



College Development Plan 2025-26

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1. Executive Summary

North West Regional College (NWRC) as the main provider of professional and technical education and training in the North West, NWRC plays a central role in up-skilling and re-skilling the population through the delivery of an economically focussed curriculum from Level 0 - Level 6.

NWRC maintains strong partnerships with civic, business and community including schools and employs over 700 teaching and support staff across five campuses. The College has an annual turnover of around £46m and has invested significantly in College estates in recent years, to provide industry standard learning and teaching environments, including the successful refurbishment of the Springtown Campus, which is the site for delivery of the majority of the College's training programmes and apprenticeships.

The Governing Body fully endorses this CDP and works constructively with the College Executive Team to ensure that NWRC provides and delivers suitable and efficient skills provision, for the benefit of its learners and the businesses the College supports, through effective management and robust governance. The performance metrics included in the CDP are reported to the Governing Body by the College Executive Team and progress in the achievement of targets are monitored on a regular basis. The College also submits CDP Progress Reports to DfE for scrutiny throughout the academic year.

The College **vision** is to improve the life chances of everyone, no matter how hard to reach. Its **purpose** is Making Lives Better for our students, our businesses, our community and our staff.

NWRC aims to achieve excellence through embracing its core **values**:

1. Excellence through innovation, constantly seeking creative ways of working with students, staff and the community
2. Excellence through trust in each other and respect for different views. The College is a welcoming, caring, supportive, safe and inclusive College which respects different views and outlooks
3. Excellence through professionalism. Staff demonstrate the highest levels of skill, judgement and standards of behaviour, individually and as a team
4. Excellence through integrity – staff act with honesty and openness

Through this NWRC aims to foster a partnership that inspires and includes all its stakeholders.

NWRC operates in a very challenging socio-economic environment, which is still impacted by the economic downturn. Further detail is set out in the sub-regional operating context at section 4.b of the plan. However, despite our socio-economic challenges, we have a strong education sector in the North West and our students achieve above the NI average at GCSE and at 'A' level.

As set out in the plan the College plays a central role in the delivery of Local Government Community Planning in both Derry City & Strabane District Council (DCSDC) and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council (CCG).

As part of the DCSDC City Deal the College will be proceeding with the development of a new Strabane Campus in the town centre/canal basin. The aim is to further enhance opportunities for education, skills and training and to work collaboratively with the other stakeholders bidding to develop in the same area.

There is momentum in the city and region around health excellence as a strategic economic competence. The College, the Curriculum Hub lead for the FE Sector in Health and Social Care, is leading curriculum development from Level 1 – Level 5 in this vocational area.

NWRC's role in supporting the widening access and participation agenda in the city region is widely recognised and we remain committed to providing a curriculum that supports the participation of learners with learning difficulties and disabilities, those from underrepresented groups in society, and those not in employment, education or training (NEETs). Examples include ongoing collaboration with Ulster University as part of the Magee Taskforce including exploration of shared accommodation, the College partnerships with the Kings Trust, the delivery of the StepUp programme and participation in a range of externally funded programmes.

The College has a long and successful working relationship with HMP Magilligan and the curriculum offer there continues to broaden and expand under the current Service Level Agreement in collaboration with Belfast Met as lead College. NWRC recruits around 350 individuals to this provision. However, these are not included in the college overall targets as the prison provision performance is reported by Belfast Met.

With the Minister's announcement on new proposals to support school leavers with special educational needs and the publication of the "Review of Post School Education, Skills and Training Provision, and associated legislative protections, for Young People with Special Educational Needs" the College is committed to continuing to provide and improve the necessary support for these learners including an uplift in the college targets in respect of the Skills for Life and Work programme.

Economic engagement at NWRC continues to be outward facing and is unlocking the potential of the city and region to create prosperity. The Business Support Centre, which manages economic engagement and economic development, is central to supporting businesses with skills acquisition and innovation awareness to assist them to move up the skills and innovation escalator.

The College has experienced a recent trend in declining full time enrolments. However, an increase in part time enrolments was evident partly due to the increase in the employer support provision. A target of 8,409 individuals, to generate around 13,679 enrolments is planned for 2025/26 academic year. These reflect a 5% uplift on the number of individuals recruited in 2023/24. These aspirational targets follow success in securing external funding for several key projects due to commence in 2025/26 academic year, and also a focus on enhancing short term part time curriculum offer during the second semester of 2024/25. Planning has taken place to continue and expand on this offer in 2025/26 particularly in the community and outreach provision.

NWRC is committed to delivering a curriculum that aligns with the Ministers four key priorities and plans in 2025/26:

- Increase the proportion of working-age people in "Good Jobs"
- Raise Productivity of Businesses
- Promote a more Regionally Balanced Economy
- Reduce Carbon Emissions in the transition to a greener and more sustainable economy

These are set out in detail in the Department for the Economy's "Business Plan for 2025/26".

The College Curriculum Policy states the curriculum offered at NWRC will:

- be economically relevant, demand led and responsive to local needs (including the significance of digital skills);

- be innovative and sustainable;
- provide progression pathways for FE, Apprenticeships and HE and employment;
- be inclusive and accessible to learners;
- be of the highest quality;
- be delivered in a flexible and learner focused manner;
- have appropriate physical and staff resources;
- be delivered in a cost effective manner.

College Development Plan (CDP) 2025/2026

Article 20 of the Further Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1997 requires that each College should prepare a College Development Plan (CDP). This CDP is our business plan for 2025/26 and it has been submitted to the Department for the Economy (DfE) to fulfil our statutory requirement.

2. Strategic Context

Programme for Government 2024-2027: Doing What Matters Most

Grow a Globally Competitive Economy

Proposed Action: Through a series of multi-million-pound committed investments, we will make this a more vibrant and inclusive place to live, work, invest and visit. Central to every part of our plan for a globally competitive and sustainable economy will be employers and workers. Supporting them to build the skills needed both now, and in the future, will be vital if we are to harness our economic potential.

Better Support for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs

Proposed Action: We will work to transform the Education system to provide high quality, efficient and sustainable services for children with SEN and disability. Systemic transformation will take time and will require significant investment but it is vital that we respond meaningfully to make sure our education system works for all learners.

Minister's Economic Vision

The College is a key delivery partner in taking forward the Minister's priorities set out in his Economic Vision to:

- Increase the proportion of working-age people in **Good Jobs**;
- Promote a more **Regionally Balanced** economy;
- **Raise Productivity** of businesses; and
- **Reduce Carbon Emissions** in the transition to a greener and more sustainable economy.

Strategies / Priorities

- [Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland](#)
- [Trade and Investment Strategic Priorities](#)
- [Climate Change Act \(NI\) 2022](#) and [The Climate Change \(Reporting Bodies\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2024](#)
- FE Transformation
- [Developing a More Strategic Approach to 14-19 Education and Training - a Framework to Transform 14-19 Education and Training Provision](#)
- [Skills Barometer 2023 - 2033](#)
- [DfE Sectoral Action Plans](#)
- [DfE Sub Regional Economic Plans](#)
- [DfE Digital Skills Action Plan 2024 - 2034](#)
- [Tourism Vision & Action Plan – 10 Year Plan](#)
- DfE Business Plan for 2025/26
- Review of Post School Education, Skills and Training Provision, and associated legislative protections, for Young People with Special Educational Needs – Summary Report

3. Financial Performance / Position

2025/26 Forecast Position

The tables below set out the College resource and capital requirements of **£34,794K** for 2025/26.

	PROGRAMME / ACTIVITY					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
	Further Education	Higher Education	Apprenticeships / Traineeships	Business Development	Social Inclusion	Other
	EL - Level 3 (not under B – F)	Level 4+	Programmes up to Level 3 including AppsNI; Traineeships; Skills for Life and Work	InnovateUs; Skills Focus; Assured Skills Academies; Flexible Skills; International Programmes; Innovation Voucher Scheme	Access NI; Essential Skills; ESOL; College Connect; NI Prisons Service; VEP; Princes Trust; UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Step Up	
Direct Teaching Costs - Pay	11,333	2,020	2,883	1,044	1,088	
Direct Teaching Costs - Non Pay	351	56	167	122	44	
Non-Direct Costs*	15,314	2,688	4,399	1,460	1,503	
Total Delivery Cost	26,998	4,764	7,449	2,626	2,635	
Non-Grant in Aid Income	1,888	1,580	2,277	2,073	2,139	221
Net Requirement	25,110	3,184	5,172	553	496	-221

* Includes total support service/non-front-line activity overheads apportioned based on delivery hours.

TOTAL RESOURCE REQUIREMENT (£000's)	£34,294
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Capital Expenditure – Major capital projects	
Capital Expenditure – Minor Works	£500
Capital Expenditure – DfE Energy – Invest to Save	
Capital Receipts	
Net DfE Capital Requirement (£000's)	£500
City Deals Capital Expenditure	

Reform to Save

Staff numbers control has been provided by NWRC and evidenced by the figures provided in the following table.

	Jul-24	Feb-25	Jun-25
Teaching	314.49	294.59	303.87
Non-Teaching	275.85	282.20	282.44
Sub-Total	590.34	576.79	586.31
External Funded Posts	(16.70)	(19.10)	(22.93)
Vacant Posts	27.38	16.12	9.00
Net Total	601.02	573.81	572.38

4. 2025/26 College Planned Delivery

The College takes into account the College profile and Sub-regional Operating Context to prioritise resource utilisation to areas of greatest need, aligned to the Strategic Context.

a. College Profile for 2025/26

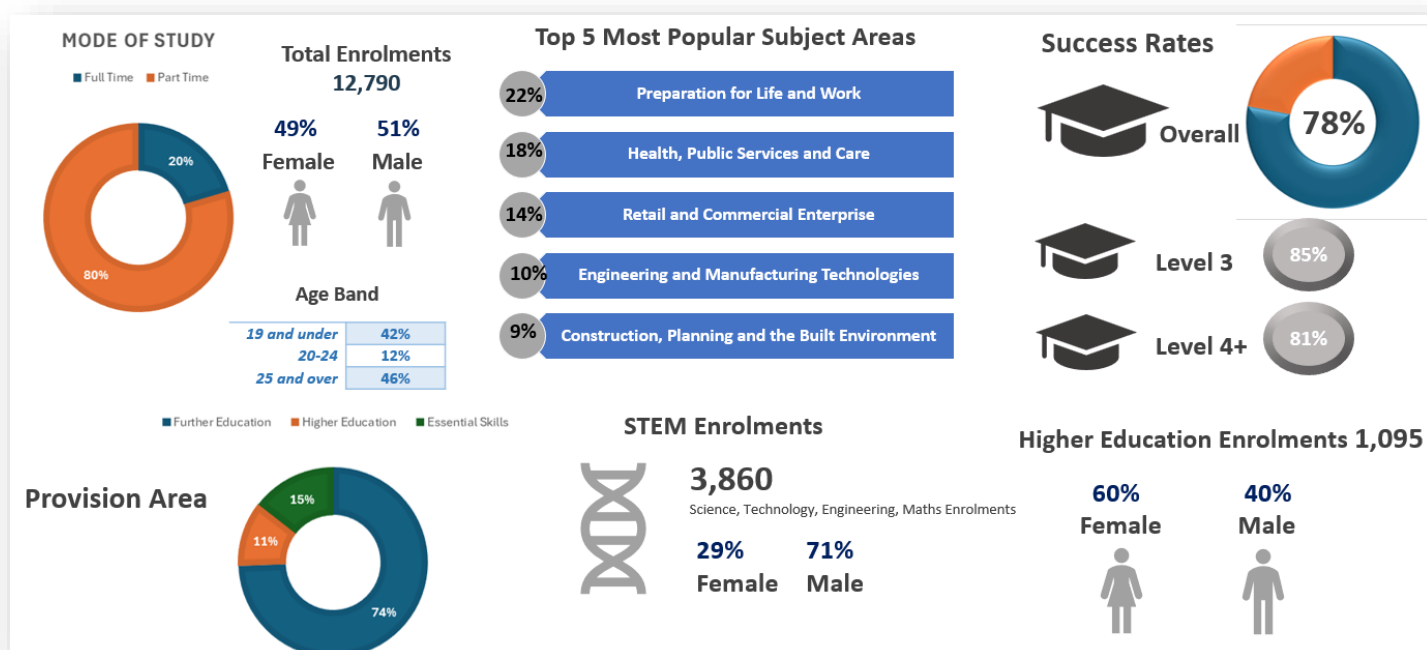
North West Regional College (NWRC) is the main provider of professional and technical education and training in the North West region with the main campuses located in Derry~Londonderry (Strand Road and Springtown), two campuses at Limavady (Main Street and Greystone) and a campus at Strabane. NWRC operates across two district councils, namely Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) and Causeway Coasts and Glens Council (CCG).



The industry standard learning and teaching facilities on most of our campuses provide aspirational and realistic environments for learning and we continue to be well placed to take on the challenge of enhancing the skills set of the population of the city and region.

The College employs 777 members of staff made up of 403 lecturers, 374 support services staff including staff in management roles.

2023/24 College overview¹ including the student profile is set out below. NWRC enrolment trends are illustrated in the College Data Analysis section in Annex 1.



The college regularly participates in Skills Competitions that highlight the quality of vocational skills and teaching offered at regional and national levels. Funding is being secured to support the mentoring staff and students participating in these competitions with costs incurred. WorldSkills competitions enable colleges to gain international benchmarking on skills development and encourage improvement in standards in higher technical education and apprenticeships.

Skills Competitions and Awards

NWRC appointed a Skills Competitions Champion to engage with staff and students participating in Skills Competitions (including WorldSkills UK) providing mentorship and assisting with sourcing funding for these competitions.

¹ Source: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/further-education-sector-activity-northern-ireland-201920-202324> extracted from tables published on 12 December 2024

Highlights of awards and achievements of NWRC staff and students in 2024/25 academic year are set out below:

- Matthew McGrotty – L3 travel and Tourism student, won NCFE UK Learner of the year 2024. Matthew has since progressed to a Foundation Degree at NWRC.



- 24 NWRC students studying Higher Education courses were awarded scholarships from the SSE Renewables Scholarship Fund. The students are currently studying across a range of areas including Media & Music, Engineering & Renewables, and Art & Design.

- NWRC awarded three scholarships to asylum seekers living and studying in Derry~Londonderry, offering them the chance to pursue their academic and professional goals. Diana Tamayo from Colombia, Ghadeer Fatouh from Syria, and Micheal Mutebi from Uganda are the 2024/25 recipients of the NWRC Asylum Seeker Scholarship, an initiative that seeks to support the college's ongoing commitment to inclusivity and diversity.



- Wall and Floor Tiling Trainee Rebecca Gavigan from our Greystone Campus won GOLD at The Construction Industry Training Board NI annual Skill Build NI Regional Competition at South West College. Rebecca is now officially the best in her field in NI and competed in the UK National Skill Build finals in Milton Keynes.



Kevin McLaughlin, who lectures at Strand Road campus in the Faculty of Business, Media, and Technology, a lecturer at NWRC for more than 20 years was named IT Educator of the Year at the Northern Ireland Further Education IT Awards in October 2024. The awards were hosted by The British Computer Society (BCS) recognise and celebrate those educators who innovate, challenge and embrace technology to encourage and support young people driving computing and digital education in schools.

- Seven students studying traineeships at NWRC were presented with a scholarship worth £1,000 by The Honourable the Irish Society. This is the 3rd year of the scholarships. They were presented by the Irish Society's Chief Executive Officer, Duane Farrell in February 2025.



- Computing graduate Patrick Barber was awarded a £22,000 All Ireland Scholarship funded by JP McManus, following his brother who was awarded the same prize last year.



- International Projects Officer Bronagh Fikri who was named Anti-Racism Teacher of the Year at the Advancing Race Equality Awards 2024. This is fourth year of the awards that were established to celebrate the efforts of individuals and grassroots community groups working to tackle racism and break down barriers. Student Frank Nwanonyi was a shortlisted finalist in the Young leader award. Bronagh Fikri also leads NWRC's bid for College of Sanctuary status.

- Study USA scholarships - Music student Keegan Houston participated in the prestigious Study USA scholarship programme, studying in USA in 2024/25.

