

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT
ACTION TRACKER



COMMITTEE: Learning and Teaching Committee, 4 March 2021

(Paper 1a)

DATE RAISED	ACTION No	ACTION	DUE DATE	OWNER	STATUS*	COMMENTS
		There are currently no outstanding actions.				

* Not Started / In Progress / *Completed*

Ayrshire College # 484082
02/25/2021 13:49:09

Learning and Teaching Committee

4 March 2021

- Subject:** Student Association Report
- Purpose:** To update Committee Members on Student Association activity since the last meeting
- Recommendation:** That Committee Members note the content of the report and feedback any recommendations they may have

1. Background

Lauren Howieson, Student President, and Steven Oliver, Student Vice President, continue to deliver the core service of the Student Association through a variety of virtual platforms and through student email, with the support of the Student Association Advisor. Work of the Student Association has been supported by a core group of students who have taken responsibility for co-facilitating and moderating the Student Associations clubs and societies.

2. Current Situation

The Student Association has maintained consistent levels of student engagement through various clubs, Ambassador focus groups, and dealing daily with student feedback and concerns. Digital inclusion, digital fatigue and student welfare have emerged as the recurring themes during this period. The Student Association is engaging with other Associations across the sector to share ideas on how to make students feel part of the student community and we will continue to do this throughout this academic year.

3. Association Activity

SFC Additional Funding

The Student Association is delighted to have been awarded a payment of £21,000 from the Scottish Funding Council to deliver activities and provide services which mitigate the effects of Covid-19 on students. The Student Association took part in a meeting on the 24 February with a working group of staff from across the college to put forward initial ideas on how this, along with additional funding the College has received, can be best utilised. We are also consulting with students from the SWAP Science class on ideas around student mental health support.

Your Voice Matters

Following the successful recruitment and training of the Student Ambassadors, the Student Association supported Ambassadors throughout December to arrange and deliver Focus Groups to classes through Microsoft Teams. The purpose of the focus

groups was to gather class attitudes and comments with regards to twenty-four questions around their initial experiences of the College.

Success was limited in that, due to various factors, not all curriculum areas on every campus were covered. An initial evaluation from the exercise has presented valuable learning that the Student Association will use to ensure that improvements are made with regards to the second round, which will take place in March.

Moving forward, the Student Association will evaluate and review the model with the support of the Quality Enhancement Team and Vice Principal of Curriculum.

In the meantime, the Student Ambassadors will be contacting the curriculum areas over the next week with regards to the second round of focus.

SQA Focus Groups

The Student Association, upon the request of the SQA, has arranged two student focus groups to take place on Wednesday 24 February and Friday 26 February. David Brooks from consultation firm, Brookes Research, on behalf of the SQA, will be facilitating these with the support of the Student Vice President. These focus groups will gather information from our students studying SQA qualifications. These follow on from an SQA focus group delivered at the end of last year and their purpose is to provide the SQA with feedback on how COVID-19 has affected the learner experience and the use of the SQA Website.

Equality Outcome Focus Group

On January 20, the Student Association facilitated a focus group to gather student opinion on the proposed equality outcomes contained in the draft Ayrshire College Mainstreaming Equality and Equality Outcomes Report being worked upon at the moment by the Equalities and Inclusion Advisor. The participants feedback will help shape the actions created within the report.

Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey

The Student Association is working with the Quality Enhancement Team to promote the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey which is due to go live on the 8 March. We are currently in the process of planning and recording a Podcast for the College's Rockpool Podcast with the Head of Quality Enhancement and student, Joseph Smith. The Podcast will be titled Amplifying the Student Voice and will involve discussions with regards to the importance of the student voice and how students can get their voices heard through the survey. This will compliment a month-long promotion of the survey.

Going Further for Student Carers, Student Carers Recognition Award

The Student Association Advisor worked with the Student Experience Team to submit the portfolio for the Carers Scotland, Student Carers Recognition Award and we are delighted that the College has received news today that it has been successful in attaining the award. This is great news for our Student Carers and potential students who are carers, as it is a reassurance that the College is committed to supporting them to manage their student experience along-side their

caring commitments. The Student Association will continue to support our student carers through the Student Carer Forum.

