the location of their work; characteristics of their employment; whether they feel the course has made a difference in obtaining or staying in a job; and the perceived non-economic benefits of completing their course.

#### Overview of Main Activity before

Of the 1,727 FE Leavers in employment six months after achieving a regulated qualification:

- 1,171 (67.8%) had previously been in Employment
- 419 (24.3%) had previously been in Learning
- 83 (4.8%) had previously been Unemployed
- 52 (3.0%) had previously been categorised as Other
- 1 (0.05%) respondent refused to provide an answer
- 1 (0.05%) did not know (**Chart 1**)

**Chart 1** FE Leavers in Employment (1,727): Main activity before (2014/15)



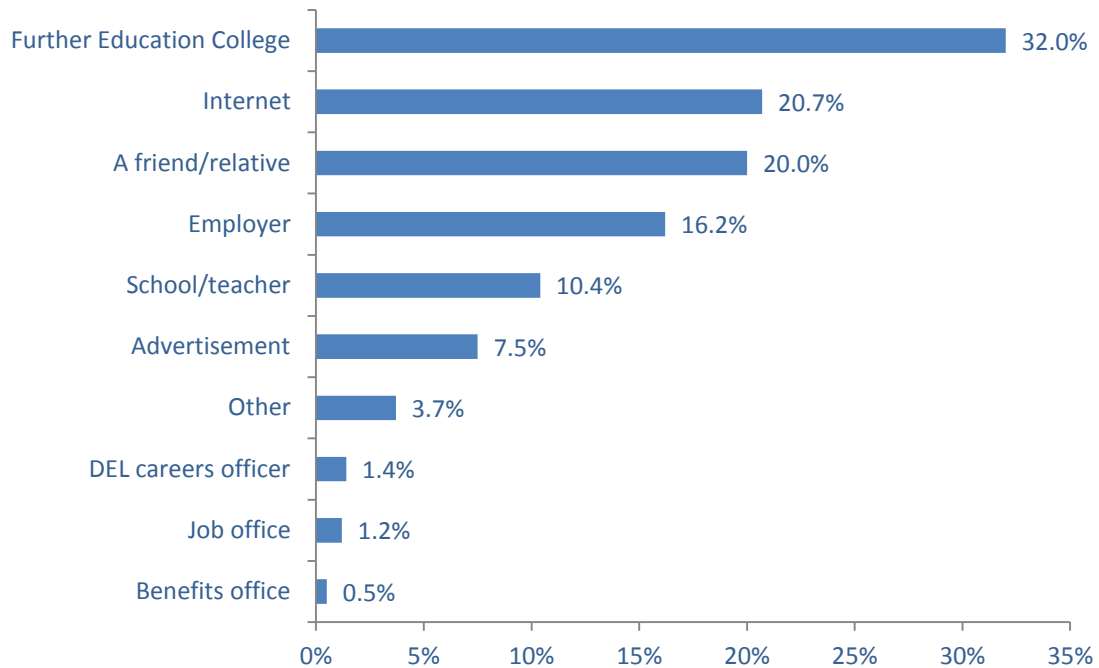
Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 1,727.

Note: 'Main Activity Before Completing Course' - Excludes one respondent who refused to provide an answer and one who did not know.

## How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. The three most common ways of hearing about their course were: through the 'FE College' itself (32.0%); through the 'Internet' (20.7%); and through 'a friend/relative' (20.0%) (Figure 2 and Table A06).

**Figure 2** FE Leavers in Employment: How individuals had heard about their FE Course (2014/15)



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 1,726.

## Main reasons for undertaking the course

The three most popular reasons for undertaking a course included: 'to learn something new/gain new skills' (70.7%); 'to improve job prospects or get a new job/career' (64.2%); and 'personal interest in the course' (63.7%) (Table 9).

**Table 9 FE Leavers in Employment: Main reasons for undertaking the course (2014/15)**

| Reason  | %     |
|---|-------|
| To learn something new/gain new skills                  | 70.7% |
| To improve my job prospects or get a new job/career     | 64.2% |
| I have/had a personal interest in the course            | 63.7% |
| To gain a qualification                                 | 59.4% |
| Because it was at a time/place that suited me           | 43.0% |
| To go on to further or higher learning                  | 38.4% |
| To improve my ability to do my current job              | 35.7% |
| To meet new people and build my self confidence         | 33.0% |
| To get more job satisfaction                            | 28.8% |
| To improve my job security                              | 22.3% |
| To increase my income                                   | 21.6% |
| Because I did not have to pay for it                    | 17.8% |
| I was required to attend course by my employer          | 12.3% |
| To get a promotion                                      | 11.9% |
| It was mandatory  | 6.5%  |
| To help/support my children/grandchildren with homework | 2.3%  |
| Other reason  | 1.0%  |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 1,727.

## Using skills and knowledge acquired in course?

Over two-thirds (68.8%) of FE Leavers who took part in the survey and who were in employment stated they were using the skills and knowledge acquired at least to some extent in their jobs; in particular 33.4% said 'to a great extent' (**Table A20**).

## Subject area

Four subjects accounted for over half (54.1%) of the FE Leavers in employment: 'Health, public services and care' (14.4%); 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (13.6%); 'Preparation for life and work' (13.1%); and, 'Business, administration and law' (13.0%) (**Table 10**).

## Is the job in the same subject area as the course?

Almost three-fifths (57.2%) of the FE Leavers in employment had studied a course in the same subject area as their current job. 'Construction, planning and the built environment' had the highest proportion (86.5%) of FE Leavers in a job in the subject area they had recently qualified in; the lowest was in 'Languages, literature and culture', with 18.5% (**Table 10**).

**Table 10** *FE Leavers in Employment: Subject area studied and if job in the same subject area (2014/15)*

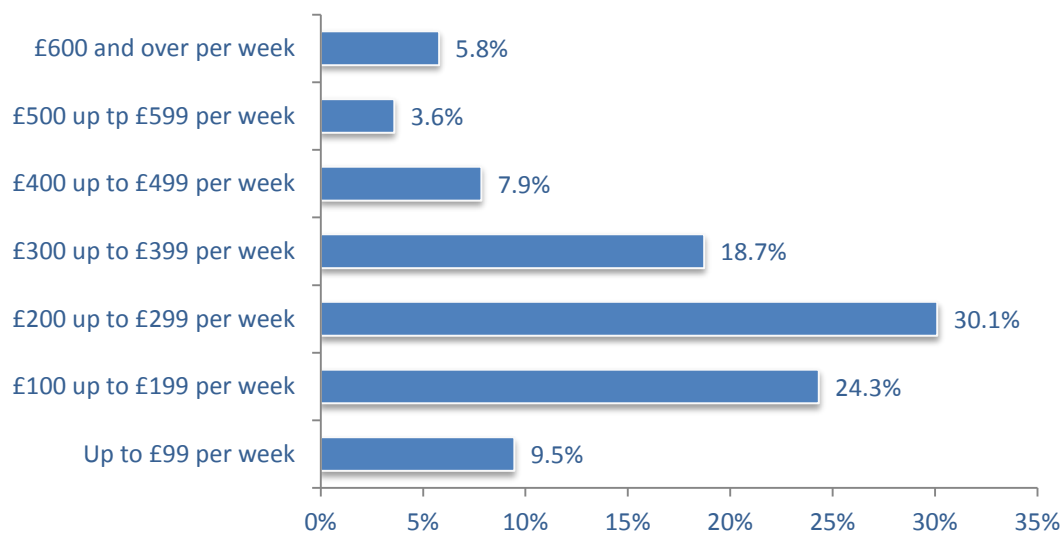
| Subject Area                                     | % of All Subjects | % job within same subject area |
|--|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| Health, public services and care                 | 14.4              | 78.6                           |
| Retail and commercial enterprise                 | 13.6              | 61.5                           |
| Preparation for life and work                    | 13.1              | 33.6                           |
| Business, administration and law                 | 13.0              | 69.5                           |
| Information and communication technology         | 11.4              | 49.0                           |
| Engineering and manufacturing technologies       | 9.2               | 77.2                           |
| Languages, literature and culture                | 6.3               | 18.5                           |
| Construction, planning and the built environment | 4.3               | 86.5                           |
| Arts, media and publishing                       | 3.7               | 31.7                           |
| Leisure, travel and tourism                      | 3.3               | 43.9                           |
| Education and training                           | 2.5               | 67.4                           |
| Science and mathematics                          | 2.4               | 28.6                           |
| Agriculture, horticulture and animal care        | 1.8               | 61.3                           |
| Social sciences                                  | 0.9               | 26.7                           |
| History, philosophy and theology                 | 0.1               | 100.0                          |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>100.0</b>      | <b>57.2</b>                    |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 1,720.

## Usual take home pay

For FE Leavers in employment, almost two-thirds (63.9%) were earning less than £300 per week. A further 18.7% were earning between £300 and £399 per week. This means that 17.4% were earning £400 or more per week (**Figure 3** and **Table A30**). Putting these figures into context, the **2016 NI gross weekly pay** averaged £461.50, although it should be noted that the age distribution of FE Leavers is much younger than that of the overall working population. When examining across gender, a higher proportion of males (21.1%) earned more than £400 per week compared than females (14.4%) (**Table A30B**).

**Figure 3** FE Leavers in Employment: Pay bands (2014/15)



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

*n* = 1,554. Please note that pay information was not available for 9.7% of this sub-group.

## Where did they work?

The vast majority of the FE Leavers in employment were working in Northern Ireland (96.3%); 2.3% were working in the Republic of Ireland, 1.3% in England, Scotland or Wales, and 0.1% overseas (**Table A17**).



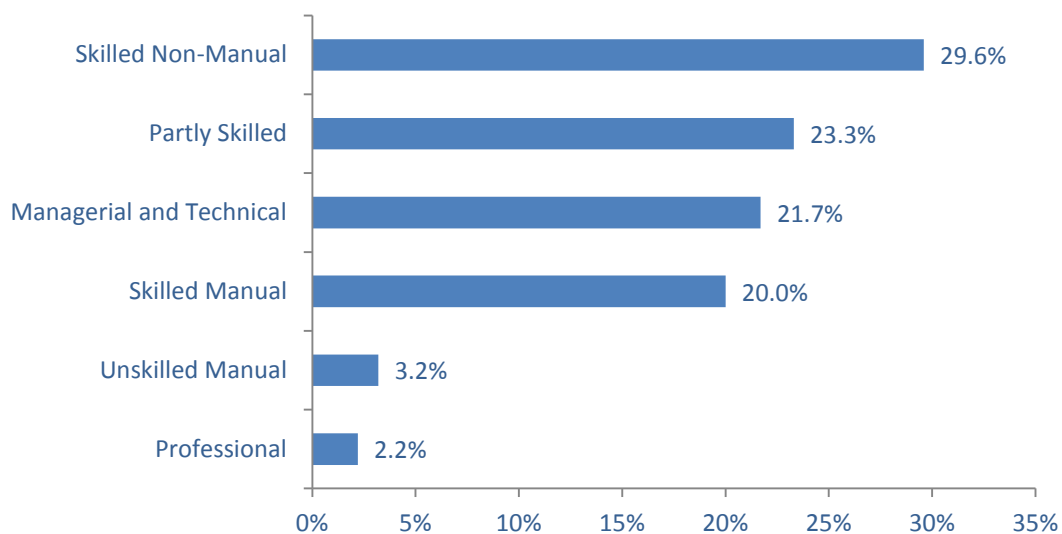
## Paid employment or self-employed?

The vast majority (94.4%) of the FE Leavers who were in employment six months after their course were in paid employment as opposed to being self-employed (5.2%) (Table A16).

## National Statistics Socio Economic Classification

Most of the FE Leavers in employment had jobs classified as either: 'Skilled Non-Manual' (29.6%); 'Partly Skilled' (23.3%); 'Managerial and Technical' (21.7%); or 'Skilled Manual' (20.0%) (Figure 4 and Table A18).

**Figure 4** FE Leavers in Employment: National Statistics Socio Economic Classification (2014/15)



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 1,711.

## Obtain/stay in employment without course?

Approximately one-quarter (25.7%) of the FE Leavers who were in employment six months after their course said they probably/definitely would not have obtained/stayed in their job without their FE Course (Table A19).

## Working pattern?

Nearly three-quarters (70.8%) of the FE Leavers who were in employment six months after their course said they were working full-time (defined as 30 hours or more per week); 27.2% worked part-time (Table A23). A higher proportion of males (84.1%) were working full-time than females (60.0%) (Table A23B).

**Box 3 FE Leavers in Employment: Non economic benefits (2014/15)**

**Box 3** provides an overview of these findings for FE Leavers in employment approximately six months after completing and achieving their course.

**Positive Impact? (n=1,725)**

The majority of FE Leavers in employment (95.5%) said their course has had a 'positive impact' on them; this included 74.6% who said their course definitely had a positive impact on them (**Table A46**).

**Gain anything from Learning? (n=1,602)**

The three most popular responses included: 'boosting their confidence' (82.0%); 'making new friends/meeting new people' (79.0%); and 'increased self-esteem' (63.7%) (**Table A48**).

**Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=1,725)**

Four-fifths (80.5%) of FE Leavers in employment agreed that they have become 'more enthusiastic about learning' as a result of completing their course (**Table A50**).

**Better Idea What to Do in Your Life? (n=1,724)**

Over three-fifths (62.8%) of this group agreed that, as a result of their FE Course, they have a 'better idea what to do in life' (**Table A52**).

**Improved Quality of Life? (n=1,724)**

Over half (53.9%) agreed that completing their FE Course has 'improved their quality of life' (**Table A54**).

**Undertake Further Learning & Training? (n=1,724); At a Higher Level? (n=1,721)**

Almost four-fifths (79.3%) agreed that as a result of their course, they are more likely to 'undertake further learning and training' (**Table A56**). Almost three-quarters (71.0%) agreed they are more likely to do so at a 'higher level' (**Table A58**).

*Findings by Employment sub-groups, Learning and Unemployment are available in the [FE Leaver Survey Report Excel Tables 2014/15](#) [Tables A46, A48, A50, A52, A54, A56, & A58].*

## Summary for 2014/15 FE Leavers in Employment

As a proportion of FE Leavers, employment as a main activity had increased by ten percentage points after FE Course completion and achievement. Before taking their FE Course, the main activity of 36.7% of survey respondents was employment. Approximately six months after FE Course completion and achievement, 46.7% said their main activity was employment ([Table 3](#)).

Over two-thirds (67.8%) of FE Leavers in employment after their FE Course had also been in employment before their FE Course. Nearly one-quarter (24.3%) had moved into employment from some form of learning, while 4.8% had been unemployed ([Chart 1](#)).

Almost three-fifths (59.1%) of the FE Leavers in employment were aged 25 years and over; most had studied on a part-time basis (83.7%) ([Table A61](#)).

The three most common ways FE Leavers in employment had **heard about their course** were: through the 'FE College' itself (32.0%); the 'Internet' (20.7%); and via 'a friend/relative' (20.0%) ([Figure 2](#)).

The three most common **reasons for undertaking the course** had been: 'to learn something new/gain new skills' (70.7%); 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' (64.2%); and 'personal interest in the course' (63.7%) ([Table 9](#)).

Over two-thirds (68.8%) of FE Leavers in employment stated they were **using the skills and knowledge acquired** at least to some extent in their job ([Table A20](#)). Over half (57.2%) of this group had **studied a course in the same subject area as their job** ([Table 10](#)).

In terms of **job characteristics** almost all (96.3%) of the FE Leavers in employment worked in Northern Ireland ([Table A17](#)). The vast majority (94.4%) were in paid employment ([Table A16](#)) and most (70.8%) worked on a full-time basis ([Table A23](#)). The largest group belonged to the Skilled Non-Manual job classification (29.6%); the smallest group belonged to the Professional job classification (2.2%) ([Figure 4](#)). In terms of **earnings** for this group, almost two-thirds (63.9%) were earning less than £300 per week ([Figure 3](#)).

Approximately one-quarter of the FE Leavers in employment (25.7%) felt they probably would **not** have **obtained/stayed in their job without** the FE Course, indicating some value of FE Course completion for this group ([Table A19](#)).

Analysis of responses on the perceived **non-economic benefit** statements indicated that the three most common gains for FE Leavers in employment were: 'boosting their confidence' (82.0%); 'making new friends/meeting new people' (79.0%); and 'increased self-esteem' (63.7%) ([Box 3](#)).

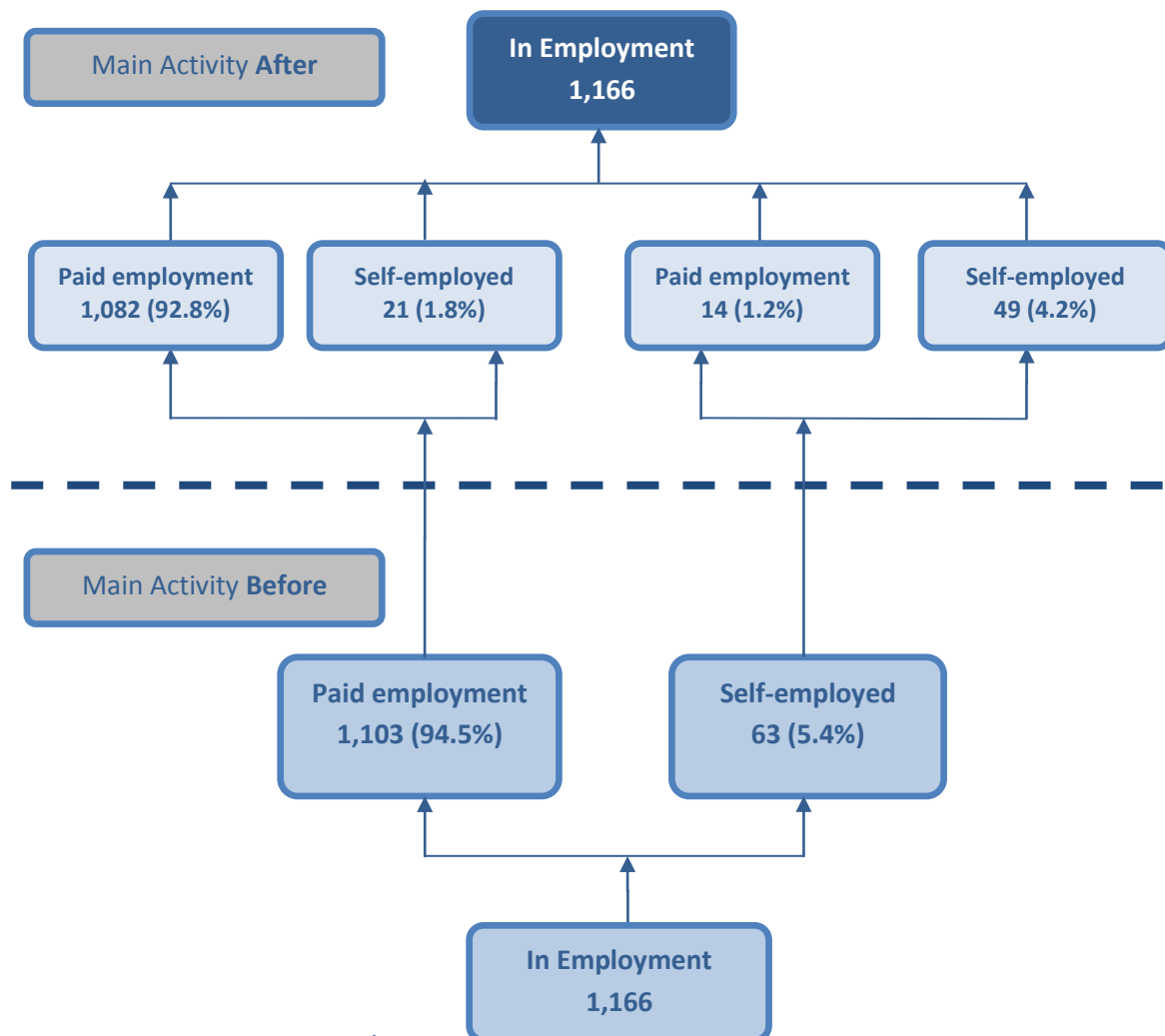
Four-fifths (80.5%) agreed that as a result of completing their course they have become 'more enthusiastic about learning'. A similar proportion (79.4%) agreed they were more likely to 'undertake further learning and training' and 71.0% agreed they were more likely to do so 'at a higher level'. Over three-fifths (62.8%) agreed they now have a 'better idea about what they want to do in their life'. Over half agreed their 'quality of life' has improved (53.9%). Almost all (95.5%) of the FE Leavers in employment said the course they completed in 2014/15 has had a 'positive impact' on them ([Box 3](#)).