- Hospitality students from North West Regional College (NWRC) have made it through to the regional finals of the Rotary Generation Chef competition after delivering outstanding performances at the local heats. The winners of the competition were Emmet Hargan, Liam Walsh and Jamie Harkin who will now represent NWRC in the Generation Chef National Final to be hosted at Belfast Met on 1 May 2025 where they will compete against teams from Northern Ireland's other Further Education Colleges.



The NISRA published FE Leavers Survey Outcomes for 2022/23² show that of the overall NWRC leavers that year 85% share of leavers achieved a positive outcome. Where 52% were in employment, 34% continued with learning and 7% were unemployed with 8% recorded as other. Other categories are set out in Annex 1.

Outcome	Mode of Attendance	
	Full Time	Part Time
Employed	35%	60%
Learning	57%	22%
Other	5%	9%
Unemployed	3%	9%

These tables illustrate the positive impact on learner achievement upon completing their studies at NWRC. In particular, only 3% of full time learners were unemployed following completion of their course and only 4% of all learners completing a Level 3 qualification were unemployed following completion of their course.

² <https://datavis.nisra.gov.uk/economy/Further-Education-Outcomes-Dashboard-2022-23.html> published on 5 September 2024

The outcomes presented in the National Student Survey (NSS)³ Survey for 2023/24 were very positive. A sample of highlights are set out below.

	NWRC Result %	NI %
Teaching on my course	94.00	85.84
Learning Opportunities	93.73	83.18
Assessment & Feedback	92.93	79.53
Academic Support	94.67	86.81
Learning Resources	94.71	88.49
Overall satisfaction	92.52	80.17

College retention, achievement and success rates over the previous three years are set out in Annex 1. The Curriculum Leadership Team monitors retention, achievement and success rates throughout the academic year with the aid of EBS dashboards established to improve scrutiny of these KPIs by the management teams.

The Quality and Performance Department at NWRC monitors the targets and outcomes throughout the year following a process established as part of the College’s quality improvement cycle. Further details are included in NWRC’s Whole College Self Evaluation Report (SER) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).



NWRC is the recognised curriculum leader in Health and Social Care for the Further Education sector in Northern Ireland. As the lead College for the Curriculum Hub NWRC leads in curriculum development for Health & Social Care (HSC) from level 1 to 5 in the sector.

Leading the Curriculum HUB in HSC is an important initiative not only for our College but also for our city and region as it links well with other strategic assets.

³ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/national-student-survey-data/> published on 10 July 2024

The College has a long and successful working relationship with HMP Magilligan, and the curriculum offer there continues to broaden and expand under the current Service Level Agreement in collaboration with Belfast Met as lead College.

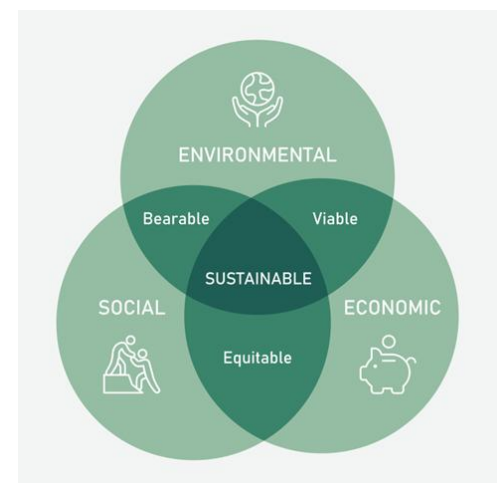
The College has established several internal multi-disciplinary forums to improve curriculum development and collaboration. These are:



As one of Minister's key objectives, that the College is committed to is embedding sustainability with a vision to create institutional and behavioural changes within NWRC in order to become a greener and more sustainable organisation and achieve and maintain green campus status - whilst also incorporating and monitoring the UN's Sustainable Development Goals in all that we do.

The College appointed a Principal Lecturer in Sustainability and Social Inclusion progressing the establishment of a five year strategic plan to set out:

- Leadership and Governance
- Teaching, Learning and Curriculum
- Student Engagement / Student Voice
- Professional and Support Operations
- Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement



Other future plans include:

- Integration of a Sustainability Committee into wider ESG Framework
- Development of monitoring and reporting to capture all relevant data.

- Extensive Staff Development Programme
- Student Engagement Programme
- Sourcing external funds to deliver additional programmes in Green Skills and Sustainability

b. Sub-regional Operating Context

Population Profile

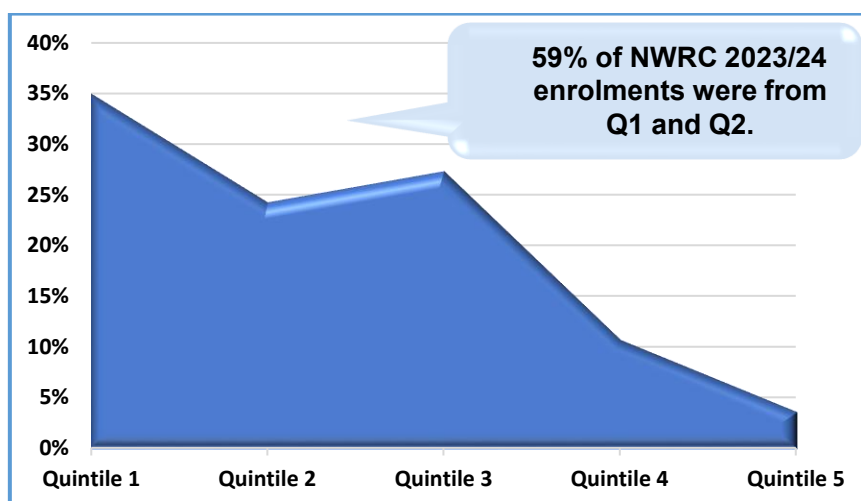
NWRC already operates in a very challenging socio-economic environment due to the:

- high levels of deprivation; these are based on multi-deprivation measures, including income levels, employment, health, education and skills and access to services (Figure 1);
- skills gaps, in the local council areas where the working age population has lower rates of achievement of qualifications at Level 4 or above (Figure 2);
- comparatively higher unemployment rates (compared to the Northern Ireland average), with systemic long-term unemployment and disengagement from the skills escalator (Figures 3);
- population rate of 16 year old school leavers and competition with post primary schools in the NWRC catchment area impacting on Full-Time enrolments (Figure 4); and

Through continuing collaboration and delivering the activities planned for 2025/26 NWRC aims to support individuals and industry and ultimately improve the position for the North West region.

High Levels of Deprivation

Figure 1. NWRC % Enrolments by Deprivation Quintile 2023/24⁴



⁴ Source: <https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/publications/further-education-sector-activity-northern-ireland-201920-202324> Excel Table A22

The NWRC has the highest percentage (59%) of enrolments across the sector (sector average rate of 45%) of students who reside in those areas with the highest levels of Deprivation⁵ (Quintiles 1 and 2). These students typically require additional support and guidance during their time at the College.

Evidence shows that travel is identified as one of the major barriers' students (from the most deprived quintiles) face in accessing their course of choice, even within a 20 mile radius of their homes. It is important, therefore that these students in Strabane or Limavady, for example, have access to high quality education and training provision with reduced journey times and travel times in order to address lower educational attainment.

The NWRC Student Services team provide a highly effective support intervention service across all campuses aimed at supporting students who are struggling with their studies to overcome the barriers they face to their education and training.

The support team are made up of specialist staff from a range of relevant disciplines including:

- Widening access
- Safeguarding
- Careers
- Learning Support
- Student Finance
- Students Union
- Student Health & Wellbeing.



The common purpose is improving the success of the student. The Student Services team, through its well-established student-centred ethos, and innovative practice provides a high quality “wrap-round” service that is tailored to the specific needs of all our students.

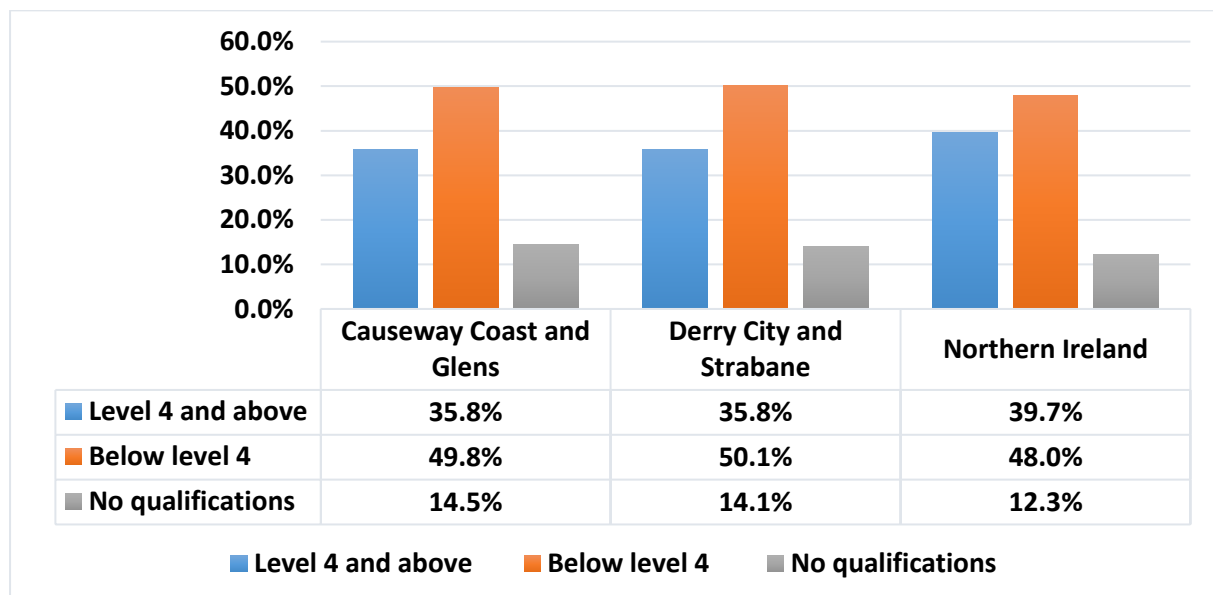
⁵ This figure is significantly higher from other Colleges in the sector

The College has for example, a robust Widening Access Participation Plan (WAPP) to improve access to higher education (for example Higher Education Access courses) for those students from deprived backgrounds.

Labour Market Weaknesses

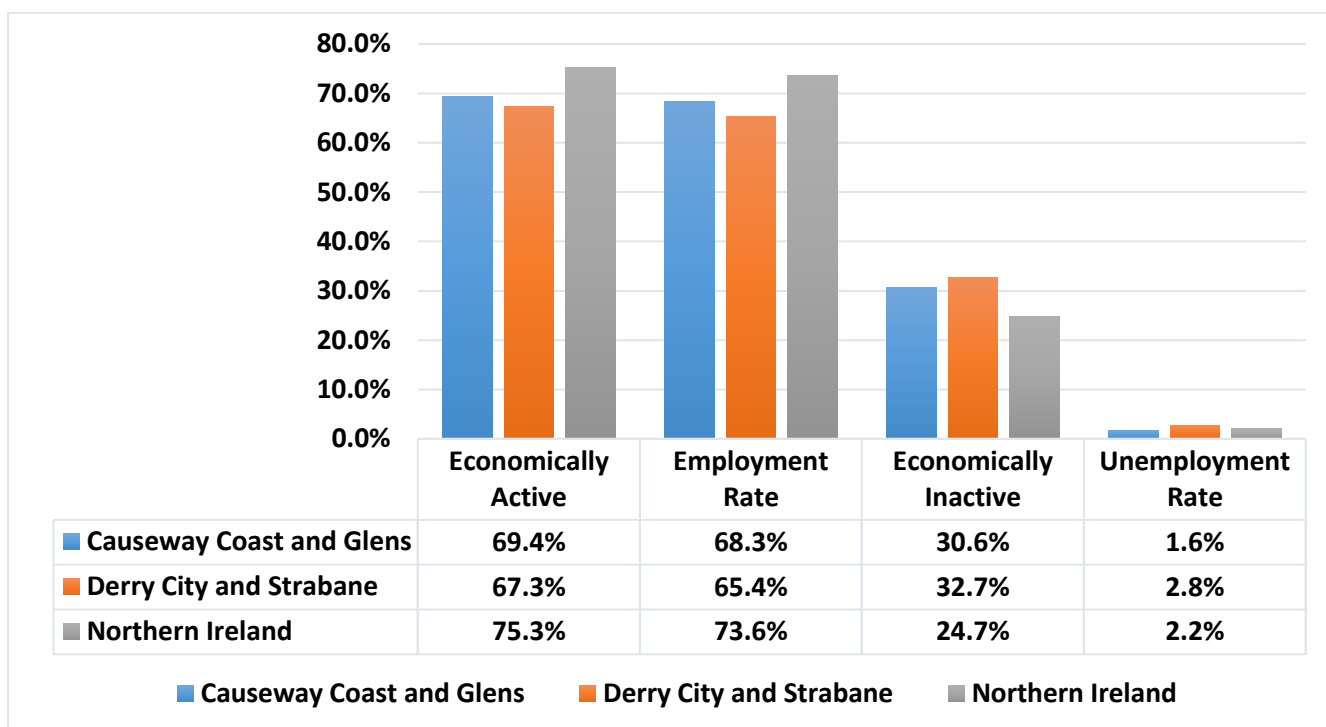
In 2023, the percentage of the working age population that had obtained a Higher Education (HE) qualification i.e., Level 4 and above (Figure. 2) was lower than the Northern Ireland average (39.7%) in both DCSDC and CCG. The working age economic inactivity rates were above the Northern Ireland average (24.7%) across the entire catchment area for the College. They were particularly high in DCSDC (33%) and in CCG (31%). Both council areas also have higher rates of working age population with no qualifications against the Northern Ireland average of 12.3% with DCSDC at 14.1% and CCG at 14.5%. More widely, the labour market data from the 2021 Census for Northern Ireland, shows that the DCSDC area by far, has the highest proportion of people aged 16 and over with no qualifications, at 28.3% compared to the Northern Ireland average of 23.8%.

Figure 2: Persons Aged 16 to 64 by Qualification Level and Council Area in 2023⁶



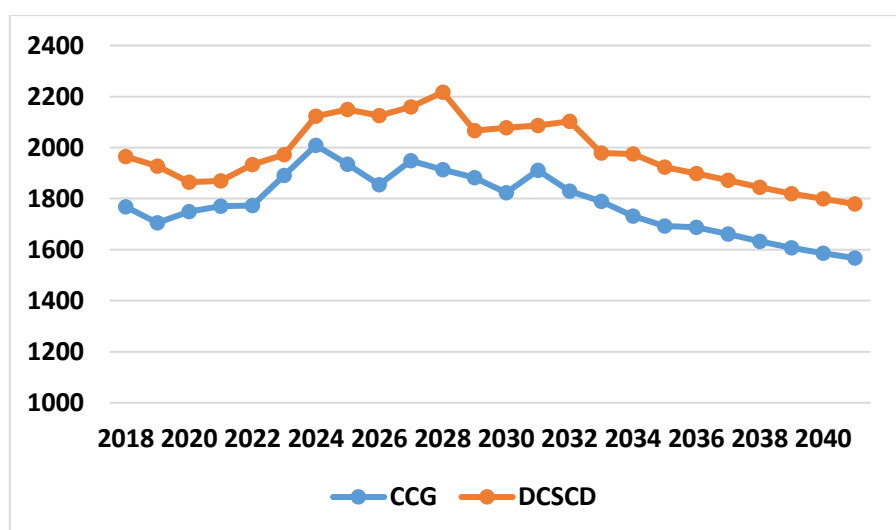
⁶ Source: NISRA [Labour Force Survey Annual Tables 2023](#)

Figure 3: Economically Active and Employment Rate of Persons aged 16 to 64 by Council Area in 2023⁷ (excluding students)



Population/Demographic Trends

Figure 4. Population of 16 year olds 2018 – 2040 in DCSCD and CCG Areas⁸



⁷ Source: NISRA [Labour Force Survey Tables](#)

⁸ Source: Population Statistics [NISRA](#)

The projected population figures set out above show an increase in the number of 16 years olds from 2022 to 2025. This does not align with full time enrolment figures, partly due to the increase in post primary schools retaining learners upon completion of Level 2 qualifications and increasing their delivery of vocational and technical programmes. The decline in engagement with post primary schools to deliver vocational programmes under the Entitlement Framework is evident over recent years – particularly with Derry/Londonderry post primary schools. The College continues to collaborate with the local learning community groups and representatives sit on each of ALC committees (Foyle Learning Community, Roe Valley Learning Community and Derg Mourne Learning Community). Enrolment trends can be seen in Annex 1.