Ayrshire College Gaming Society

The Ayrshire College Gaming Society is still being utilised daily with a membership of almost one hundred students. Feedback from members has been really positive and many informal student networks have formed as a result of shared interests. An event will be in the works shortly to remind students of ACGS in an attempt to recruit new members.

Wear It On Your Sleeve

WIOYS mental health project group held a conversation cafe for Time to Talk Day on the 4 February to encourage people to talk about their own mental health and the impact Covid has been having, as well as to encourage talk around ways to tackle mental health issues everyone faces. There are ongoing conversations within the WIOYS Teams Group and the officers and Student Association advisor have been offering regular one-to-one chats with students which has been working well.

Future Activity

NUS Scotland Conference

The Student President, Student Vice President and one of our Student Ambassadors will be attending the NUS Scotland Conference online from the 8-10 March. This is a great opportunity for the Student Association to network with other Associations and Student Unions from across the sector. Focus will be on the student experience during COVID and the challenges Student Associations have faced in engaging and supporting our students, as well as the sharing of resources and ideas. The conference will take place over three days with a blue-sky format where Officers can pop in and out of sessions according to their interests.

Keep Calm, Camera's On

The Student Association have been supporting the marketing teams, Keep Calm Cameras On campaign in response to the amount of students taking part in online classes with cameras off. We have received student feedback that the student experience is affected by not being able to see classmates during class and how demoralising this is for both students and staff. We are consulting with NUS regarding resources that can be used in a short session with classes to encourage them to engage with cameras on. The Student Association Advisor and Student President will be delivering the first session on Tuesday to a schools class in Ayr.

4. Proposals

N/A

5. Risks

Due to the challenging issues dealt with within the SA there is a risk of reputational damage.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

Due to the nature of this paper an equality impact assessment has not been undertaken.

7. Conclusion

ACSA will continue to work alongside staff in order to best support and encourage student and make the 2020/21 session, despite the unprecedented challenges it brings, both enjoyable and successful for students.

Lauren Howieson
Student President
25 February 2021

Publication

This paper will be published on the College website

Ayrshire College # 484082
02/25/2021 13:49:09

Learning and Teaching Committee

4 March 2021

- Subject:** 2020-21 Credit Report (position at 17 February 2021)
- Purpose:** To advise the Learning and Teaching Committee of the current 2020-21 credit activity target position and projection to the end of the academic year
- Recommendation:** Members are invited to note the contents of this paper

1. Background

A key strategic aim, of the College, is to meet the annual credit activity target agreed with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) as part of the Regional Outcome Agreement process.

The activity target, agreed for AY 2020-21, is **124,877** credits which comprises a combination of core and ESF credits. Table 1 provides a breakdown of credits.

Table 1

	2020-21
SFC Core credit target	124,086
ESF credits	791
Total SFC credit target	124,877

2. Current Situation

Appendix 1 provides a summary of the current position and the anticipated final position for AY 2020-21. The final projection currently shows a shortfall of 566 credits. This is due to a reduction in planned activity which now cannot be undertaken as a consequence of the current significant operating constraints.

3. Resource Implications

Members should be aware that, ordinarily, the SFC reserves the right to clawback funding should the College not meet the agreed activity target. SFC has confirmed, however, that it will not seek to recover funds, for AY 2020-21, for shortfalls against Outcome Agreement targets where related to COVID-19. The College is not funded for over delivery.

4. Risks

The failure to meet the SFC credit activity target, ordinarily, also presents a reputational risk to the College and may affect future activity levels. These risks are included in the corporate risk register.