### 3.2.1 FE Leavers in Employment before and after

Of the 1,727 FE Leavers in Employment after their FE Course, 1,171 had also been in employment before the course. Most (1,166) had been in paid employment or self-employment. This section presents findings for the 1,166 FE Leavers in paid employment or self-employment before and after their FE Course (**Chart 2**).

This section includes: how they had heard about the course, their reasons for undertaking the course; if they are using the skills and knowledge they acquired from the course; the subject area they had studied in, if their job was in the same subject area as the course; their earnings; job characteristics; whether they felt they would have obtained/stayed in the job; and the perceived non-economic benefits of completing their course. Where appropriate, findings for the FE Leavers employed before and after their FE Course have been compared with those for all FE Leavers in employment after course completion.

**Chart 2** *FE Leavers in Employment before and after (1,166): Main activity before (2014/15)*



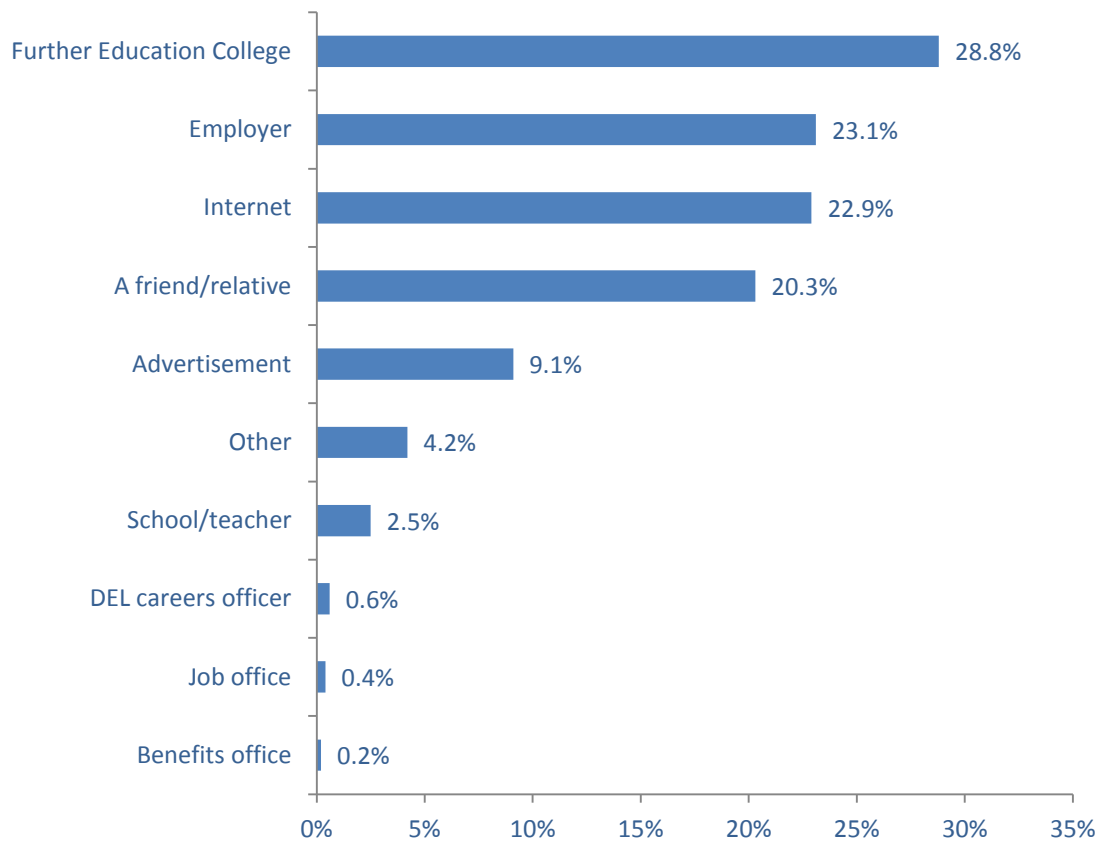
Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 1,166.

Note: Excludes the FE Leavers in Employment waiting to start a confirmed job.

## How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. The three most common ways of hearing about their course were: through the 'FE College' itself (28.8%); through their 'Employer' (23.1%); and through the 'Internet' (22.9%) (Figure 5 and Table A06).

**Figure 5** *FE Leavers in Employment before and after: How individuals had heard about their FE Course (2014/15)*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
In Employment before and after FE Course n = 1,165.

## Main reasons for undertaking the course

The three most popular reasons for FE Leavers employed before and after undertaking a course were: 'to learn something new/gain new skills' (70.5%); 'personal interest in the course' (62.3%); and 'to improve job prospects or get a new job/career' (60.0%)(**Table 11**).

**Table 11** *FE Leavers in Employment before and after: Main reasons for undertaking FE Course (2014/15)*

| Reason  | Employed Before and After (%) |
|---|-------------------------------|
| To learn something new/gain new skills                  | 70.5                          |
| I have/had a personal interest in the course            | 62.3                          |
| To improve my job prospects or get a new job/career     | 60.0                          |
| To gain a qualification                                 | 56.9                          |
| To improve my ability to do my current job              | 45.7                          |
| Because it was at a time/place that suited me           | 42.1                          |
| To go on to further or higher learning                  | 35.2                          |
| To get more job satisfaction                            | 32.3                          |
| To meet new people and build my self confidence         | 29.8                          |
| To improve my job security                              | 26.6                          |
| To increase my income                                   | 22.0                          |
| Because I did not have to pay for it                    | 15.9                          |
| I was required to attend course by my employer          | 15.7                          |
| To get a promotion                                      | 13.9                          |
| It was mandatory  | 7.4                           |
| To help/support my children/grandchildren with homework | 3.2                           |
| Other reason  | 1.1                           |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

In Employment before and after FE Course n = 1,166.

## Using skills and knowledge acquired in course?

Over two-thirds (69.7%) of the FE Leavers who took part in the survey, and who were employed before and after their FE Course, stated they were using the skills and knowledge acquired at least to some extent in their jobs; in particular 31.4% said 'to a great extent'(Table A20).

## Subject area

Four subject areas accounted for over half (56.2%) of the FE Leavers employed before and after their course: 'Business, administration and law' (16.1%); 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (14.1%); 'Health, public services and care' (13.0%); and 'Information and communication technology' (13.0%) (Table 12).

## Is the job in the same subject area as the course?

Over half (57.9%) of the FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course had studied a course in the same subject area as their current job. 'Construction, planning and the built environment' had the largest group (86.8%) of FE Leavers in a job within the subject area they had recently qualified in; the smallest was in 'Languages, literature and culture' (18.4%) (Table 12).

**Table 12** *FE Leavers in Employment before and after: Subject area studied and if job in the same subject area (2014/15)*

| Subject Area                                     | In employment before <u>and</u> after |                                  |
|--|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|  | % of All Subjects                     | Job within same subject area (%) |
| Business, administration and law                 | 16.1                                  | 70.7                             |
| Retail and commercial enterprise                 | 14.1                                  | 61.0                             |
| Health, public services and care                 | 13.0                                  | 80.8                             |
| Information and communication technology         | 13.0                                  | 49.7                             |
| Preparation for life and work                    | 10.3                                  | 40.8                             |
| Languages, literature and culture                | 8.4                                   | 18.4                             |
| Engineering and manufacturing technologies       | 7.4                                   | 80.2                             |
| Arts, media and publishing                       | 3.5                                   | 31.7                             |
| Construction, planning and the built environment | 3.3                                   | 86.8                             |
| Education and training                           | 3.0                                   | 65.7                             |
| Science and mathematics                          | 2.5                                   | 31.0                             |
| Agriculture, horticulture and animal care        | 2.3                                   | 59.3                             |
| Leisure, travel and tourism                      | 2.3                                   | 40.7                             |
| Social sciences                                  | 0.9                                   | 30.0                             |
| History, philosophy and theology                 | 0.0                                   | 0.0                              |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>100.0</b>                          | <b>57.9</b>                      |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

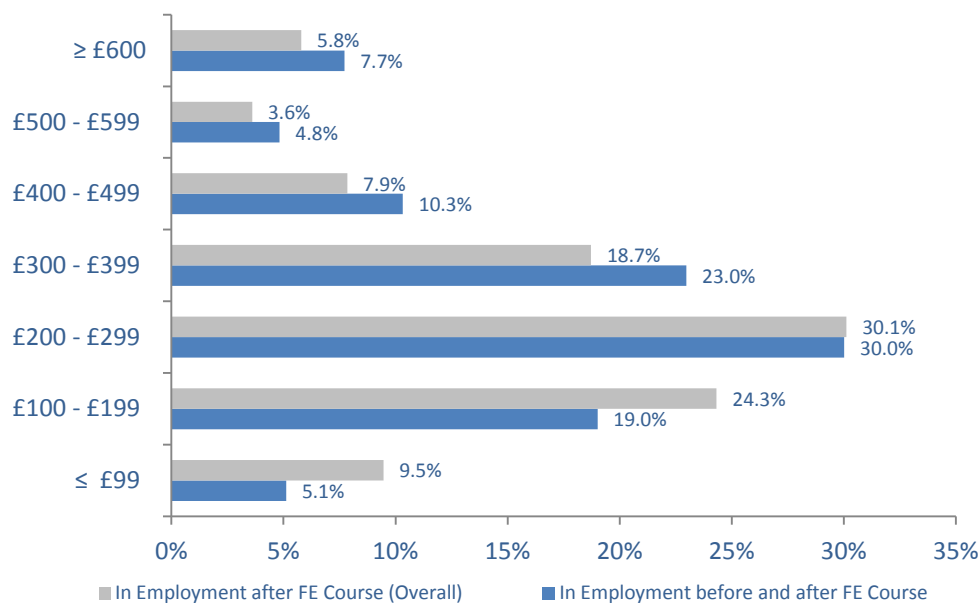
In Employment before and after n = 1,165.



## Usual take home pay

For FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course, the usual take home pay for over half (54.2%) was less than £300 per week. Over one-fifth (23.0%) were earning between £300 and £400 per week. This means that over one-fifth (22.9%) were earning £400 or more per week. To put these figures into context, the **2016 NI gross weekly pay** averaged £461.50, although it should be noted that the age distribution of FE Leavers is much younger than that of the overall working population (**Figure 6** and **Table A30**).

**Figure 6** *FE Leavers in Employment before and after and all FE Leavers in Employment: Pay bands (2014/15)*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

In Employment before and after n=1,036.

Please note that pay information was not available for 11.1% of the FE Leavers in Employment before and after their FE Course.

## Higher Pay?

Of the 288 FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course and who said their income was higher after their FE course, almost three-fifths (58.0%) said that the increase was at least to some extent a result of the course they had completed in 2014/15 (**Table A30C**).

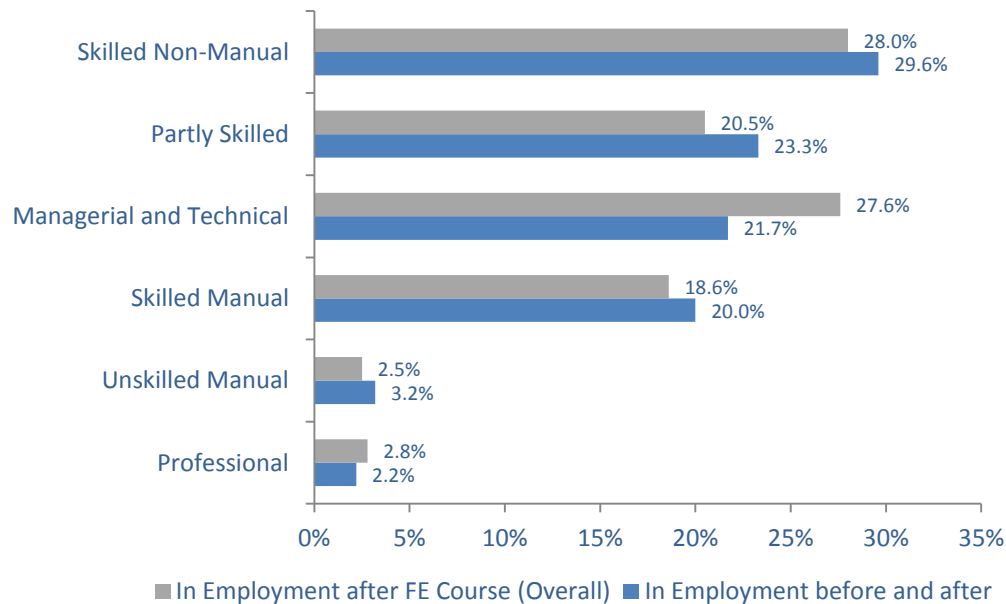
## Paid employment or self-employed?

The vast majority (94.6%) of the FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course were in paid employment; 5.4% were self-employed (**Table A16**).

## National Statistics Socio Economic Classification

Although the overall profile for the FE Leavers employed before and after their FE Course was the same as for the overall group of FE Leavers in employment, this sub-group had a higher proportion classed in 'Managerial and Technical' jobs (27.6% compared with 21.7%), a marginally higher proportion classed in 'Professional' jobs (2.8% compared with 2.2%) and lower proportions in skilled, partly skilled and unskilled jobs (**Figure 7** and **Table A18**).

**Figure 7** Comparison: FE Leavers in Employment before and after and all FE Leavers in Employment - National Statistics Socio Economic Classification (2014/15)



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

In Employment before and after FE Course n = 1,158; In Employment after n=1,711

## Stay in employment without course?

As might be expected from a sub-group already in employment, a lower proportion (18.5%) than the overall group in employment after their FE Course (25.7%) said they probably/definitely would not have obtained/stayed in their job without the FE Course (**Table A19**).

## Working pattern?

Three-quarters (74.8%) of the FE Leavers who were in employment before and after their course said they were working full-time (defined as 30 hours or more per week); 22.7% were working part-time. Information on the number of hours usually worked was not available for the remaining 2.5% (**Table A23**).

**Box 4**            **FE Leavers in Employment before and after: Non economic benefits (2014/15)**

**Box 4** provides an overview of these findings for FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course.

**Positive Impact? (n=1,165)**

Almost all of the FE Leavers in employment before and after their course said that their course has ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ had a ‘positive impact’ on them (95.6%); this included 75.7% who said their course has ‘definitely’ had a positive impact on them (**Table A46**).

**Gain anything from Learning? (n=1,072)**

The three most popular responses included: ‘boosting their confidence’ (82.2%); ‘making new friends/ meeting new people’ (76.3%); and ‘increased self-esteem’ (63.4%) (**Table A48**).

**Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=1,165)**

Four-fifths (80.0%) of the FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course agreed that they have become ‘more enthusiastic about learning’ as a result of completing their course (**Table A50**).

**Better Idea What to Do in Your Life? (n=1,164)**

Over half (55.9%) of this group agreed that, as a result of their FE Course, they have a ‘better idea of what to do in life’ (**Table A52**).

**Improved Quality of Life? (n=1,164)**

Just less than half (48.6%) agreed that completing their FE Course has ‘improved their quality of life’ (**Table A54**).

**Undertake Further Learning and Training? (n=1,164); At a Higher Level (n=1,162)**

Four-fifths (80.8%) agreed that, as a result of their FE Course, they were more likely to ‘undertake further learning and training’ (**Table A56**). Almost three-quarters (71.5%) agreed they were more likely to do so at a ‘higher level’ (**Table A58**).

*Findings by Employment sub-groups, Learning and Unemployment are available in the [FE Leaver Survey Report](#) Excel Tables 2014/15 [Tables A46, A48, A50, A52, A54, A56, & A58].*

## Summary for 2014/15 FE Leavers in Employment before and after

Over two-thirds (67.8%) of the 1,727 FE Leavers in employment had also been employed before their FE Course ([Chart 2](#)).

The three most common ways those in employment before and after their FE Course had **heard about their FE Course** were through: the 'FE College' (28.8%); their 'Employer' (23.1%); and the 'Internet' (22.9%) ([Figure 5](#)).

The three most common **reasons for undertaking the course** had been: 'to learn something new/gain new skills' (70.5%); 'personal interest in the course' (62.3%); and 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' (60.0%) ([Table 11](#)).

Almost three-fifths (57.9%) of this employment sub-group had **studied a course in the same subject area as their job**, although this varied by subject area ([Table 12](#)).

Over two-thirds (69.7%) of this group stated they have been **using the skills and knowledge acquired** at least to some extent in their job ([Table A20](#)).

In terms of **job characteristics**, the vast majority (94.6%) of the FE Leavers employed before and after their FE Course were in paid employment; 5.4% were self-employed ([Table A16](#)).

In terms of socio-economic group profile, compared with the overall group in employment, a higher proportion of the FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course were classed in 'Managerial and Technical', or 'Professional' jobs and lower proportions in skilled, partly skilled and unskilled jobs ([Figure 7](#)).

In terms of **earnings**, over half (54.2%) of this employment sub-group earned less than £300 per week. Of the 288 FE Leavers employed before and after and who provided pay information and who said their pay was higher after their FE Course, almost three-fifths (58.0%) said their higher income was at least to some extent as a result of the course they completed ([Figure 6](#)).

As might be expected of a group in employment before and after their FE Course, compared with the overall group employed after their FE Course (25.7%), a lower proportion (18.5%) said they probably would not have **obtained/stayed in their job** without the FE Course (18.5%) ([Table A19](#)).

The perceived **non-economic benefit** statements most likely to be cited by FE Leavers in employment before and after their FE Course were: 'boosting their confidence' (82.2%); 'making new friends/met new people' (76.3%); and 'increased self-esteem' (63.4%) ([Box 4](#)).