More generally, over the longer-term, NISRA population projections (2018 based) suggest that the DCSDC area will experience (in line with Northern Ireland figures) a decline in the proportion of 16-24 year olds to 11.9% of the population by 2040 and an expansion in the number of people aged 65 plus to 52% of the population over this period. This demographic trend will heighten the need for increases in productivity rates and skill levels to support the ageing population. (Graphs included in Annex 1).

Additional Economic Indicators⁹

Indicator	LGD Rank	Value (Latest Period)	NI Average
% of Working Age Pop Engaged in Education / Training	9	12.2%	14.4%
Male Inactivity Rate	11	28.3%	21.2%
Female Inactivity Rate	11	37.1%	28.2%

Source: Labour Force Survey, NISRA

- “Derry City and Strabane has the highest rate of economic inactivity for both men and women of any LGD. The difference between both rates and the equivalent NI average is roughly in proportion when considering differential participation rates for men and women generally. This suggests that adverse labour market conditions within the area are pervasive rather than specific to a particular group.

⁹ Invest Northern Ireland Sub-Regional Economic Plan Technical Annex page 75

- Derry City and Strabane has a notably low proportion of the working age population participating in education and/or training. In 2022 the proportion of those engaged in education or training in the area was 2.2pps lower than the NI average for men and 2.3pps lower for women. The low incidence of participation in education and/or training is likely to have negative implications for reducing working age inactivity and improving employment in the region.”

Throughout this report it can be seen that DCSDC frequently ranks lowest performing when considering Minister’s priority areas such as:

Priority 1 - Raise Productivity

DCSDC rank lowest performing region in labour productivity with £47,229 against NI average of £55,364. CCG rank lowest performing region in Stage Entrepreneurship activity rates (2021-23) with 5.6% against a NI average of 9.2%.

Priority 2 - Good Jobs

Employees earning above the real living wage (working age population 18+, 2020-22) DCSDC are the lowest performing with 79.7% against the NI average of 85.5%

In relation to employees in secure employment (2021-22) CCG are lowest performing with 93.2% against NI average of 95.6%.

Priority 3 - Regional Balance

Employment Rate – DCSDC rank lowest performing at 65.4% against NI average of 73.6% (2023) as mentioned earlier.

Economic Activity Rate - DCSDC rank lowest performing at 65.4% against NI average of 73.6% (2023) as mentioned earlier.

Gross Disposable Income - DCSDC rank lowest performing at £16,572 against NI average of £17,636 (per head, 2021)

The DfE Business Plan 2025/26 outlines planned actions against each of the Minister’s key Priorities in the 2025/26 financial year. NWRC is committed to providing a positive contribution in support of these actions as set out in this CDP and the planned activity for 2025/26.

Further Considerations

Over recent years, approximately 10% of the NWRC enrolments have been from learners domiciled in the Republic of Ireland (Figure 6). There does not appear to have been any significant impact on recruitment of learners from the Republic of Ireland following Brexit.

Figure 6. NWRC Enrolments Domiciled in the Republic of Ireland¹⁰

Academic Year	% NWRC Enrolments domiciled in RoI
2018/29	11
2019/20	11
2020/21	11
2021/22	10
2022/23	10
2023/24	10

Industry Profile

The North West Regional College (NWRC) Business Support Centre (BSC) assists businesses from fledgling entrepreneurs and micro companies to long-standing indigenous and multinational and foreign direct investment (FDI) businesses with tailored solutions to meet their needs.

The BSC offers support to industry in two main ways:

- Our Innovation and Skills Centres assist businesses to source funding to support upskilling and mentoring in applied innovation, research and development and then foster innovation by delivering tailored solutions, with the skills and knowledge required, in areas of new product, process or service development, to support businesses to be more innovative and competitive.
- The BSC's Skills team support businesses to identify their skills needs through a training needs analysis and tailor bespoke training and upskilling specific to the business needs. Many of these skills courses are in priority areas and linked to employment opportunities.

¹⁰ Source: NWRC CDR



The NWRC is committed to encouraging and stimulating innovation through upskilling and mentoring in new product development and process or service improvement, to enhance productivity and business innovation. The NWRC has 5 dedicated innovation and skills centres that deliver solutions across the 7 sectors identified by DfE as the most innovation, productive and internationally oriented parts of the local economy, namely Agri-Tech; Life & Health Sciences; Advanced Manufacturing, Materials & Engineering; Software & Cyber; Low Carbon/Net Zero; Fintech & financial services; and Screen industries.



The NWRC delivers high-quality skills and innovation support to students, entrepreneurs, industry and the wider economy across these innovation centres:

- Foodovation Centre,
- Design Innovation for Assisted Living (DIAL) Centre,
- Product Design Centre (PDC),
- XR Hub and
- i4.0 (industry 4.0) Centre.

The support available for early-stage entrepreneurs, micro and SMEs includes:

- Bespoke upskilling and training and one-to-one mentoring,
- Access to state-of-the-art equipment and industry-standard workshops including new technology demonstrations and NWRC staff with the associated skills,

- Technical staff with knowledge and expertise in idea generation, proof of concept creation and prototype development right through to scale-up of production,
- Conducting industry applied research and development (r&D).

With the support of the BSC team, the NWRC aims to assist business to find new markets, scale-up production and to rapidly and effectively bring new ideas and products to market to increase sales, reduce costs, access new markets while enhancing workforce skills and creating employment. In so doing, the NWRC is supporting the Department for the Economy NI's vision for regionally balanced innovation and productivity within the North West economy and also targeting sectors that are important to the Causeway Coast and Glens and Derry City and Strabane District Council regions, and the businesses based in these regions, looking at opportunities via City and Growth deals and Peace Plus funding. The NWRC is at Outline Business Case stage (OBC) with a Foodovation and Skills Centre in Causeway Coast and Glens Council's Growth Deal and has been successful in partnering on 2 successful 4-year Peace Plus project applications under 2.2 Innovation Challenge Fund:

- NWRC are a partner on an SWC-led project called PRISM – Promote Research & Innovation for Sustainable Manufacturing, where the NWRC is focussing on decarbonisation for food and drink businesses.
- Partnering on the Catalyst led NW CAM2 project. Partners ATU, Ulster University, Trinity College Dublin, Irish Manufacturing Research Centre and NWRC (PDC), where the NWRC is supporting with health and medtech innovation.

c. College Engagement/Collaboration

A key challenge for all district council areas across Northern Ireland has been flat economic growth and the consistently revised downward projections on future growth, particularly following the cost-of-living crisis since 2022.

If the city and region within which the College is located is to prosper then there is a need to continue in the dual mandate of helping to develop a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy and supporting social inclusion. The College will also continue to provide a balanced curriculum and an economic support service across the urban and rural districts that it serves.

The NWRC continues to play a significant role in delivery of Local Government Community Planning as an active member of Community Planning partnerships in both DCSDC and in CCG. The College remains central to the implementation of a shared plan for promoting better outcomes for everyone and continues to collaborate through these strategic partnerships during this phase of recovery. NWRC is committed to delivering a high quality community provision through collaboration as set out in the infographic below:



NWRC Promoting Regional Balance

NWRC aligns closely with the objective of promoting a more regionally balanced economy and enhancing regional skill development through several targeted initiatives.

Emphasis on creating a regionally balanced economy seeks to ensure that economic growth is not solely concentrated in major urban centres like Belfast but is also spread across Northern Ireland's more peripheral regions. NWRC contributes to this goal through its strategic location and programme delivery in Derry~Londonderry, Strabane, and Limavady—areas that historically suffer from economic underperformance due to their geographical isolation and the legacy of underinvestment.

Key Contributions to promoting regional balance:

- **Regeneration and Infrastructure Projects:** NWRC's involvement in the Derry City and Strabane District Council's City and Growth Deals reflects its commitment to revitalizing these underserved areas. The development of a new campus in Strabane as part of the town's regeneration directly aligns with the goal of ensuring economic opportunities are distributed across the region. This infrastructure investment not only improves educational access but also attracts business and industry to the area, generating employment and stimulating local economies.
- **Collaborations with Local Industry:** NWRC is collaborating with local businesses and government agencies to support the growth of key sectors such as digital technologies, life sciences, and manufacturing. By partnering with Ulster University in initiatives like the **Cognitive Analytics and Digital Robotics Innovation Centre (CADRIC)** and the **SMART/Digital City** project, NWRC is helping to position the region as a hub for technological innovation. These projects bring significant investment and job creation to the region, supporting the vision of regional economic balance.
- **Business Incubation and Support:** NWRC is involved in the creation of business incubation units as part of the Strabane regeneration. These facilities

will foster entrepreneurship in the region by offering start-ups access to resources, mentorship, and collaboration opportunities. This encourages local innovation and reduces reliance on central economic hubs.

Enhancing Regional Skill Development

Enhancing skills across Northern Ireland is central to the Department for the Economy's objectives, particularly to create a workforce that is prepared for the challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the evolving demands of industries such as digital technologies, health, and manufacturing.

Key Contributions:

- **Skills Aligned with Growth Sectors:** NWRC offers a range of programmes and courses specifically designed to meet the demands of emerging sectors. For example, its focus on **digital and cyber technologies, robotics, and data analytics** ties into the needs of industries growing within the region due to City and Growth Deal investments. By providing training that aligns with these key areas, NWRC ensures that local residents are equipped with the skills to take advantage of new employment opportunities.
- **Further and Higher Education Integration:** NWRC's development of a further and higher education campus in Strabane enhances access to education for students in the region. This localised approach addresses the skill gaps in areas where young people previously may have had to leave the region for opportunities. The College's ability to deliver education in a format that supports both traditional and non-traditional learners (e.g., part-time or mature students) increases educational accessibility and supports lifelong learning, ensuring that the workforce can adapt to new economic challenges.
- **Apprenticeships and Vocational Training:** NWRC is a leader in providing vocational training, apprenticeships and Higher Level Apprenticeships (HLA's) in conjunction with employers, which are key components of enhancing regional skill development. These programmes are closely aligned with the needs of local industries, such as engineering, construction, and healthcare, ensuring that students are gaining relevant, hands-on experience that prepares them

directly for the job market. This contributes to a more dynamic and adaptable workforce.

- **Collaborations for Workforce Development:** NWRC works closely with employers and industry bodies to create tailored training programmes that meet the specific needs of the regional economy. In health and life sciences, NWRC collaborates with the Western Health and Social Care Trust to ensure that students are trained in areas that are experiencing skill shortages, directly supporting regional healthcare systems and contributing to the overall well-being of the region.

Through its infrastructure projects, partnerships, and focus on skills development, NWRC is central to delivering on the economic objectives of promoting a regionally balanced economy and enhancing regional skill development. The College's initiatives contribute to both the short-term economic revitalisation of Derry~Londonderry, Strabane, and Limavady and the long-term resilience of the workforce by ensuring that the region's residents are equipped with the skills needed to thrive in a rapidly changing economy.

Examples of Planned Activity continuing in 2025/26:

- **Strategic Sector & Council-Wide Initiatives:** NWRC collaborates on regional development through partnerships like NWSGP, SGP, NWTEC and the Londonderry Chamber of Commerce. These initiatives align education and economic strategies with local government priorities, including innovation and skills development.
- **Projects & Programmes:** NWRC is active in projects such as the City Deal and the Smart Village Network. These initiatives focus on regional growth, enhancing digital infrastructure, and promoting lifelong learning through strategic collaborations.
- **Funding:** The college is involved in securing significant funding through City Deal, Peace Plus, and Levelling Up. These funds are essential for regional economic development, focusing on infrastructure, skills enhancement, and community projects.

- **Peace Plus** - NWRC is actively involved in six PEACE PLUS programme projects:
 - **Theme 2.3 - Skills Development:** Partner in **GRASP** (Green Skills) and **DEPTH** (Digital Skills), focusing on green construction and digital employment pathways.
 - **Theme 2.4 - Smart Towns & Villages:** Supporting rural innovation through the **Smart Village Network Project (SVNP)**.
 - **Theme 2.2 - Innovation:** Partner in **NWCAM2**, linking academia and industry through R&D.
 - **Theme 6.1 - Strategic Engagement:** Contributor to **North South ESTEEM** and lead on **ASCEND**, advancing social care workforce mobility and skills.
- **Working Groups:** NWRC participates in multiple working groups across sectors like Arts & Culture, IT, and Tourism. These groups facilitate collaboration between industry and education, driving innovation and workforce development.
- **Development & Delivery Training:** The college offers various training programmes, including recruitment, work-based learning (WBL), and project-based learning (PBL). These initiatives aim to equip students with the skills needed in a competitive job market.
- **Business Support Centre:** NWRC's Business Support Centre provides research, industry forums, and innovation projects. Initiatives like Assured Skills Academies and Enterprise Week foster close ties between education and industry, promoting regional economic growth.
- **Employability:** NWRC runs initiatives like Careers Fairs and Apprenticeships Week to enhance employability. These programmes connect students with employers, offering opportunities for placements, apprenticeships, and career development.
- **International:** NWRC hosts international delegations and conferences, fostering global partnerships. These initiatives enhance the college's international profile, promote knowledge exchange, and attract foreign investment and collaboration.

- **Community Initiatives:** The college supports community-focused programmes like Success North West, which offer education and employability services. These initiatives are crucial for social inclusion and regional economic stability.
- **Dial Centre:** NWRC partners with local councils and RNIB to promote Derry as a visually aware city, aiming to make it the first in the UK and Ireland with this distinction. The initiative focuses on accessibility and inclusion for visually impaired individuals.

Collaboration Product Design, Foodovation, XR Hub and Industry 4.0 Centres: NWRC fosters innovation through centres focused on product design, food innovation, extended reality (XR), and Industry 4.0 technologies. These collaborations enhance regional competitiveness in advanced sectors.

DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S CITY AND GROWTH DEAL¹¹

NWRC plays a vital role in the Derry City and Strabane District Council's City and Growth Deals, partnering with local institutions to foster regional development through education, innovation, and infrastructure projects.

NWRC's involvement is concentrated on enhancing education and skills development, which are central to the region's inclusive growth strategy. The College is particularly focused on contributing to the **Strabane Town Centre regeneration**. This project aims to create a new further and higher education campus for NWRC, integrated with health and leisure facilities, business incubation units, and a revitalized public realm. This will not only provide modern educational infrastructure but also stimulate economic activity and social development in the town.

Moreover, NWRC is actively engaged in the **Digital and Innovation Pillar** of the City Deal. Working alongside Ulster University, the College contributes to initiatives such as the **Cognitive Analytics and Digital Robotics Innovation Centre (CADRIC)** and the **SMART/Digital City** programme. These projects will leverage digital technologies,

¹¹ www.derrystrabane.com

improving public services and business opportunities, and placing the North West at the forefront of digital transformation.

The NWRC's involvement is part of a broader strategy to create educational pathways that align with key growth sectors, such as health sciences, digital technologies, and artificial intelligence, thereby supporting the creation of thousands of new jobs and driving long-term economic growth in the region.

Strabane Town Regeneration Project

The Strabane Town Regeneration Project is a key component of the Derry City and Strabane District Council's broader economic development strategy and a key capital project for NWRC. This project focuses on revitalizing the town of Strabane by enhancing its infrastructure, boosting the local economy, and improving the town's overall aesthetic and functionality. Central to the regeneration efforts is the transformation of key areas within the town, including the redevelopment of the town centre to create a more attractive and accessible environment for both residents and visitors.

The project also aims to foster economic growth by supporting local businesses, attracting new investments, and creating job opportunities. Improvements in transport infrastructure, public spaces, and connectivity are expected to make Strabane a more appealing place to live, work, and visit. The regeneration plan includes initiatives to restore historic buildings, improve retail spaces, and develop new residential and commercial areas, thus breathing new life into the town.