5. Conclusion

Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Anne Campbell
Vice Principal, Curriculum
23 February 2021

Publication

This paper will be published on the College website

Ayrshire College # 484082
02/25/2021 13:49:09

Curriculum Area	2020-21 Covid baseline	Current position as at 17 February 2021 (minus deferred)	Deferred Credits	Total as at 17 February 2021	Winter Starts Balance	Remaining Provision	Total Projection
ACES, Computing, Games Development, Business including Travel & Tourism	43,469	38,996	2,854	41,850	1,662	0	43,512
Creative, Social Science, Sport and Hospitality	37,565	33,859	730	34,589	529	300	35,418
Care, Essential Skills, Supported Learning and ESOL	31,231	31,390	378	31,768	171	290	32,229
Schools, Engagement and Widening Access	3,559	3,168	158	3,326	61	0	3,387
Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning	2,550	3,012		3,012	0	500	3,512
Community	1,700	1,226		1,226	0	178	1,404
One-plus/remaining provision	3,100	0		0	0	5,000	5,000
Deferred students	4,101						0
Sub-Total	127,275	111,651	4,120	115,771	2,423	6,268	124,462
Less UWS Articulation Agreement	-150						
Total	127,125	111,651	4,120	115,771	2,423	6,268	124,462

Summary	Total
Current Position	115,771
Remaining	8,691
Total	124,462

Total Projected Delivery	124,462
Less UWS Credits	-150
Sub-total	124,312
Credit target	124,877
Over/Under Target	-565

Ayrshire College # 484082
02/25/2021 13:49:09

Learning and Teaching Committee**4 March 2021**

- Subject:** 2020-21 Early Withdrawals (at November 2020)
- Purpose:** To update the Learning and Teaching Committee members on full-time student retention in 2020-21.
- Recommendation:** Members are asked to note the contents of this paper.
-

1. Background

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) funds the College for students who have completed, as a minimum, the first 25% of the planned duration of their course. For full-time courses, the 25% date, known as the census date, is 1 November of each year. SFC advised that 1 November would remain the census date for full-time programmes in AY 2020-21 despite the delayed start to the term as a consequence of COVID-19.

Students who do not attend after the census date are reported, as part of the College's Key Performance Indicators, as early withdrawals. The purpose of this paper is to provide the Committee with an analysis of the College's early withdrawals and actions taken to improve student retention.

2. Current situation**Analysis of FE Full-Time withdrawal rates**

A full analysis is provided in appendix 1.

Early withdrawal rates, for FE full-time courses, have decreased by 3.6% from 10.3% in AY 2019-20 to 6.7% for the current year. Early withdrawal rates are higher for both Ayr (7%) and Kilmarnock campuses (8.5%) than for the Kilwinning Campus (3.5%), though all rates have decreased from those in AY 2019-20. The higher withdrawal rates correspond with a higher number of enrolments at Ayr and Kilmarnock.

Reasons for a student withdrawing from a course are captured in the SFC's Further Education Statistics return (FES). The most common reason given for withdrawing early from a course was reason not known to the College followed by personal/other. While every attempt is made to contact students to establish reasons for non-engagement and subsequent withdrawal, invariably, some students will not respond to attempts to re-engage them or to illicit this information.

In terms of age band, the highest number of early withdrawals came from those aged 16-19, followed by those aged 25 and over.

Overall, more females (58%) than males (42%) withdrew, though there were variations by Directorate, reflecting the differences in enrolments by gender per Directorate.

Analysis of early withdrawal by Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) shows that the greatest number came from those students residing in SIMD 1, followed by SIMD 2 areas.

The highest number of early withdrawals, by category, came from students declaring as 'no know disability.'

Analysis of HE Full-time withdrawal rates

Early withdrawal rates for HE full-time courses have increased by 1.5% from 7.2% in AY 2019-20 to 8.7% for the current year. Early withdrawal rates are higher in Ayr Campus (10.4%) and Kilwinning Campus (8.4%) than Kilmarnock (6.4%) which was the only campus which saw a reduction in withdrawal rates. The most common reason given for withdrawing early from a course was personal/other, followed by reason not known to College.

Overall, more males (59%) than females (41%) withdrew, though there were variations by Directorate.

There are variances across the different Directorates, but, in terms of age band, the highest number of early withdrawals, overall, come from those aged 25 and over.

There are also variances across the different Directorates in terms of SIMD, with early withdraws more evenly spread across SIMD areas 1-4.

