



SFC Published Key Performance Indicators AY2024-2025 Report

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Executive Summary

The College's [*Strategic Plan 2025-30*](#), supported by a comprehensive suite of sub-strategies, sets out how NESCol will bring learning to life for its students, staff, partners, and stakeholders over the next five years and beyond. This bold and ambitious strategy positions the College not only as a cornerstone of excellence in educational and skills development within the region, but also as a key contributor to the national tertiary education landscape.

Developed through rigorous analysis, collaborative design with students, staff, and key partners, and guided by a shared vision for the future, the strategy outlines the College's core priorities, aims, and objectives. It clearly defines the routes through which the College will achieve its goals, underpinned by a deep commitment to innovation, inclusion, and positive impact. It is a forward-looking response to the evolving needs of students, communities, and industry partners, while anticipating the opportunities and challenges of a rapidly changing educational, industrial, and economic environment.

The Strategic Plan reaffirms the College's dedication to delivering an outstanding student experience, supporting regional economic development, and contributing to national skills priorities aligned with critical industry sectors. It also marks the beginning of a new chapter for NESCol, defined by aspiration, partnership, and a shared determination to unlock the full potential of its learners and the communities it serves.

The College recognises that achieving its Vision depends on the quality of its provision and the success of its students. To this end, the College will deepen its commitment to excellence by embedding a culture of continuous enhancement and self-evaluation. Staff, students, and stakeholders will work together with shared purpose to reflect on and improve the curriculum, student experience and student services, ensuring that they meet the highest standards and the evolving expectations of today's learners.

Robust quality improvement processes are embedded across the College, including regular review of the courses offered to ensure that they remain relevant to both students and employers. A key aspect of this review is consideration of a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The College has produced this publication to inform potential applicants, students, the communities it serves, and key stakeholders about its performance in relation to student retention, attainment, and successful qualification achievement.

The following pages provide details of the College's performance in Academic Year 2024-25 against three nationally recognised Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):

- Completed Successfully
- Partial Success
- Non-completion

(An explanation of each of the above indicators is provided in the Glossary on page 25)

Information has been provided across a number of key categories including, level of study (Further Education (FE), Higher Education (HE)), mode of attendance (full-time, part-time), subject area, and student characteristics such as age and gender. Unless otherwise stated, the information relates to NESCol courses of 160 hours or more. For some KPIs, comparative information is also provided for the previous two academic years, 2022-23 and 2023-24.

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) publishes information on the performance of all Scottish colleges on its [website](#). NESCol recognises the importance of benchmarking its performance in comparison to other colleges to support quality improvement and to identify and share good practice. Accordingly, a number of the indicators presented on the following pages include sector averages for comparison purposes.

Where the number of enrolments within a category is fewer than 23, the data has been suppressed to reduce the risk of incorrect conclusions being drawn from performance rates based on small numbers.

Figure 1 - Outcomes for full-time students on non-advanced courses (FE)

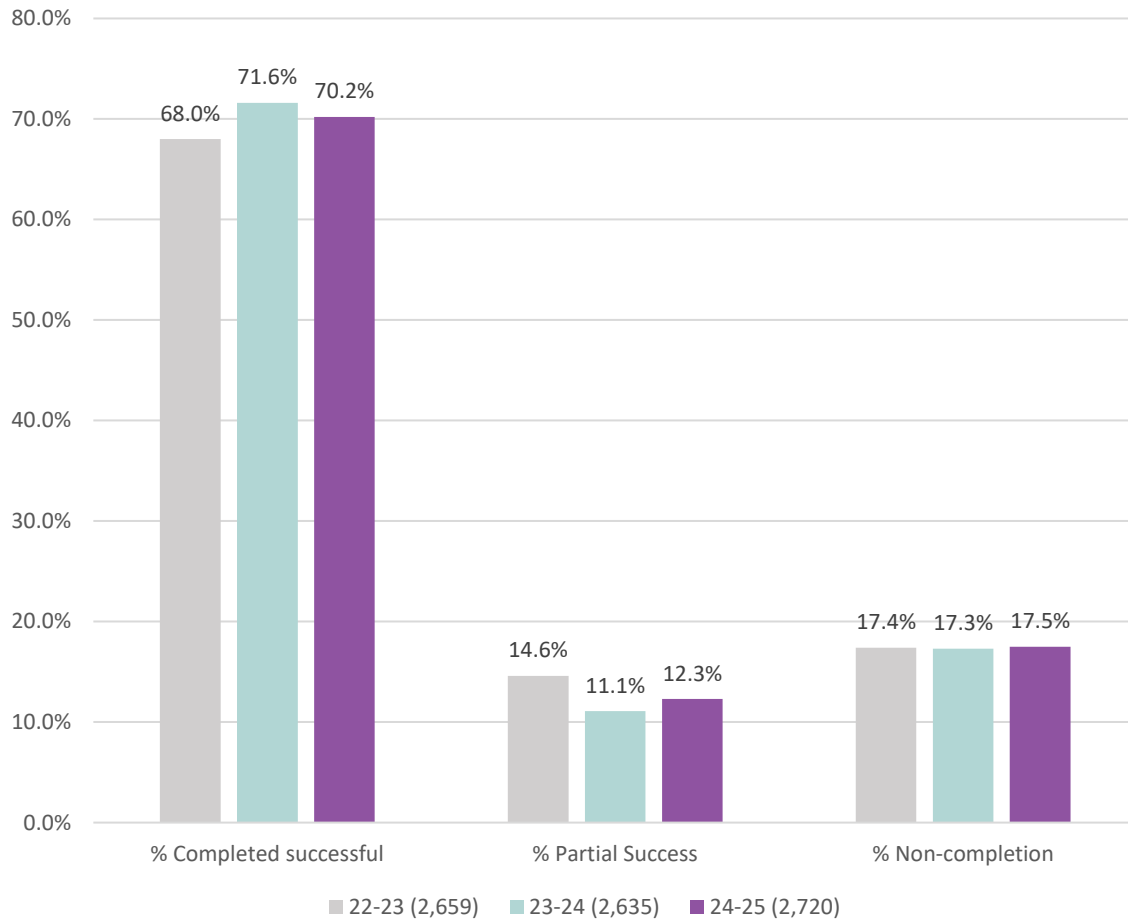


Figure 1 shows the key outcomes for students studying on full-time non-advanced courses (as defined by the number of hours study required to complete the course) over a three-year period.

The graph shows the percentage of students who completed their course successfully, the percentage who remained enrolled until the end of the course but did not achieve their group award (partial success), and the percentage of students who did not complete their course and withdrew before the end of the academic year.

In Academic Year (AY) 2024-25, the percentage of students who completed their course successfully decreased by 1.4 percentage points compared with AY2023-24. The attainment rate was also slightly below the sector average of 70.5%.

The Strategic Leadership Team commissioned an ongoing programme of Spotlight Reviews to provide additional focus and support to curriculum areas where there are performance challenges or opportunities for enhancement. These reviews have proven to be an effective mechanism for identifying improvement actions and driving positive change. By working collaboratively across both curriculum and professional services through a whole-college support model, the College has strengthened outcomes overall, while maintaining a clear focus on addressing the recent slight decline in full-time FE success rates and the corresponding increase in partial success. This collaborative and evidence-led approach is expected to form the foundation of the College's new Intuition-Led Quality Review (ILQR) process, which is currently being phased in across the organisation.