By addressing both the physical and economic aspects of Strabane, the regeneration project seeks to create a vibrant, sustainable, and prosperous town that meets the needs of its community and contributes to the broader goals of regional development and economic revitalization.

CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS BOROUGH COUNCIL CITY AND GROWTH DEAL¹²

NWRC has partnered with Council to develop a business support project proposition at its Limavady campus through an Outline Business Case (OBC). This approach builds on the success of a similar initiative at NWRC's Strand Road campus in Derry-Londonderry, which includes the 'Foodovation' programme. The new project aims to replicate this successful model of innovation, focusing on outreach and delivering wide-ranging benefits.

NWRC: THE NORTH WEST STRATEGIC GROWTH PARTNERSHIP

The **North West Strategic Growth Partnership** (NWSGP) was established to foster cross-border cooperation between the **Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC)** in Northern Ireland and **Donegal County Council** in the Republic of Ireland. The partnership aims to support the economic and social growth of the North West City Region by identifying key strategic opportunities for collaboration. NWRC, as a regional educational leader, is a critical partner in these efforts. It provides expertise in skill development, research, and innovation, aligning closely with the goals of NWSGP.

Key areas of NWRC's involvement include:

- **Developing Cross-Border Skill Sets:** NWRC works in partnership with cross-border institutions to create joint educational programmes, addressing the skill demands in both regions. This collaboration strengthens the labour market by offering bespoke courses that meet the needs of both local employers and industries across the border.
- **Supporting Key Growth Sectors:** NWRC tailors its curriculum and training programmes to support sectors identified by the partnership as crucial for regional development, such as **advanced manufacturing, digital technologies, green economy, and healthcare**. By offering industry-relevant

¹² www.causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk

qualifications, NWRC equips learners with skills that directly contribute to the growth of the North West economy.

- **Promoting Research and Innovation:** NWRC actively engages in research initiatives that address regional challenges, often in collaboration with local businesses. This helps foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, which is vital for economic development. Through the partnership, NWRC helps businesses and entrepreneurs access the necessary resources and expertise to scale and innovate, driving productivity and growth.

NWRC'S ROLE IN THE DCSDC STRATEGIC GROWTH PARTNERSHIP

The **DCSDC Strategic Growth Partnership** (SGP) is a collaborative initiative between the local council, businesses, and educational institutions like NWRC. Its focus is on implementing the **Strategic Growth Plan**, which outlines the long-term economic and social development goals for the Derry City and Strabane District. NWRC plays a pivotal role in meeting the key objectives of this partnership.

- **Enhancing Regional Skill Development:** NWRC is a primary provider of vocational training and higher education in the region, offering a range of courses aligned with the local labour market needs. By offering **apprenticeship schemes**, **upskilling programmes**, and **vocational qualifications**, NWRC helps address the skills gap in areas such as IT, construction, and healthcare. This ensures that residents are equipped with the skills required for local employment opportunities, enhancing overall regional productivity. The apprenticeship schemes in collaboration with the Council do not follow the AppsNI Framework as they do not meet the necessary criteria. These schemes fall within the part time FE provision. In 2024/25 DCSDC and NWRC won the Public Sector Employer in Partnership with a Training Provider Award at the NI Apprenticeship of the Year Awards, held in Belfast City Hall on 26 March 2025.
- **Driving Employment through Education:** NWRC collaborates closely with the DCSDC to develop education programmes that align with the council's growth strategy, specifically designed to meet the needs of local businesses.

By tailoring its educational offerings to meet regional needs, NWRC helps reduce unemployment and increase job opportunities within the local community, supporting the **Good Jobs** objective by enhancing employability and wages.

- **Promoting Regional Balance:** NWRC contributes to the goal of promoting a more regionally balanced economy by ensuring that education and skills training are accessible to all communities in the North West. Through outreach programmes and partnerships with local employers, NWRC targets areas of economic disadvantage, providing education and training opportunities that help bridge the regional economic divide. The focus on inclusive access to education also ensures that marginalized groups, such as individuals with disabilities or those in rural areas, have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the local economy.
- **Local Focus:** NWRC plays a key role in addressing regional imbalances by tailoring its educational programmes to the specific needs of the North West region. Through its work with local councils and cross-border partnerships, NWRC helps ensure that economic growth is not just concentrated in urban centres but also reaches rural and disadvantaged communities.
- **Cross-Border Collaboration:** The North West Strategic Growth Partnership allows NWRC to promote a regionally balanced economy on both sides of the Irish border, helping to create synergies between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. By developing cross-border training and education programmes, NWRC facilitates shared economic growth and equal access to opportunities across the region.
- **Industry-Specific Skills:** NWRC's focus on aligning its educational programmes with the needs of local industries directly supports the objective of enhancing regional skill development. By offering training in high-demand sectors like digital technology, green energy, and healthcare, NWRC ensures that the local workforce is equipped with the skills required to support economic growth.
- **Accessible Training:** NWRC's outreach into rural and underserved communities ensures that skills development is accessible to all, promoting inclusivity in education. This approach helps to reduce regional disparities in skills and employment opportunities.

NWRC's involvement in both the **North West Strategic Growth Partnership** and the **DCSDC Strategic Growth Partnership** is critical to meeting Northern Ireland's economic objectives of promoting a regionally balanced economy and enhancing skill development. Through targeted education and training initiatives, strong partnerships with local businesses, and a focus on regional needs, NWRC contributes significantly to the social and economic growth of the North West region.

NORTH WEST TERTIARY EDUCATION CLUSTER (NWTEC)

NWRC are a partner in the North West Tertiary Education Cluster (NWTEC). This a strategic alliance formed in 2018 to drive education, skills development, and innovation across the cross-border region of the North West, encompassing Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It brings together key tertiary education institutions: Atlantic Technological University (ATU), Ulster University (UU), North West Regional College (NWRC), and Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB). The cluster is designed to deliver a coherent, cross-border approach to education, research, and economic development, aiming to position the North West as a growth hub on both the European and global stages.

NWTEC aims to align education with regional needs by offering comprehensive education options, upskilling initiatives, and promoting cross-border collaboration. It supports regional growth through sustainable development, making the North West a hub for investment and innovation. NWTEC endeavour to remove barriers to cross-border student mobility and strengthen research and innovation in key sectors. It also engages with local enterprises, ensuring education aligns with industry needs, driving job creation and supporting the evolving regional economy.

NWTEC's work directly aligns with fostering regional economic balance by bolstering cross-border collaboration, developing a skilled workforce, and supporting enterprise growth in the North West, NWTEC contributes to reducing regional disparities and building a more robust, balanced economy.

NWTEC is pivotal in enhancing regional skill development, aligning education with industry needs, particularly through its focus on cross-border apprenticeships, vocational training, and higher education pathways. These efforts enhance the

skillsets of the local workforce, addressing skills gaps, and positioning the region to meet future demands.

Through these initiatives, NWTEC supports long-term economic resilience and regional development, effectively contributing to the regional balance and skills development goals.

The cluster was successful in securing a €10 million digital and cyber PEACE PLUS skills programme commencing in September 2025. The initiative will run for four years, focusing on addressing emerging skills gaps in high-value sectors across borders. It will prioritize equitable access to inclusive, high-quality education, training, and lifelong learning by creating accessible programmes. These programmes will be supported by a robust framework for adult learning, as well as distance and online education and training opportunities.

The second NWTEC Conference, held in May 2024 at Ulster University, brought together leaders from education, government, and industry to address key issues and opportunities for the North West region. It emphasized collaboration between all four partners, focusing on regional development, education, and skills alignment with economic needs. The conference highlighted the importance of cross-border innovation, research, and industry partnerships in sectors like ICT and engineering. It concluded with a shared vision to build a resilient, skilled workforce and position the region as a hub for investment and innovation.

The UNESCO Learning Cities Project promotes lifelong learning to enhance social inclusion, economic development, and sustainability. Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) is a member of this network, focusing on inclusive education and skills development¹. DCSDC aims to foster a culture of learning through various initiatives and partnerships². Over the next two years, the NWTEC plan to collaborate closely with DCSDC and other stakeholders to develop a cross-border learning city region, enhancing educational opportunities and community engagement. This initiative aligns with the NWTEC's strategic goals for regional growth and development

NWTEC received the EURASHE Star award for Local and Regional Impact for two consecutive years for the cross-border collaboration cluster. This recognition followed the presentation of a paper at the international European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) conference in 2023 and 2024.

DERRY CITY AND STRABANE DISTRICT COUNCIL¹³

The North West Regional College (NWRC) in collaboration with Derry City and Strabane District Council, has implemented several employability and innovation projects to promote regional economic growth and skill development. The **Labour Market Partnership (LMP)** funds free training programmes in Office IT, Customer Service, Advanced Manufacturing, and Construction, helping local residents, including youth and individuals with disabilities, gain employment. NWRC also delivers the **Kickstart to IT** course, a 16-week full-time programme focused on software fundamentals, offering placements and guaranteed interviews with local software companies. Additionally, NWRC supports **horticulture apprenticeships**, providing practical skills and job opportunities in the industry.

These initiatives align with **the objective** by promoting a more regionally balanced economy and enhancing skills development. NWRC's collaboration with local authorities fosters local economic strategies and attracts investment by offering a diverse and upskilled workforce. Programmes like Kickstart to IT address regional skill shortages, ensuring residents are equipped for sustainable, well-paid jobs.

NWRC is also engaged in innovation projects, including the development of the **Acorn Farm website** and promoting sustainable agriculture. Additionally, the college plays a role in **City Deal projects**, focusing on building innovation centres and enhancing digital connectivity. These initiatives contribute to long-term regional growth by addressing skills gaps, supporting employment, and driving economic activity in the North West, reinforcing NWRC's commitment to the local community and economic development.

Examples of Employability Projects

Labour Market Partnership (LMP)

- Training Programmes: NWRC offers free training courses funded by the LMP programme, focusing on skills in Office IT, Customer Service, Advanced Manufacturing, and Construction.

¹³ www.derrystrabane.com

- Employment Support: The LMP programme creates targeted employment action plans, supporting individuals, including young people and those with disabilities, towards and into work.
- Economic Development: These initiatives help increase employment figures and drive economic activity in the North West.

Kickstart to IT Course

- Specialist Training: This 16-week full-time course provides training in software fundamentals, enabling candidates to apply for IT software roles.
- Industry Collaboration: The course includes a four-week placement with local software companies and guarantees job interviews with participating companies.

Horticulture Apprenticeships

- Apprenticeship Programmes: In collaboration with the Council, NWRC offers apprenticeships in the horticulture industry, providing practical skills and job opportunities.

Skills Academies

- The training programmes and courses offered by NWRC directly contribute to enhancing regional skills development.

Pathways to Employment

- The college works with the Council to deliver 'lead into employment' programmes, supporting individuals towards and into work.

Innovation Projects

- **Acorn Farm Website:** NWRC students collaborated with Acorn Farm to create a new website, enhancing the farm's visibility and promoting sustainable agriculture.
- **City Deal Projects:** NWRC is involved in the City Deal, which includes the development of world-class innovation centres and digital connectivity enhancements.

Business Projects

- **Kickstart to IT Course:** This 16-week course, in partnership with local IT firms, provides specialist training in software fundamentals, including a four-week placement and guaranteed job interviews.
- **Apprenticeship Programmes:** NWRC offers apprenticeships in various sectors, including horticulture, in collaboration with the Council.

Local Economic Strategies: NWRC's collaboration with the Council aligns with promoting a regionally balanced economy by setting local economic targets and funding strategies designed in partnership with local authorities.

Investment Attraction: By offering a diverse talent pool and upskilling the workforce, these initiatives attract investment to the region, showcasing Derry and Strabane as ripe for business opportunities.

Addressing Skill Shortages: Programmes like the Kickstart to IT course address specific skill shortages in the region, ensuring that local people are equipped with the necessary skills to secure well-paid and sustainable job opportunities.

These initiatives highlight NWRC's commitment to supporting the local community and enhancing the region's economic prospects through education and training, in line with economic objectives of the North West.

PEACE PLUS FUNDING

PEACE PLUS is a €1.14 billion EU funding programme aimed at promoting peace, reconciliation, and cross-border cooperation in Northern Ireland and the border counties of Ireland. It supports social, economic, and environmental initiatives, focusing on community building, economic regeneration, and shared services to foster long-term peace and stability. NWRC are involved in the bids as partner for a number of programmes as detailed below:

Theme 2.3 Skills Development: GRASP (Green Accelerator Skills Programme) will enable 8 further education & training (FET) institutions in the Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) area, to collaborate with Construction Sector partners to develop a suite of Green Skills qualifications designed to meet increasing demand. Green Skills are those required to construct /retrofit buildings to near zero energy

standards. GRASP will be led by SWC in partnership with: SRC; & NWRC in NI; & MSLETB; CMETB; DETB; ATUL; & FC in Ireland. It will be evaluated by ICBAN, whose membership includes 9 councils.

The partners have identified 50 Green Skills Programmes of Study aligned with specific Construction Sector needs, as confirmed through targeted consultation with public & private developers. These span areas including: (i) domestic retrofit; (ii) NZEB tradesperson & site supervision; (iii) PassivHaus design; (iv) photovoltaic systems management; (v) environmental auditing; & (vi) digital construction technology. In addition, GRASP will include two Green Skills Academies: (i) 'Women into Construction'; & (ii) 'Labour Activation'.

GRASP will also encompass cross-cutting activities: (i) activities designed to promote Green apprenticeships and develop joint awards; (ii) development & delivery of a residential carbon literacy programme; & (iii) a schools outreach programme designed to raise awareness of Green Skills employment opportunities.

Theme 2.3 Skills Development: North West Digital Employment Pathways Training Hub (DEPTH)

With partners of the North West Tertiary Education Cluster (NWTEC) - Atlantic Technological University (ATU), Lead partner, Ulster University and Donegal Education and Training Board (DLETB), NWRC have secured a Programme Area by addressing emerging skills gaps for high value sectors on a cross-border basis. This initiative will prioritise equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through the development of accessible programmes. These programmes will be scaffolded by a resilient framework for adult learning, and distance and on-line education and training.

The overall objective is to develop a learner-centred Digital Skills framework that encourages progression of individuals on flexible but structured pathways; supporting them to move up the relevant qualification framework, and to help these individuals be better placed to re-enter, remain or progress their role in the NW region workforce. In addition, a digital strategy will be developed that complements other major investment plans for the region, such as, Derry and Strabane City Deal, to ensure a future vibrant digital ecosystem that is of international significance.

Theme 2.4 Smart Towns & Villages: Smart Village Network Project (SVNP)

The Smart Village Network Project (SVNP) implements a Lighthouse Project model with DCSDC 'following' the Donegal Digital 'Lighthouse Project' to build connectivity and digital capabilities in rural areas. Two state-of-the-art Rural Digital Hubs and five community hubs will be established in existing community properties in DCSDC. NWRC is a partner in this project providing technical support to entrepreneurs, start-ups and businesses at the digital and community hubs. NWRC BSC staff to be funded to provide this technical support to include staff costs, travel and possibly some small-scale equipment.

Theme 2.2 Innovation Challenge Fund: NWCAM2

NWCAM2. With partners Catalyst, UU, QUB, ATU and NWRC, it responded directly to the 10X Strategy and DETE's Project Ireland 2040 targets relating to industry-facing innovation bridging academia into industry, through digitisation and adaption of new and innovative technologies. The focus is on real life innovation challenges, co-designing industry-led research projects. The project will improve research absorption capability of industry. Engineering teams and accelerators will develop innovation skills and knowledge transfer. Sustainable R&DI activity will be a desired outcome leading to sustained innovation.

The consortium of complementary research strengths will be formed offering capability via 2 strands:

- 4-year term with core research element to address complex research projects that will support PhD level study – delivered by Universities.
- 1- or 2-year term with closer to market product and process development – delivered by NWRC & Universities.

Both strands will identify emerging training, and development needs to upskill businesses within the programme area. The consortium will draw on the collective expertise, capability and facilities by the funded partners, that an agile and adaptative training and upskilling facility will be offered to businesses on a service-based

approach and open to a wide range of businesses within the target area and sectoral focus.