Again, as is the case with FE, the highest number of early withdrawals, by category, came from students declaring as 'no know disability.'

Groups of Specific Interest – Care-Experienced

Colleges are challenged to maintain the current level of care-experienced students in the sector so that they represent 1.6% of total student population by headcount. The College is exceeding the ambition and, as can be demonstrate in table 1, below, there has been a significant increase in the number of students self-declaring as care-experienced. This increase has also resulted in a corresponding increase in the number of care-experienced students withdrawing early from their course, though early withdrawal figures have improved for AY 2020-21.

Table 1: Care-experienced withdrawal rates

Year	Number enrolled	Early withdrawals	
		Number	Percentage
2016-17	135	15	11.1%
2017-18	161	13	8.1%
2018-19	355	28	7.9%
2019-20	565	57	10.1%
2020-21	746	69	9.2%

Cross-college actions to support student retention

The College has had a strategic, cross-college focus, over the last three years, on improving the volume, quality and presentation of data, to allow teams to intervene earlier and provide support to enable students to remain on course.

The February 2020 Education Scotland Progress Visit commented on the effective, use of the retention tool by Personal Development tutors, Curriculum Administrators, Student Services staff and Curriculum Managers. The tool is used to contact students, who have been absent from class, to ascertain the reason why, offer support, if required, and re-engage them in their studies. This has continued under the blended and restricted blended delivery and working models.

Education Scotland also noted the cross-college approach to weekly curriculum meetings where actions to support at-risk students are discussed. Cross-college support teams also provide access to discretionary funding, lunch vouchers and extended learning support where required.

The Student Funding team continue to provide tailored support and advice to care experienced students to ensure that they have the right financial support in place for their individual circumstances.

3. Risks

The College is now focused on improving further withdrawals and reducing partial success, within the context of the current challenging operating environment, to ensure that as many students as possible achieve a successful outcome on their course. This is constrained by the response of individual Awarding Bodies and their flexibility in assessment evidence requirements. It is also constrained by the College's requirement to adhere to Scottish Government guidance in relation to numbers of students and staff on campus.

4. Conclusion

Course teams are currently in the process of analysing data for their own respective areas. This individual analysis at course level informs actions for each area. These actions will be discussed at the Curriculum Area Review meetings which take place over February and March.

Finally, staff are focused, for the remainder of the academic term, on reducing overall withdrawals and on improving outcomes for all students.

Members are invited to consider the contents of this paper.

