Further education (FE), sixth form and specialist colleges in England provide high-quality academic, technical and professional education and training for young people, adults and employers. They prepare 1.7 MILLION students with valuable skills, helping to develop their career opportunities and enabling them to progress to university, higher level vocational education or employment.

(As at May 2021)
STUDENTS

1.7 MILLION PEOPLE

1 MILLION
adults study or train in colleges

652,000
16 to 18-year-olds study in colleges

An additional
55,000
16 to 18-year-olds undertake an Apprenticeship through colleges

10,500
14 to 15-year-olds are enrolled in colleges (7,500 part-time; 3,000 full-time)
The average age of college students is 28.

Number of students in colleges by age (2019/20):

- 16-18: 707,000
- 19-24: 267,000
- 25+: 734,000
- Under 16: 11,000
18,000 people study higher education in a college.

162 colleges are currently on the Office for Students (OfS) register of English Higher Education Providers – offering undergraduate and/or postgraduate level courses.

One third of English students aged 19 and under who enter higher education through UCAS studied at a college.
Colleges deliver:

- 84% of Higher National Certificates (HNCs)
- 66% of Higher National Diplomas (HNDs)
- 67% of Foundation Degrees

( HNCs are level 4 qualifications and HNDs and Foundation Degrees are both level 5 qualifications)

Number of Higher Education Students in Colleges by Age (2019/20):

- Under 21: 31,000
- 21-24: 22,000
- 25+: 65,000

(HNCs are level 4 qualifications and HNDs and Foundation Degrees are both level 5 qualifications)
APPRENTICESHIPS

There are 188,000 people on apprenticeship provision in colleges of whom 55,000 are aged under 19.

Colleges train 57% of all construction, planning and the built environment and 44% of engineering and manufacturing apprentices.
THE AVERAGE GENERAL FE COLLEGE TRAINS

1,100 APPRENTICES

NUMBER OF APPRENTICESHIPS IN COLLEGES BY AGE AND HIGHEST LEVEL, 2019/20³

16-18
- Intermediate Level Apprenticeship: 32,000
- Advanced Level Apprenticeship: 22,500
- Higher Level Apprenticeship: 800

19-24
- Intermediate Level Apprenticeship: 22,200
- Advanced Level Apprenticeship: 45,600
- Higher Level Apprenticeship: 7,300

25+
- Intermediate Level Apprenticeship: 15,400
- Advanced Level Apprenticeship: 29,300
- Higher Level Apprenticeship: 12,600
COURSES AND QUALIFICATIONS

150,000
16 to 18-year-old students in colleges are doing A Level courses

579,000
students in colleges are taking STEM subjects

198,000
students in colleges retake GCSE English and / or maths
81% of colleges were judged GOOD or OUTSTANDING for overall effectiveness at their most recent inspection. 

OFSTED INSPECTION
ACHIEVEMENT RATES - 2018/19

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- General FE colleges: 86.7%
- Sixth form colleges: 85.0%

APPRENTICESHIPS

- General FE colleges: 66.7%
- Private training providers: 62.2%
HIGHER EDUCATION -
EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

TEACHING EXCELLENCE AND STUDENT OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK (TEF) GRADINGS
March 2021

- Provisional: 4%
- Gold: 14%
- Bronze: 32%
- Silver: 50%

EIGHT colleges have foundation degree awarding powers (FDAP) and ONE college has taught degree awarding powers (TDAP)
The annual AoC Beacon Awards and the Student of the Year Awards recognise the outstanding and innovative practice provided by FE Colleges and achievement of their students. We use these examples of excellence in the sector which span diverse aspects of college life to promote the significant and positive impact that colleges have on the students and community.

There were over 200 applications for 15 awards from 100 colleges
16 TO 18 PARTICIPATION IN EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

WHERE 16 TO 18-YEAR-OLDS ARE STUDYING OR WORKING

34%
FE and Sixth Form Colleges

25%
All state funded schools

12%
Higher education institutions

7%
Not in education, employment or training (NEET)

7%
Employment

5%
Apprenticeships

5%
Independent schools

5%
Other education and training

1%
Special schools
### 16 to 18-Year-Olds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students from ethnic minority backgrounds</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female students</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners with learning difficulties and/or disability</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students from ethnic minority backgrounds</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female students</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learners with learning difficulties and/or disability</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
21% of students in colleges have a learning difficulty and/or disability.

73,000 college students are aged 60 and over.

16 to 18-year-olds in colleges and schools that claimed free school meals at age 15:

- Colleges: 16%
- Maintained school and academy sixth forms: 8%

The average distance between home postcode and learning location for undergraduate students:

- College: 15 miles
- University: 54 miles
77,000
students in colleges are
doing a sports course

In 2019/20,
93
FA College Grassroots Hubs
engaged
52,712
participants and deployed
2,470
student volunteers

HEALTH, WELL-BEING AND SPORT
482 disabled students competed in AoC Sport events

In 2019/20...

over 1,350 teams entered one of the 170 leagues delivered by AoC Sport, providing weekly competitive opportunities for 20,000 students

over 7,200 students from 182 colleges competed in regional tournaments

1,326 colleges students were involved in volunteering through the AoC Sport Leadership Academy

The number of active students in colleges has increased to 64.8%

During lockdown, students from over 100 colleges have walked, run or cycled over 555,000 MILES as part of AoC Sport virtual challenges
Over 180 colleges are signatories to the AoC Mental Health and Wellbeing Charter

The average college provides 40 HOURS of counselling per week

83% of colleges increased resources spent on mental health between 2017 and 2020

67% of colleges have good or very good relationship with CAMHS (Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services)

95% of colleges have staff trained in Mental Health First Aid

71% of colleges have trained all staff in Mental Health Awareness

100% of colleges have structures in place to support staff mental health & wellbeing

62% of colleges say there are good links between staff responsible for physical activity and staff supporting student wellbeing
CHINA is the most important market for college international activity...with ITALY second...and JAPAN third.