Figure 2 - Outcome totals for part-time students on non-advanced courses (FE)

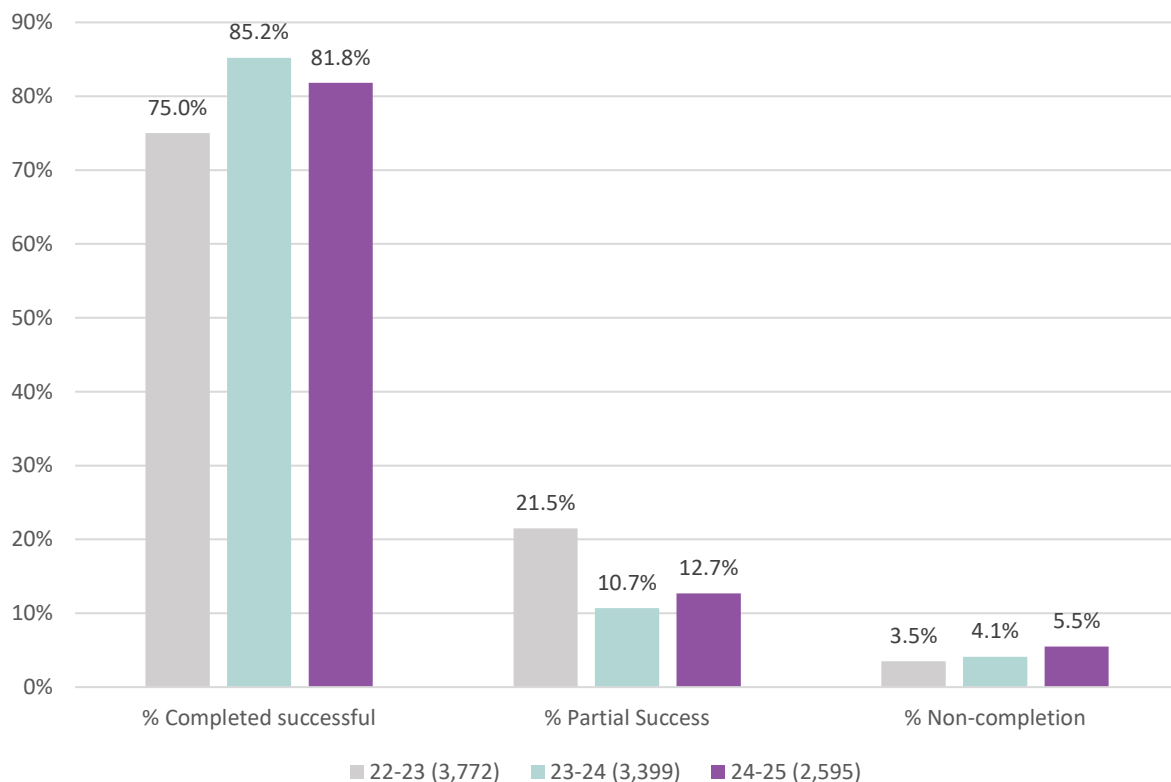


Figure 2 shows the key outcomes for students enrolled on part-time non-advanced courses (as defined by the number of hours required to complete the course) over a three-year period.

The success rate for part-time non-advanced courses has decreased by 3.4 percentage points compared with the previous academic year. However, the AY2024-25 success rate of 81.8% remained slightly above the sector average of 81.7%.

Lower completion rates on longer-duration programmes were the primary contributor to the decrease in performance. Despite this decline, the overall rate of complete success has

remained high since the significant increase observed in AY2023-24, with only minor fluctuations between complete and partial success. As enrolment numbers in these provision areas continue to decrease, performance outcomes are more susceptible to year-on-year fluctuation.

Figure 3 - Outcome breakdown for part-time students on non-advanced courses (FE)

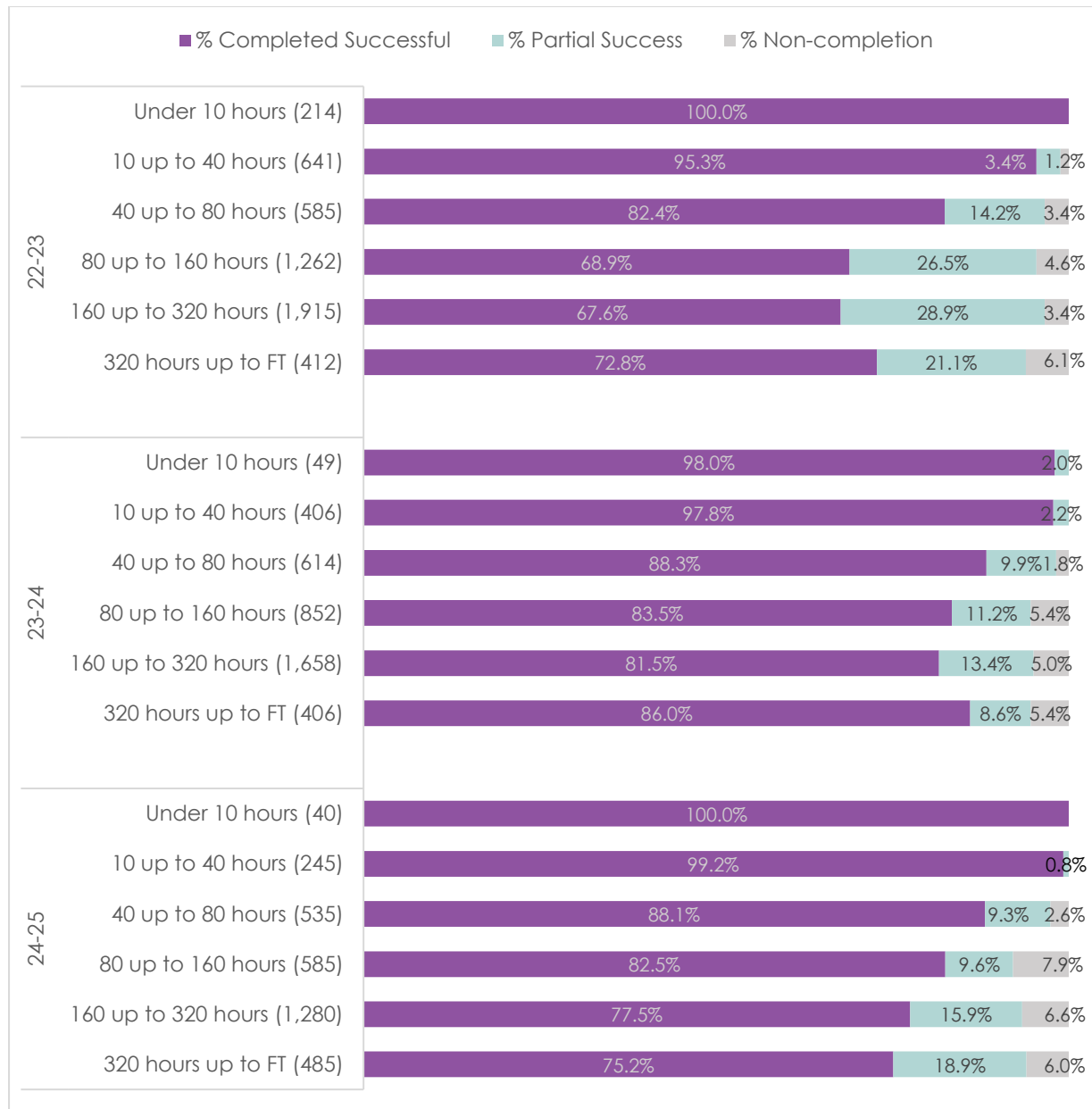


Figure 3 provides a comparison of part-time course performance over a three-year period, categorised by the number of study hours required to complete the course.

Courses of less than 10 hours and those between 10 and 40 hours continue to demonstrate very high levels of success at 100% and 99.2% respectively. These rates are 2.1 and 3.8 percentage points above the sector averages of 97.9% and 95.4%. Courses of between 40 and 80 hours have maintained the level of success from AY2023-24 and are only 0.1 percentage points below the sector average of 88.2%.

Courses of between 80 and 160 hours experienced a decrease of 1.0 percentage points compared with AY2023-24; however, the success rate remains 4.5 percentage points above the sector average. Performance in courses of between 160 and 320 hours decreased by 4.0 percentage points compared with AY2023-24 and is 0.1 percentage points below the sector average.