Theme 6.1: Strategic Planning and Engagement: North South Education & Skills Training: Empowering Economic Mobility (North South ESTEEM)

NWRC have bid in partnership with NWTEC partners on a project titled North South Education & Skills Training: Empowering Economic Mobility (North South ESTEEM). The project emphasises a strong commitment to a learner centred ethos to provide enhanced education and employment skills opportunities on an All-Island basis.

This project will be led by Atlantic Technological University, in partnership with Ulster University, North West Regional College, and Donegal Education and Training Board, in conjunction with the pre- eminent authority on cross-border policy and regulation, the Centre for Cross-border Cooperation (CCBC). If successful, this initiative will provide a comprehensive information resource for learners considering their tertiary education or employment skills opportunities and will also target resolving the systemic issues that have contributed to low levels of cross-border student mobility and impediments to the free movement of some categories of skilled employees.

Theme 6.1: Strategic Planning and Engagement: ASCEND (Advancing Social Care in Empowering New Directions)

NWRC are leading a bid entitled (Advancing Social Care in Empowering New Directions) with partners Digital Health and Care Innovation Centre (DHI) Scotland, Ulster University, Atlantic Technological University, Queen Margaret University, Scotland, Open University, Dundalk Institute of Technology, Edinburgh College, Donegal ETB, Northern Ireland Social Care Council and Scottish Social Services Council.

This project will jointly develop a cross-border strategy and action plan to harmonise, modernise, and professionalise the social care workforce to increase the

attractiveness, retention and mobility of staff in this crucial sector across the island of Ireland.

COMMUNITY

NWRC has played a pivotal role in supporting community development in the North West region, particularly in Derry and Strabane. Through various projects, NWRC has contributed to promoting a more regionally balanced economy and enhancing regional skill development, aligning with broader economic objectives.

Community-Based Education and Training Initiatives

NWRC has been deeply involved in delivering education and training programmes directly within community settings, making education more accessible to those who might not engage with traditional educational institutions. These programmes are tailored to meet the specific needs of local communities, often targeting marginalised groups, such as those with low educational attainment, long-term unemployed individuals, and people with disabilities.

Examples:

- **STEP UP Programme:** This initiative is designed to provide targeted vocational training and educational opportunities within local communities. By collaborating with community organizations, NWRC recruits and supports learners who face barriers to education and employment, particularly in areas like Derry and Strabane. The programme's community-centric approach ensures that educational benefits are retained within the local area, contributing to Community Wealth Building and enhancing economic resilience.
- **Horticulture Apprenticeships:** In collaboration with Derry City and Strabane District Council, NWRC offers apprenticeship programmes in horticulture, providing participants with practical skills and employment opportunities. This initiative not only equips individuals with valuable skills but also supports local economic strategies by developing a skilled workforce within the region.

Support for Local Economic Strategies

NWRC actively collaborates with local councils and community organisations to align educational programmes with local economic strategies. By doing so, the college ensures that its initiatives contribute to the broader goal of regional economic development.

Examples:

- **Labour Market Partnership (LMP):** NWRC provides free training courses funded by the LMP programme, focusing on skills critical to the local economy, such as Office IT, Customer Service, Advanced Manufacturing, and Construction. These programmes directly contribute to increasing employment figures and driving economic activity in the North West.
- **Kickstart to IT Course:** This specialized training programme offers intensive education in software fundamentals, followed by placements with local IT companies. By addressing skill shortages in the IT sector, NWRC helps create a more competitive workforce, attracting investment to the region and promoting economic growth.

NWRC's initiatives are designed to decentralise economic opportunities, ensuring that areas like Derry and Strabane, which may be economically disadvantaged compared to other parts of Northern Ireland, receive targeted support. By embedding educational and training programmes within these communities, NWRC helps to create local employment opportunities, reducing the reliance on larger urban centres.

Impact: These efforts help to retain talent within the region, support local businesses, and attract new investment by showcasing the area as a hub of skilled labour and innovation. The horticulture apprenticeships and IT training programmes are prime examples of how NWRC is fostering economic growth at the local level.

NWRC's community-based education programmes are directly aligned with the goal of enhancing regional skill development. By offering a range of courses that address the specific needs of the local labour market, NWRC ensures that residents are equipped with the skills required by local employers.

Impact: Programmes like the STEP UP initiative and the Kickstart to IT course address both current and future skills needs, ensuring that the local workforce is prepared for

evolving industry demands. This not only enhances individual employability but also contributes to the long-term economic sustainability of the region.

NWRC's involvement in community sector projects in the North West, particularly in Derry and Strabane, is a testament to its commitment to regional economic development. Through targeted educational programmes, apprenticeships, and strategic collaborations with local councils and community organisations, NWRC is playing a crucial role in promoting a more regionally balanced economy and enhancing regional skill development. These efforts are essential for driving economic growth, reducing regional disparities, and creating sustainable opportunities for all residents in the North West.

STEP UP

The Department for the Economy's STEP UP programme, tailored for NWRC, is an initiative designed to enhance employability and skills development in the region. It aims to bridge the gap between education and employment by providing students and job seekers with practical, industry-relevant training and qualifications that align with local economic needs.

STEP UP focuses on reskilling and upskilling individuals to meet the demands of emerging industries and high-growth sectors in Northern Ireland. The programme includes a range of targeted training courses, from entry-level to advanced, designed in collaboration with local employers to ensure that the skills being taught are directly applicable to current job markets. This approach not only increases the employability of participants but also supports the regional economy by supplying businesses with a skilled workforce.

Additionally, STEP UP offers support services such as career advice, mentoring, and placement opportunities, further enhancing the transition from education to employment. By equipping individuals with the necessary skills and qualifications, the programme plays a crucial role in addressing skill shortages and promoting economic growth in the North West region, aligning with the broader objective of creating a more regionally balanced economy in Northern Ireland. NWRC ran successful programmes in 2023/24 and 2024/25. This will continue into 2025/26 subject to funding.

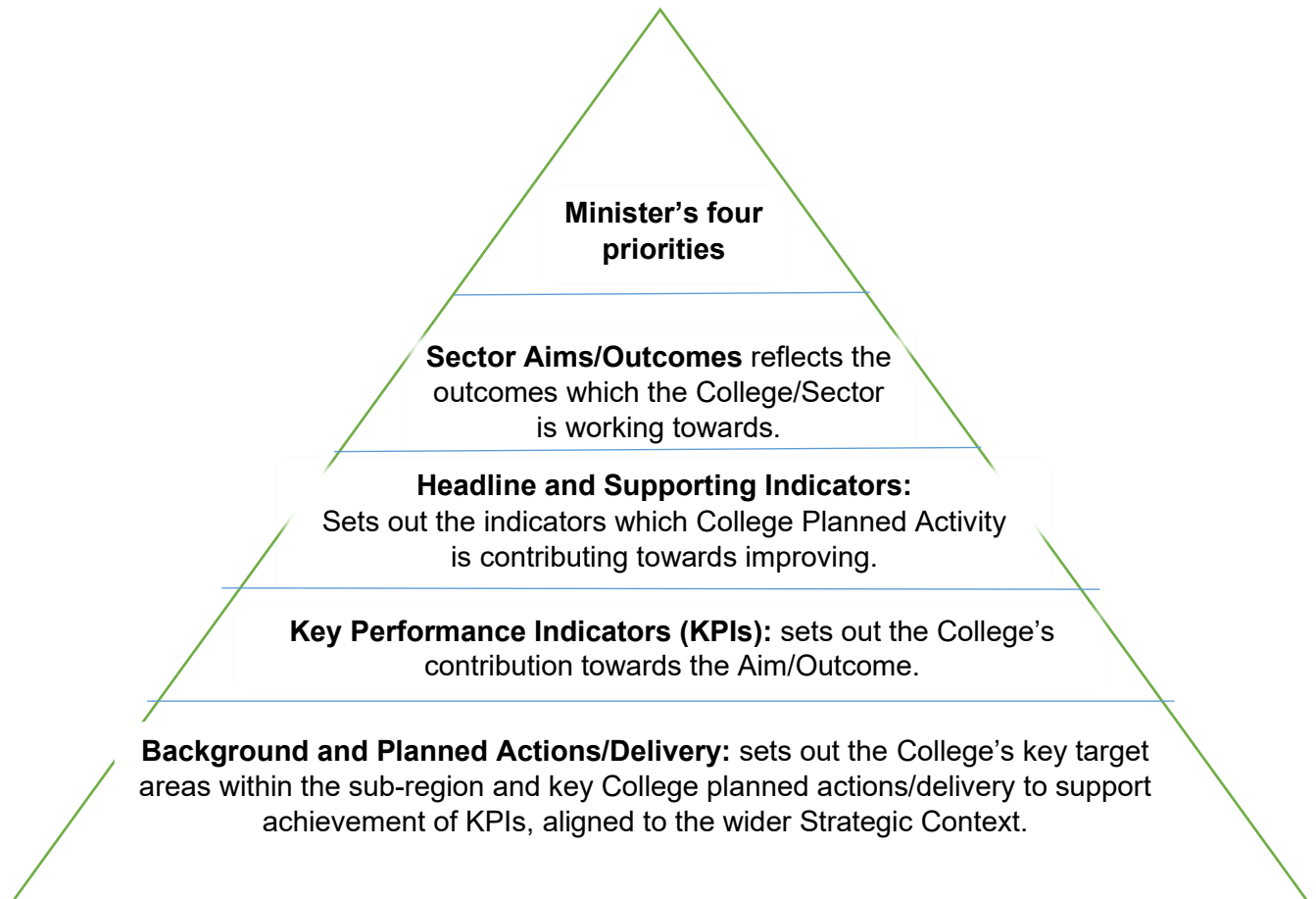
NW FORUMS ADVOCACY

NWRC plays a pivotal role in regional development through its involvement in various strategic sector, regional and council-wide initiatives. By partnering with organizations such as the North West Strategic Growth Partnership (NWSGP), Strategic Growth Partnership (SGP), North West Tertiary Education Cluster (NWTEC), and the Londonderry and Letterkenny Chambers of Commerce, Management and Staff advocate on behalf on a diverse range of Task Forces, Advisory Panels. Focus Groups. Collaborative Committees, Innovation Hubs, Project Teams, Development Councils, Strategy Boards, Smart Industry Board, Expert Panels, Action Committees and Task and Finish Groups.

NWRC aligns its educational and economic strategies with local government priorities, focusing on innovation and skills development. Additionally, NWRC actively participates in numerous working groups across diverse sectors, including Arts & Culture, IT, Tourism and Sustainability. These working groups foster collaboration between industry and education, driving innovation and workforce development. Through these initiatives and working groups, NWRC not only enhances its educational offerings but also contributes significantly to the economic and cultural growth of the region.

d. 2025/26 Planned Activity

The College Planned Delivery has been set out to show the College contributes to the Minister’s four priorities as follows:



In-year College Development Plan Progress Reports tracking **‘how well’** the College is performing will be provided to the Department for the Economy. The Department for the Economy will publish reports on performance against Headline and Supporting Indicators to show if actions are ‘moving the dial’ on the Minister’s priorities i.e. **‘anyone is better off’**, along with progress reports on the Department’s Delivery Plan 2024/25.

The below table provides a summary of the Aims/Outcomes and associated KPIs included in the preceding tables.

Aim/Outcome		KPI	
1	To increase regional business productivity/growth through the delivery of tailored/bespoke training programmes.	1.1	Deliver 95 innovation-based projects in SMEs in 2025/26 financial year
		1.2	Deliver tailored training programmes via Skills Focus, Assured Skills (50 individuals across 3 Academies), and SME Productivity Booster (6 projects), with 148 projects via Skills Focus (to support 158 individuals) in 2025/26 financial year
		1.3	Support 345 individuals via Skill Up (£350K funding) in 2025/26 financial year.
2	To upskill/reskill individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to secure employment, meet employer needs for today and the future and support economic growth of the region.	2.1	To increase the total number of individuals enrolled in the College from 7,990 no. individuals in 2023/24 to 8,409 no. individuals in 2025/26 academic year.
		2.2	To equip 203 individuals participating in international programmes with key employability skills necessary through participation in Turing and Skills Competitions in the 2025/26 academic year.
		2.3	To increase the number of individuals supported by the College who are furthest away from the labour market and with low or no formal qualifications from 3,655 in 2023/24 to 4,165 in 2025/26 academic year.
		2.4	To increase the retention rate within the College from 89% in 2023/24 to 90% in 2025/26 academic year.
		2.5	To increase the achievement rate within the College from 87% in 2023/24 to 89% in 2025/26 academic year.
		2.6	To enrol 4005 individuals in the 2025/26 academic year, who are between 25 and 64 years old to participate in education and training. To include 45 individuals on All Age Apprenticeships and 42 individuals on WRAP.
3	To address the skills needs of the future workforce in green industries through upskilling and reskilling individuals in support of a net zero economy in Northern Ireland.	3.1	To train 5% of College staff in delivery of sustainability and/or green skills in the 2025/26 academic year. In 2025/26 academic year, improve baseline position of 25% (24/25) of the FTE number of staff (based on yearly average) to be trained in green skills or sustainability to 30% of all staff.
		3.2	To have 500 individuals participating on green/sustainable courses in the 2025/26 academic year.
4	To deliver against the Public Body reporting duties of the Climate Change legislation delivering an energy efficient and sustainable estate.	4.1	To establish the key actions to improve/maintain energy efficiency in the College in 2025/26 academic year.

Raise Productivity/Promote Regional Balance	
Aim/Outcome - 1	To increase regional business productivity/growth through the delivery of tailored/bespoke training programmes.
Draft Headline Indicator	Output per hour worked Regional Employment Rate
Draft Supporting Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative active businesses (including number of Innovation Recognitions) Business Support offered by colleges to businesses
Background	<p>The North West Regional College (NWRC) Business Support Centre (BSC) will assist businesses from fledgling entrepreneurs and micro companies to long-standing indigenous and multinational and foreign direct investment (FDI) businesses with tailored solutions to meet their needs.</p> <p>The College's 5 Innovation and Skills Centres will assist businesses to source funding to support upskilling and mentoring in applied innovation, research and development and then foster innovation by delivering tailored solutions, with the skills and knowledge required, in areas of new product, process or service development, to support businesses to be more productive and innovative.</p> <p>The projects will be delivered across the 7 sectors identified by DfE as the most innovation, productive and internationally oriented parts of the local economy, namely Agri-Tech; Life & Health Sciences; Advanced Manufacturing, Materials & Engineering; Software & Cyber; Low Carbon/Net Zero; Fintech & financial services; and Screen industries.</p> <p>The NWRC's innovation and skills centres are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foodovation Centre, Design Innovation for Assisted Living (DIAL) Centre, Product Design Centre (PDC), XR Hub and i4.0 (industry 4.0) Centre.
KPI 1.1	To deliver 95 innovation-based projects in SMEs in 2025/26 financial year. 128 delivered in 2024/25 financial year.
Planned Activity:	
With an available budget of £277K for InnovateUs	Complete 43 projects. (Estimated 32 businesses, with remainder of projects being with businesses who previously had another project)

Innovation Vouchers	20 vouchers to be completed
Innovate UK funding	2 projects to be secured
Innovation Boost (Inter Trade Ireland)	30 projects to be completed or ongoing
KPI 1.2	To deliver 148 tailored training programmes via Skills Focus (target of 158 individuals / 196 enrolments) in 2025/26 financial year. In 2023/24 Skill Focus supported 270 enrolments¹⁴. To deliver three Assured Skills Academies to 50 individuals and deliver 6 SME Productivity Booster projects.
Planned Activity:	
With an available budget of £276K for Skills Focus	Support 158 individuals receiving qualifications at Level 2 and above.
Assured Skills Academies: 3	2 Veritiv Assured Skills Academies with 26 participants in total each achieving qualification at Level 2 1 EY Assured Skills Academy (subject to confirmation with EY) with potentially 20 participants in total.
SME Productivity Booster	6 projects (subject to funding)
KPI 1.3	To support 345 individuals via Skill Up (£350K funding) in the 2025/26 financial year. 675 enrolments were supported in 2023/24¹⁵.