Anne Campbell
Vice Principal, Curriculum
23 February 2021

Publication

This paper will be published on the College website

2020-21

FE & HE Full Time
Early Withdrawals
Report

RAISING ASPIRATIONS

INSPIRING ACHIEVEMENT

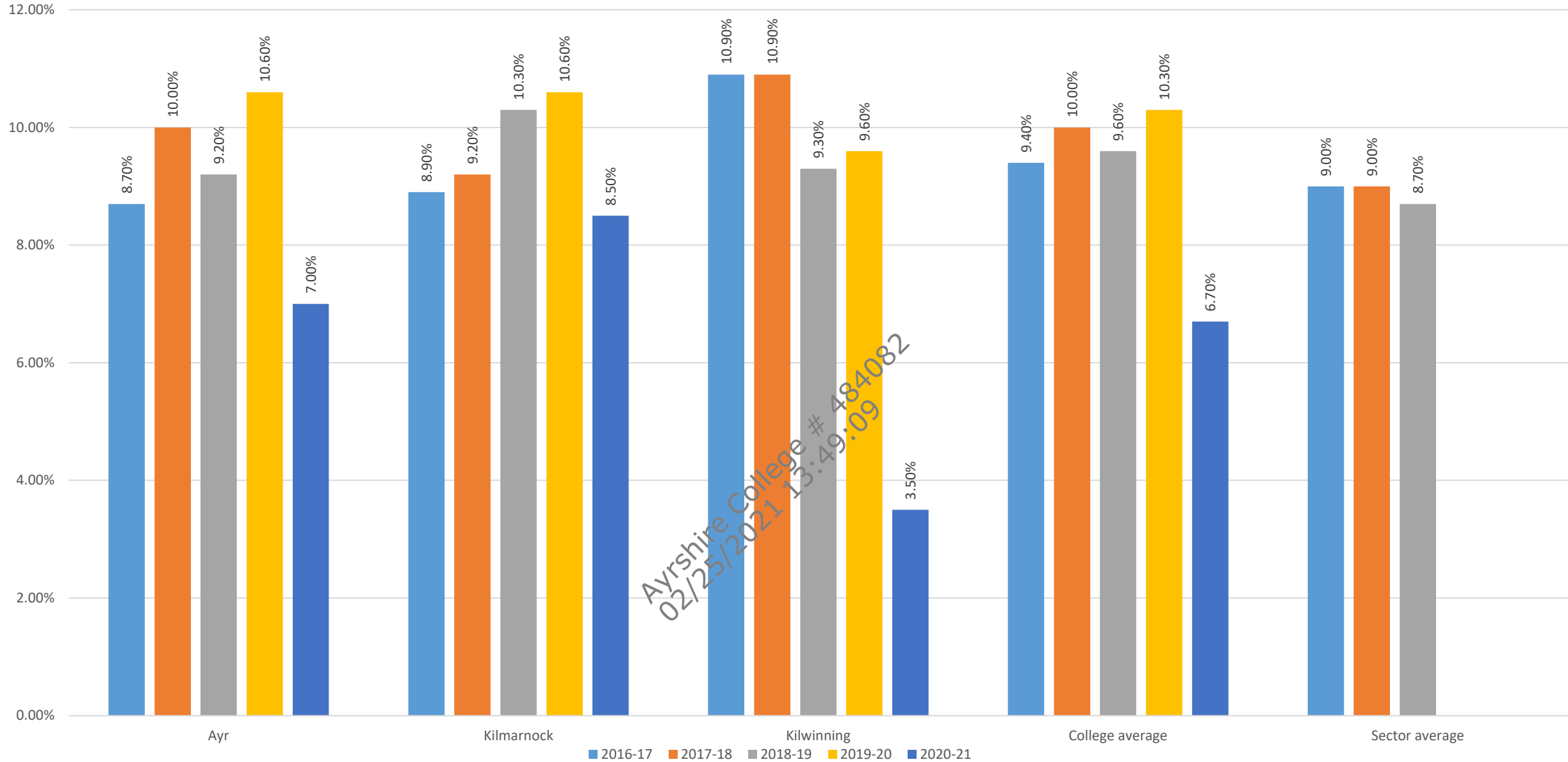