Significant growth in Modern Apprenticeship enrolments has placed increased pressure on existing resources. Although recruitment activity has been successful, newly appointed staff require time to develop the knowledge, skills and experience necessary to provide the required levels of support.

Figure 4 - Outcomes for full-time students on advanced courses (HE)

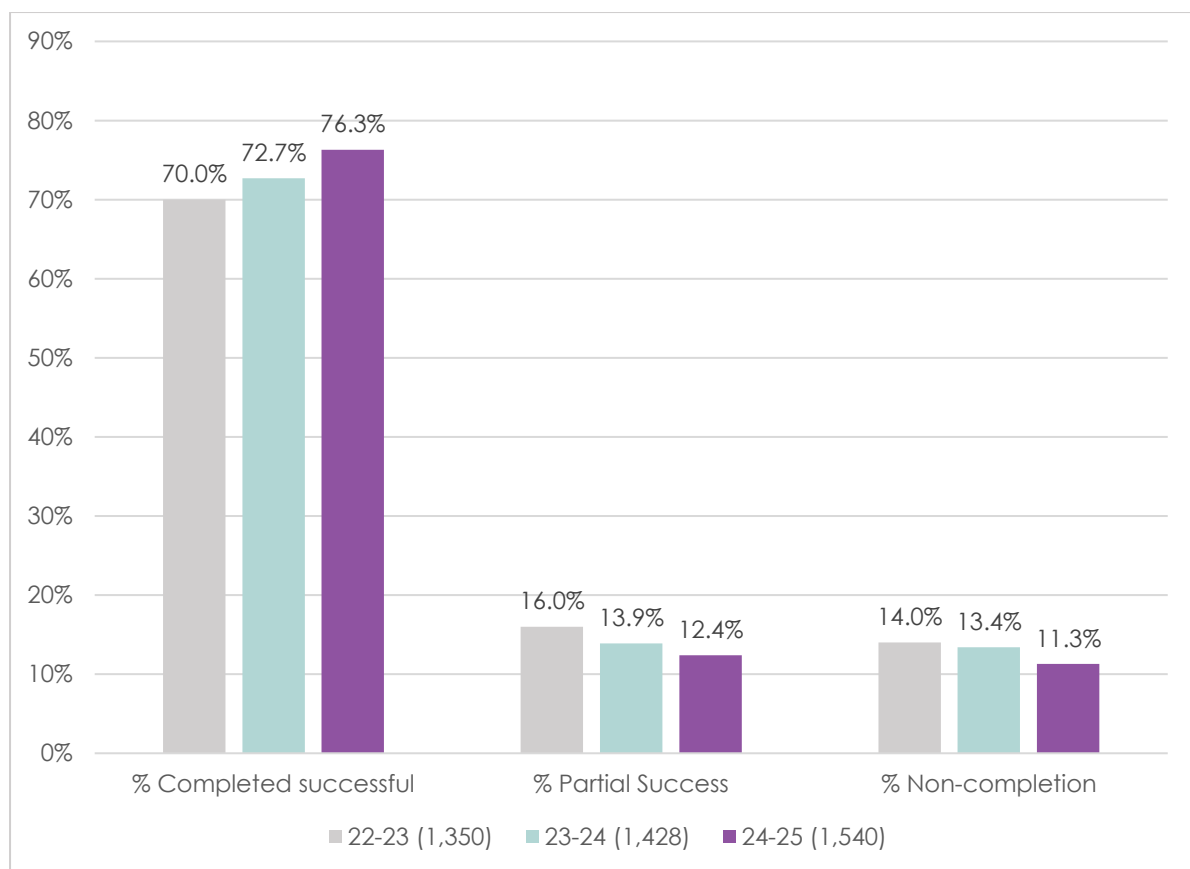


Figure 4 outlines the key outcomes for students enrolled on full-time advanced courses (as defined by the number of study hours required to complete the course) over a three-year period.

The graph shows the percentage of students who completed their course successfully, the percentage who remained enrolled until the end of the course but did not achieve their group award (partial success), and the percentage of students who did not complete their course and withdrew before the end of the academic year.

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In AY2024-25, the percentage of students who completed their course successfully increased by 3.6 percentage points compared with AY2023-24. The attainment rate was also 3.9 percentage points above the sector average of 72.4%

A continued focus on reducing partial success rates, together with targeted interventions in lower-performing courses, contributed to the improvement in outcomes.

Figure 5 - Outcome totals for part-time students on advanced courses (HE)

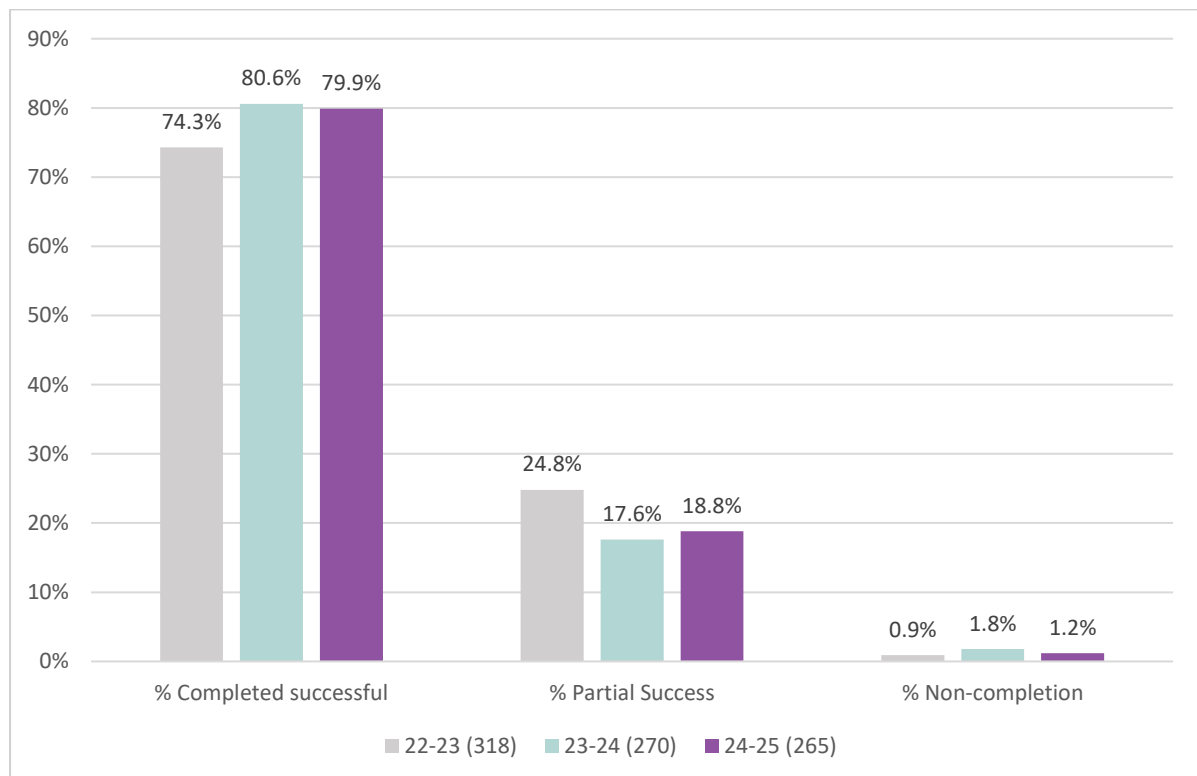


Figure 5 provides a three-year comparison of attainment rates for students enrolled on part-time advanced courses. It also includes a comparison of students who achieved partial success and those who did not complete their course and withdrew before the end of the academic year.

The success rate for part-time advanced courses decreased by 0.7 percentage points compared with the previous academic year. The AY2024-25 success rate of 79.9% is 3.6 percentage points below the sector average of 83.5%

The College will continue to review and evaluate the delivery of these programmes through its internal quality improvement processes to support continuous enhancement and the identification and sharing of good practice. Spotlight review activity is expected to have a positive impact on success rates across part-time Higher Education provision, alongside broader improvement activity within full-time programmes.