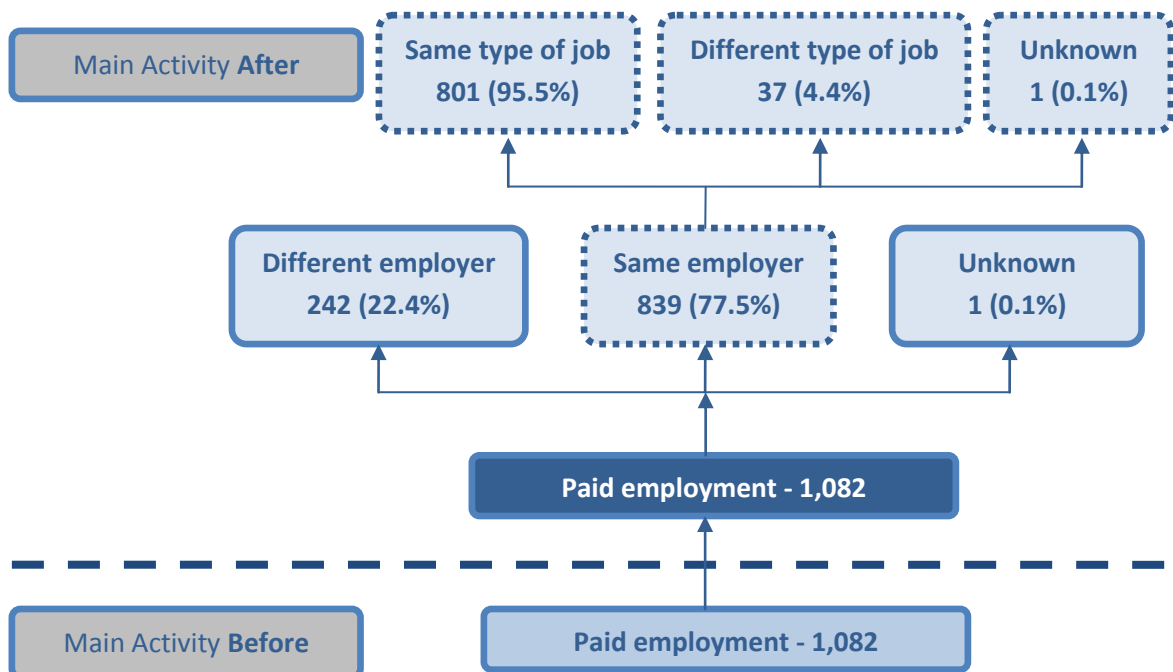
Four-fifths (80.0%) agreed that, as a result of completing their course, they have become more enthusiastic about learning. A similar proportion (80.8%) agreed they were more likely to undertake further learning and training, with 71.5% agreeing they were more likely to do so at a higher level. Just over half (55.9%) agreed they now have a better idea about what they want to do in their life. Less than half (48.6%) agreed that their quality of life has improved. Almost all (95.6%) of the FE Leavers in employment said the course they had completed in 2014/15 has had a positive impact on them ([Box 4](#)).

### 3.2.1.1 FE Leavers in Paid employment before and after with the same employer

Of the 1,171 FE Leavers employed before and after their FE Course, 1,082 (92.4%) had stayed in paid employment. Of these, 839 had stayed with the **same** employer. This section presents findings for the 839 FE Leavers in paid employment before and six months after their FE Course and who were with the **same** employer (Chart 3).

This section includes: whether they felt they would have stayed in the job without their course; their earnings; and their progression within employment.

**Chart 3** FE Leavers in Paid Employment before and after (1,082): Employer and job status after (2014/15)



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 1,082.

## Stay in employment without course?

Just under one-eighth (12.3%) of the FE Leavers in employment before and after their course and who had stayed with the **same** employer, said they probably would not have stayed in their job without completing the FE Course. Of all the employment sub-groups, this is the lowest percentage for these response choices (**Table A19**).

## National Statistics Socio Economic Classification

Over half of this group (55.4%) belonged to either 'Skilled Manual' or 'Managerial and Technical' occupations. This is higher than the overall group in Employment after their FE Course (41.7%) (**Table A18**).

## Usual take home pay

One-quarter (25.2%) of the FE Leavers who were with the **same** employer before and after their FE Course had usual take home pay of £400 per week or more. Of all the employment sub-groups, this is the highest percentage for this pay band (**Tables A30 and A31**).

## Progression within employment circumstances

### Better at job?

Respondents were asked if they feel their job performance has improved since completing their course. Almost three-fifths (59.5%) said they are now better at doing their job (**Figure 8, Table A24**). Of those who said performance has improved, nearly three-quarters (73.0%) said they probably/definitely would not have been better at doing their job without doing the course (**Table A25**).

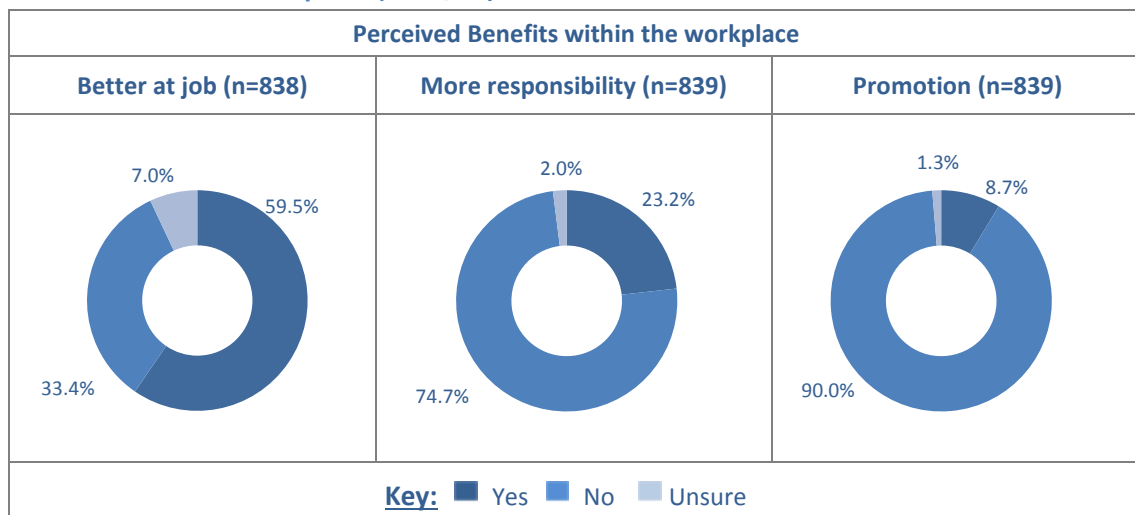
### Increased responsibility?

Respondents were asked if they were doing a job with more responsibilities since completing their course. Almost one-quarter (23.2%) said they were doing a job with more responsibilities (**Figure 8, Table A26**). Of those who said their job involves more responsibilities, over three-fifths (62.1%) said they probably/definitely would not have been doing a job with more responsibilities without doing the course (**Table A27**).

### Promotion?

Respondents were asked if they had been promoted after completing their course. Around one-twelfth (8.7%) said they had been promoted (**Figure 8, Table A28**). Of the 73 who said they had been promoted, over two-thirds (67.1%) said they probably/definitely would not have been without doing the course (**Table A29**). *Note: this is a small number and should be used with caution.*

**Figure 8** FE Leavers in Paid employment before and after - Perceived benefits within the workplace (2014/15)



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

In Employment before and after FE Course with same employer n = 838.

## Summary for 2014/15 FE Leavers in Employment before and after with same employer

Almost half (48.6%) of the FE Leavers in employment had been with the same employer before and after their FE Course. Of these, most were doing the same type of job (95.5%); those remaining were doing a different type of job (4.4%) ([Chart 3](#)).

As might be expected of a group already established with one employer, a small proportion (13.8%) of the FE Leavers who had stayed with the same employer said they probably would not have **stayed in their job** without their FE Course ([Table A19](#)).

Approximately one-quarter (25.2%) of the FE Leavers who stayed with the same employer before and after their FE Course had usual take home pay of £400 per week and above. Across employment sub-groups this is the highest percentage for this pay band ([Tables A30](#) and [A31](#)).

Findings also indicated progression within employment for the FE Leavers who stayed with the same employer before and after their FE Course:

- Almost three-fifths (59.5%) said that they were better at their job ([Table A24](#)).

Of those who said their job performance has improved, nearly three-quarters (73.0%) said they probably/definitely would not have been better at doing their job without doing the course ([Table A25](#)).

- Almost one-quarter (23.2%) said their job involves more responsibilities ([Table A26](#)).

Of those who said their job involves more responsibilities, over three-fifths (62.1%) said they probably/definitely would not have been doing a job with more responsibilities without doing the course ([Table A27](#)).

- Almost one-twelfth (8.7%) said they had been promoted ([Table A28](#)).

Of the 73 who had been promoted, over two-thirds (67.1%) said they probably/definitely would not have been promoted without completing the course ([Table A29](#)).

*Note: numbers for promotion are small and should be used with caution.*

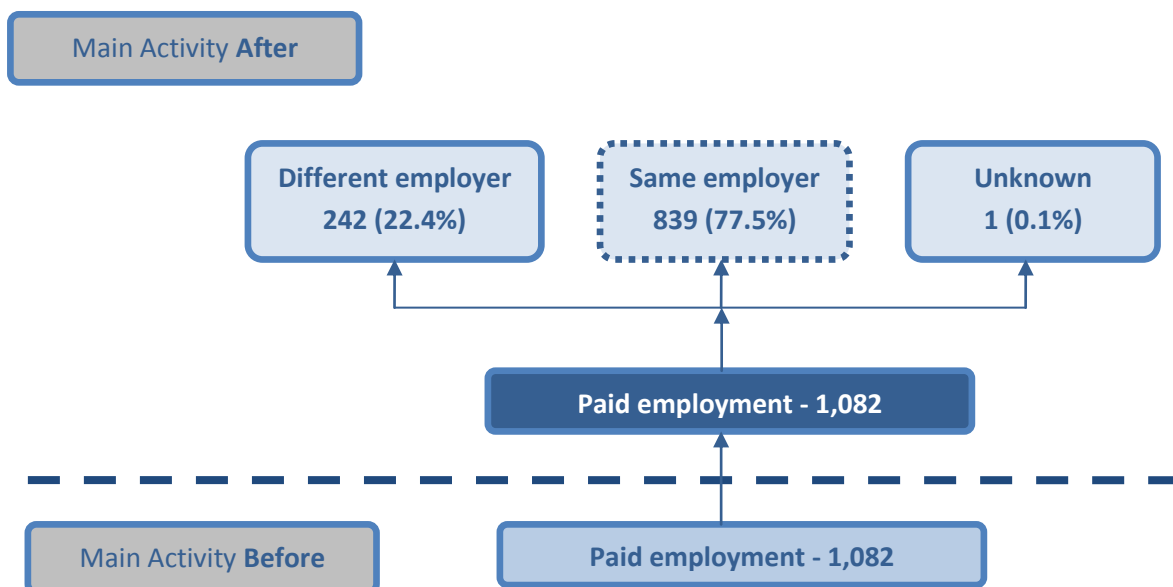


### 3.2.1.2 FE Leavers in Paid employment before and after with a different employer

Of the 1,171 FE Leavers employed before and after their FE Course, 1,082 (92.4%) had stayed in paid employment. Of these, 242 had moved to a different employer. This section presents findings for the 242 FE Leavers in paid employment before and six months after who had moved to a different employer (**Chart 4**).

This section includes: whether they felt they would have obtained the job without their course; their earnings; their progression within employment; and whether their job type had changed. Where appropriate, responses from this sub-group (employed before and after and who had a **different** employer) are compared with all FE Leavers in Employment after.

**Chart 4** *FE Leavers in Paid Employment before and after (1,082): Employer and job status after (2014/15)*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 1,082.

## Obtain employment without course?

Almost two-fifths (39.7%) of FE Leavers in employment before and after their course and who moved to a different employer said they probably would not have obtained their job without completing the FE Course (**Table A19**). Of all the employment sub-groups, this is the highest percentage for these response choices.

## National Statistics Socio Economic Classification

Compared with all other employment sub-groups (in employment before and after 28.0%; same employer before and after 27.6%), more of the FE Leavers who had moved to a different employer were classed in 'Skilled Non-Manual' occupations (37.3%) (**Table A18**).

## Using skills and knowledge acquired in course?

Compared with all other employment sub-groups (in employment before and after 69.7%; same employer before and after 68.9%), more of the FE Leavers employed before and after their course and who had moved to a different employer (72.8%) said they were using the skills and knowledge acquired in their course at least to some extent in their jobs (**Table A20**).

## Usual take home pay

Over four-fifths (83.9%) of the FE Leavers who had moved to a different employer after their FE Course had take home pay of less than £400 per week. This finding was broadly similar to the overall group in Employment after their FE Course (82.6%) (**Table A30**). Comparison of the employment sub-groups indicates that a slightly lower proportion of those who had moved to a different employer attributed their higher income to the completion of their FE Course (55.0% compared with around 58.0%) (**Table A30C**).

## Job location

A higher proportion of the FE Leavers who had changed employer were working in jobs outside NI (7.0%). This was almost double the proportion amongst all those in employment after (3.7%) (**Table A17**).

## Subject area

Three-fifths (60.3%) of the FE Leavers who had moved to a different employer had completed a course in the same subject area as their job. This was a few percentage points higher than for all other employment sub-groups (in employment before and after 57.9%; same employer before and after 57.8%) (**Table A22**).

---

## Summary for 2014/15 FE Leavers in Employment before and after with a different employer

Two-fifths (39.7%) of the FE Leavers who were in employment before and after their course and who had moved to a different employer, said they probably would not have **obtained their job** without completing the FE Course. This was more than double the equivalent proportion for all those employed before and after (18.5%) (**Table A19**).

Over four-fifths (83.9%) of the FE Leavers who had moved to a different employer after their FE Course had take home pay of less than £400 per week (Table A30). This finding was broadly similar to the overall group in Employment after their FE Course (81.0%) (**Tables A30 and A30C**).

Compared with other employment sub-groups (in employment before and after 69.7%; same employer before and after 68.9%), a slightly higher proportion of the FE Leavers who had changed employer said they were using the knowledge and skills acquired in their course at least to some extent (72.8%) (**Table A20**).

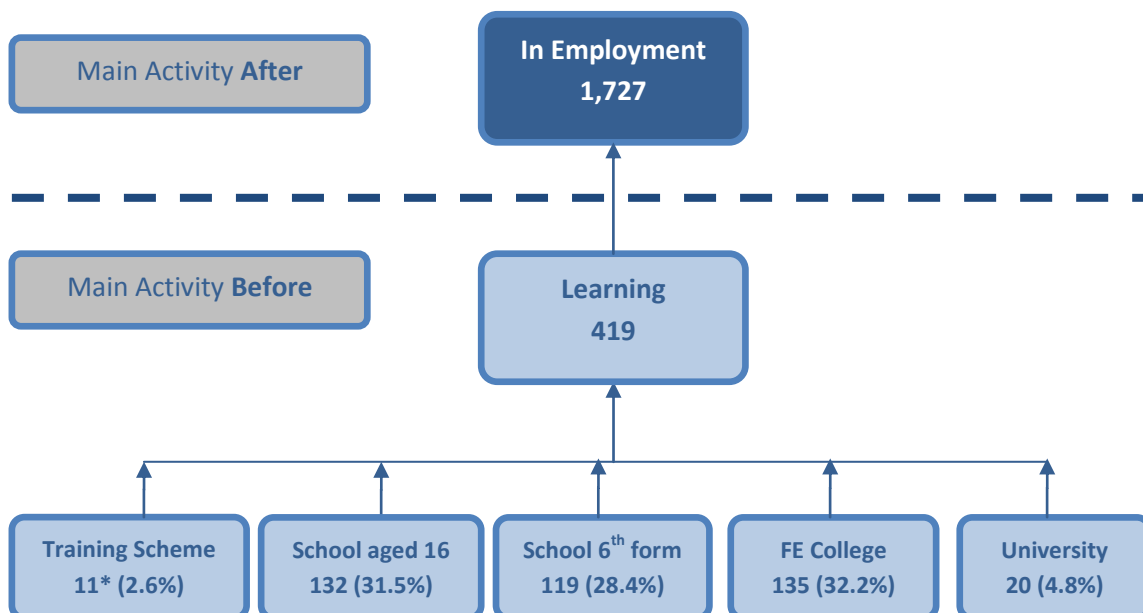
A higher proportion of the FE Leavers who had changed employer were working in jobs outside NI (7.0%). This was almost double the proportion amongst all those in employment after (3.7%) (**Table A17**).

### 3.2.2 FE Leavers in Learning before and in Employment after

Of the 1,727 FE Leavers in Employment after their FE Course, 419 (24.3%) had been in learning before their FE Course. This section presents findings for the 419 FE Leavers who had changed their main activity from learning before the FE Course to employment after FE Course completion (**Chart 5**).

This section includes: how they had heard about the course; their reasons for undertaking the course; if they were using the skills and knowledge they had acquired from the course; the subject area they had studied in; if their job was in the same subject area as the course; their earnings; job characteristics; and the perceived non-economic benefits reported by the FE Leavers in this group. Where appropriate, the responses from this sub-group (learning before and employed after) are compared with all FE Leavers in employment after course completion.

**Chart 5** *FE Leavers in Learning before and in Employment after (419): Main Activity before (2014/15)*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

*n* = 419.

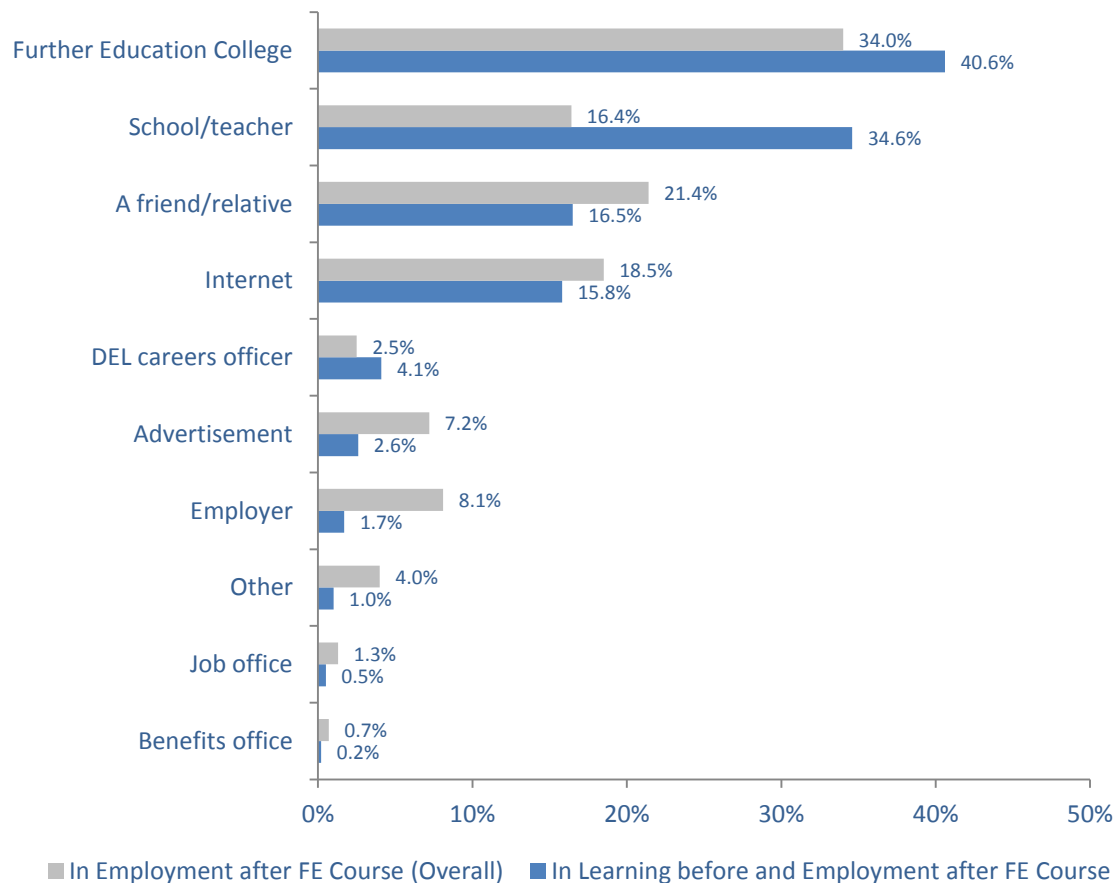
Note: \* Excludes two who had been waiting to start a confirmed scheme.