For academic year 2019/20, Erasmus+ was the most significant form of international activity reported by colleges. Over 100 colleges took part in the 2014-2020 Erasmus+ programme cycle.

LEVEL 3 is the most popular level of study for international students at colleges.
72% of internationally active colleges work with local homestay hosts

Online training as a form of college international activity quadrupled from 2019 to 2020

Colleges provide a pipeline to HE: 63% of colleges say that 75-100% of their non-EU international students progress to HE courses

College top strengths for the international marketplace include A LEVELS, ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSES and TEACHER-TRAINING

TOP 15 COUNTRIES MOST IMPORTANT FOR COLLEGE INTERNATIONAL WORK

1. CHINA (MAINLAND) 122 citation points
2. JAPAN 32 citation points
3. GERMANY 30 citation points
4. FRANCE 28 citation points
5. SAUDI ARABIA 28 citation points
6. INDIA 24 citation points
7. SOUTH KOREA 24 citation points
8. SPAIN 27 citation points
9. FINLAND 18 citation points
10. VENGE (SAR) 17 citation points
11. SWITZERLAND 15 citation points
12. USA 14 citation points
13. SOUTH AFRICA 18 citation points
14. ITALY 18 citation points
15. HONG KONG (SAR) 26 citation points
Colleges are involved in **OVER A DOZEN TYPES OF INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY**, ranging from student recruitment to professional training and operating campuses overseas.

**TYPES OF COLLEGE INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY**

- Erasmus+ programmes: 76%
- International student recruitment (Tier 4): 73%
- European student recruitment: 63%
- International student recruitment (Short-term study visa): 59%
- Summer or winter schools: 55%
- Professional or vocational training programmes: 47%
- ESF/other European funding: 39%
- Projects funded by UK Government or UK organisations: 39%
- Online training courses: 31%
- Consultancy work overseas: 29%
- Other curriculum/verification/quality assurance activity: 27%
- Overseas campus operation: 10%
- Other: 10%
Colleges are responsible for 39% of all the publicly funded HE progression of young people in England (68,644 students progressed to HE from 236 colleges in 2018/19) and 48% of disadvantaged young people progressing to HE.

68% of young people progressing to sustainable employment were from colleges.

79% of disadvantaged young people progressing to sustainable employment were from colleges.
EMPLOYMENT

35% of large employers who train their staff do so through a college, compared with 30% who do so through a university.

Proportion of employers that view 17 to 18-year-old education leavers to be well prepared for work:

- 69% college
- 65% school
STAFF

COLLEGES EMPLOY 105,000 FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT PEOPLE

- 50,000 are teaching staff
- 64% are female
- 16% are from an ethnic minority background
- 5% have a learning difficulty and/or disability
FEMALE LEADERS

- College Principals: 48%
- Secondary School Head Teachers: 40%
- University Vice-Chancellors: 31%

8% of college chief executives and principals come from black or minority ethnic backgrounds.

THE AVERAGE AGE OF COLLEGE STAFF: 46

THE AVERAGE AGE OF COLLEGES CHIEF EXECUTIVES AND PRINCIPALS: 54

THE AVERAGE (MEAN) ANNUAL PAY FOR FULL-TIME TEACHING STAFF

- Colleges: £32,000
- Secondary Schools: £35,300
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

The total college income in England is £6.4 billion (2019/20).

Staff costs total £4.3 billion, accounting for 67% of total college income (2019/20).
Colleges spent £165 million on exam fees (2019/20).

Colleges financed £455 million in capital expenditure with £148 million in grants, £122 million in asset sales, £87 million in loans and £98 million from retained surpluses (2019/20).

COLLEGE INCOME ANALYSIS 2019/20

- **16-18 EDUCATION**: £3.1 billion - 49%
- **ADULT EDUCATION**: £799 million - 12%
- **HIGHER EDUCATION**: £470 million - 7%
- **APPRENTICESHIPS**: £454 million - 7%
- **FUTHER EDUCATION FEES**: £350 million - 5%
- **GRANTS AND CONTRACTS**: £645 million - 10%
- **CATERING AND ANCILLARY**: £550 million - 9%
AoC is a founding partner of the UK FE/HE Leaders and Students Climate commission and 64 colleges actively engaged in its work developing resources to assist colleges in their move to Net Zero and meet their Carbon Reduction targets.

The FE Colleges Climate Action Roadmap adopted by over 80 colleges, 450+ students directly involved in commission work, 87 student governors trained with Unloc on Environmental Sustainably, 34 Colleges piloting the Carbon Literacy programme, 1000 delegates attended 3 major conferences on Climate Change.
ENDNOTES

1. Age breakdown excludes higher education students taught at colleges that are franchised from a higher education institution.

2. Includes non-prescribed higher education and higher level apprenticeships.

3. 16 to 18-year-olds includes a small number of students aged under 16.

4. STEM: science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

5. Excludes colleges that have merged and not been inspected as a 'new' provider.

6. Ethnic minority groups are classified as any group that are non-white British.

7. Includes the 16-19 converter academies.

Note: the majority of statistics in this publication relate to the 2019/20 academic year (2018/19 data has been used where 2019/20 was not available). The covid-19 pandemic will mean the current situation is different in some areas of college activity.

This document refers to further education and sixth form colleges in England established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992.