INCREASING OPPORTUNITIES

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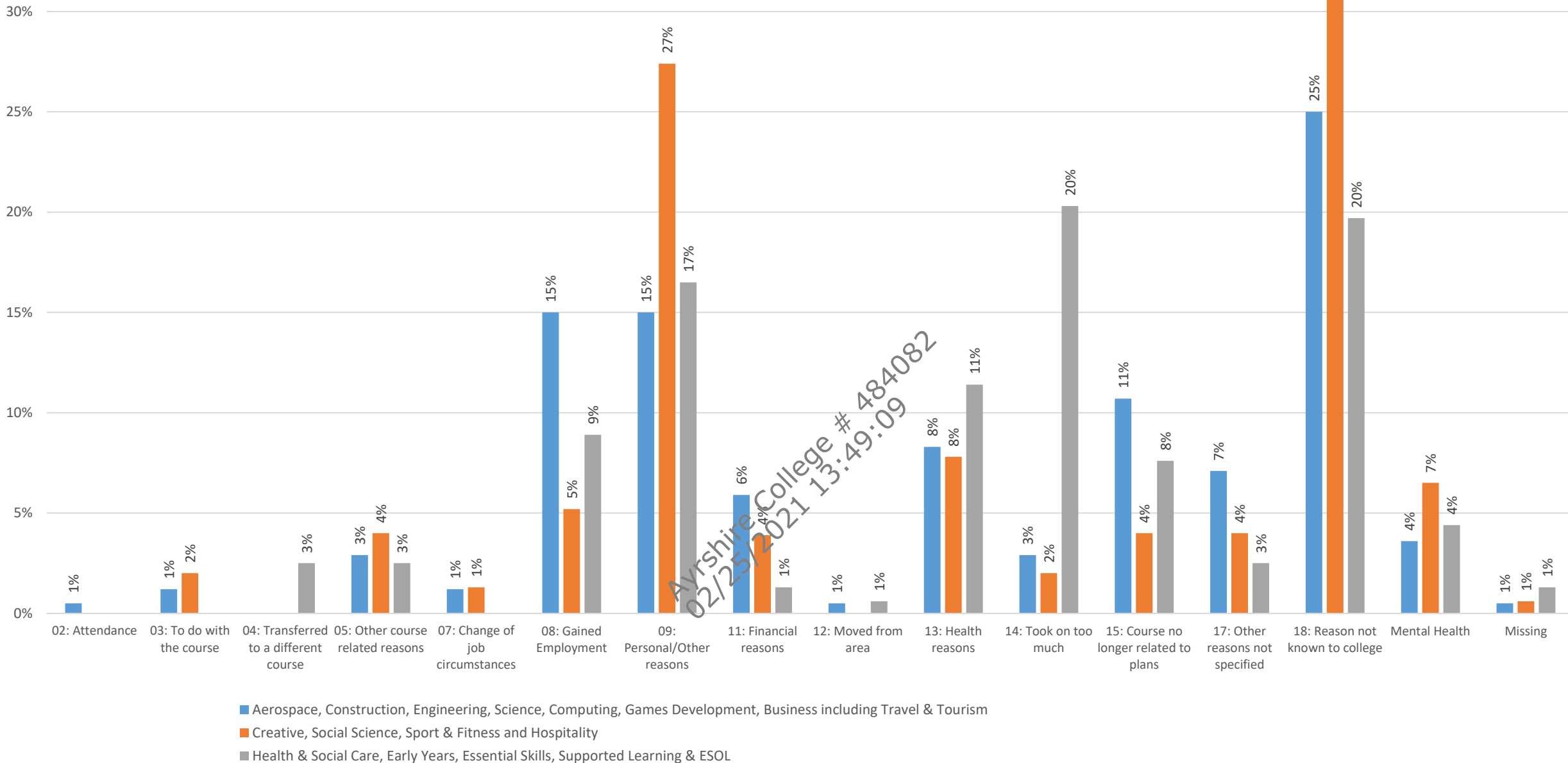
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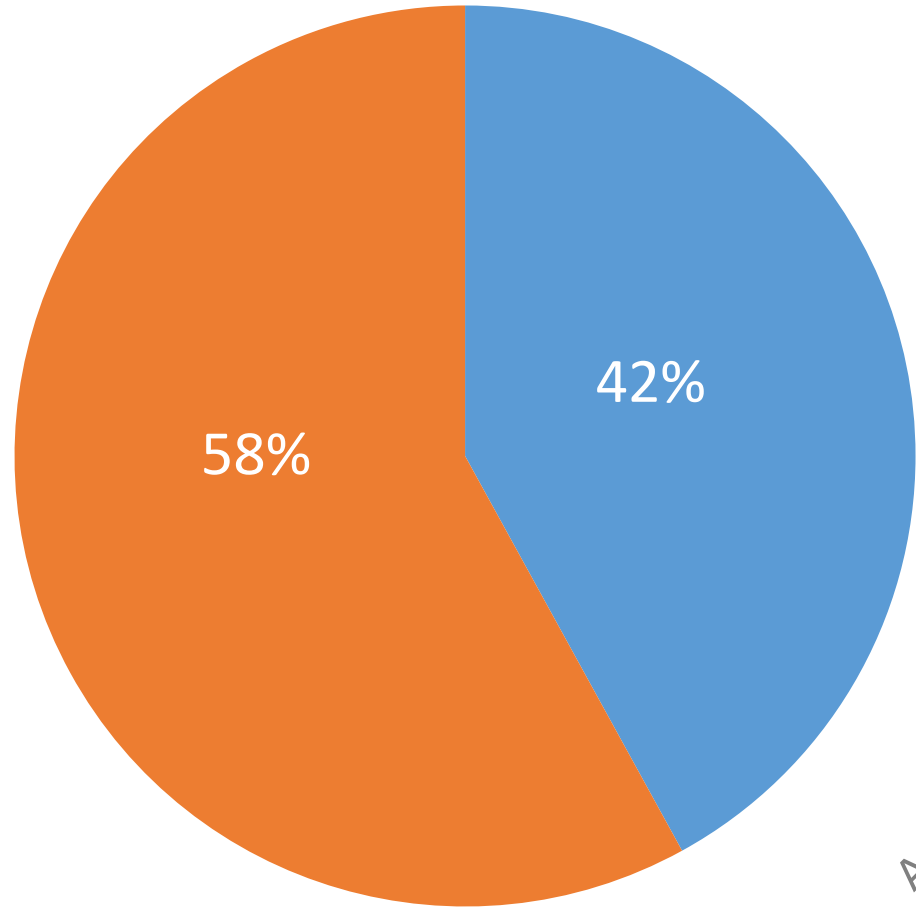
FE Full Time Early Withdrawals Rates