Figure 6 - Outcome breakdown for part-time students on advanced courses (HE)

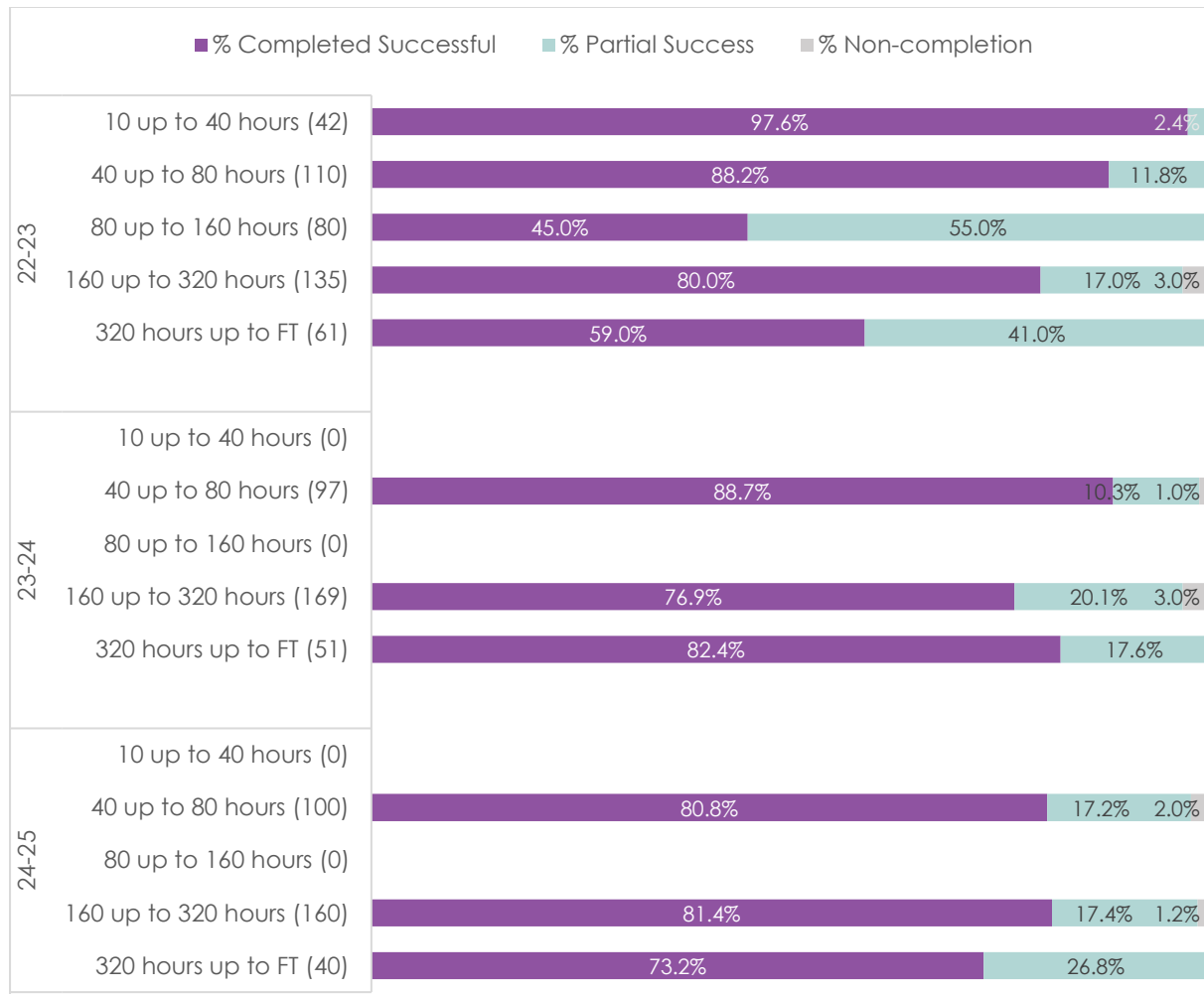


Figure 6 provides a comparison of part-time course performance over a three-year period, categorised by the number of study hours required to complete the course.

Courses of between 160 and 320 hours experienced an increase of 4.5 percentage points compared with AY2023-24 and are only 2.4 percentage points below the sector average of 83.8%. Courses of between 40 and 80 hours continue to demonstrate a strong level of success at 80.8%, which is only 1.1 percentage points below the sector average of 81.9%

As with non-advanced courses, strong learner motivation within targeted provision areas helps to support high success rates, with shorter courses generally requiring lower financial and time commitments. Responding to student feedback to ensure that course content remains relevant and engaging also plays an important role in maintaining high levels of performance.

The lowest-performing courses are those of between 320 hours and full-time duration, where success rates decreased by 9.2 percentage points compared with the previous academic year and remain 12.9 percentage points below the sector average of 86.1%.

Part-time Higher Education provision represents a relatively small volume of enrolments and has been affected by ongoing cost-of-living pressures, with many students facing increased demands on both their time and financial resources.

Figure 7 - Outcomes by age group on courses lasting 160 hours or more

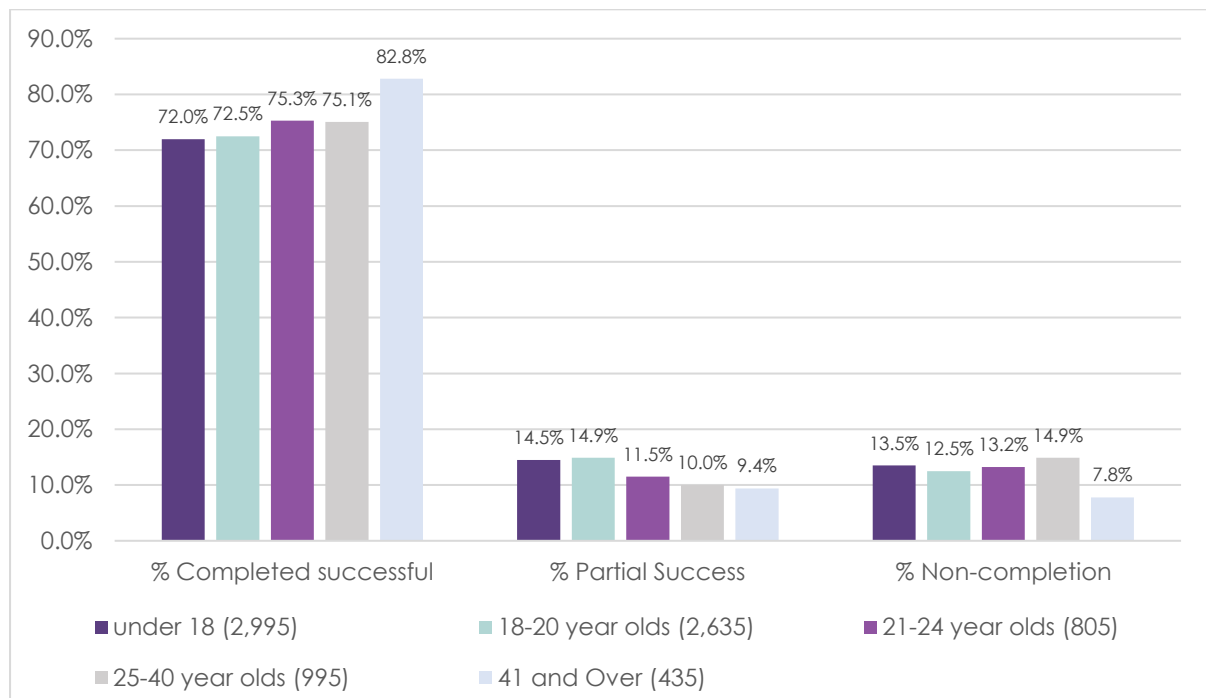


Figure 7 shows the outcomes for students in AY2024-25 across five defined age groups. Students aged 41 and over achieved the highest success rate at 82.8%. The 21 to 24 age group and the 25 to 40 age group recorded the next highest levels of attainment at 75.3% and 75.1% respectively. The difference between the highest and lowest success rates across all age groups was 10.8 percentage points, representing a reduction in the attainment gap of 3.9 percentage points compared with the previous academic year.