## How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. The three most common ways of hearing about their course had been: through the 'FE College' itself (40.6%); through a 'School/teacher' (34.6%); and through 'a friend/relative' (16.5%) (Figure 9 and Table A06).

Compared with the overall group of FE Leavers in employment after their FE Course, and probably related to their younger age profile, higher proportions of those previously in learning said they had heard about the course via a 'FE College' (40.6% compared with 34.0%), a 'School/teacher' (34.6% compared with 16.4%) or a 'DEL careers officer' (4.1% compared with 2.5%) (Figure 9 and Table A06).

**Figure 9** Comparison: FE Leavers in Learning before and Employment after and all FE Leavers in Employment - How individuals had heard about their FE Course (2014/15)



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

In Employment before and after FE Course n = 1,726; In Learning before and in Employment after FE Course n = 419.

## Main reasons for undertaking the course

The three most popular reasons for FE Leavers in learning before employment undertaking their course were: 'to learn something new/gain new skills' (70.2%); 'to improve job prospects or get a new job/career' (69.0%); and 'personal interest in the course' (67.5%).

Although these are the same top three reasons as for all those in employment after, higher proportions of those previously in learning said they had undertaken their FE Course 'to go on to further or higher learning (47.0% compared with 38.4%), or 'because I did not have to pay for it (22.9% compared with 17.8%). Lower proportions stated employment-related reasons, such as 'to get more job satisfaction' (21.2% compared with 28.8%), 'to improve my ability to do my current job' (35.7% compared with 14.8%) and 'to improve my job security' (22.3% compared with 12.9%) (Table 13).

**Table 13** *Comparison: FE Leavers in Learning before and Employment after and all FE Leavers in Employment - Main Reasons for Undertaking FE Course (2014/15)*

| Reason  | In Learning before and In employment after FE Course (%) | In Employment after (Overall) (%) |
|---|--|-----------------------------------|
| To learn something new gain new skills                  | 70.2%  | 70.7%                             |
| To improve my job prospects or get a new job/career     | 69.0%  | 64.2%                             |
| I have/had a personal interest in the course            | 67.5%  | 63.7%                             |
| To gain a qualification                                 | 65.4%  | 59.4%                             |
| To go on to further or higher learning                  | 47.0%  | 38.4%                             |
| Because it was at a time/place that suited me           | 45.6%  | 43.0%                             |
| To meet new people and build my self confidence         | 39.9%  | 33.0%                             |
| Because I did not have to pay for it                    | 22.9%  | 17.8%                             |
| To increase my income                                   | 21.5%  | 21.6%                             |
| To get more job satisfaction                            | 21.2%  | 28.8%                             |
| To improve my ability to do my current job              | 14.8%  | 35.7%                             |
| To improve my job security                              | 12.9%  | 22.3%                             |
| To get a promotion                                      | 8.6%   | 11.9%                             |
| I was required to attend course by my employer          | 6.2%   | 12.3%                             |
| It was mandatory  | 5.5%   | 6.5%                              |
| Other reason  | 0.7%   | 1.0%                              |
| To help/support my children/grandchildren with homework | 0.0%   | 2.3%                              |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

Learning before and in Employment after FE Course n = 419; In Employment after n=1,726.

## Using skills and knowledge acquired in course?

Two-thirds (66.3%) of the FE Leavers in learning before employment stated they were using the skills and knowledge acquired at least to some extent in their jobs; in particular, 37.7% said 'to a great extent' (**Table A20**).

## Subject area

Just over half (51.1%) of the FE Leavers in learning before and in employment after their course had studied one of three subject areas: 'Preparation for life and work' (18.9%); 'Health, public services and care' (16.5%); and 'Engineering and manufacturing technologies' (15.8%) (**Table 14**).

## Is the job in the same subject area as the course?

Almost three-fifths (58.2%) had studied a course in the same subject area as their current job (**Tables 14, A21 and A22**).

**Table 14** Comparison: FE Leavers in Learning before and Employment after and all FE Leavers in Employment - Subject area studied and if job in the same subject area (2014/15)

| Subject Area                                     | Learning before and in Employment after |                                  | In Employment after (Overall) |                                  |
|--|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|  | % of All Subjects                       | Job within same subject area (%) | % of All Subjects             | Job within same subject area (%) |
| Preparation for life and work                    | 18.9                                    | 30.4                             | 13.1                          | 33.6                             |
| Health, public services and care                 | 16.5                                    | 68.1                             | 14.4                          | 78.6                             |
| Engineering and manufacturing technologies       | 15.8                                    | 80.3                             | 9.2                           | 77.2                             |
| Retail and commercial enterprise                 | 12.6                                    | 67.9                             | 13.6                          | 61.5                             |
| Construction, planning and the built environment | 7.4                                     | 87.1                             | 4.3                           | 86.5                             |
| Information and communication technology         | 6.7                                     | 46.4                             | 11.4                          | 49.0                             |
| Leisure, travel and tourism                      | 6.2                                     | 50.0                             | 3.3                           | 43.9                             |
| Business, administration and law                 | 6.0                                     | 60.0                             | 13.0                          | 69.5                             |
| Arts, media and publishing                       | 4.8                                     | 35.0                             | 3.7                           | 31.7                             |
| Science and mathematics                          | 2.4                                     | 30.0                             | 2.4                           | 28.6                             |
| Languages, literature and culture                | 1.2                                     | 0.0                              | 6.3                           | 18.5                             |
| Agriculture, horticulture and animal care        | 0.7                                     | 100.0                            | 1.8                           | 61.3                             |
| History, philosophy and theology                 | 0.5                                     | 100.0                            | 0.1                           | 100.0                            |
| Social sciences                                  | 0.5                                     | 50.0                             | 0.9                           | 26.7                             |
| Education and training                           | 0.0                                     | 0.0                              | 2.5                           | 67.4                             |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>100.0</b>                            | <b>58.2</b>                      | <b>100.0</b>                  | <b>57.2</b>                      |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

Learning before and in Employment after FE Course n=419; In Employment after n=1,720.

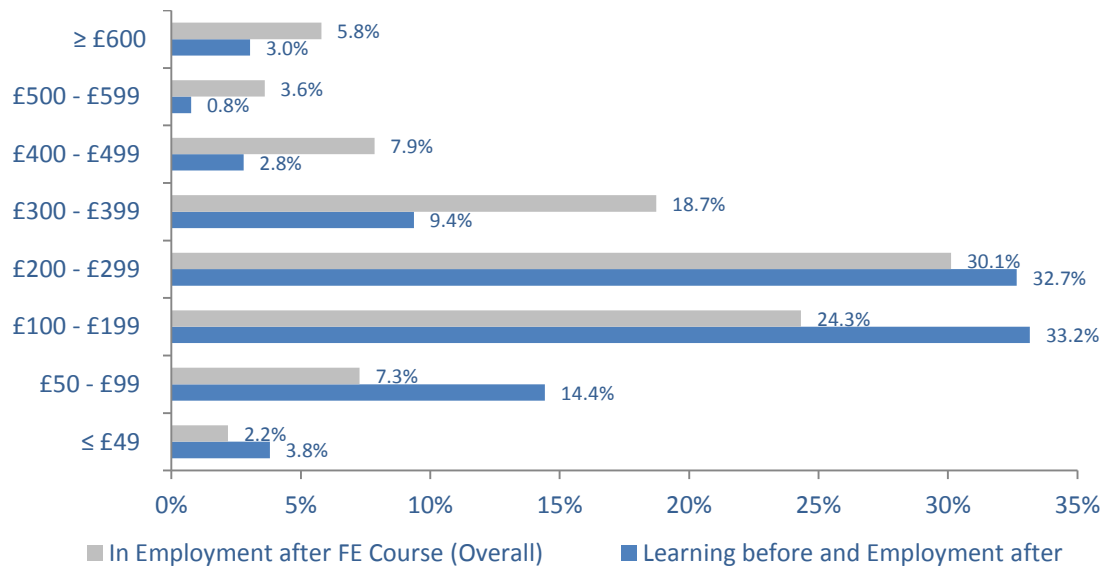
Overall, comparison of all the FE Leavers in employment after their FE Course (57.2%) and those who moved from learning into employment (58.2%) indicated little difference by subject area in the percentage employed in a job in the same subject as the course studied. However, across subject areas there were differences (**Table 14**).

### Usual take home pay

Most (93.5%) of the FE Leavers in learning before employment had usual take home pay of less than £400 per week; 18.2% earned less than £100 per week, a higher proportion than for all those employed after their FE Course (9.5%) (**Figure 10** and **Table A30**).



**Figure 10 Comparison: FE Leavers in Learning before and Employment after and all FE Leavers in Employment - Pay bands (2014/15)**



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

Please note that pay information was not available for 5.7% of those in Learning before and In Employment after; of all those In Employment after their FE Course, pay information was not available for 9.7%.

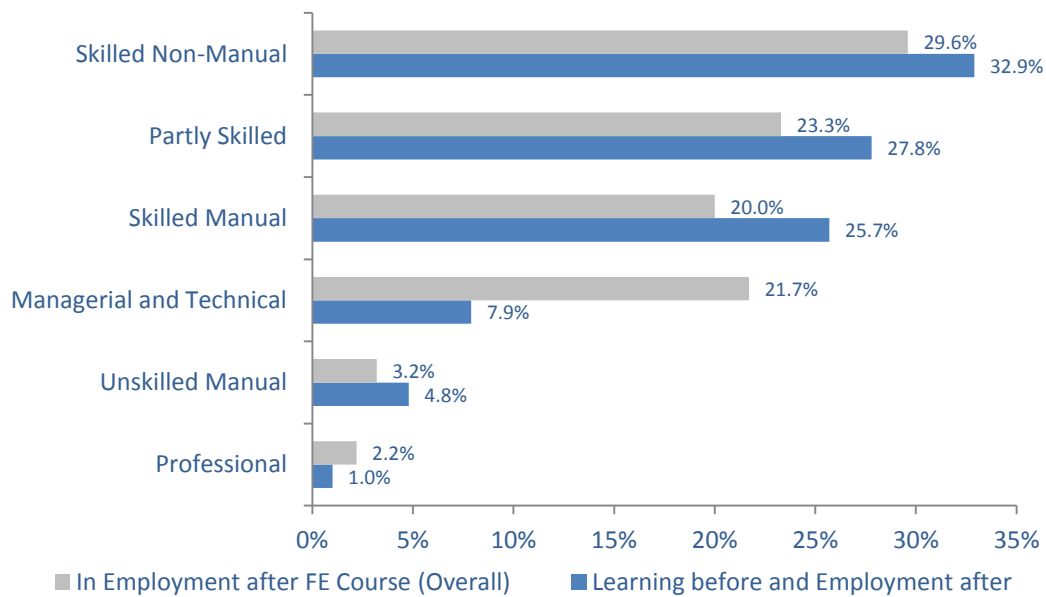
### Paid employment or self-employed?

Almost all (97.4%) of the 419 FE Leavers in learning before employment were in paid employment; 2.6% were self-employed (**Table A16**).

### National Statistics Socio Economic Classification

Compared with all other employment sub-groups, higher proportions of the FE Leavers who had moved from learning into employment were classed as: 'Partly Skilled' (27.8%); 'Skilled Manual' (25.7%); or 'Unskilled Manual' (4.8%) (**Figure 11** and **Table A18**).

**Figure 11 Comparison: FE Leavers in Learning Before and Employment after and all FE Leavers in Employment - National Statistics Socio Economic Classification (2014/15)**



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

Learning before and In Employment after FE Course n = 417; In Employment after FE Course (Overall) n=1,711.

### Obtain employment without course?

Over two-fifths (41.5%) of the FE Leavers in learning before employment said they probably/definitely would not have obtained their job without completing the FE Course. This included 26.0% who said they *definitely* would *not* have obtained their job without their FE Course (**Table A19**).

### Working pattern?

After FE Leavers unemployed before employment, FE Leavers in learning before employment had the second highest proportion of all the employment sub-groups working part-time (31.5%) (**Table A23**).

## Box 5 FE Leavers in Learning before and Employment after: Non economic benefits (2014/15)

Box 5 provides an overview of these findings for FE Leavers in learning before and employment after their FE Course.

### Positive Impact? (n=419)

Almost all of the FE Leavers in learning before employment (95.2%) said that their course has probably/definitely had a 'positive impact' on them; this included 70.4% who said their course has definitely had a positive impact on them (Table A46).

### Gain anything from Learning? (n=394)

The three most popular responses included: 'making new friends/meeting new people' (85.8%); 'boosting their confidence' (81.2%); and 'increased self-esteem' (63.7%) (Table A48).

### Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=419)

Almost four-fifths (79.4%) of FE Leavers learning before employment agreed that they had become 'more enthusiastic about learning' as a result of completing their course (Table A50).

### Better Idea What to Do in Your Life? (n=419)

Almost four-fifths (79.9%) of this group agreed that, as a result of completing their FE Course, they have a 'better idea what to do in life' (Table A52).

### Improved Quality of Life? (n=419)

Almost two-thirds (64.4%) agreed that completing their FE Course has 'improved their quality of life' (Table A54).

### Undertake Further Learning & Training? (n=419); At a Higher Level (n=419)

Almost three-quarters (73.8%) agreed that, as a result of completing their FE Course, they are 'more likely to undertake further learning and training' (Table A56). Over two-thirds (68.8%) agreed they are more likely to do so at a 'higher level' (Table A58).

*Findings by Employment sub-groups, Learning and Unemployment are available in the [FE Leaver Survey Report](#) Excel Tables 2014/15 [Tables A46, A48, A50, A52, A54, A56, & A58].*

## Summary for 2014/15 FE Leavers in Learning before and in Employment after

Almost one-quarter (24.3%) of the 1,727 FE Leavers in employment had been in learning before their FE Course ([Chart 5](#)).

The three most common ways this group in learning before employment had **heard about their FE Course** were: through a 'FE College' (40.6%); through a 'School/teacher' (34.6%); and through 'a friend/relative' (16.5%) ([Figure 9](#)).

The three most common **reasons for undertaking the FE Course** had been: 'to learn something new/gain new skills' (70.2%); 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' (69.0%); and 'personal interest in the course' (67.5%) ([Table 13](#)).

Almost two-thirds (66.3%) of this group stated they were **using the skills and knowledge acquired** in their course at least to some extent in their jobs ([Table A20](#)).

Almost three-fifths (58.2%) of the FE Leavers in learning before employment had **studied a course in the same subject area as their job** ([Table 14](#)).

In terms of **job characteristics**, most of the FE Leavers in learning before employment (97.4%) were in paid employment; 2.6% were self-employed ([Table A16](#)).

In terms of socio-economic group profile, higher proportions of the FE Leavers who had moved from learning into employment were classed in 'Partly Skilled' (27.8%), 'Skilled Manual' (25.7%) or 'Unskilled Manual' (4.8%) jobs ([Figure 11](#)).

Most (93.5%) of the FE Leavers in learning before employment had usual take home pay of less than £400 per week; 18.2% earned less than £100 per week ([Figure 10](#)).

Over two-fifths (41.5%) of the FE Leavers who had been in learning before employment said they probably/definitely would not have obtained their job without completing the FE Course. This included 26.0% who said they definitely could not have obtained their job without their FE Course ([Table A19](#)).

The perceived **non-economic benefit** statements most likely to be cited by FE Leavers in learning before employment were: 'making new friends/meeting new people' (85.8%); 'boosting their confidence' (81.2%); and 'increased self-esteem' (63.7%) ([Box 5](#)).

Almost four-fifths (79.4%) of those in learning before employment agreed that as a result of completing their course they have become 'more enthusiastic about learning'. A similar proportion (79.9%) agreed they have a 'better idea about what they want to do in their life'. Almost three-quarters (73.8%) agreed they are more likely to 'undertake further learning and training' and 68.8% agreed they are more likely to do so 'at a higher level'. Almost two-thirds agreed that their 'quality of life' has improved (64.4%). Almost all (95.2%) of the FE Leavers in learning before employment said the course they completed in 2014/15 has had a 'positive impact' on them ([Box 5](#)).

### 3.2.3 FE Leavers Unemployed before and in Employment after

Of the 1,727 FE Leavers in Employment after their FE course, 83 (4.8%) had been unemployed before their course. This section presents findings for the 83 FE Leavers who had moved from unemployment before their FE Course to employment after their FE Course. **As this section is based on small numbers, findings should be used with caution.**

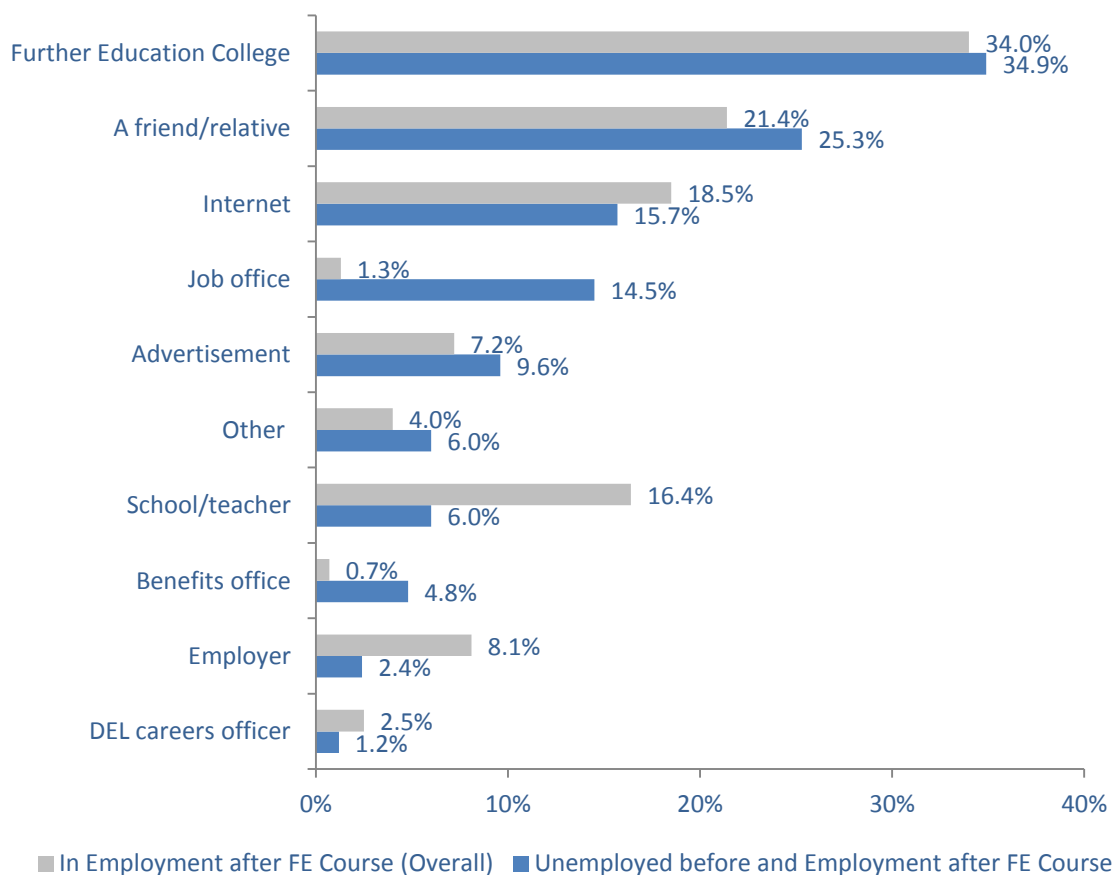
This section includes: how they had heard about the course; their reasons for undertaking the course; if they are using the skills and knowledge they had acquired from the course; the subject area they had studied in; if their job was in the same subject area as their course; their earnings; job characteristics; whether they felt they would have obtained the job without completing the FE Course; and the perceived non-economic benefits. Where appropriate, the responses from this sub-group (unemployed before and in employment after) are compared with all FE Leavers in employment after.