PE Full Time Early Withdrawals by Reason

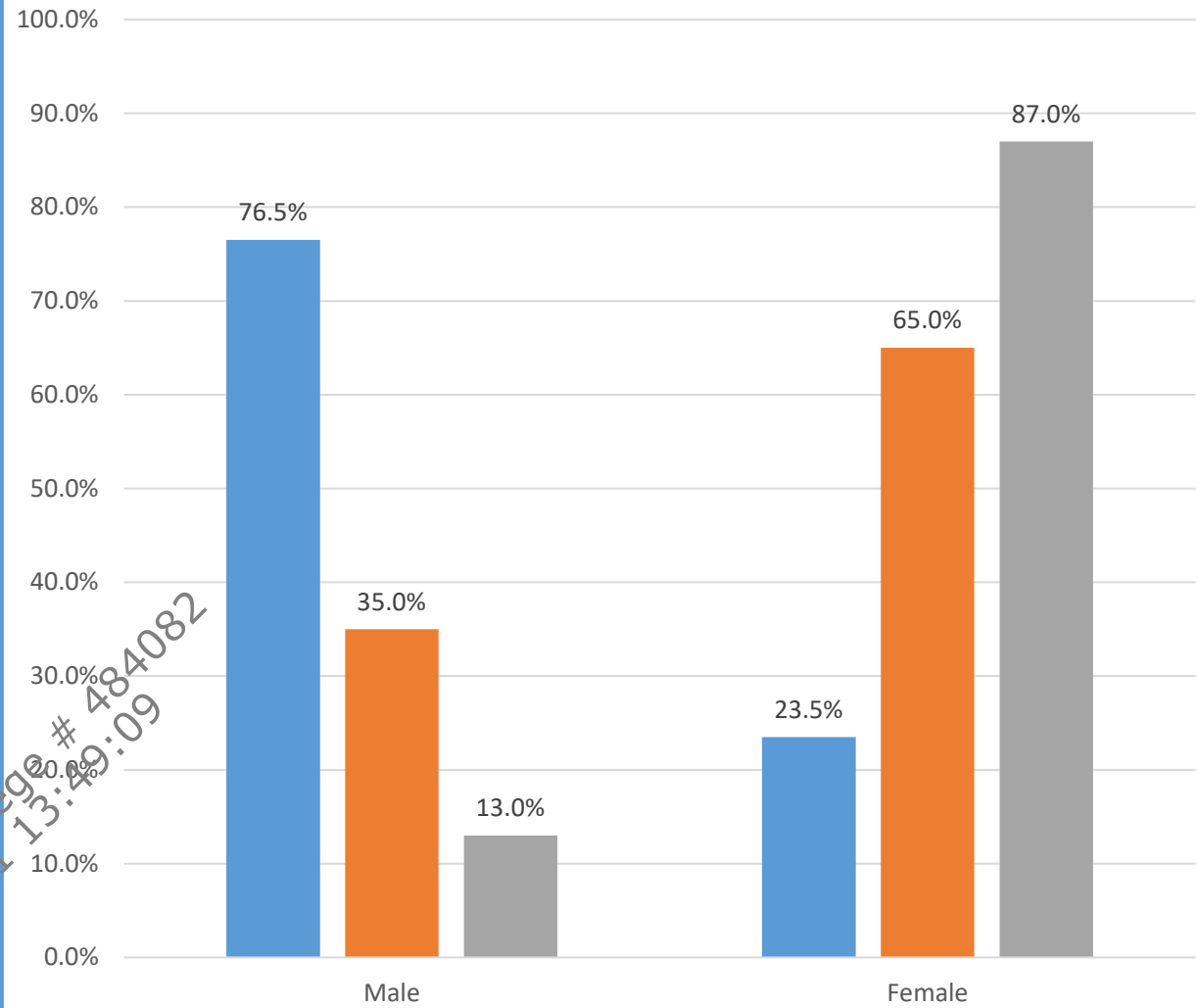


FE Full Time Early Withdrawals by Gender