¹⁴ Source: [FE Activity in Northern Ireland: 2019/20 to 2023/24 excel table A12](#)

¹⁵ Source: [FE Activity in Northern Ireland: 2019/20 to 2023/24 excel table A12](#)

Good Jobs/Promote Regional Balance/Raise Productivity	
Aim/Outcome - 2	To upskill/reskill individuals with the knowledge and skills necessary to secure employment, meet employer needs for today and the future and support economic growth of the region.
Headline Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good jobs measure based on earning, permanent contracts and guaranteed hours. • Regional Employment Rate • Output per hour worked
Supporting Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Quality Indicators • Proportion leaving NI HEIs with narrow STEM qualifications • Qualifications by Level of Study • Economic Inactivity Rate
Background	<p>Engagement with stakeholders to adapt, develop and align provision to meet the needs of students, industry and others is set out earlier in section 4 of the CDP. In particular, engagement, and partnerships with schools, voluntary and community organisations along with the College's lead in the Health and Social Care Curriculum Hub and Sector Partnerships.</p> <p>A review of curriculum offer at NWRC in 2024/25 was carried out by the Curriculum Leadership Team. The outcome is targeting growth of almost 6% from 2023/24 to 2025/26 due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planned expansion of HE provision, • externally funded projects due to commence in 2025/26, • additional occupational areas being offered via AppsNI25 and Skills for Life and Work, • a new Traineeship subject area; • the offer of new short part time courses in 2025/26. <p>The College Student Services team provide key support mechanisms for learners to improve performance through college mentors, pastoral support and progress coaches.</p> <p>Life-long learning continues to be a priority for NWRC and with the introduction of All Age Apprenticeships and the StepUp provision the College is committed to progressing this area.</p> <p>NWRC is committed to supporting the Ministers objectives as set out in this CDP.</p> <p>International Activity at NWRC</p> <p>NWRC recognises that international activities add value to our courses and looking outwards benefits our students' learning experiences, develops their skills, enhances their ambitions and expands their horizons and aspirations. Participating in an international activity offers an invaluable opportunity for our</p>

	<p>students, providing numerous benefits including focusing on cultural awareness, personal and professional development, team building, exposure to specific industry and innovative trends and best practices. Activities will immerse students in local culture and working environments which in turn will greatly enhance their cultural awareness, fostering a deeper appreciation for global diversity and internationalisation. Students will interact and engage with industry, education, communities and other students. Some of our students have never travelled outside of Ireland/UK. The experience will undoubtedly enrich their professional and personal perspectives. Personal development is another significant advantage. Travelling to a foreign country, particularly for an extended period, encourages independence, adaptability, and problem-solving skills. Students will face real-world challenges and learn to navigate a new environment, advancing personal growth and self-confidence. Team building is essential for students, especially as they embark on group projects throughout the academic year. Activities will provide an ideal context for developing teamwork, communication, and collaborative skills. These are qualities that are not only vital in their respective industries but are also transferable to various career paths. Industry visits, masterclasses and workshops will provide a unique insight into their curriculum sector. Understanding the workings of the industry in a foreign country is vital in an ever globalised and competitive economy. This exposure will better prepare students for their careers and equip them with the knowledge, skills and create networks needed for international success. Project activities will help students become future leaders, develop their emotional intelligence, entrepreneurial and creative thinking and be committed to sustainability. The aim is for students to become more adaptable to the rapidly evolving technological, economic, and social landscape of the future. Our projects will inspire, incentivise and motivate students to do well and progress in their careers.</p>	
<p>KPI 2.1</p>	<p>To increase the total number of individuals enrolled in the College from 7,990 individuals in 2023/24 to 8,409 individuals in 2025/26 academic year.</p>	
<p>Plans to achieve in the 2025/26 academic year:</p>		
<p>Level 0 - 3</p>	<p>No. of individuals on PT FE</p>	<p>4,406</p>
	<p>No. of individuals on FT FE</p>	<p>1,559</p>
	<p>No. of individuals on Skills for Life and Work programme</p>	<p>30</p>
	<p>No. of individuals on Traineeships programme</p>	<p>563</p>
	<p>No. of individuals on Apprenticeships NI programme</p>	<p>658</p>
<p>Level 4+</p>	<p>No. of individuals on PT HE in FE</p>	<p>354</p>
	<p>No. of individuals on FT HE in FE</p>	<p>413</p>
	<p>No. of individuals on High Level Apprenticeship programme</p>	<p>151</p>
<p>KPI 2.2</p>	<p>To equip 203 individuals participating in international programmes with key employability skills necessary</p>	

	through participation in Turing and Skills Competitions¹⁶ in the 2025/26 academic year.	
	Planned Activity	Students
	Turing Scheme (11 programmes)	56
	Washington Ireland Programme	1
	Washington Ireland 's Class of Emerging Leaders	2
	Study USA	1
	Euro Exchange	35
	EC/UK project (British Council)	10
	Erasmus+ KA2 More than Music project	3
	Skills Competitions	95
KPI 2.3	To support 4,165 individuals who are furthest away from the labour market and with low or no formal qualifications in the 2025/26 academic year (i.e., individuals from Quintiles 1 and 2).	
Planned Activity:		
<p>As mentioned earlier in the CDP significant number of learners enrolled at NWRC are domiciled in high areas of deprivation (quintiles 1 and 2). Therefore, the College is strongly committed to delivering a curriculum that meets the needs of those furthest away from the labour market and or with low or no formal qualifications. This includes widening participation (WAPP) for those learners to achieve higher education qualifications.</p> <p>The College continues to engage with local community, voluntary organisations and local schools as mentioned earlier in the CDP.</p>		
No. of individuals Quintile 1 and 2		4,165
No. of individuals declaring a disability/long term health problem		1,200
No. of individuals on ESOL programmes		140
No. of individuals on StepUp programmes		102
No. of individuals on Skills for Life and Work programmes		30
KPI 2.4	To increase the retention rate within the College from 89% in 2023/24 to 90% in 2025/26 academic year.	
Planned Activity:		
<p>Retention Rates are being continuously monitored throughout the academic year, through the use of College retention dashboards. The Student Services team also continue to support learners with a variety of activities to promote communication with students and provide support to avoid unnecessary withdrawals from courses. Pastoral care through tutorials is monitored through the college Tutorial Working Group to ensure best practice is shared.</p> <p>Curriculum Leadership will revise the current Retention and Achievement Policy by 30 November 2025 and implement additional measures with the aim of improving retention in 2025/26.</p>		

¹⁶ Skills Competitions Metrics reflect individuals in international, including feeder competitions such as National UK Finals e.g., an individual learner registered on three competitions would be reflected as three learners.

Retention rates have improved over recent years as set out in Annex 1 and therefore a target of 90% retention for 2025/25 has been agreed.

Following publication of the ETI evaluation of the Traineeship Programme, College Action Plans for Improvement (API) for Traineeships to be submitted by 26 August 2025 and Whole Sector API to be provided by 23 September 2025. APIs to be submitted to ACVED. Regular implementation and impact updates against APIs to be provided to the Traineeship Project Board and progress checks sought as part of CDP updates.

Following publication of the ETI evaluation of the Traineeship Programme, College Action Plans for Improvement (API) for Essential Skills to be submitted by 26 August 2025 and Whole Sector API to be provided by 23 September 2025. APIs to be submitted to Quality Improvement Team. Regular implementation and impact updates against APIs to be provided to QIT against which updates will be provided to the Traineeship Project Board and progress checks sought as part of CDP updates.

KPI 2.5

To increase the achievement rate within the College from 87% in 2023/24 to 89% in 2025/26 academic year.

Planned Activity:

To support students in attaining a positive outcome progress and exam boards, chaired by the Quality and Performance Department, are held at the end of each semester to highlight any areas of concern where support may be offered.

Curriculum Leadership will revise the current Retention and Achievement Policy by 30 November 2025 and implement additional measures with the aim of improving achievement in 2025/26.

In 2023/24 the achievement rate improved by 2% and following the establishment of a Quality and Performance Department to support staff and enhance teaching and learning at NWRC it is expected that achievement rates will improve in 2024/25. Therefore, a target of 89% achievement has been agreed for 2025/26.

Achievement rates have improved over recent years as set out in Annex 1.

KPI 2.6

To enrol 4,005 individuals in the 2025/26 academic year, who are between 25 and 64 years old to participate in education and training.

Planned Activity:

The target of 4,005 is made up of individuals enrolled on various types of College provision with different funding sources. With plans to expand social inclusion through Community Outreach and programmes, NWRC aims to increase the number of individuals in this age bracket engaging with the college. This includes Women Returners via the WRAP provision funded through StepUp mentioned in KPI 2.3 with a specific **target of 42 individuals for 2025/26.**

The introduction of All Age Apprenticeships is also encouraging adult learners over the age of 24 years to engage in further education (**2025/26 target recruitment of 45 individuals**).

Reduce Carbon Emissions	
Aim/Outcome - 3	To address the skills needs of the future workforce in green industries through upskilling and reskilling individuals in support of a net zero economy in Northern Ireland.
Headline Indicator	CO² Emissions per Capita
Supporting Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of electricity consumption generated from renewable sources • Energy Intensity • Energy Efficiency • Circular economy material and carbon footprint
Background	<p>Sustainability and Green Skills is increasingly recognised as a strategic priority for Further Education (FE) colleges in Northern Ireland, driven by policy, economic, and societal imperatives. The Northern Ireland Executive’s Programme for Government (2024–2027) and the Department of Economy strategic objectives both emphasise the need for educational institutions to operate sustainably, collaborate across sectors, and plan for long-term environmental and educational viability (Northern Ireland Executive, 2024).</p> <p>FE colleges are uniquely positioned to support Northern Ireland’s transition to a green economy, not only by reducing their own environmental impact but also by equipping learners with the green skills needed for future employment. As the Department for the Economy states, “the delivery plan for green skills for Northern Ireland will initially focus on the Built Environment and Utilities. The Audit identified the need for long term planning and collaboration across the UK, a requirement for courses in the curriculum from year 8, and that the skills needed for energy transition are, generally, an upgrading/expansion of the current skills as new technologies are developed and deployed” (Department for the Economy, 2024). This approach is designed to ensure that “all sections of the community, no matter what their academic abilities, are aware of and have access to meaningful employment in the green industries” (Department for the Economy, 2024). This aligns with the UK-wide Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy, which calls for education providers to lead in reducing emissions, embedding sustainability in teaching, and preparing learners for a climate-impacted world.</p> <p>Crucially, the effective delivery of green skills depends on ensuring that FE college staff are themselves equipped and confident to train future generations. The Department for the Economy highlights that “90% of the 2030 workforce are currently in employment so the focus must be on reskilling” (Department for the Economy, 2024). The development of staff expertise in sustainability and green technologies is essential for successful curriculum delivery and for inspiring students to become environmental leaders and change-makers. Professional development, leadership in sustainability, and the integration of sustainability principles into college governance</p>

	<p>and operations are now recognised as best practice, with colleges committing to continuous improvement, compliance with environmental legislation, and the promotion of environmental awareness across their communities.</p> <p>Furthermore, research from the Department for the Economy emphasises that “the skills required for a transition to an advanced zero emission, indigenous diverse energy secure and circular economy in Northern Ireland... must be delivered in a way that maximises the benefits to all sections of the Northern Ireland population” (Department for the Economy, 2024). This underscores the importance of inclusive access, long-term planning, and collaboration to ensure the FE sector can fully support the region’s green growth ambitions.</p> <p>In summary, embedding sustainability in Northern Ireland’s FE sector is not only a policy requirement but a strategic necessity. It ensures that colleges can fulfil their dual role: leading by example in environmental stewardship and preparing both staff and students to thrive in, and contribute to, a sustainable, low-carbon future.</p>
<p>KPI 3.1</p>	<p>To train 5% of College staff in delivery of green sustainable skills in the 2025/26 academic year.</p>
<p>Planned Activity:</p>	
<p>In 2025/26 academic year, improve baseline position of 25% (24/25) of the FTE number of staff (based on yearly average) to be trained in green skills or sustainability to 30% of all staff</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By June 2026, 25% of all College lecturers will complete sustainability and UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) training tailored to their specific vocational areas. The training will equip them with the skills to integrate relevant sustainability concepts into their teaching. Success will be measured by 50% of lecturers demonstrating application of these concepts through curriculum updates and student feedback within the following academic year and participating in the international SDG Teach in Campaign. • By June 2026, all new lecturers (estimated 15-20 staff) at the College will receive mandatory training on embedding sustainability in the curriculum as part of their staff induction process. The training programme will ensure that 100% of new lecturers demonstrate competency in integrating sustainability into their teaching, as measured by successful completion of an assessment by the end of their first year in post. • By June 2026, at least 5% of staff to gain an accredited qualification in green skills or sustainability – this will include specialised courses to provide curriculum staff with new skills to be able to deliver new courses and other more generic courses relevant to all job roles such as accredited training in Sustainability in the Workplace. Success will be measured by 80% achievement and success on all courses. 	

- By June 2026, at least 70% of staff will have completed an online learning module on an introduction to sustainability in the workplace. With a minimum achievement of 80% pass rate on module assessments.
- All College technicians will complete a specialised training programme on green skills and sustainability relevant to their technical roles by June 2026. Success will be measured by 90% of participants implementing successful sustainability improvements in their own area of work.
- By March 2026, all finance staff to complete training in Green Procurement
- By June 2026, a minimum of 12 line managers and/or senior managers to complete accredited training for managing sustainability in the workplace. Success will be measured by 100% certification for all registered individuals.

KPI 3.2

500 individuals participating on green/sustainable courses in the 2025/26 academic year.

Planned Activity:

- By June 2026, the GRASP PEACEPLUS project will train 90 individuals in sustainability and green skills courses specific to the construction industry. Courses outlined in the table below. Success will be measured by achieving a target of 90% retention and 80% success for all enrolments on the courses.

Green Skills/Sustainability Courses Planned 25/26 GRASP	Level	Estimated Enrolments
NOCN Energy Efficiency measures for older and traditional buildings	3	12
IEMA Environmental Management in Construction	3	12
OCN Award in Sustainable Construction	2	12
C&G Award in the Design and Installation of Domestic Electric Vehicle Charging Installations	3	12
OCN Certificate in Sustainable Construction	3	12
C&G Air Source Heat Pump Installation and Maintenance	3	12
C&G Award in Retrofit	3	12
ILM Certificate in Site Waste Management	3	12
Estimated Total		96

- By August 2025, the College will develop and launch an online learning module on sustainability, accessible to all students to complete during College Induction. The modules will cover key sustainability principles and practices relevant to the College's operations. Success will be measured by at least 40% of all FT students completing the learning object by the end of December 2025, with a minimum 80% pass rate on module assessments.
- By the end of December 2025, the College will deliver at least 100 face-to-face induction sessions on sustainability to new students relevant to their curriculum area. These sessions will introduce key sustainability principles and practices, with

success measured by full attendance in all scheduled sessions and a post-session survey indicating that 70% of students gained useful knowledge on sustainability.

- By August 2026, the Green Clubs Project, funded by the PEACEPLUS tender, will train and/or mentor 100 individuals in sustainability practices within sports. The programme will provide workshops and one-on-one mentoring, with success measured by achieving 80% participation and 100% of all participating Sports Clubs demonstrating improved sustainability knowledge and improved practices in their sports clubs and premises by the end of their programme.
- By June 2026, the College will deliver at least six accredited courses in sustainability and green skills through its business support programme with a minimum of 90 participants. The courses will target local businesses and employees, with success measured by at least 80% of enrolled participants completing the course and receiving accreditation by the end of the programme.

The below tables are green skills courses agreed and planned for 25/26 via funding managed by BSC.

Green Technologies/ Sustainability Courses Planned 25/26	Level	Estimated Enrolments	Funding Mechanism
Certificate in Practical Horticulture Skills	2	12	Skill Up
Diploma in Practical Horticulture Skills	2	10	Skill Up
IEMA Environmental Sustainability Skills for the Workplace	2	24	Skill Up
Green Skills Sustainability Programme	2	12	Skill Up
IMI Level Electric Vehicle	2	12	Skills Focus
IMI Level Electric Vehicle	3	12	Skills Focus
IMI Level Electric Vehicle	4	12	Skills Focus
Estimated Total		94	

By March 2026, the College will secure approvals and accreditations to deliver new sustainability courses in a range of demand areas identified by industry, businesses and key stakeholders. The courses will target the enrolment of at least 40 students in the first cohort by March 2026, with success measured by achieving accreditation and enrolling at least 40 students within the first year of the courses launch. The target is 3 new course approvals to be complete with delivery of at least 1 cohort for each course. Some will be sector wide courses that were developed by all Colleges and there will also be additional courses NWRC will be seeking approval for that have yet to be delivered.