Attainment rates for three age groups were below the sector average: 18 to 20 (1.6 percentage points below), 21 to 24 (2.4 percentage points below), and 25 to 40 (4.1 percentage points below). The remaining two age groups, Under 18 and 41 and over, were above the sector average by 0.9 and 1.9 percentage points respectively.

While self-evaluation activity did not identify any common themes affecting attainment across the different age groups, work is ongoing to develop an equalities data dashboard. This

will support more robust analysis and evaluation of performance data and help to identify any emerging trends or disparities in outcomes.

Figure 8 - Outcomes and enrolments by subject group for non-advanced students (FE)

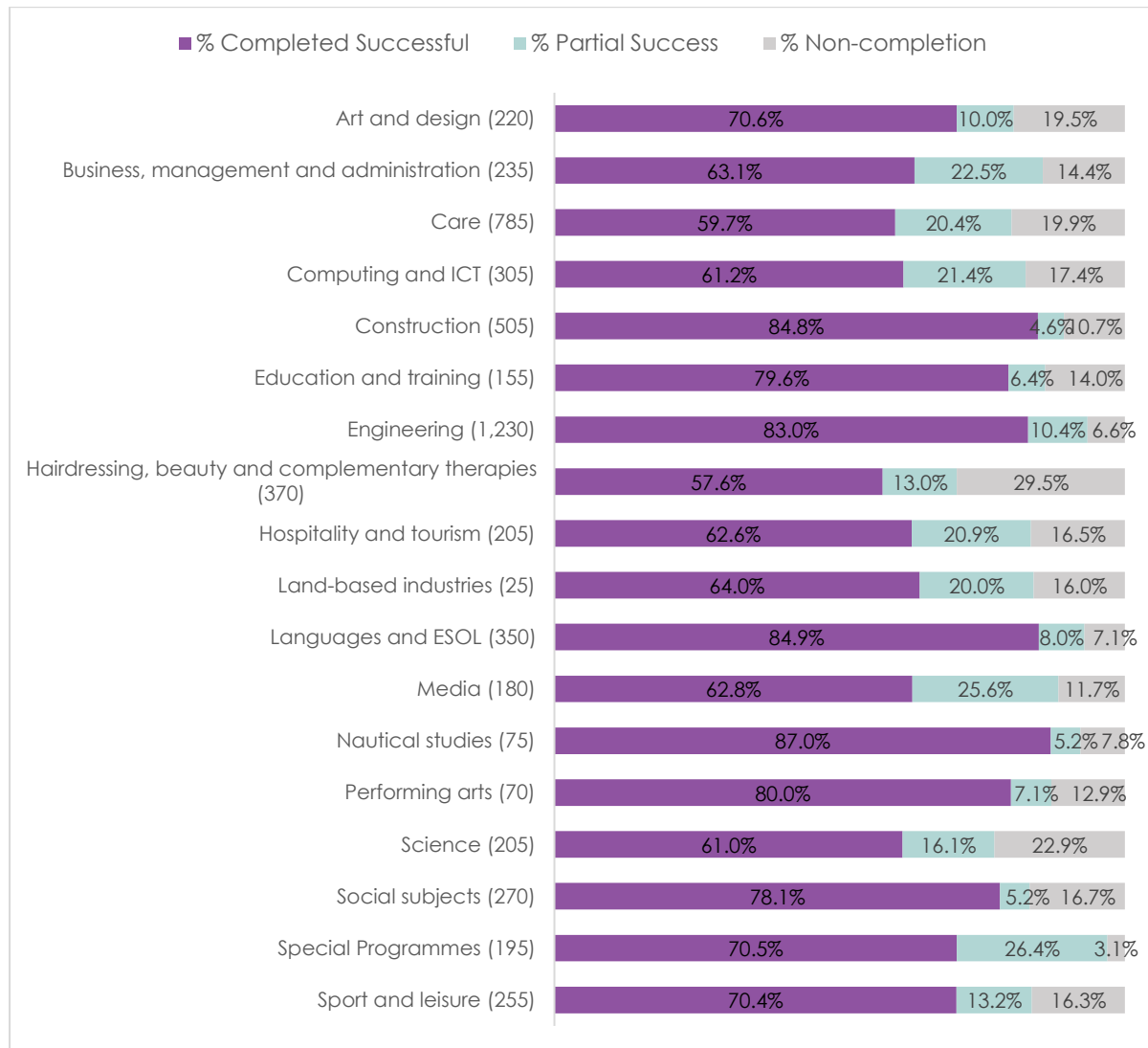


Figure 8 provides an overview of enrolments and outcomes by subject group for non-advanced students (FE) in AY2024-25.

Ten of the non-advanced subject groups achieved success rates of 70.0% or above, with Languages and ESOL recording the highest success rate at 84.9%, which is 5.5 percentage points above the sector average.

Of the 18 subject groups presented, eight achieved success rates above the sector average.

Figure 9 on the following page provides a more detailed comparison of subject group outcomes for non-advanced students against sector averages.

Figure 9 - Subject group comparisons for non-advanced students (FE)

Subject Group	Sector (Scotland)	NESCol	Sector Comparison
Art and design (155)	74.3%	70.6%	-3.7%
Business, management and administration (150)	69.0%	63.1%	-5.9%
Care (470)	70.0%	59.7%	-10.3%
Computing and ICT (185)	68.1%	61.2%	-6.9%
Construction (430)	84.4%	84.8%	0.4%
Education and training (125)	71.0%	79.6%	8.6%
Engineering (1,020)	81.6%	83.0%	1.4%
Hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies (215)	71.2%	57.6%	-13.6%
Hospitality and tourism (130)	72.1%	62.6%	-9.5%
Land-based industries (15)	78.6%	64.0%	-14.6%
Languages and ESOL (300)	79.4%	84.9%	5.5%
Media (115)	65.6%	62.8%	-2.8%
Nautical studies (65)	86.6%	87.0%	0.4%
Performing arts (55)	74.6%	80.0%	5.4%
Science (125)	59.3%	61.0%	1.7%
Social subjects (210)	63.7%	78.1%	14.4%
Special Programmes (135)	77.0%	70.5%	-6.5%
Sport and leisure (180)	76.8%	70.4%	-6.4%

Figure 9 shows that, although significant improvements have been achieved across a number of subject groups, the College performed below the sector average in 10 of the 18 subject groups presented. In most cases, this reflects a combination of a slight decline in NESCol performance and improvements in sector performance.

The most significant changes were observed in Business, Management and Administration; Care; Computing and ICT; Media; and Special Programmes. Courses within three of these subject groups were selected for Spotlight Review activity in AY2025-26.