## How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. The three most common ways of hearing about their course had been: through the 'FE College' itself (34.9%); through 'a friend/relative' (25.3%); and through the 'Internet' (15.7%).

As expected, compared with all the FE Leavers in employment after their FE Course, higher proportions of the FE Leavers previously unemployed said they had heard about the course via the 'Job Office' (14.5% compared with 1.3%) and via the 'Benefits Office' (4.8% compared with 0.7%)(Figure 12 and Table A06).

**Figure 12** Comparison: FE Leavers Unemployed before and Employment after and all FE Leavers in Employment - How individuals had heard about their FE Course (2014/15)



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

Unemployed before and Employment after FE Course n = 83; In Employment after n=1,726.

## Main reasons for undertaking the course

The three most popular reasons for FE Leavers unemployed before employment undertaking their course were: 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' (84.3%); 'to learn something new/gain new skills' (79.5%); and, 'personal interest in the course' (65.1%).

Compared with all the FE Leavers in employment, higher proportions of those unemployed before their FE Course said they did their FE Course 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' (84.3% compared with 64.2%), and 'because I did not have to pay for it' (24.1% compared with 17.8%) (Tables 15 and A12).

**Table 15** Comparison: FE Leavers Unemployed before and Employment after and all FE Leavers in Employment - Main reasons for undertaking FE Course (2014/15)

| Reason  | Unemployed before and In employment after | In Employment after (%) |
|---|---|-------------------------|
| To improve my job prospects or get a new job/career     | 84.3%                                     | 64.2%                   |
| To learn something new/gain new skills                  | 79.5%                                     | 70.7%                   |
| I have/had a personal interest in the course            | 65.1%                                     | 63.7%                   |
| To gain a qualification                                 | 62.7%                                     | 59.4%                   |
| Because it was at a time/place that suited me           | 43.4%                                     | 43.0%                   |
| To meet new people and build my self confidence         | 42.2%                                     | 33.0%                   |
| To go on to further or higher learning                  | 41.0%                                     | 38.4%                   |
| Because I did not have to pay for it                    | 24.1%                                     | 17.8%                   |
| To get more job satisfaction                            | 21.7%                                     | 28.8%                   |
| To increase my income                                   | 16.9%                                     | 21.6%                   |
| To improve my ability to do my current job              | 14.5%                                     | 35.7%                   |
| To improve my job security                              | 14.5%                                     | 22.3%                   |
| To get a promotion                                      | 6.0%                                      | 11.9%                   |
| I was required to attend course by my employer          | 4.8%                                      | 12.3%                   |
| It was mandatory  | 1.2%                                      | 6.5%                    |
| To help/support my children/grandchildren with homework | 1.2%                                      | 2.3%                    |
| Other reason  | 0.0%                                      | 1.0%                    |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

Unemployed before and In Employment after FE Course n = 83; In Employment after n=1,727.

## Using skills and knowledge acquired in course?

Almost two-thirds (65.0%) of the FE Leavers unemployed before employment stated they were using the skills and knowledge acquired at least to some extent in their jobs; in particular, 28.9% said 'to a great extent' (Table A20).

## Subject area

Just over half (51.9%) of the FE Leavers unemployed before employment after their course had studied one of three subject areas: 'Preparation for life and work' (21.7%); 'Health, public services and care' (16.9); and 'Information and communication technology' (13.3%) (Table A21).

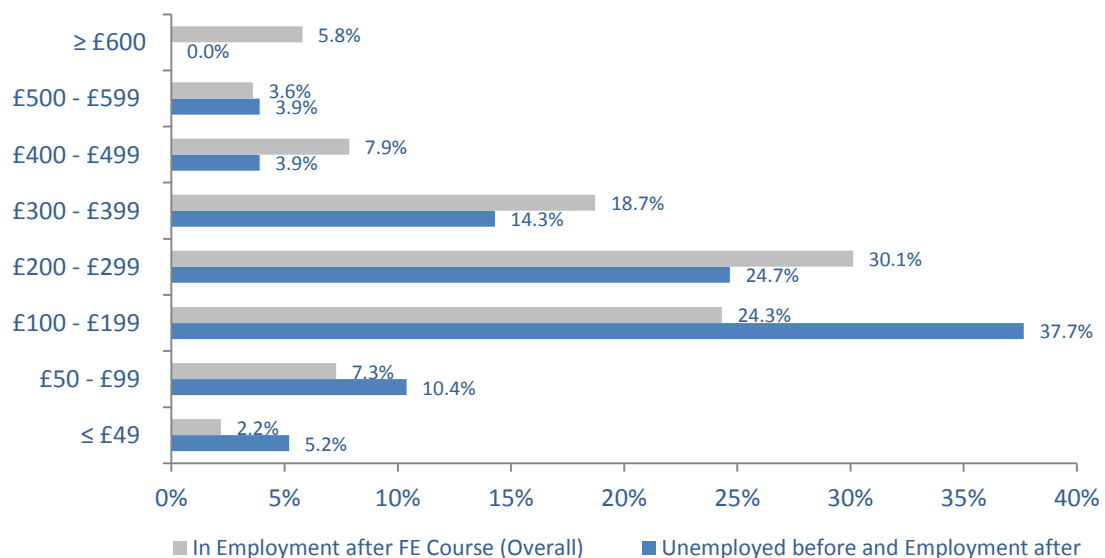
## Is the job in the same subject area as the course?

Less than half (44.6%) had studied a course in the same subject area as their job (Table A22).

## Usual take home pay

Most (92.3%) of the FE Leavers unemployed before employment earned less than £400 per week; 15.6% earned less than £100 per week. In contrast, of all the FE Leavers in employment after their FE Course, 82.6% earned less than £400 per week and 9.5% less than £100 (Figure 13 and Table A30).

**Figure 13** Comparison: FE Leavers Unemployed before and Employment after and all FE Leavers in Employment - Pay bands (2014/15)



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

Please note that pay information was not available for 7.2% of those Unemployed before and In Employment after; of all those In Employment after their FE Course, pay information was not available for 9.7%.



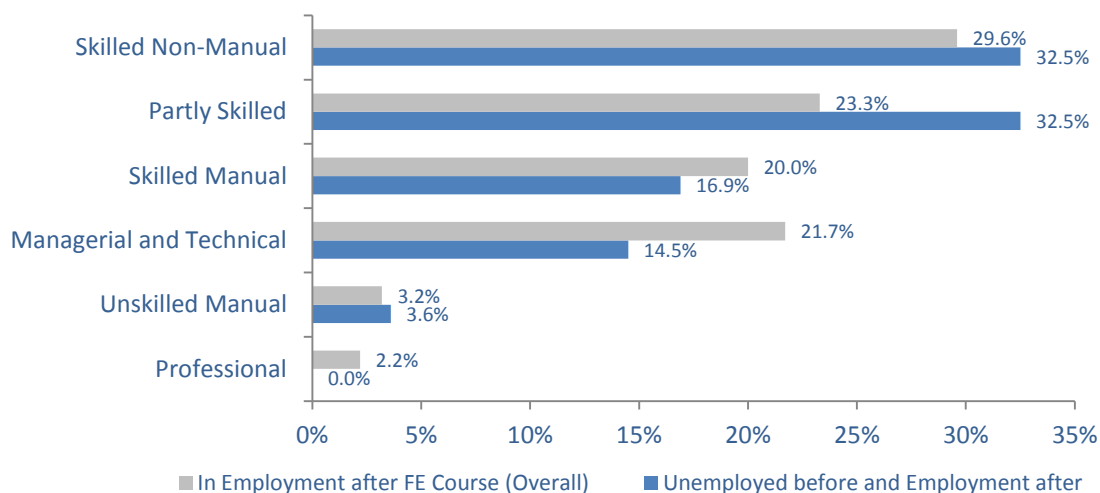
## Paid employment or self-employed?

The majority (94.0%) of the 83 FE Leavers who moved from unemployment into employment were in paid employment; 6.0% were self-employed. This proportion self-employed, along with those employed before and after their FE Course, represented the highest proportion of employed FE Leavers in self-employment (**Table A16**).

## National Statistics Socio Economic Classification

Almost half (49.4%) of the FE Leavers who had moved from unemployment into employment were in skilled jobs: 32.5% were 'Skilled Non-Manual' and 16.9% were 'Skilled Manual'. A further third (32.5%) worked in jobs classed as 'Partly Skilled'; this was the largest 'Partly Skilled' sub-group of all the employment sub-groups (**Figure 14** and **Table A18**).

**Figure 14** Comparison: FE Leavers Unemployed before and Employment after and all FE Leavers in Employment - National Statistics Socio Economic Classification (2014/15)



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

Unemployed before and In Employment after FE Course n = 83; In Employment after FE Course (Overall) n=1,711.

## Obtain employment without course?

Over one-third (36.2%) of the FE Leavers who had been unemployed before employment said they probably/definitely would not have obtained their job without completing the FE Course. Of these, 22.9% said they *definitely* could *not* have obtained their job without their FE Course (**Table A19**).

## Working pattern?

Compared with all other employment sub-groups, more of FE Leavers who had moved from unemployment into employment were working part-time (44.6%). Just over half of the FE Leavers unemployed before employment worked full-time (53.0%) (**Table A23**).

**Box 6 FE Leavers Unemployed before and Employment after: Non economic benefits (2014/15)**

**Box 6** provides an overview of these findings for FE Leavers unemployed before employment.

**Positive Impact? (n=82)**

Almost all (97.5%) of the FE Leavers unemployed before employment said that their course has ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ had a ‘positive impact’ on them; this included 76.8% who said their course has definitely had a positive impact on them (**Table A46**).

**Gain anything from Learning? (n=78)**

The three most popular responses were: ‘boosting their confidence’ (84.6%); ‘making new friends/meeting new people’ (80.8%); and ‘increased self-esteem’ (66.7%) (**Table A48**).

**Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=82)**

Most (85.4%) of FE Leavers unemployed before employment agreed that they have become ‘more enthusiastic about learning’ as a result of completing their course (**Table A50**).

**Better Idea What to Do in Your Life? (n=82)**

Approximately three-fifths (61.0%) of this group agreed that as a result of their FE Course they have a ‘better idea what to do in life’ (**Table A52**).

**Improved Quality of Life? (n=82)**

Approximately three-fifths (60.9%) agreed that completing their FE Course has ‘improved their quality of life’ (**Table A54**).

**Undertake Further Learning & Training? (n=82); At a Higher Level? (n=104)**

Almost four-fifths (79.3%) agreed that as a result of their FE Course they are ‘more likely to undertake further learning and training’ (**Table A56**). Almost three-quarters (74.1%) agreed they are more likely to do so at a ‘higher level’ (**Table A58**).

*Findings by Employment sub-groups, Learning and Unemployment are available in the [FE Leaver Survey Report Excel Tables 2014/15](#) [Tables A46, A48, A50, A52, A54, A56, & A58].*

## Summary for 2014/15 FE Leavers Unemployed before and in Employment after

**This section is based on small numbers - findings should be used with caution.**

Of the 1,727 FE Leavers in Employment after FE Course completion and achievement, 83 (4.8%) had been unemployed before the course ([Chart 1](#)).

The three most common ways the group unemployed before employment had **heard about the FE Course** were: through the 'FE College' itself (34.9%); via 'a friend/relative' (25.3%); and through the 'Internet' (15.7%) ([Figure 12](#)).

The three most common **reasons for undertaking the FE Course** had been: 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' (84.3%); 'to learn something new/gain new skills' (79.5%); and 'personal interest in the course' (65.1%). A much higher proportion of those previously unemployed cited 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' than all those employed after completing the FE Course (84.3% compared with 64.2%) ([Table 15](#)).

Almost two-thirds (65.0%) of those unemployed before employment stated they were **using the skills and knowledge acquired** in their jobs at least to some extent ([Table A20](#)).

Less than half (44.6%) of the FE Leavers unemployed before employment had **studied a course in the same subject area as their job** ([Table A22](#)). Most (94.0%) of the FE Leavers unemployed before employment were in paid employment; 6.0% were self-employed ([Table A16](#)). Almost half (49.4%) of the FE Leavers who moved from unemployment into employment were working in skilled jobs: 32.5% were 'Skilled Non-Manual' and 16.9% were 'Skilled Manual'. A further third (32.5%) were working in jobs classed as 'Partly Skilled' ([Figure 14](#)). Most (92.3%) of the FE Leavers unemployed before employment earned less than £400 per week; 15.6% earned less than £100 per week ([Figure 13](#)).

Over one-third (36.2%) of the FE Leavers previously unemployed said they probably/definitely would not have **obtained their job** without the FE Course. Of these, 22.9% said they definitely would not have obtained their job without their FE Course ([Table A19](#)).

The perceived **non-economic benefit** statements most likely to be cited by FE Leavers who had moved from unemployment into employment were: 'boosting their confidence' (84.6%); 'making new friends/meet new people' (80.8%); and 'increased self-esteem' (66.7%) ([Box 6](#)).

Over four-fifths (85.4%) agreed that as a result of completing their course they have become 'more enthusiastic about learning'. Almost four-fifths (79.3%) agreed they are more likely to 'undertake further learning and training' and 74.1% agreed they are more likely to do so at a 'higher level'. Just over three-fifths (61.0%) agreed that their 'quality of life' has improved. A similar proportion (60.9%) agreed they have a 'better idea about what they want to do in their life'. Almost all (97.6%) of the FE Leavers unemployed before employment, said the course they completed in 2014/15 has had a 'positive impact' on them ([Box 6](#)).

## FE Leavers in Employment: Cross Year Comparison (Academic Years 2013/14 - 2014/15)

This section provides a cross year comparison of the FE Leavers who said their main activity was employment. **Table 16** provides an overview of all FE Leavers in employment. **Table 17** compares cross year findings on how FE Leavers in employment had heard about their course, reasons for doing their course, and job characteristics. **Table 18** summarises the progression of the FE Leavers employed with the same employer before and after their FE Course. **Table 19** overviews the non economic benefits of FE Course completion for all the FE Leavers in employment.

Data for each year are available in the [FE Leaver Survey Excel Tables](#).

**Note:** some sections are based on small numbers (<100). These findings should be used with caution.

**Table 16** Overview: FE Leavers in Employment and Employment Sub-Groups 2013/14 - 2014/15

| Employment After  | Academic Year |         |
|---|---------------|---------|
|   | 2013/14       | 2014/15 |
| Number In Employment after * [Table 3]                      | 1,834         | 1,727   |
| Proportion of all FE Leavers [Table 3]                      | 47.5%         | 46.7%   |
| Number In Employment before [Table 4]                       | 1,469         | 1,355   |
| <b>Sub-groups of those In Employment after [Table A16]:</b> |               |         |
| Employment Before   | 1,246         | 1,166   |
| Same Employer Before  | 845           | 839     |
| Different Employer Before                                   | N/A           | 242     |
| In Learning Before  | 413           | 419     |
| Unemployed Before   | 105           | 83      |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Notes:

Counts vary by question.

Data on FE Leavers who changed employer were not reported for 2013/14.

**Table 17 Comparison: FE Leavers in Employment 2013/14 - 2014/15**

| In Employment after  | Academic Year  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  | 2013/14  | 2014/15   |
| How did individuals hear about their FE Course? (top three ways) [Table A06]                     | FE College (31.6%)                                   | FE College (32.0%)  |
|  | Internet (19.3%)                                     | Internet (20.7%)  |
|  | Friend/Relative (17.8%)                              | Friend/Relative (20.0%)   |
| Main Reasons for undertaking FE Course? (top three reasons) [Table A12]                          | To learn something new/gain new skills (63.4%)       | To learn something new/gain new skills (70.7%)                                      |
|  | To improve my job prospects or get a new job (61.9%) | To improve my job prospects or get a new job (64.2%)                                |
|  | I have/had a personal interest in the course (58.3%) | I have/had a personal interest in the course (63.7%)                                |
| Employee or Self-employed*? [Table A16]  | Employee (90.5%)<br>Self-Employed (9.5%)             | Employee (94.4%)<br>Self-Employed (5.2%)<br>Waiting to start a confirmed job (0.3%) |
| Have Job in same subject area as FE Course [Table A22]   | 56.6%  | 57.2%   |
| National Statistics Socio Economic Classification? (NSSEC) (top three) [Table A18]               | Skilled Manual (26.2%)                               | Skilled Non-Manual (29.6%)  |
|  | Partly Skilled (24.6%)                               | Partly Skilled (23.3%)  |
|  | Skilled Non-Manual (22.9%)                           | Managerial and Technical (21.7%)  |
| % Working in Northern Ireland (NI) and the Republic of Ireland (ROI) [Table A17]                 | NI (95.1%)<br>ROI (3.9%)                             | NI (96.3%)<br>ROI (2.3%)  |
| Probably/definitely <b>would not</b> have obtained/stayed in work without FE Course? [Table A19] | 25.6%  | 25.7%   |
| Working Pattern? [Table A23]   | 70.4% full-time<br>29.6% part-time                   | 70.8% full-time<br>27.2% part-time<br>2.0% missing                                  |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Note:

Counts vary by question.

#### Comment:

With the exception of NSSEC, findings were broadly similar across academic years. In comparison with the 2013/14 academic year, a higher proportion of 2014/15 FE Leavers were working in jobs classed as 'Skilled Non-Manual' (29.6% compared with 22.9%) and a lower proportion 'Skilled Manual' (20.0% compared with 26.2%).

**Table 18 Comparison: Progression within Employment (Same Employer) 2013/14 - 2014/15**

| In Employment after   | Academic Year |         |
|---|---------------|---------|
|   | 2013/14       | 2014/15 |
| Employment Before [Table A16]   | 1,246         | 1,166   |
| Same Employer Before [Table A16]  | 845           | 839     |
| <b>Same Employer</b>  |               |         |
| Better at job [Table A24]   | 62.7%         | 59.5%   |
| Probably/definitely <b>not</b> better at job without the course [Table A25]                                 | 39.8%         | 73.0%   |
| Doing a job with more responsibilities [Table A26]  | 29.3%         | 23.2%   |
| Probably/definitely <b>not</b> doing a job with more responsibilities <u>without</u> the course [Table A27] | 45.1%         | 62.1%   |
| Promoted [Table A28]  | 12.2%         | 8.7%    |
| Probably/definitely <b>not</b> promoted <u>without</u> the course [Table A29]                               | 55.4%         | 67.1%   |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Note:

Counts vary by question.

**Comment:**

With the exception of the questions attributing progression in employment to FE Course completion, findings were broadly similar across academic years. In comparison with the 2013/14 academic year, higher proportions of 2014/15 FE Leavers said they were: 'probably/definitely **not** better at job without the course' (73.0% compared with 39.8%); were 'probably/definitely **not** doing a job with more responsibilities without the course' (62.1% compared with 45.1%); and had 'probably/definitely **not** been promoted without the course' (67.1% compared with 55.4%). Please note: question wording was refined for 2014/15.