Reduce Carbon Emissions	
Aim/Outcome - 4	To deliver against the Public Body reporting duties of the Climate Change legislation delivering an energy efficient and sustainable estate.
Headline Indicator	CO² Emissions per Capita
Supporting Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportion of electricity consumption generated from renewable sources • Energy Intensity • Energy Efficiency • Circular economy material and carbon footprint
Background	<p>Section 42 of the Climate Change Act sets out what the regulations must include in the context of climate change reporting. Aspects of this include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An assessment of current and predicted impacts of climate change, in relation to our functions. 2. A statement of proposals and policies to address those impacts identified, and to reduce our Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. 3. Confirmation of timescales for implementing relevant proposals and policies. 4. An assessment of our progress made towards implementing the proposals and policies set out in any previous reports. <p>The legislative obligation will be for NWRC to submit our first Mitigation Report to DAERA no later than 31/10/25. This report will cover the Green House Gas (GHG) emission data for the period 01/04/24 to 31/03/25. Such emissions will fall under 3 separate scopes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope 1 – Direct GHG emissions from our own resources e.g. heating systems, utility consumption and vehicles. • Scope 2 – Indirect GHG emissions from offsite energy suppliers e.g. heating or cooling. • Scope 3 – Total GHG emissions of the organisation as a consequence of our activities e.g. business travel.
KPI 4.1	To establish the key actions to improve/maintain energy efficiency in the College in the 2025/26 academic year.
Planned Activity:	
In 2025/26 financial year, top four Minor Works projects¹⁷, pending	1. £50k – Ongoing replacement / upgrade of existing LED lighting.

¹⁷ Includes Energy Branch Invest to Save Funded projects.

<p>funding allocation, that contribute towards a sustainable College estate.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. £20k – Installation of submeters across all campuses to allow for more detailed review of energy consumption. 3. £30k – Upgrade of existing Building Management System (BMS). 4. £20k – Reduce hot water heating temperature no more than 5 Degrees to improve energy efficiency, lower utility costs and reduce emissions.
<p>In 2025/26 academic year, to establish key actions to improve/maintain energy efficiency of College campuses.</p>	<p>Action 1 – Foster a culture of energy awareness by engaging staff through training and visible energy-saving goals. Empowering employees to take ownership of daily efficiency actions will build lasting habits and support broader sustainability targets.</p> <p>Action 2 – Procure the services of a professional Surveyor to undertake a review / audit of each building and its associated fabric along with m&e infrastructure with the aim to identify steps that can be taken to improve energy efficiency.</p> <p>Action 3 – We will continue to work closely with our contracted carbon accounting software provider to successfully monitor and track our carbon emissions and implement our mitigation plan to reduce our carbon footprint year on year by providing changes to our estate but also working on fostering a cultural change through college-wide awareness campaigns and staff/student workshops and training.</p>
<p>In 2025/26 academic year, improve baseline position for each College campus.</p>	<p>Strand Road Campus from 296 TCO_{2e} for Scope 1 emissions for heating to 265 TCO_{2e}</p> <p>Springtown Campus from 87 TCO_{2e} for Scope 1 emissions for heating to 75 TCO_{2e}</p>

	<p>Limavady Main Campus 128 TCO₂e for Scope 1 emissions for heating to 115 TCO₂e</p> <p>Limavady Greystone Campus 84 TCO₂e for Scope 1 emissions for heating to 76 TCO₂e</p> <p>Strabane Campus 107 TCO₂e for Scope 1 emissions for heating to 96 TCO₂e</p> <p>All figures above, which reflects a 10% reduction target for one year, only includes Scope 1 emissions for solid fuel for heating - does not include scope 1 for transport emissions as this is not available on a per campus basis.</p>
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5. Key Challenges/Constraints

The below table sets out the top five corporate challenges/constraints towards achievement of planned delivery set out in section 4 above.

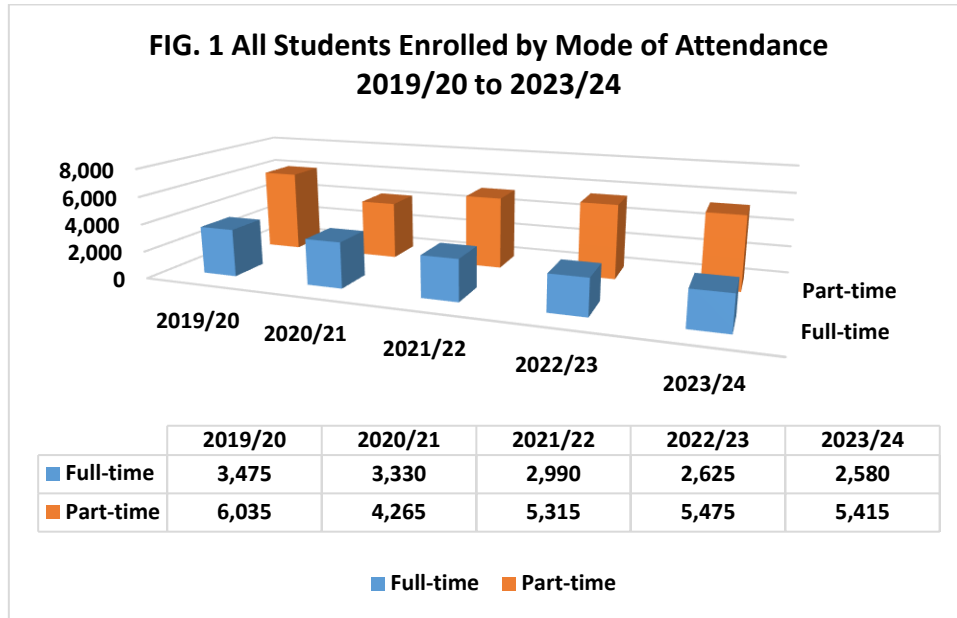
Challenge	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions
<p>Industrial Relations Landscape – Comparisons to teaching profession for parity in respect of pay aligned to contractual arrangements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action short of strike, withholding of grades impacting on students' ability to complete qualifications and progress. Continuous negative impact on FE activities which acts as a potential recruitment drive for post primary schools. Uncertainty leads to parents and students taking alternative pathways not within FE. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two year pay deal accepted by lecturing trade unions. Employer commitment to workload review in 2024/25. Employer commitment to pay parity review in 2025/26. Employer commitment to take forward FE transformation.
<p>Economic Planning Complexity – Pace of change of the key drivers for education and skills in FE Sector with new economic priorities and target actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Challenges in aligning College Development Plans with evolving indicators. Staff resources committed to existing curriculum delivery with limited flexibility. Work underway with Councils to integrate local College curriculum plans with regional LEP plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing engagement to refine performance indicators from FE programmes to link to Minister economic priorities. More clarity required on the approach to regional planning and LEPs and alignment with Council and InvestNI roles. Formal re-engagement with InvestNI commenced and ongoing via representations at LSPs.
<p>Uncertainty and Complexity Around Funding Streams and Delays in LOOs – impacts on ability of Colleges to include planned delivery in curriculum build and associated targets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uncertainty on budgets, downward pressures coupled with a 3 year budget settlement with further savings anticipated. Late approval or visibility of additional funding streams becoming available can make it difficult to build into delivery planning which starts at different time-frames compared to the commencement of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More visibility through NIFON and Curriculum Directors on scale of opportunities. Holding back on recruitment and utilising full-time staff whilst supplementing with part-time lectures as required. Explore the opportunity to include a number of separate programmes over a central theme: Business and Innovation, Support for Inclusion.

Challenge	Potential Impact	Mitigating Actions
	<p>academic year in September whilst requiring full-spend by March.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range and variety of funding pots and compliance and eligibility issues takes time to put in place and test learner eligibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider consideration of the funding model requires NIFON input in terms of different rates to ensure consistency and viability. • Work with funders for release of LoOs earlier in the year to enable full integration into curriculum planning and delivery. • Identification earlier from funders of new or additional in-year allocations to enable building of capacity.
<p>Recruitment challenges Impacting on Enrolment – Colleges not being able to attract lecturers/trainers in traditional trade and STEM areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trend for last 5 years of significant interest in trade and STEM areas which cannot be accommodated due to recruitment challenges. • Aging profile of the workforce may have longer term impact in key sectors with significant critical skills gaps. • Negative impact on curriculum offer, quality of service provision and learner success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate review through HR sector working group of trends in applications and enrolments in last 3 years. • Implement pay parity to increase salary levels and consideration of specialist lecture grades. • Understand the opportunity for more flexible approach in terms of recruitment premium for agreed occupational areas. • Secure pay remit approval to progress towards salary expectations. • Industrial Relations review to commence, focusing on pay parity and terms and conditions.
<p>Investment in facilities (including IT and AI) and infrastructure to ensure competitiveness and to support action towards net zero targets in context of one year budgetary landscape</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to be at the forefront of new advances in technology developments. • Failure to implement full obligations under the Climate Change Act and impact on net/zero/sustainability targets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further in-year bids to be placed to DfE to secure funding to deliver new initiatives. • Progress commenced with establishment of baselines and initial progress towards targets.

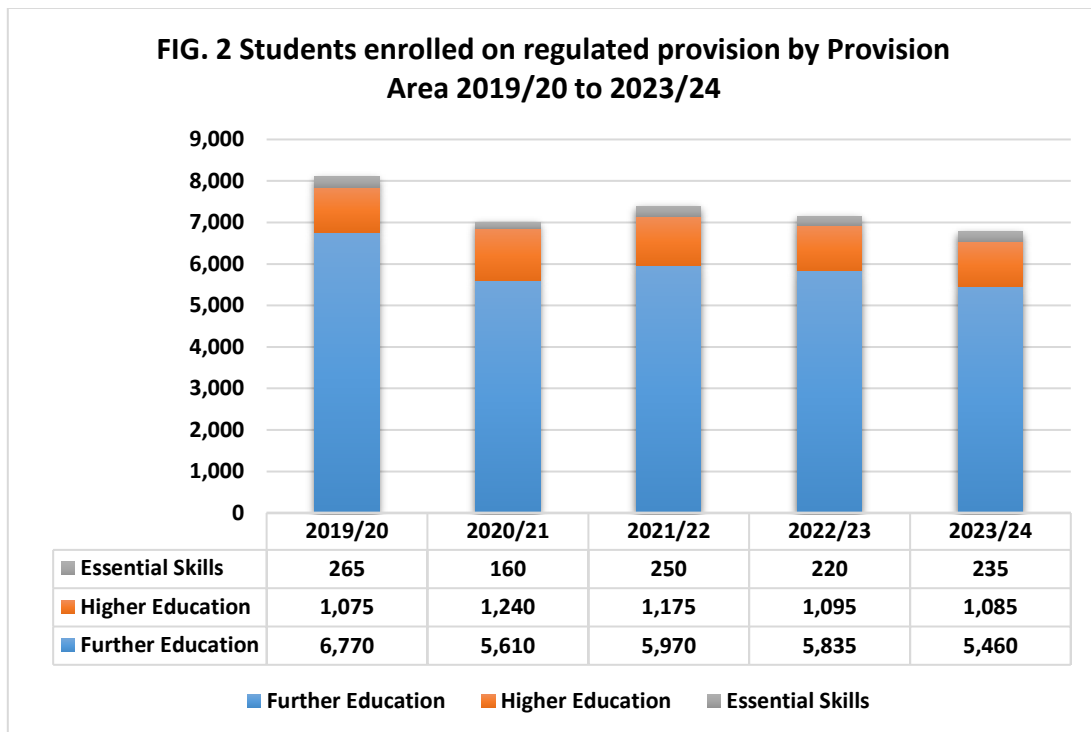
The College has a Risk Management Framework in place including Corporate and Operational Risk Registers from which key risks are reflected.

College Data Analysis

Enrolment Trends – Outcome 2.1

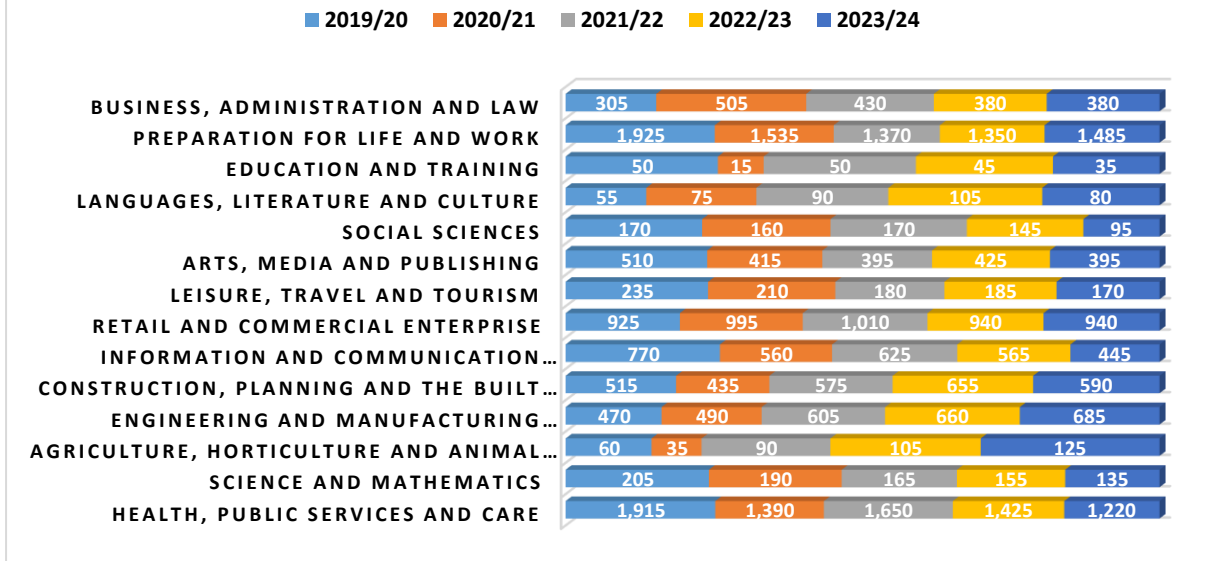


Source: [FE Activity in Northern Ireland: 2019/20 to 2023/24](#) excel table A41



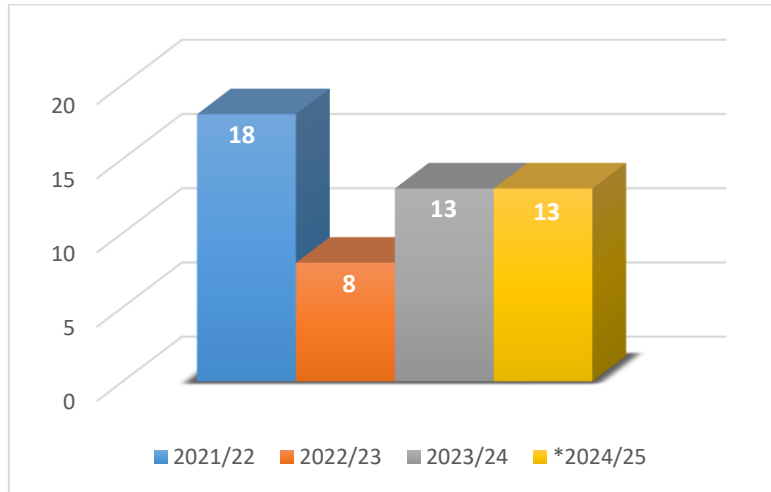
Source: [FE Activity in Northern Ireland: 2019/20 to 2023/24](#) excel table A46