Figure 10 - Outcomes and enrolments by subject group for advanced students (HE)

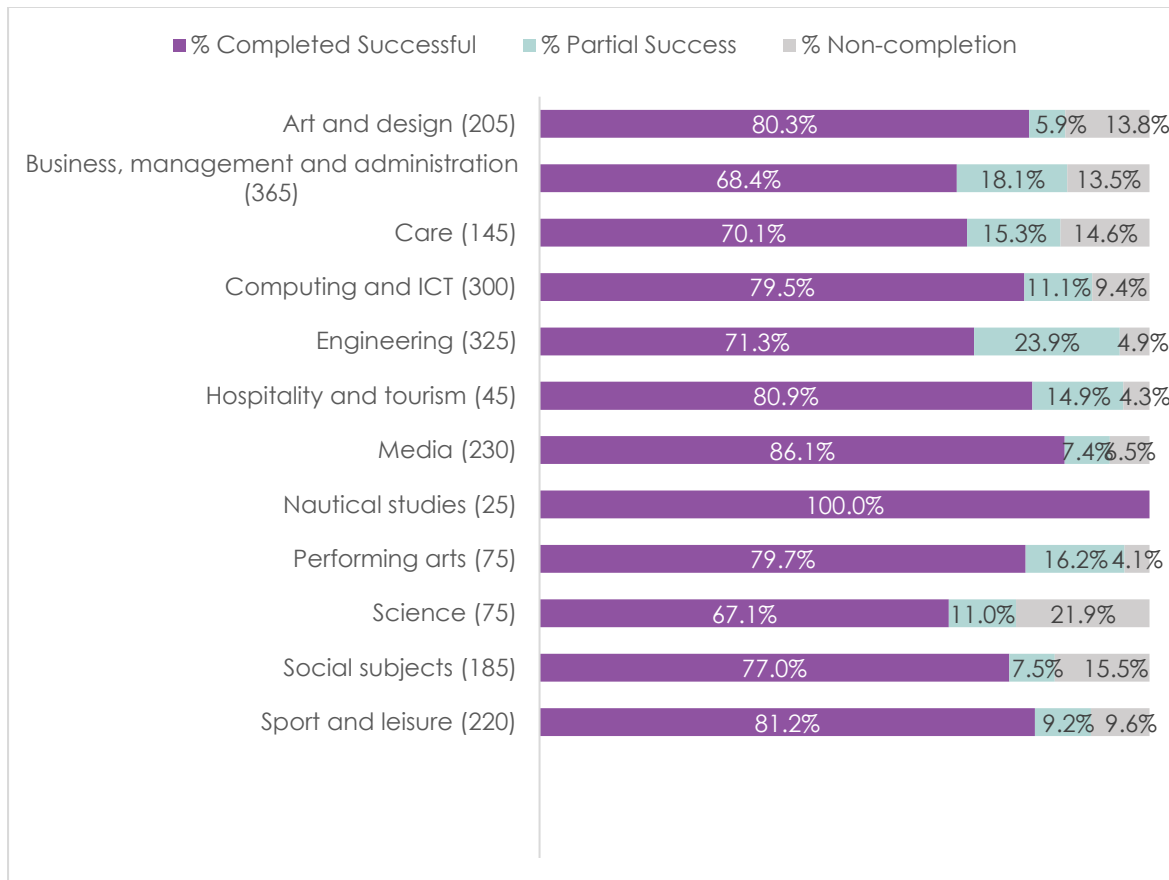


Figure 10 provides an overview of enrolments and outcomes by subject group for advanced students (HE) in AY2024-25.

Ten advanced subject groups achieved success rates above 70.0%, with Nautical Studies recording the highest success rate at 100.0%, which was 27.1 percentage points above the sector average. This was followed by Media, Sport and Leisure, and Hospitality and Tourism, which were the next highest-performing subject groups. Of the 12 subject groups presented, six achieved outcomes above the sector average.

Nautical programmes consistently achieve high levels of performance, reflecting both the nature of the training and the professional standards expected within the sector. Progression within the nautical industry is closely linked to the attainment of recognised qualifications, creating a strong sense of purpose and motivation among learners. In addition, relatively small class sizes enable highly personalised support, allowing staff to respond effectively to individual learning needs and contribute to positive learner outcomes.

Figure 11 on the following page provides a more detailed comparison of subject group outcomes for advanced students (HE) against sector averages.

Figure 11 - Subject group comparisons for advanced students (HE)

Subject Group	Sector (Scotland)	NESCol	Sector Comparison
Art and design (234)	79.4%	80.3%	0.9%
Business, management and administration (362)	73.8%	68.4%	-5.4%
Care (137)	75.4%	70.1%	-5.3%
Computing and ICT (286)	74.1%	79.5%	5.4%
Engineering (320)	76.6%	71.3%	-5.3%
Hospitality and tourism (32)	64.3%	80.9%	16.6%
Media (216)	78.1%	86.1%	8.0%
Nautical studies (28)	72.9%	100.0%	27.1%
Performing arts (85)	81.5%	79.7%	-1.8%
Science (76)	75.2%	67.1%	-8.1%
Social subjects (165)	60.7%	77.0%	16.3%
Sport and leisure (232)	N/A	81.2%	N/A

As Figure 11 shows, six of the advanced subject groups achieved success rates above the sector average. Of the 12 subject groups presented, five performed below the sector average. No sector average data is currently available from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for Sport and Leisure.

Science recorded the largest negative variance, performing 8.1 percentage points below the sector average. This represents a decline compared with previous years' performance.

Through the College's ongoing self-evaluation programme, areas for development were identified and appropriate actions have been implemented. It is anticipated that these measures will contribute to improved performance in future reporting periods.

The College's Science team has experienced a number of staffing changes and requires time to embed new arrangements and implement longer-term strategies for continuous improvement. The team is actively reviewing current practices and drawing on both internal and external good practice to identify opportunities to enhance performance and improve learner outcomes.

Figure 12 - Outcomes by level and gender on advanced and non-advanced courses

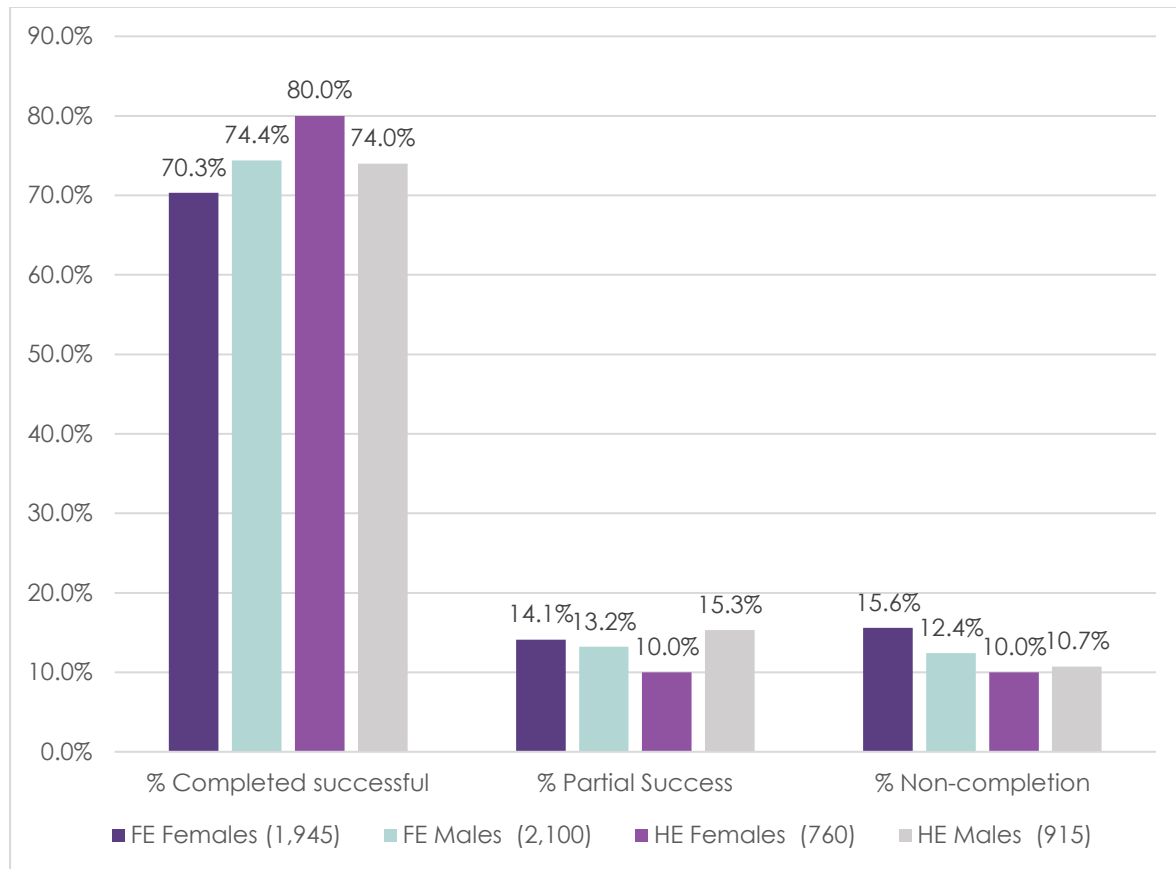


Figure 12 shows that the success rate for female students undertaking advanced (HE) courses was 80.0%, which was 6.0 percentage points higher than that of male students and 3.5 percentage points above the sector average. Within non-advanced (FE) provision, the success rate for male students was 4.1 percentage points higher than the 70.3% success rate achieved by female students; however, it remained 3.5 percentage points below the sector average.