**Table 19 Comparison: Non Economic Benefits for FE Leavers in Employment 2013/14 - 2014/15**

| In Employment after   | Academic Year                              |  |
|---|--|--|
|   | 2013/14                                    | 2014/15                                    |
| Probably/definitely positive impact [Table A46]   | 94.1%                                      | 95.6%                                      |
| Gains (top three) [Table A48]   | Boosted my confidence (77.4%)              | Boosted my confidence (82.0%)              |
|   | I made new friends/meet new people (70.2%) | I made new friends/meet new people (79.0%) |
|   | Increased my self-esteem (63.3%)           | Increased my self-esteem (63.7%)           |
| More enthusiastic about learning [Table A50]  | 83.0%                                      | 80.5%                                      |
| Better idea what to do in life [Table A52]  | 65.7%                                      | 62.8%                                      |
| Improved quality of life [Table A54]  | 57.1%                                      | 53.9%                                      |
| More likely to undertake further learning and training [Table A56]                          | 81.8%                                      | 79.3%                                      |
| More likely to undertake further learning and training <u>at a higher level</u> [Table A58] | 75.1%                                      | 71.0%                                      |
| Recommend completing a course in further education to a friend [Table A60]                  | 98.1%                                      | 97.7%                                      |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Note:

Counts vary by question.

**Comment:**

Findings were broadly similar across academic years.

### 3.3 FE Leavers in Learning Six Months after

This section presents findings for the FE Leavers in Learning six months after their FE Course.

After an overview of their main activity before the FE Course, this section presents findings on: how FE Leavers in additional learning had heard about their 2014/15 FE Course; their reasons for undertaking the 2014/15 course; and their learner progression. Learner progression includes: where they were doing their new learning; the level of new learning compared with the FE Course they completed and achieved in 2014/15; whether the new learning is in the same subject area as their FE Course; the mode of attendance for the new learning; whether their additional learning could have been done without their FE Course; whether their additional learning is helping them to obtain the sort of job wanted; and perceived non-economic benefits reported.

**Note: some sections are based on small numbers (<100). These findings should be used with caution.**

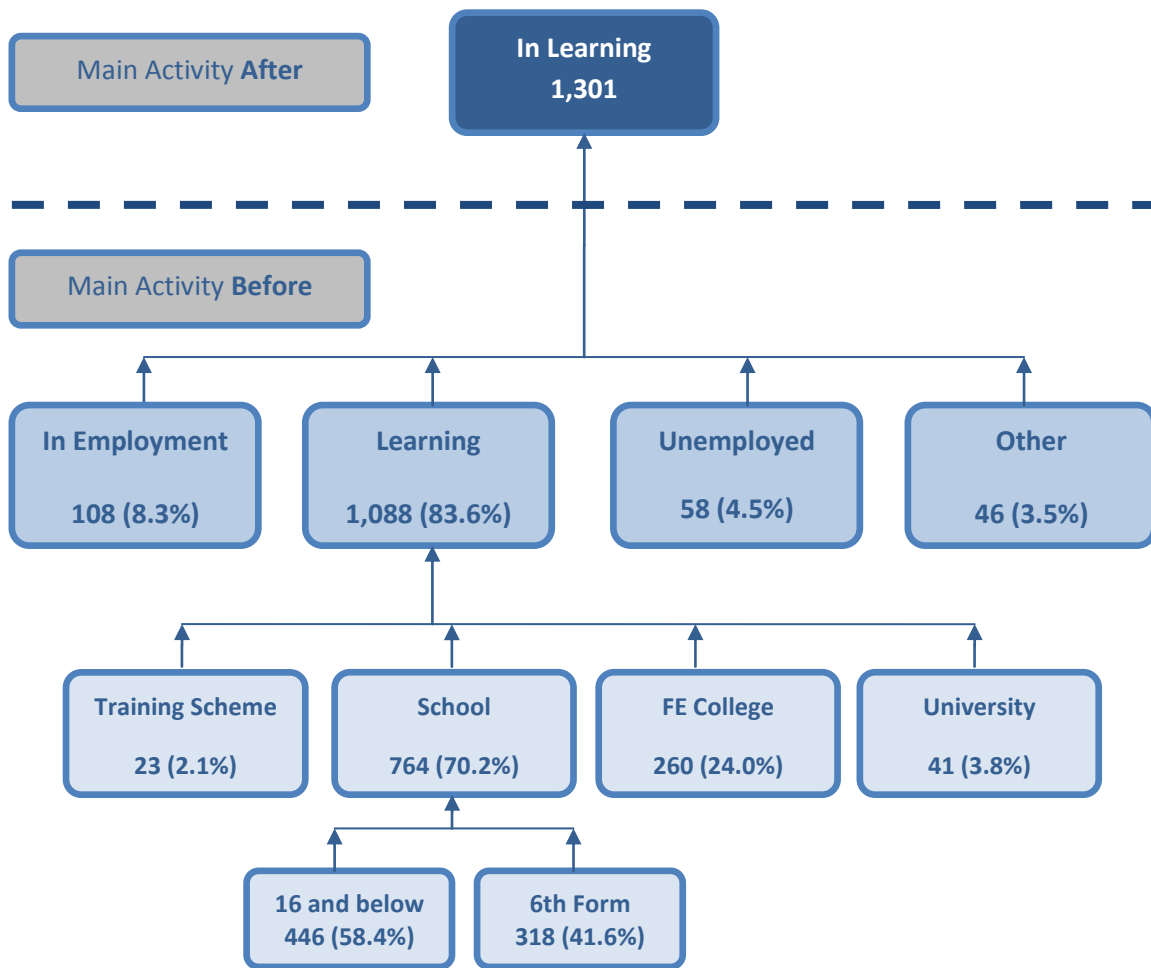
#### Overview of Main Activity before

Of the 1,301 FE Learners in learning six months after achieving a regulated qualification:

- 108 (8.3%) had previously been in Employment
- 1,088 (83.6%) had previously been in Learning
- 58 (4.5%) had previously been Unemployed
- 46 (3.5%) had previously been categorised as Other
- 1 (0.1%) did not know ([Chart 6](#)).



Chart 6 FE Leavers in Learning (1,301): Main activity before (2014/15)



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

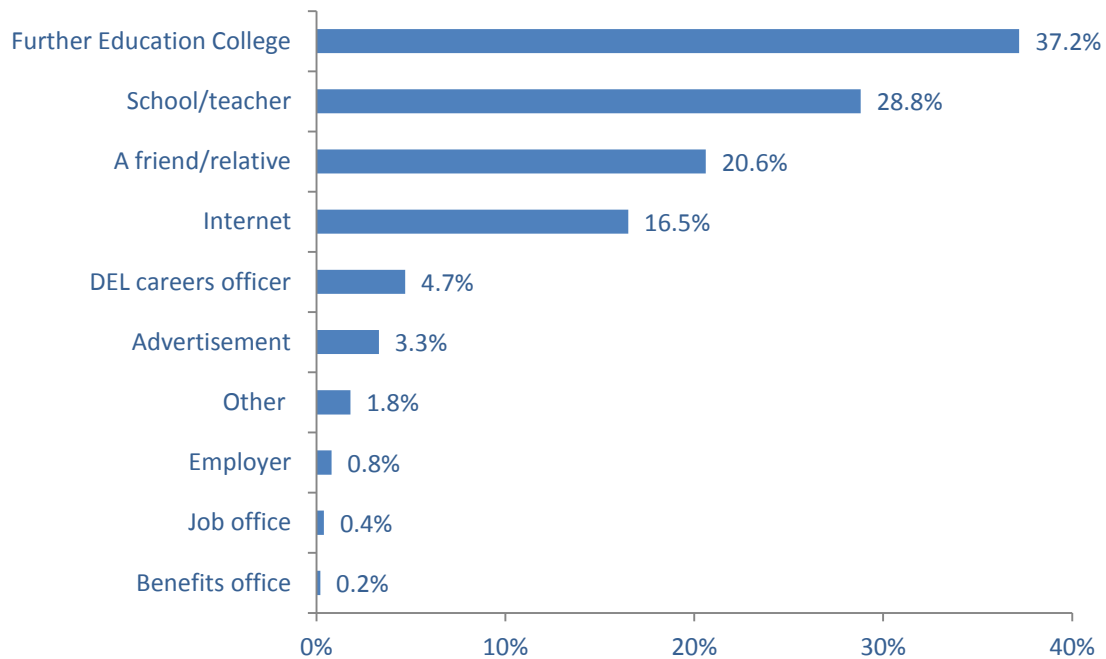
*n* = 1301.

Note: 'Main Activity Before' completing course excludes one respondent who did not know.  
 'Training Scheme' includes four respondents waiting to start a scheme/training scheme.  
 'University' includes one respondent waiting to start a confirmed course at university.

## How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. The three most common ways of hearing about their course had been: through the 'FE College' itself (37.2%); through their 'School/teacher' (28.8%); and through 'A friend/relative' (20.6%) (Figure 15 and Table A06).

**Figure 15** *FE Leavers in Learning: How individuals had heard about their FE Course (2014/15)*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 1,300.

## Main reasons for undertaking the course

The three most popular reasons for undertaking a course were: ‘to learn something new/gain new skills’ (65.3%); ‘personal interest in the course’ (62.5%); and ‘to gain a qualification’ (61.8%) (Table 20).

**Table 20** *FE Leavers in Learning: Main reasons for undertaking FE Course (2014/15)*

| Reason  | %     |
|---|-------|
| To learn something new/gain new skills                  | 65.3% |
| I have/had a personal interest in the course            | 62.5% |
| To gain a qualification                                 | 61.8% |
| To go on to further or higher learning                  | 61.7% |
| To improve my job prospects or get a new job/career     | 57.2% |
| Because it was at a time/place that suited me           | 40.2% |
| To meet new people and build my self confidence         | 37.3% |
| Because I did not have to pay for it                    | 21.1% |
| To get more job satisfaction                            | 11.1% |
| To increase my income                                   | 10.1% |
| It was mandatory  | 6.9%  |
| To improve my job security                              | 6.4%  |
| To improve my ability to do my current job              | 5.5%  |
| To get a promotion                                      | 3.7%  |
| I was required to attend course by my employer          | 1.7%  |
| Other reason  | 0.7%  |
| To help/support my children/grandchildren with homework | 0.5%  |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 1,301.

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## Learning Progression

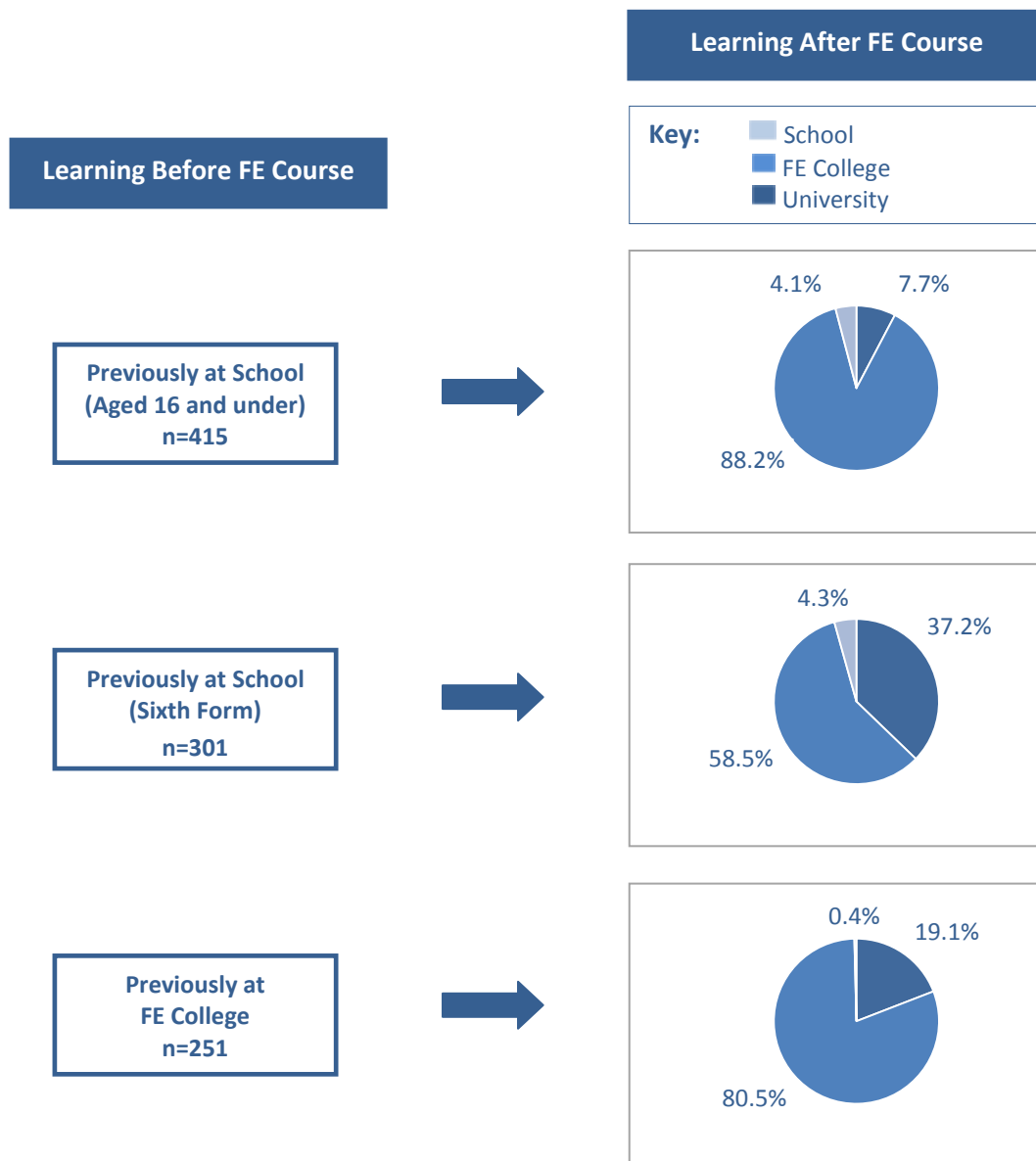
### FE Leavers in learning before and after FE Course

Of the 1,301 FE Leavers in learning six months after their FE Course, over four-fifths (83.6%) had also been in learning before the course they completed in 2014/15 ([Chart 6](#)).

[Figure 16](#) illustrates some of the previous main learning activities of this group and the location of the additional learning undertaken after FE Course completion ([Table A39](#)).

Six months after completing and achieving their FE Course, most FE Leavers in learning were continuing their learning at a FE College (71.5%), while over one-quarter (26.0%) had moved to university. Although this excludes information on the 62 FE Leavers who had progressed from a training scheme or were waiting to start a confirmed scheme / course at university, together these findings indicate the clear learning progression role of the FE Sector for FE Leavers ([Table A38](#)).

**Figure 16** FE Leavers in Learning before and after FE Course: Main activity before FE Course and location of additional learning (2014/15)



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15

Notes:

Due to small numbers, this excludes FE Leavers in Learning previously on a training scheme, or waiting to start a confirmed scheme, or at university.

## Studying at a higher level

Overall, over four-fifths (81.1%) of FE Leavers in learning said their additional learning would lead to a qualification that is higher than the learning they had undertaken in 2014/15 (**Table A35**).

Of the FE Leavers in learning who had been at school or FE College before their 2014/15 FE Course, at least three-quarters of each group progressed to additional learning at a higher level after their FE Course (**Table 21**).

**Table 21** FE Leavers in Learning before and after FE Course: Progression to study at a higher level (by location of learning) (2014/15)

| Main Activity (Learning) before FE Course | Attending additional Learning after FE Course at: |            |        | Total (Before) | Undertaking additional learning at a higher level |
|---|---|------------|--------|----------------|---|
|   | University  | FE College | School |                |   |
| At school aged 16 or below                | 7.7%  | 88.2%      | 4.1%   | 415            | 75.4%   |
| At school in sixth form                   | 37.2%   | 58.5%      | 4.3%   | 301            | 87.4%   |
| At a FE college                           | 19.1%   | 80.5%      | 0.4%   | 251            | 76.9%   |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2015.

Note: Excludes FE Leavers whose main activity before the FE Course had been 'On a scheme/training scheme'; 'Waiting to start a confirmed scheme'; or 'Waiting to start a confirmed course at college/university'; or 'At a university'.

## Studying at the same level

Of the FE Leavers asked about their additional learning, 15.9% said their learning would lead to a qualification at the same level as the learning they had undertaken in 2014/15 (**Table A35**).

## Same subject area as the FE Course?

Overall, of the 1,272 FE Leavers in learning (on a training scheme, at school, college or university) six months after their FE Course, almost three-quarters (73.3%) were continuing their learning in the same subject area as the FE Course they had completed in 2014/15 (**Table 22**). Three subject areas accounted for the learning of over half (51.6%) of this group: 'Preparation for life and work' (26.4%); 'Health, public services and care' (13.9%); and 'Information and communication technology' (11.3%).

By subject area, at least half of the respondents in each were studying in the same subject area after FE Course completion. The exception was 'Languages, literature and culture' (46.2%). Perhaps further indicating the gateway role of FE for individuals was that in eight of fifteen subject areas at least four-fifths of respondents were undertaking additional learning in the same subject as their 2014/15 FE Course (**Table 22**).

**Table 22** *FE Leavers in Learning - Subject area studied and if course in the same subject area (2014/15)*

| Subject Area                                     | % of All Subjects<br>(n=1,272) | % now studying in<br>same subject area<br>(n=933) |
|--|--------------------------------|---|
| Preparation for life and work                    | 26.4                           | 55.7  |
| Health, public services and care                 | 13.9                           | 85.3  |
| Information and communication technology         | 11.3                           | 74.3  |
| Arts, media and publishing                       | 9.7                            | 94.4  |
| Leisure, travel and tourism                      | 7.2                            | 86.8  |
| Retail and commercial enterprise                 | 6.4                            | 64.2  |
| Engineering and manufacturing technologies       | 5.9                            | 89.3  |
| Science and mathematics                          | 5.4                            | 81.2  |
| Business, administration and law                 | 5.2                            | 63.6  |
| Social sciences                                  | 2.4                            | 54.8  |
| Construction, planning and the built environment | 2.3                            | 96.6  |
| Languages, literature and culture                | 2.0                            | 46.2  |
| History, philosophy and theology                 | 0.9                            | 54.8  |
| Agriculture, horticulture and animal care        | 0.6                            | 100.0   |
| Education and training                           | 0.2                            | 100.0   |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>100.0</b>                   | <b>73.3</b>                                       |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

Note: Excludes FE Leavers in Learning waiting to start a training scheme or confirmed university course.

## Mode of attendance

Overall, the mode of attendance of the FE Leavers in learning who had gone on to additional learning differed to the FE Course completed in 2014/15. The proportion studying full-time more than doubled from 39.8% for the FE Course to 88.3% for the additional learning (**Tables A32 and A33**).

## Undertake additional learning without FE Course?

Almost two-thirds (63.1%) of FE Leavers in additional learning (at a school, FE College or university) said they probably/definitely could not have undertaken their current learning or training without the FE Course they had completed and achieved in 2014/15 (**Table A40**).

## Additional learning helping me to obtain the sort of job I want?

Most (83.5%) of the FE Leavers in additional learning (at a school, FE College or university) said that their additional learning was helping them to obtain the sort of job they wanted. Although 12.2% were 'unsure' if their additional learning was helping them get the sort of job they wanted, the proportion who said 'no' was small (4.3%) (**Table A43**).