FIG. 3 STUDENTS ENROLLED ON REGULATED COURSES BY SUBJECT AREA 2019/20 TO 2023/24



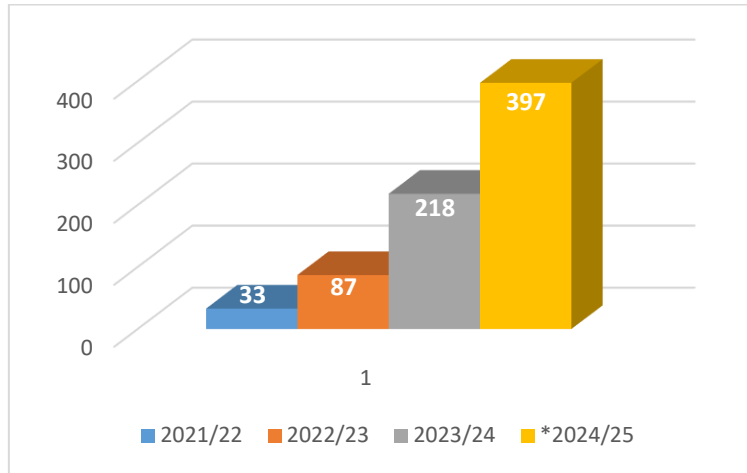
Source: [FE Activity in Northern Ireland: 2019/20 to 2023/24](#) excel table A48

FIG. 4 Individuals on Skills for Life and Work Programme 2021/22 to 2024/25



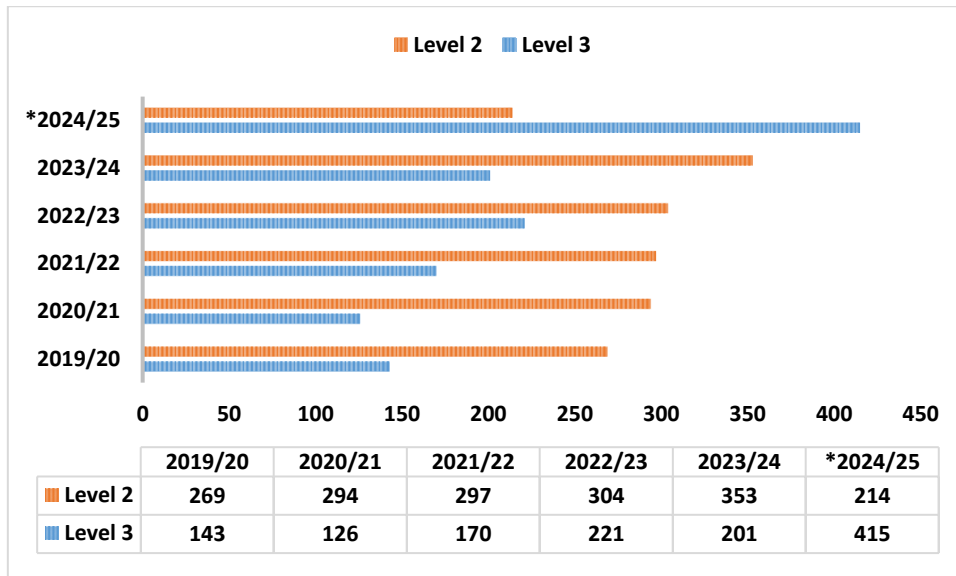
Source: NWRC EBS/CDR (*taken from March CDP ERC extract)

FIG. 5 – Individuals Enrolled on Traineeship Provision 2021/22 to 2024/25



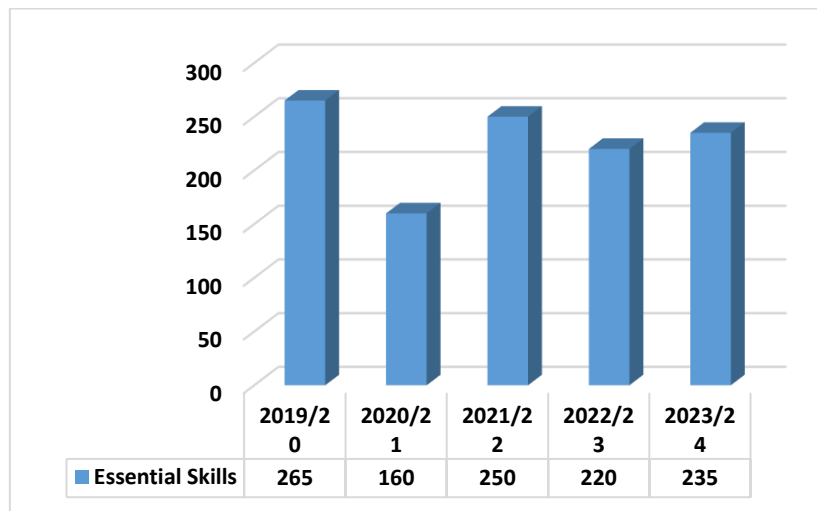
Source: NWRC EBS/CDR (*taken from March CDP ERC extract)

FIG. 6 – Individuals Enrolled on Apprenticeships NI Programmes by Level 2021



Source: NWRC EBS/CDR (*taken from March CDP ERC extract)

FIG. 7 Students enrolled on Essential Skills (regulated) Provision 2019/20 to 2023/24



Source: [FE Activity in Northern Ireland: 2019/20 to 2023/24](#) excel table A46

FIG. 8 Students enrolled on Part Time HE

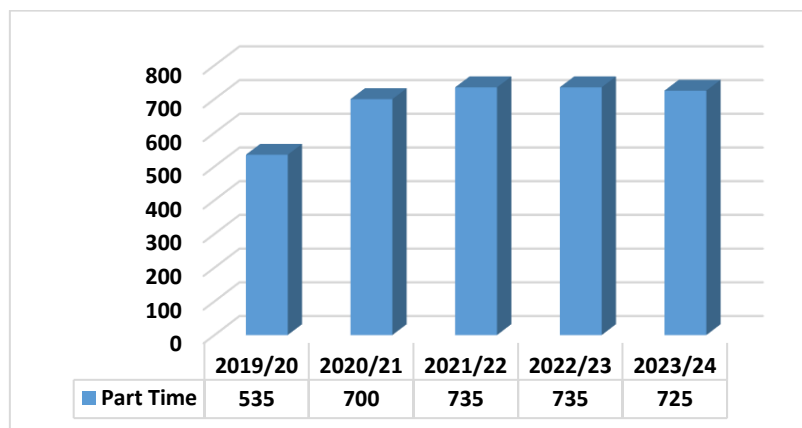
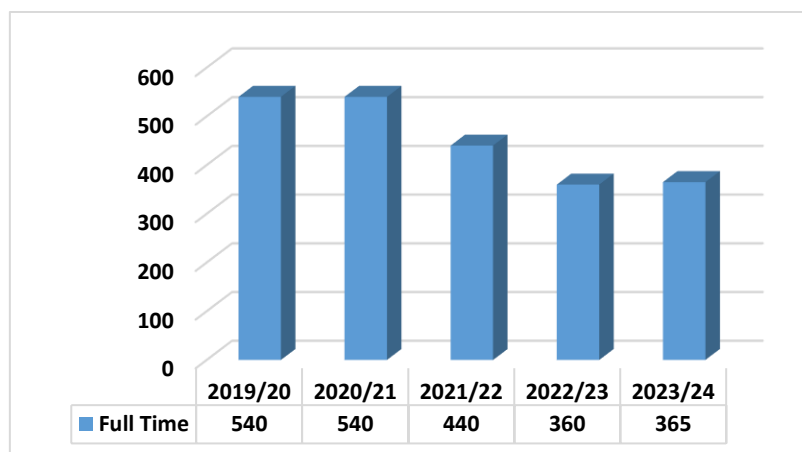


FIG. 9 Students enrolled on Full Time HE



Source: [FE Activity in Northern Ireland: 2019/20 to 2023/24](#) excel table A53

FIG. 10 Students enrolled on Higher Level Apprenticeships

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	*2024/25
HLA Enrolments	85	67	62	72	95	121

Source: EBS/CDR (*taken from March CDP ERC extract)

Outcome 2.3 Enrolment Trends

Students Enrolled from Quintile 1 and 2

Quintile	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	*2024/25
1&2	4,440	4,070	4,180	3,995		4,156

Source: [FE Activity in Northern Ireland: 2019/20 to 2023/24](#) excel table A50 (*taken from March CDP extract)

Enrolments of learners declaring a Disability

	2019/20	20/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
With a Disability	3,360	1,715	1,975	2,095	2,215

Source: [FE Activity in Northern Ireland: 2019/20 to 2023/24](#) excel table S2

Students Enrolled declaring a Disability

	2019/20	20/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	*2024/25
With a Disability	1,869	709	946	1,021	1,253	1,071

Source: NWRC EBS/CDR (*taken from March CDP extract)

Students enrolled on ESOL programmes

	2018/19	2019/20	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	*2024/25
ESOL	35	39	128	116	116	71

Source: NWRC EBS/CDR (*taken from March CDP extract)

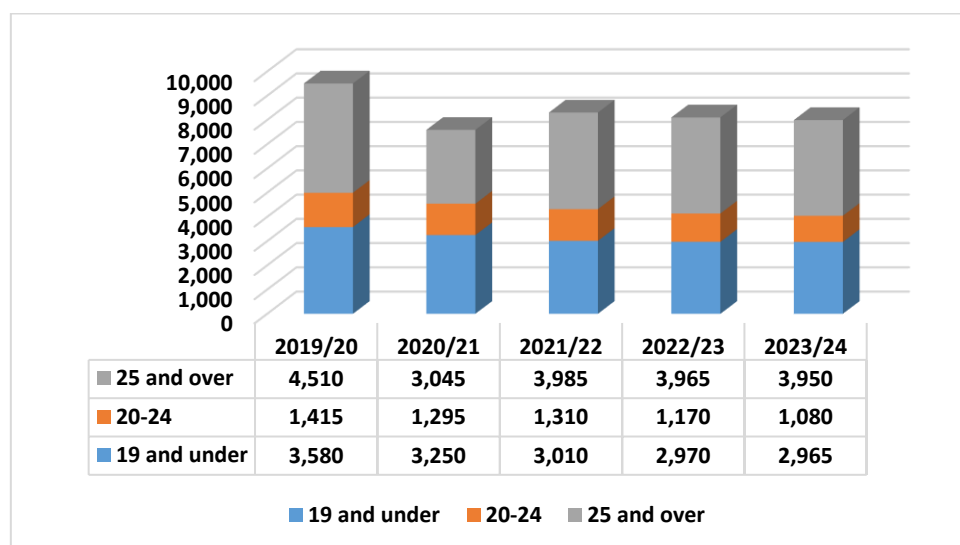
Outcomes 2.4 and 2.5 - Retention, Achievement and Success Rates

Academic Year	Retention	Achievement	Success
2019/20	91%	86%	78%
2020/21	88%	83%	73%
2021/22	86%	85%	73%
2022/23	88%	85%	75%
2023/24	89%	87%	78%

Analysis of College Planned Activity		19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	*24/25	25/26 Target
NWRC	Individuals	9,505	7,950	8,310	8,100	7,990	7,602	8,500

Source: [FE Activity in Northern Ireland: 2019/20 to 2023/24 excel tables](#)

Outcome 2.6 - Enrolment Trend – All Individuals enrolled by Age Band



Source: [FE Activity in Northern Ireland: 2019/20 to 2023/24 excel table A39](#)

Individuals Enrolled on Apprenticeships NI programmes aged 25 years+:

Academic Year	Individuals ¹⁸ Enrolled Aged 25+
2022/23	12
2023/24	24
*2024/25	46

Source: NWRC EBS/CDR (*taken from March CDP extract)

¹⁸ Apprenticeship NI data extracted from NWRC CDR

Other relevant data

NWRC FE Leaver Survey Outcomes 2022/23 (Source: [FE Outcomes 2022/23](#))

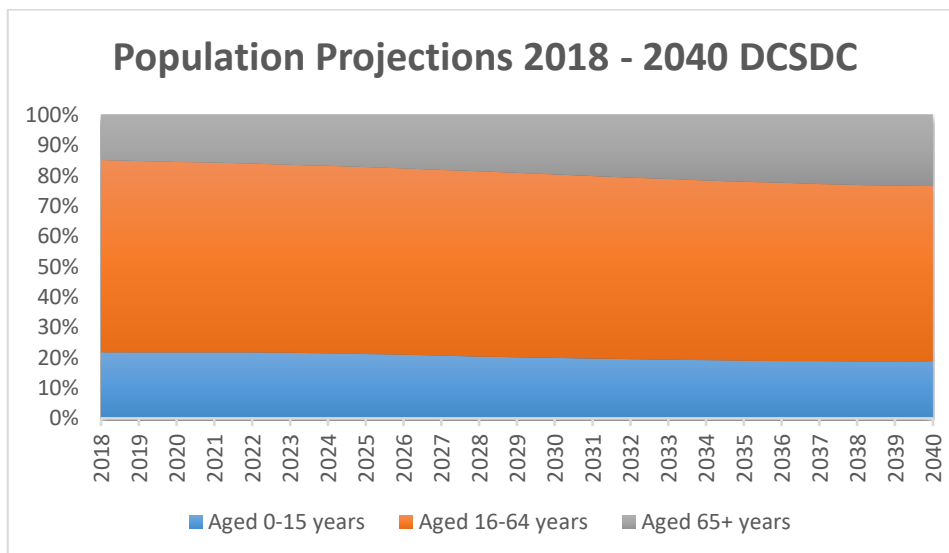
Outcome	Sex	
	Male	Female
Employed	52%	52%
Learning	34%	33%
Other	4%	10%
Unemployed	9%	6%

Outcome	Level of Study		
	1	2	3
Employed	52%	55%	51%
Learning	25%	27%	39%
Other	11%	9%	6%
Unemployed	13%	8%	4%

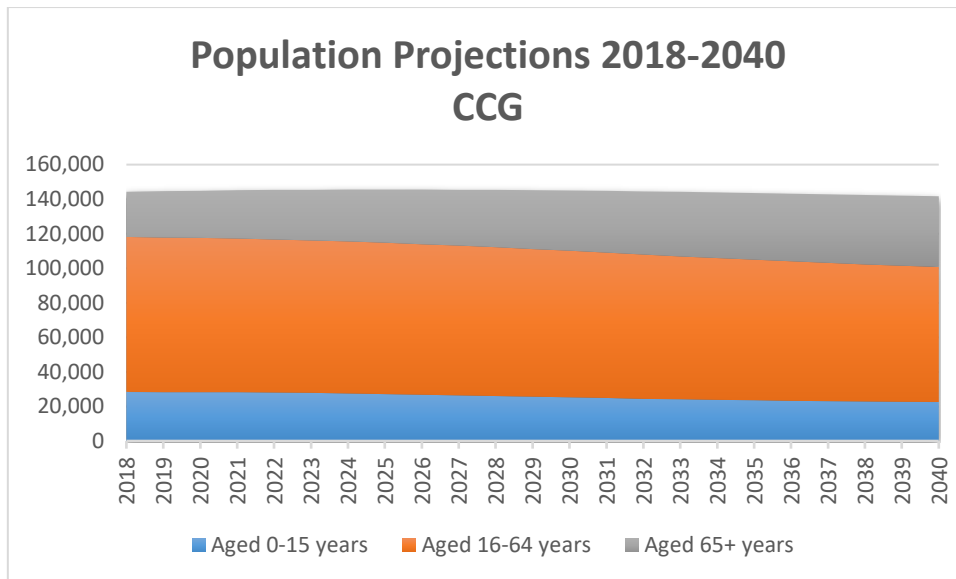
Outcome	Deprivation Quintile				
	1	2	3	4	Unknown
Employed	49%	53%	57%	56%	52%
Learning	32%	39%	30%	28%	30%
Other	9%	4%	4%	11%	18%
Unemployed	10%	4%	9%	5%	0%

Outcome	STEM Indicator	
	Broad	Non-STEM
Employed	65%	46%
Learning	25%	38%
Other	7%	8%
Unemployed	3%	9%

Population Profile



Source: [NISRA](#)



Source: [NISRA](#)

Entitlement Framework Enrolment Trends

Campus	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Derry/Londonderry	84	43	90	122	101	71
Limavady	266	272	266	253	229	222
Strabane	182	131	101	120	88	90
Totals	532	446	457	495	418	383

Source: NWRC CDR/EBS