The pattern of higher success rates for male students in Further Education (FE) and female students in Higher Education (HE) is consistent with the wider sector position

The College has in place an [Equality Mainstreaming and Outcomes](#) report. The report, together with its accompanying appendices, outlines the progress being made towards meeting the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and how equality is being mainstreamed across the organisation to ensure that all students and staff receive the best possible experience.

Figure 13 - Outcomes and enrolments by key group for part-time students

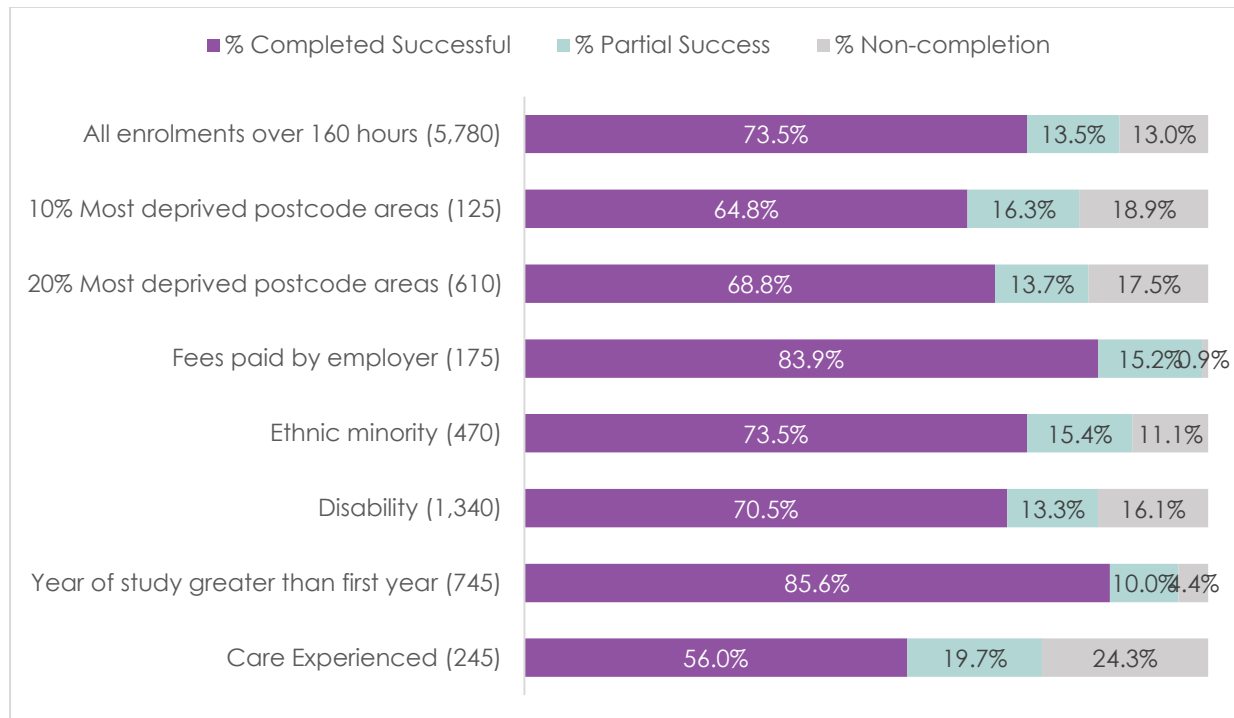


Figure 13 shows the performance of key student groups in AY2024-25 aligned to the measures outlined within the SFC Outcome Framework and Assurance Model.

Success rates for students beyond their first year of study increased by 2.3 percentage points compared with the previous academic year, reaching 85.6%

Two other key groups also recorded improvements in outcomes compared with AY2023-24. Success rates for students whose fees were paid by employers increased by 0.6 percentage points, while outcomes for students from ethnic minority backgrounds increased by 1.4 percentage points.

Three key groups experienced a decline in successful completion rates and also achieved success rates below the sector average. The success rate for students from the 10% most deprived postcode areas decreased by 3.7 percentage points and was 5.8 percentage points below the sector average. For students from the 20% most deprived postcode areas, the success rate decreased by 1.6 percentage points and was 2.4 percentage points below the sector average. Outcomes for care-experienced students decreased by 2.2 percentage points and were 8.1 percentage points below the sector average.

Although outcomes for care-experienced students declined only slightly, NESCol's performance did not reflect the wider sector trend, resulting in a larger attainment gap than in the previous academic year. Improving outcomes for care-experienced students remains a

key priority for the College and is reflected within its Equality Outcomes. Activity to support improved attainment, retention, and achievement for this group will therefore continue to be a significant area of focus.

Figure 14 - Overall college performance

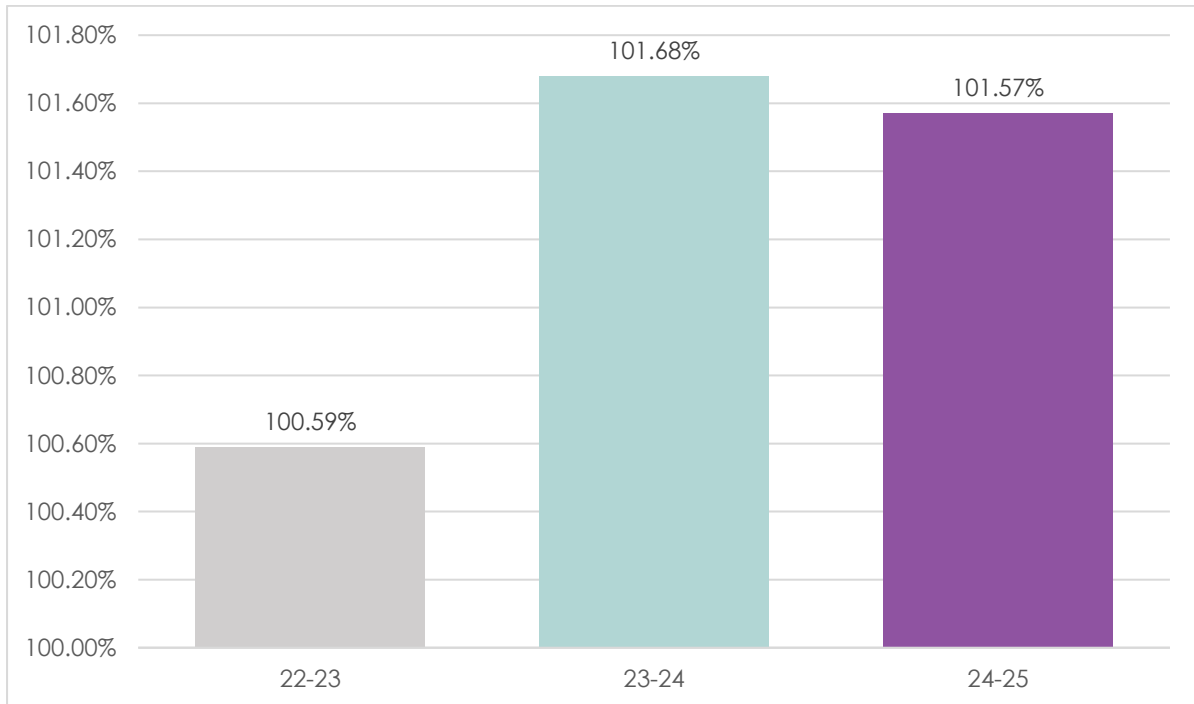


Figure 14 shows the College's overall credit activity performance in AY2024-25.

The Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) annual grant to the college sector enables eligible students to access funded learning opportunities. In return, colleges are expected to deliver an agreed level of activity.

This activity is measured in credits, with each credit representing 40 hours of study.

The College manages its credit activity through a process administered by the Curriculum Planning Team and overseen by the College Executive Team. In AY2024-25, NESCol delivered 117,750 credits against a target of 115,931, representing 101.57% of target.

Figure 15 - Full-time permanent teaching staff with a teaching qualification

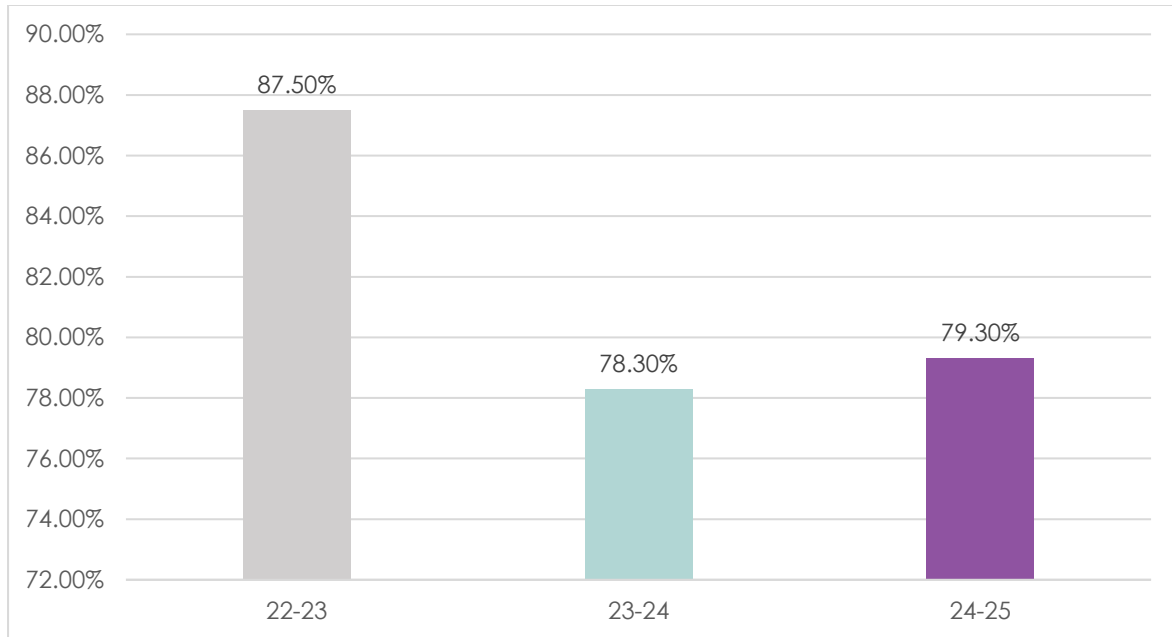


Figure 15 shows the proportion of full-time permanent teaching staff holding a Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE) or equivalent qualification.

The College continues to maintain a high proportion of permanent teaching staff with a recognised teaching qualification. The proportion of staff holding a TQFE or equivalent qualification increased by 1.0 percentage points, from 78.3% in AY2023-24 to 79.3% in AY2024-25.

Additional information

The following publications provide additional information on the ambitions and performance of North East Scotland College, and the performance of all Scottish colleges.

NESCol Strategic Plan 2025-30

The Strategic Plan 2025–2030 has been developed through a collaborative and inclusive process, engaging staff, students, stakeholders, and community partners across a range of forums. This has included an all-staff survey, targeted consultations, strategic workshops with the Leadership Team and Regional Board, student workshops across campuses, a Winter Development Day staff session, open information events, and online feedback opportunities.

The insights gathered through these activities have been carefully analysed to identify key themes and priorities, which have shaped the development of a high-level strategic framework. The resulting plan sets out a clear and ambitious direction for the College, underpinned by a strong regional focus, a commitment to sustainability and innovation, and a shared vision for student success and institutional growth.

The plan is structured with clear articulation of:

- Who We Are (an infographic overview)
- Why We're Here (mission statement)
- What We Stand For (core values)
- Where We're Going (vision statement)
- How We'll Get There (key objectives)

There are 6 sub-strategies, each contributing to the overarching College goals. Several themes cut across many, if not all, of these sub-strategies, including innovation, sustainability, efficiency, wellbeing and skills development.

- **Our Region** – Enhancing regional engagement, commercial development, and curriculum alignment with local labour market needs.
- **Our Secure Future** – Ensuring long-term sustainability through diverse funding, operational efficiency, and alignment with the UN SDGs.
- **Our Colleagues** – Supporting staff development, wellbeing, and strategic workforce planning.
- **Our Spaces** – Improving physical infrastructure with a focus on sustainability, safety, and inclusivity.
- **Our Digital Ambition** – Driving digital transformation and building digital capabilities across the College.

- **Our Student Experience** – Enriching the student journey through innovation in learning, teaching, and support.

NESCol/SFC Outcome Framework & Assurance Model

The Scottish Funding Council introduced a new approach to assurance and accountability for Scotland's colleges and universities, replacing the previous Outcome Agreement model with the Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model (OF&AM) starting in Academic Year 2024–25.

At a high level, the Outcomes Framework sets broad expectations for institutions in return for public funding, focusing on areas such as high-quality learning and teaching, financial sustainability, good governance, skills development, and student success. Unlike the previous model, it does not require institutions to agree on specific targets in advance. Instead, outcomes are expressed generally across themes that relate to students, employers, and government stakeholders.

College Sector Performance Indicators 2024-25

Further information on the performance of all Scottish Colleges in AY2024-25 has been published by the Scottish Funding Council. Comparative information provided covers areas such as student retention and achievement, staff qualifications and student satisfaction. Indicators are reported at sector and individual college level.

Glossary

Acronym	Term	Description
	Completed Successful (KPI)	A KPI, which measures students' success – those who enrolled and achieved the full qualification.
	Credits	The SFC provides funding to colleges who undertake to deliver a specified volume of activity measured in Credits (1 credit is equivalent to 40 hours of learning). Each college is set an annual Credits target by the SFC for each academic year.
ES	Education Scotland	A Scottish Government executive agency tasked with designing, supporting and improving the national education system. It works to ensure the delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence.
FE	Further Education (FE)	Non-school based education below SVQ level 4, SCQF level 7, i.e. below HNC level, non-advanced post school education.
HE	Higher Education (HE)	Education at SVQ level 4 or above, SCQF level 7 or above, for example HNC, HND, degree, postgraduate degree.
KPI	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	A type of performance and quality improvement measurement. KPIs evaluate the success of an organisation at a particular activity in which it engages.
	Level	Indicates if the course is an FE or HE programme.
	Outcomes	Statements that describe significant and essential learning that students have achieved, and can reliably demonstrate at the end of a course.
	Partial Success (KPI)	A KPI that measure students' success – those who completed the course but did not gain all the units to gain the qualification. These students do however receive formal accreditation for the units completed successfully.
SFC	Scottish Funding Council (SFC)	The national, strategic body that is responsible for funding teaching and learning provision, research and other activities in Scotland's colleges and universities and higher education institutions.
	Subject Group	Categories used by Education Scotland and the SFC to group courses from the same curriculum area.
	Non-completion (KPI)	A KPI that measures students who withdrew from their course without achieving a qualification.