**Box 7 FE Leavers in Learning: Non economic benefits (2014/15)**

**Box 7** provides an overview of these findings for FE Leavers in learning approximately six months after completing and achieving their FE Course.

**Positive Impact? (n=1,300)**

The majority (96.0%) of FE Leavers in learning said that their course has had a 'positive impact' on them; this included 80.2% who said their course has definitely had a positive impact on them (**Table A46**).

**Gain anything from Learning? (n=1,238)**

The three most popular responses included: 'boosting their confidence' (85.4%); 'making new friends/ meeting new people' (83.8%); and 'increased self-esteem' (68.6%) (**Table A48**).

**Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=1,298)**

Most (88.0%) of FE Leavers in learning agreed that they have become 'more enthusiastic about learning as a result of completing their course' (**Table A50**).

**Better Idea What to Do in Your Life? (n=1,299)**

Over four-fifths (84.6%) of the FE Leavers in learning agreed that, as a result of their FE Course, they have a 'better idea what to do in life' (**Table A52**).

**Improved Quality of Life? (n=1,299)**

Over two-thirds (68.0%) agreed that completing their FE Course has 'improved their quality of life' (**Table A54**).

**Undertake Further Learning & Training? (n=1,299); At a Higher Level? (n=1,299)**

The majority (91.4%) agreed that, as a result of their course, they are 'more likely to undertake further learning and training' (**Table A56**). Similarly, the majority (88.8%) also agreed they are more likely to do so at a 'higher level' (**Table A58**).

*Findings by Employment sub-groups, Learning and Unemployment are available in the [FE Leaver Survey Report Excel Tables 2014/15](#) [Tables A46, A48, A50, A52, A54, A56, & A58].*



## Summary for 2014/15 FE Leavers in Learning after

As a proportion of FE Leavers, learning as a main activity had decreased by over nine percentage points (9.4%) after FE Course completion and achievement. Before taking their FE Course, the main activity of 44.6% of survey respondents was learning. Approximately six months after FE Course completion and achievement, 35.2% said their main activity was learning ([Table 3](#)).

Over four-fifths (83.6%) of FE Leavers in learning after their FE Course had also been in learning before their FE Course; 8.3% had been in employment; 4.5% had been unemployed; and 3.5% had been other ([Chart 6](#)).

Almost four-fifths of the FE Leavers still in learning were under 20 years of age. Three-fifths (60.2%) had studied their FE Course on a part-time basis. Over four-fifths (81.8%) had studied their FE Course at Level 2 (39.6%) or Level 3 (42.2%) ([Table A61](#)).

The three most common ways FE Leavers in learning had **heard about the course** had been: through the 'FE College' (37.2%); a 'School/teacher' (28.8%); and a 'friend/relative' (20.6%) ([Figure 15](#)).

The three most common **reasons for undertaking the course** had been: 'to learn something new/gain new skills' (65.3%); 'personal interest in the course' (62.5%); and, 'to gain a qualification' (61.8%) ([Table 20](#)).

Four-fifths (80.0%) of the FE Leavers in additional learning at a school, college or university said their **learning would lead to a qualification at a higher level** than the FE Course they had completed in 2014/15 ([Table A35](#)). Almost three-quarters (73.3%) of the 1,272 FE Leavers in learning (on a training scheme, at school, college or university) had **continued their learning in the same subject area** as the FE Course they had completed in 2014/15 ([Table 22](#)). The **mode of attendance** for most (88.3%) of the FE Leavers who had gone on to additional learning was full-time. The proportion studying full-time had more than doubled, increasing from 39.8% to 88.3% for the additional learning ([Tables A32 and A33](#)). Almost three-quarters (71.5%) of the FE Leavers in learning had **continued their learning** at a FE College ([Table A38](#)). Over one-quarter (26.0%) had changed to a university. Almost two-thirds (63.1%) said they **probably/definitely could not have undertaken their additional learning without the FE Course** they had completed and achieved in 2014/15 ([Table A40](#)).

The perceived **non-economic benefit** statements most likely to be cited by FE Leavers in additional learning included: 'boosting their confidence' (85.4%); 'making new friends/meet new people' (83.8%); and 'increased self-esteem' (68.6%) ([Box 7](#)).

Most (88.1%) FE Leavers in learning agreed, that as a result of completing their course, they have become 'more enthusiastic about learning'. Most (91.5%) agreed they are more likely to 'undertake further learning and training' with most (88.8%) also agreeing they are more likely to do so 'at a higher level'. Most (84.6%) agreed they have a 'better idea about what they want to do in their life'. Over two-thirds (68.0%) agreed that their 'quality of life' has improved. Almost all (96.0%) of the FE Leavers in learning said the course they had completed in 2014/15 has had a 'positive impact' on them ([Box 7](#)).

## FE Leavers in Learning: Cross Year Comparison (Academic Years 2013/14 - 2014/15)

This section provides a cross year comparison of the FE Leavers in Learning. **Table 23** provides an overview of all FE Leavers in Learning. **Table 24** compares cross year findings on how FE Leavers in learning had heard about their course and reasons for doing their course. **Table 25** summarises the learning progression of FE Leavers in additional learning. **Table 26** overviews the non economic benefits of FE Course completion for all the FE Leavers in learning.

Data for each year are available in the [FE Leaver Survey Excel Tables](#).

**Note:** some sections are based on small numbers (<100). These findings should be used with caution.

**Table 23** Overview: FE Leavers in Learning 2013/14 -2014/15

| Learning after   | Academic Year |         |
|--|---------------|---------|
|  | 2013/14       | 2014/15 |
| Number in Learning After * [Table 3]                             | 1,315         | 1,301   |
| Proportion of all FE Leavers [Table 3]                           | 34.1%         | 35.2%   |
| Number in Learning Before [Table 3]                              | 1,642         | 1,648   |
| <b>Main Activity of FE Leavers in Learning Before [Chart 6]:</b> |               |         |
| Employment   | 129           | 108     |
| Learning   | 1,080         | 1,088   |
| On a training Scheme   | 13            | 19      |
| Waiting to start a scheme/training scheme                        | NA            | 4       |
| At School (aged 16 and below)                                    | 441           | 446     |
| At School (sixth form)   | 292           | 318     |
| FE College   | 334           | 260     |
| At a University  |               | 40      |
| Waiting to start a confirmed course at university                | NA            | 1       |
| Unemployed   | 50            | 58      |
| Other  | 56            | 46      |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Notes:

Counts vary by question.

Due to refinement of main activity options available to respondents, caution should be exercised when comparing all FE Leavers in Learning across academic years. In addition to separating 'FE College' and 'University' the following main activities were introduced for the 2014/15 academic year: 'Waiting to start a scheme/training scheme' and 'Waiting to start a confirmed course at university'. 'NA' indicates these options as not applicable.

**Table 24 Comparison: FE Leavers in Learning 2013/14 - 2014/15**

| Learning after   | Academic Year  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | 2013/14  | 2014/15  |
| <b>How did individuals hear about their FE Course? (top three ways)</b><br>[Table A06] | FE College (35.8%)                                   | FE College (37.2%)                                   |
|  | School/teacher (28.7%)                               | School/teacher (28.8%)                               |
|  | Internet (16.7%);<br>Friend/Relative (16.7%)         | Friend/Relative (20.6%)                              |
| <b>Main Reasons for undertaking FE Course? (top three reasons)</b><br>[Table A12]      | I have/had a personal interest in the course (62.3%) | To learn something new/gain new skills (65.3%)       |
|  | To go on to further or higher learning (60.6%)       | I have/had a personal interest in the course (62.5%) |
|  | To learn something new/gain new skills (60.4%)       | To gain a qualification (61.8%)                      |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Note:

Counts vary by question.

**Comment:**

Findings were broadly similar across academic years.

**Table 25 Comparison: Learner Progression 2013/14 - 2014/15**

| Learning after   | Academic Year                   |                                 |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|  | 2013/14                         | 2014/15                         |
| In Learning After                                      | 1,315                           | 1,301                           |
| In Learning Before and After                           | 1,080                           | 1,088                           |
| <b>Additional Learning</b>                             |                                 |                                 |
| Location of Learning [Table A38]                       | <i>n</i> =1,258                 | <i>n</i> =1,216                 |
|  | FE College 73.3%                | FE College 71.5%                |
|  | University 24.2%                | University 26.0%                |
|  | School 2.5%                     | School 2.5%                     |
| Mode of Attendance for FE Course [Table A32]           | <i>n</i> =1,315                 | <i>n</i> =1,301                 |
|  | Full-time 43.5%                 | Full-time 60.2%                 |
|  | Part-time 56.5%                 | Part-time 39.8%                 |
| Mode of Attendance for additional learning [Table A33] | Full-time 86.9%                 | Full-time 88.3%                 |
|  | Part-time 13.1%                 | Part-time 11.7%                 |
| Level of Study compared with FE Course [Table A35]     | <i>n</i> =1,315                 | <i>n</i> =1,216                 |
|  | Higher 81.4%                    | Higher 81.1%                    |
|  | Lower 1.4%                      | Lower 1.0%                      |
|  | Same 15.5%                      | Same 15.9%                      |
|  | Unsure 17.0%                    | Unsure 2.1%                     |
| Studying in the same subject as FE Course [Table 22]   | <i>n</i> =1,260                 | <i>n</i> =933                   |
|  | 71.0%                           | 73.3%                           |
| Undertake without FE Course [Table A40]                | <i>n</i> =1,314                 | <i>n</i> =1,272                 |
|  | Yes (definitely/probably) 36.9% | Yes (definitely/probably) 33.9% |
|  | No (definitely/probably) 60.4%  | No (definitely/probably) 63.1%  |
|  | Unsure 2.7%                     | Unsure 3.0%                     |
| Helping get me the sort of job I want [Table A43 ]     | NA                              | <i>n</i> =1,272                 |
|  |                                 | Yes 83.5%                       |
|  |                                 | No 4.3%                         |
|  |                                 | Unsure 12.2%                    |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Notes:

Counts vary by question.

Due to refinement of main activity options available to respondents, caution should be exercised when comparing all FE Leavers in Learning across academic years. Not all sub-groups are asked the same questions. 'Is this additional learning helping you to get the sort of job you want?' was introduced for the 2014/15 academic year. 'NA' indicates these options as not applicable.

#### Comment:

Caution is needed when making direct comparison of question responses across years. This is because of steps taken to refine and improve the survey.

Findings were broadly similar across academic years.

**Table 26 Comparison: Non Economic Benefits for FE Leavers in Learning 2013/14 - 2014/15**

| Learning after  | Academic Year                              |  |
|---|--|--|
|   | 2013/14                                    | 2014/15                                    |
| Probably/definitely positive impact [Table A46]   | 95.1%                                      | 96.0%                                      |
| Gains (top three) [Table A48]   | Boosted my confidence (82.4%)              | Boosted my confidence (85.4%)              |
|   | I made new friends/meet new people (77.8%) | I made new friends/meet new people (83.8%) |
|   | Increased my self-esteem (70.2%)           | Increased my self-esteem (68.6%)           |
| More enthusiastic about learning [Table A50]  | 88.5%                                      | 88.0%                                      |
| Better idea what to do in life [Table A52]  | 87.2%                                      | 84.6%                                      |
| Improved quality of life [Table A54]  | 69.9%                                      | 68.0%                                      |
| More likely to undertake further learning and training [Table A56]                          | 92.3%                                      | 91.4%                                      |
| More likely to undertake further learning and training <u>at a higher level</u> [Table A58] | 89.7%                                      | 88.8%                                      |
| Recommend completing a course in further education to a friend [Table A60]                  | 98.5%                                      | 98.6%                                      |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Note:

Counts vary by question.

**Comment:**

Findings were broadly similar across academic years.

### 3.4 FE Leavers Unemployed and Looking for Work

This section presents findings for the FE Leavers Unemployed six months after their FE Course.

After an overview of their main activity before their FE Course, this section presents findings on: how unemployed FE Leavers had heard about their course; their reasons for undertaking the FE course; any employment in the six months after leaving FE; and the perceived non-economic benefits of completing their course.

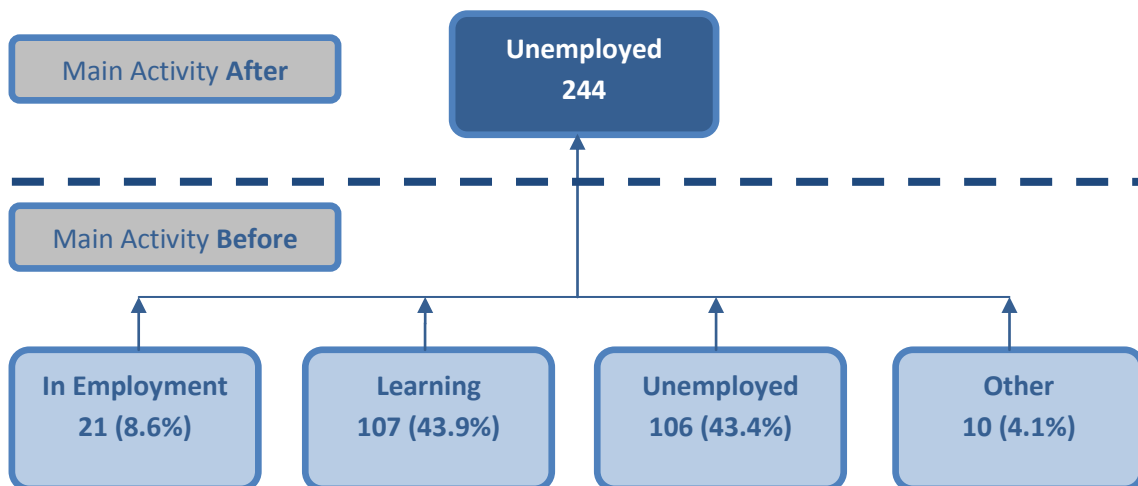
**Note: some sections are based on just over 100 cases. These findings should be used with a degree of caution.**

#### Overview of Main Activity before

Of the 244 FE Leavers unemployed six months after achieving a regulated qualification:

- 21 (8.6%) had previously been in Employment
- 107 (43.9%) had previously been in Learning
- 106 (43.4%) had previously been Unemployed
- 10 (4.1%) had previously been categorised as Other (**Chart 7**).

**Chart 7** Unemployed FE Leavers (244): Main activity before (2014/15)

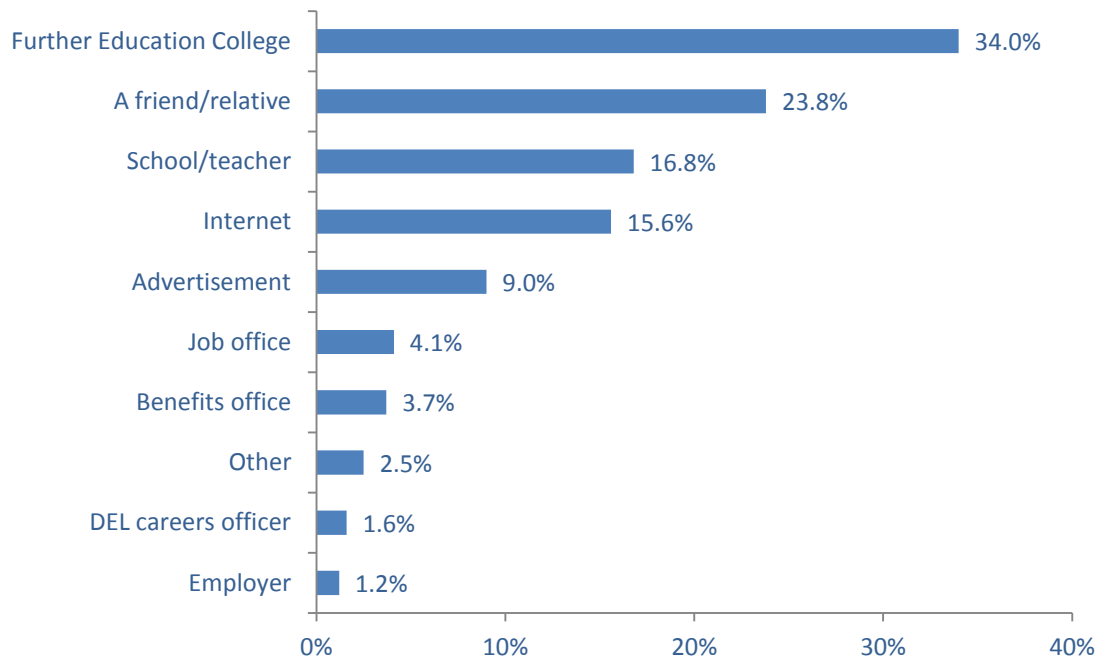


Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 244.

## How did individuals hear about their FE Course?

Respondents were asked how they had heard about their course and could provide as many responses to this question as they wanted. The three most common ways of hearing about their course were: through the 'FE College' itself (34.0%); through 'a friend/relative' (23.8%); and through their 'School/teacher' (16.8%) (**Figure 17** and **Table A06**).

**Figure 17** *Unemployed FE Leavers: How individuals had heard about their FE Course (2014/15)*



Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 244

## Main reasons for undertaking the course

The three most popular reasons for undertaking the course were: 'to learn something new/gain new skills' (78.7%); 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' (68.9%); and 'personal interest in the course' (66.8%) (Tables 27 and A12).

**Table 27** *Unemployed FE Leavers: Main reasons for undertaking FE Course (2014/15)*

| Reason  | %     |
|---|-------|
| To learn something new/gain new skills                  | 78.7% |
| To improve my job prospects or get a new job/career     | 68.9% |
| I have/had a personal interest in the course            | 66.8% |
| To gain a qualification                                 | 63.9% |
| Because it was at a time/place that suited me           | 51.6% |
| To go on to further or higher learning                  | 48.4% |
| To meet new people and build my self confidence         | 45.9% |
| Because I did not have to pay for it                    | 29.9% |
| To get more job satisfaction                            | 14.3% |
| To increase my income                                   | 13.1% |
| To improve my job security                              | 11.9% |
| To improve my ability to do my current job              | 11.1% |
| To get a promotion                                      | 5.7%  |
| It was mandatory  | 3.7%  |
| To help/support my children/grandchildren with homework | 3.7%  |
| I was required to attend course by my employer          | 2.0%  |
| Other reason  | 1.2%  |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 244.



## Subject area

Three subject areas accounted for three-fifths (60.2%) of unemployed FE Leavers: 'Preparation for life and work' (27.9%); 'Information and communication technology' (18.0%); and 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (14.3%) (**Table 28**).

**Table 28** *Unemployed FE Leavers: Subject area studied (2014/15)*

| Subject Area                                     | % of All Subjects |
|--|-------------------|
| Preparation for life and work                    | 27.9              |
| Information and communication technology         | 18.0              |
| Retail and commercial enterprise                 | 14.3              |
| Health, public services and care                 | 9.0               |
| Engineering and manufacturing technologies       | 6.6               |
| Arts, media and publishing                       | 6.6               |
| Languages, literature and culture                | 4.9               |
| Construction, planning and the built environment | 3.7               |
| Leisure, travel and tourism                      | 3.3               |
| Business, administration and law                 | 2.9               |
| Science and mathematics                          | 1.2               |
| Agriculture, horticulture and animal care        | 0.8               |
| Social Sciences                                  | 0.8               |
| <b>Total</b>                                     | <b>100.0</b>      |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.  
n = 244.

## Any employment after FE Course?

Of the 244 unemployed FE Leavers, the majority (84.4%) had had no employment at anytime in the six months after their FE Course (**Table A44**).

## Unemployed before and after FE Course?

Of the 244 FE Leavers unemployed after their FE Course, over two-fifths (43.4%) had been unemployed before the FE course they completed in 2014/15 (**Chart 7**).

Of the 106 unemployed before and after their FE Course, over three-quarters (76.4%) were aged 25 years and above. Over half (52.2%) had studied their regulated course at Entry Level (Level 0), with almost one-third at Level 2 (31.9%) (**Table A45B**).

**Box 8 Unemployed FE Leavers: Non economic benefits (2014/15)**

**Box 8** provides an overview of these findings for FE Leavers unemployed approximately six months after completing and achieving their FE Course.

**Positive Impact? (n=243)**

The majority of unemployed FE Leavers (90.5%) said their course has had a positive impact on them; this included 68.7% who said their course has definitely had a positive impact on them (**Table A46**).

**Gain anything from Learning? (n=244)**

The three most popular responses were: 'boosting their confidence' (85.7%); 'making new friends/ meeting new people' (85.7%); and 'increased self-esteem' (68.7%) (**Table A48**).

**Enthusiasm about Learning? (n=243)**

Over four-fifths (81.5%) of unemployed FE Leavers agreed that they have become 'more enthusiastic about learning' as a result of completing their course (**Table A50**).

**Better Idea What to Do in Your Life? (n=243)**

Over two-thirds (68.3%) of this group agreed that, as a result of their FE Course, they have a 'better idea what to do in life' (**Table A52**).

**Improved Quality of Life? (n=243)**

Almost three-fifths (58.4%) agreed that completing their FE Course has 'improved their quality of life' (**Table A54**).

**Undertake Further Learning & Training? (n=243); At a Higher Level? (n=243)**

Over four-fifths (83.1%) agreed that, as a result of their course, they are more likely to 'undertake further learning and training' (**Table A56**). Almost three-quarters (71.2%) also agreed they are more likely to do so at a 'higher level' (**Table A58**).

*Findings by Employment sub-groups, Learning and Unemployment are available in the [FE Leaver Survey Report](#) Excel Tables 2014/15 [Tables A46, A48, A50, A52, A54, A56, & A58].*

## Summary for 2014/15 Unemployed FE Leavers

As a proportion of FE Leavers, unemployment as a main activity had decreased by less than one percentage point (0.7%) after FE Course completion and achievement. This was not a significant decrease. Before taking their FE Course, the main activity of 7.3% survey respondents had been unemployment. Approximately six months after FE Course completion and achievement, 6.6% said their main activity was unemployment ([Table 3](#)).

Just over two-fifths (43.4%) of unemployed FE Leavers had also been unemployed before their FE Course. The largest group to move into unemployment had come from learning (43.9%). Just under one-tenth (8.6%) had been in employment ([Chart 7](#)).

Of the FE Leavers unemployed before and after their FE Course, over three-quarters (76.4%) were aged 25 years and above. Over half (52.2%) had studied a regulated course at Entry Level (Level 0); almost one-third had studied at Level 2 (31.9%) ([Table A61](#)).

The three most common ways unemployed FE Leavers had **heard about their course** had been: through the 'FE College' (34.0%); through 'a friend/relative' (23.8%); and through their 'School/teacher' (16.8%) ([Figure 17](#)).

The three most common **reasons for undertaking the course** had been: 'to learn something new/gain new skills' (78.7%); 'to improve my job prospects or get a new job/career' (68.9%); and 'personal interest in the course' (66.8%) ([Table 27](#)).

Three **subject areas** accounted for over three-fifths (60.2%) of the unemployed FE Leavers: 'Preparation for life and work' (27.9%); 'Information and communication technology' (18.0%); and 'Retail and commercial enterprise' (14.3%) ([Table 28](#)).

A small proportion (15.6%) of the FE Leavers unemployed after their FE Course said they had had **some employment** in the six months since they had completed their course ([Table A44](#)).

The perceived **non-economic benefit** statements most likely to be cited by unemployed FE Leavers were: 'boosting their confidence' (85.7%); 'making new friends/meeting new people' (85.7%); and 'increased self-esteem' (68.7%) ([Box 8](#)).

Over four-fifths (81.5%) agreed that, as a result of completing their course, they have become 'more enthusiastic about learning'. A similar proportion (83.1%) agreed they are more likely to 'undertake further learning and training' and 71.2% agreed they are more likely to do so 'at a higher level'. Over two-thirds (68.3%) agreed they have a 'better idea about what they want to do in their life'. Almost three-fifths (58.4%) agreed that their 'quality of life' has improved. Almost all (90.5%) of the unemployed FE Leavers said the course they completed in 2014/15 has had a 'positive impact' on them ([Box 8](#)).

## Unemployed FE Leavers: Cross Year Comparison (Academic Years 2013/14 - 2014/15)

This section provides a cross year comparison of the Unemployed FE Leavers who took part in the surveys. **Table 29** provides an overview of all unemployed FE Leavers. **Table 30** compares cross year findings on how unemployed FE Leavers had heard about their course, reasons for doing their course, and the proportion having done some paid employment since course completion. **Table 31** overviews the non economic benefits of FE Course completion for all the FE Leavers in Learning.

**Table 29** *Overview: Unemployed FE Leavers 2013/14 -2014/15*

| Unemployed after  | Academic Year |         |
|---|---------------|---------|
|   | 2013/14       | 2014/15 |
| Number Unemployed after [Table 3]                               | 293           | 244     |
| Proportion of all FE Leavers [Table 3]                          | 7.6%          | 6.6%    |
| Number Unemployed Before [Table 4]                              | 304           | 271     |
| <b>Main Activity of Unemployed FE Leavers before [Chart 7]:</b> |               |         |
| Employment  | 38            | 21      |
| Learning  | 105           | 107     |
| Unemployed  | 124           | 106     |
| Other   | 26            | 10      |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Notes:

Counts vary by question.

Due to refinement of main activity options available to respondents, caution should be exercised when comparing all FE Leavers in Learning across academic years.

**Table 30 Comparison: Unemployed FE Leavers 2013/14 - 2014/15**

| Unemployed after   | Academic Year   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | 2013/14   | 2014/15   |
| How did individuals hear about their FE Course?<br>(top three ways)<br>[Table A06] | FE College (31.7%)  | FE College (34.0%)  |
|  | Friend/Relative (27.3%)                                     | Friend/Relative (23.8%)                                     |
|  | Internet (14.3%)  | School/teacher (16.8%)                                      |
| Main Reasons for undertaking FE Course?<br>(top three reasons)<br>[Table A12]      | To improve my job prospects or get a new job/career (67.9%) | To learn something new/gain new skills (78.7%)              |
|  | To learn something new/gain new skills (66.6%)              | To improve my job prospects or get a new job/career (68.9%) |
|  | I have/had a personal interest in the course (56.7%)        | I have/had a personal interest in the course (66.8%)        |
| Proportion doing some Paid Work since completing course [Table A44]                | 16.0%   | 15.6%   |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Note:

Counts vary by question.

**Comment:**

For some questions, there were small differences in responses across years, for example, in the top three reasons for undertaking the course.

**Table 31 Comparison: Non Economic Benefits for Unemployed FE Leavers 2013/14 - 2014/15**

| Unemployed after   | Academic Year                              |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | 2013/14                                    | 2014/15                                    |
| Probably/definitely positive impact [Table A46]                                      | 92.8%                                      | 90.5%                                      |
| Gains (top three) [Table A48]  | Boosted my confidence (85.3%)              | Boosted my confidence (85.7%)              |
|  | I made new friends/meet new people (79.5%) | Increased my self-esteem (85.7%)           |
|  | Increased my self-esteem (69.6%)           | I made new friends/meet new people (68.7%) |
| More enthusiastic about learning [Table A50]   | 86.7%                                      | 81.5%                                      |
| Better idea what to do in life [Table A52]   | 71.2%                                      | 68.3%                                      |
| Improved quality of life [Table A54]   | 57.7%                                      | 58.4%                                      |
| More likely to undertake further learning and training [Table A56]                   | 82.9%                                      | 83.1%                                      |
| More likely to undertake further learning and training at a higher level [Table A58] | 77.1%                                      | 71.2%                                      |
| Recommend completing a course in further education to a friend [Table A60]           | 96.2%                                      | 97.5%                                      |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2013/14 and 2014/15

Note:

Counts vary by question.

**Comment:**

Findings are broadly similar across academic years.

## Section Four: Annexes



## Annex A Definitions

This section provides clarification on terms used within the report:

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Academic Year:</b>            | An academic year traditionally starts in August and finishes in July the following year.   |
| <b>Broad STEM:</b>               | This is STEM provision identified by a subject code. Broad STEM subjects include: Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects; Biological and Physical Sciences; Agriculture; Mathematics and IT; Engineering and Technology; Architecture, Building and Planning.   |
| <b>Confidence Interval (CI):</b> | As different samples can lead to different results, CIs are calculated boundaries within which the true value in the population is expected to fall.   |
| <b>Course:</b>                   | This refers to regulated qualification courses provided by an FE College.  |
| <b>Current main activity:</b>    | This is the main activity of the respondent at the time of the telephone interview. This is the activity the respondent spent the most time doing. If the respondent was doing more than one activity, they were asked to state the activity they were doing for most of the time.   |
| <b>Essential Skills:</b>         | Essential Skills is identified if it is recorded as an Essential Skills enrolment. Essential Skills courses are available in 3 subject areas: Literacy; Numeracy; Information and Communication Technology.  |
| <b>Further Education:</b>        | All provision delivered at a FE College.   |
| <b>Further Education Sector:</b> | For the purposes of this report, this refers to the provision provided by the six FE Colleges in NI.   |
| <b>Grouped Main Activity:</b>    | In Section Three, four categories are used to group the main activity of FE Leavers six months after completing and achieving their regulated qualification from a FE College. These groups are: in 'Employment'; in 'Learning'; 'Unemployed'; and those whose main activities are 'Other'. These groups are based on main activity. For the 2014/15 academic year activity categories were refined; caution with cross year comparison is, therefore recommended. |

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|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b><i>FE Leavers in Employment:</i></b> | This includes: working in paid employment; self-employed; and waiting to start a confirmed job.   |
| <b><i>FE Leavers in Learning:</i></b>   | This includes FE Leavers who said their main activity was: on a scheme/training scheme; waiting to start a confirmed scheme; at school aged 16 or below; at school in sixth form; at a FE College; at a university; or waiting to start a confirmed course at college/university.   |
| <b><i>Level:</i></b>                    | Each regulated qualification has a level between entry level and level 8. Qualifications at the same level typically have a similar level of demand or difficulty. The content and size of qualifications at the same level may be quite different. For further information on comparing qualifications across the UK, Ireland and overseas please refer to the link: <a href="http://ofqual.gov.uk/help-and-advice/comparing-qualifications/">http://ofqual.gov.uk/help-and-advice/comparing-qualifications/</a>   |
| <b><i>Narrow STEM:</i></b>              | This is STEM provision identified by a subject code. Narrow STEM subjects include: Biological and Physical Sciences; Mathematics and IT; Engineering and Technology.  |
| <b><i>Non STEM:</i></b>                 | Non-STEM is calculated by deducting the number of Broad STEM from the Overall number.   |
| <b><i>Other:</i></b>                    | This includes any FE Leavers not included as in 'Employment', 'Learning' or 'Unemployed'.   |
| <b><i>Regulated Qualification:</i></b>  | Any course at level 3 or below offering a qualification that has a qualification code on the Register of Regulated Qualifications (RRQ) or any course at level 4 or above.  |
| <b><i>Sector Subject Area:</i></b>      | The Sector Subject Area (SSA) code is derived from the official OFQUAL Register of Regulated Qualifications based on the qualification or unit code. The SSA code registered against each qualification or unit has been assigned by the responsible awarding organisation. The sector subject areas were developed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the ACCAC, the Welsh Authority, along with other key educational bodies according to industry sector and academic subject area. They aim to allow more consistent reporting of data across the UK. |

***Statistically Significant:*** *'Statistically Significant'* denotes a finding as being statistically tested to be significant at the 95% level, that is, the finding is a true reflection of the population interest and is unlikely to have occurred by chance within the selected sample.

Statistical techniques have been used to test for significant differences in percentages between the main activities sub-groups. Where a difference has been identified and found to be statistically significant at the 95% level, it is reported as being significant.

In the text, 'statistical significance' is also denoted by 'significant'.

***STEM:*** STEM provision is identified by the subject code entered by the FE College. If the subject code starts with a letter between A and K (Medicine, Dentistry and Allied Subjects; Biological and Physical Sciences; Agriculture; Mathematics and IT; Engineering and Technology; Architecture, Building and Planning) then it is regarded as 'Broad' STEM. 'Narrow' STEM is those enrolment records with a subject code starting with a letter C, F, G, H or J (Biological and Physical Sciences; Mathematics and IT; Engineering and Technology). Non-STEM is calculated by deducting the number of Broad STEM from the Overall number.

***Unemployed FE Leavers:*** This includes FE Leavers unemployed and looking for work.

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## Annex B      Technical Notes

This section provides additional information to facilitate report interpretation:

1. The naming convention for the FE Leavers Report has been refined. In the first year of the survey, the report name reflected the calendar year in which survey fieldwork was completed. To enable clarity about the academic year the survey refers to, the report name now includes the academic year in which FE Leavers completed their qualification.
2. Findings on how respondents had heard about their FE Course and their main reasons for doing their course are presented differently in 2014/15. In both, the total number of responses was used as the denominator. Where appropriate, tables within the report include the number of respondents for each question. In these questions, respondents could select as many responses as they wanted.
3. Main Activity categories have been refined for the 2014/15 academic year. This was to enable comparison of main activity groups before and after FE Course completion.

**Table B1** provides the full list of main activity categories before FE Course completion. **Tables B2** provides the full list of main activity categories approximately six months after FE Course completion and achievement.

**Table B1:** Main activity before (full list provided to respondents) (by Academic Year):

| Academic Year                         |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 2013/14                               | 2014/15  |
| Working or Self-Employed              | Working in paid employment                                     |
|                                       | Self-employed  |
|                                       | Waiting to start a confirmed job                               |
| On a scheme/training scheme           | On a scheme/training scheme (e.g. Higher Level Apprenticeship) |
|                                       | Waiting to start a confirmed scheme/training scheme            |
| In voluntary or unpaid work           | In voluntary or unpaid work                                    |
| At school aged 16 or below            | At school aged 16 or below                                     |
| At school in sixth form               | At school in sixth form  |
| At a college or university            | At a FE College  |
|                                       | At a university  |
|                                       | Waiting to start confirmed course at college/university        |
| Unemployed and looking for work       | Unemployed and looking for work                                |
| Looking after the family or home      | Looking after the family or home                               |
| Travelling                            | Travelling   |
| Temporarily sick, injured or disabled | Temporarily sick, injured or disabled                          |
| Long term sick or disabled            | Long term sick or disabled                                     |
|                                       | Retired  |
| Something else (please describe)      | Something else   |
| Don't know or can't remember          |  |

**Table B2:** Main activity after (full list provided to respondents) (by Academic Year):

| Academic Year                              |  |
|--|--|
| 2013/14                                    | 2014/15  |
| Paid work for an employer                  | Working in paid employment                                     |
| Self-employed                              | Self-employed  |
|  | Waiting to start a confirmed job                               |
| On a scheme/training scheme                | On a scheme/training scheme (e.g. Higher Level Apprenticeship) |
|  | Waiting to start a confirmed scheme/training scheme            |
| Voluntary or unpaid work                   | In voluntary or unpaid work                                    |
|  | At school aged 16 or below                                     |
| A student at school studying in sixth form | At school in sixth form  |
| A student at college or university         | At a FE College  |
|  | At a university  |
|  | Waiting to start confirmed course at college/university        |
| Unemployed and looking for work            | Unemployed and looking for work                                |
| Work placement                             |  |
|  | Looking after the family or home                               |
|  | Travelling   |
|  | Temporarily sick, injured or disabled                          |
|  | Long term sick or disabled                                     |
|  | Retired  |
| Something Else                             | Something else   |
| Spontaneous Only (difficulty deciding)     |  |

4. **Table B3:** All FE Leavers and all main activity options before and six months after completing FE Course

| Main Activity  | Before Completing Course |               | After Completing Course |               | Direction of % Change |
|--|--------------------------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
|  | Count                    | %             |                         | %             |                       |
| Working in paid employment                                     | 1,285                    | 34.8%         | 1,631                   | 44.1%         | ↑*                    |
| Self-employed  | 68                       | 1.8%          | 90                      | 2.4%          | ↑                     |
| Waiting to start a confirmed job                               | 2                        | 0.1%          | 6                       | 0.2%          | ↑                     |
| On a scheme/training scheme (e.g. Higher Level Apprenticeship) | 34                       | 0.9%          | 57                      | 1.5%          | ↑*                    |
| Waiting to start a confirmed scheme/training scheme            | 6                        | 0.2%          | 5                       | 0.1%          | ↓                     |
| In voluntary or unpaid work                                    | 30                       | 0.8%          | 34                      | 0.9%          | ↑                     |
| At school aged 16 or below                                     | 621                      | 16.8%         | 4                       | 0.1%          | ↓*                    |
| At school in sixth form  | 471                      | 12.7%         | 28                      | 0.8%          | ↓*                    |
| At a FE College  | 454                      | 12.3%         | 867                     | 23.4%         | ↑*                    |
| At a university  | 61                       | 1.7%          | 317                     | 8.6%          | ↑*                    |
| Waiting to start confirmed course at college/university        | 1                        | 0.0%          | 23                      | 0.6%          | ↑*                    |
| Unemployed and looking for work                                | 271                      | 7.3%          | 244                     | 6.6%          | ↓                     |
| Looking after the family or home                               | 194                      | 5.3%          | 169                     | 4.6%          | ↓                     |
| Travelling   | 6                        | 0.2%          | 3                       | 0.1%          | ↓                     |
| Temporarily sick, injured or disabled                          | 12                       | 0.3%          | 18                      | 0.5%          | ↑                     |
| Long term sick or disabled                                     | 49                       | 1.3%          | 57                      | 1.5%          | ↑                     |
| Retired  | 118                      | 3.2%          | 129                     | 3.5%          | ↑                     |
| Something else (please describe)                               | 12                       | 0.3%          | 18                      | 0.5%          | ↑                     |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>3,695</b>             | <b>100.0%</b> | <b>3,700</b>            | <b>100.0%</b> |                       |

Source: FE Leavers Survey 2014/15.

\* indicates that change in proportions are proven to be statistically significant at 5% level.

Table A14 provides confidence intervals and upper and lower boundaries for each percentage.

Note: 'Main Activity Before Completing Course' - Two respondents refused to provide an answer and three did not know.

- For the purpose of this report, findings for questions with less than 100 should be considered with caution as they may not accurately reflect the population.
- Where small numbers are presented in tables, consideration has been given to balancing the privacy of individual information against the utility of the data. As the risk of

identification is considered to be low, small numbers have not been suppressed. This is consistent with the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#).

7. A small number of questions are not comparable across academic years, for instance, because they have been refined, removed or added to improve the usefulness of the survey.
8. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place.
9. Due to rounding to one decimal place, some totals may not add to 100.0%, differences reported may not equate to the difference between the figures shown in the text, and summing of proportions may not equate to the value reported.
10. Base numbers are denoted in charts using the annotation n=.
11. The number of valid responses can vary across questions. For each section, the number of respondents is indicated within brackets; findings should, therefore, be considered in the context of the number of valid responses. Analysis is only based on those who responded to a specific question.

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