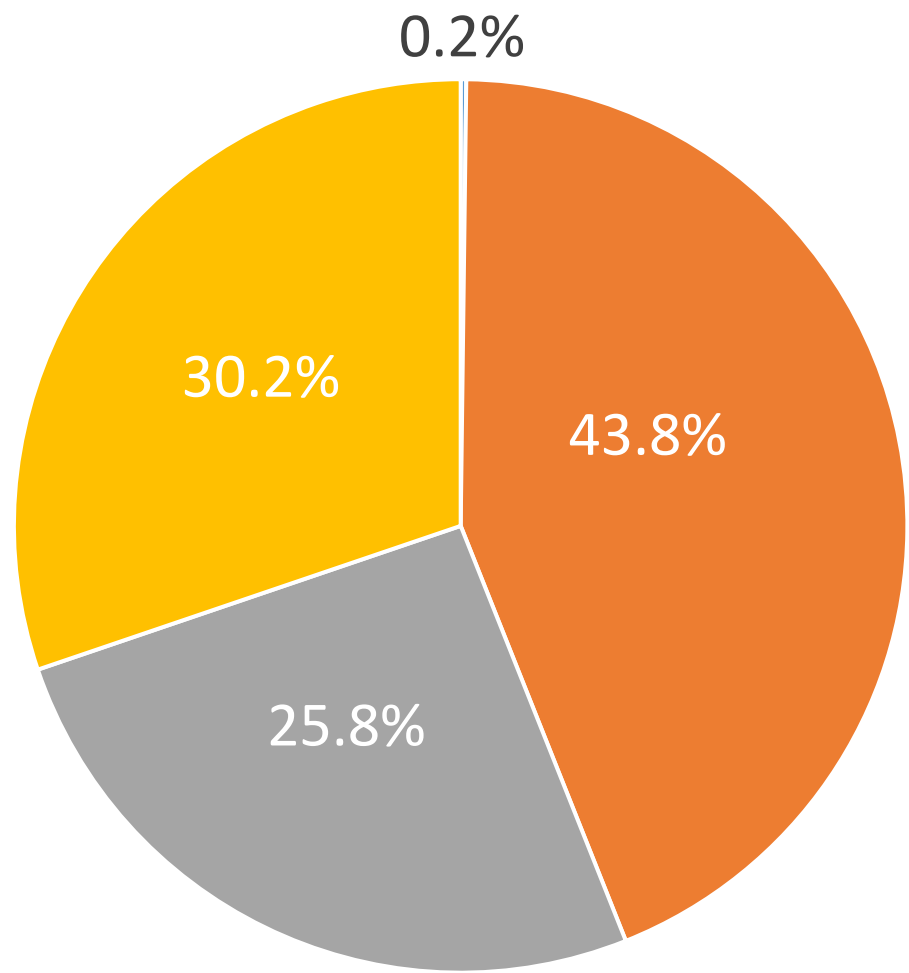
■ Male ■ Female

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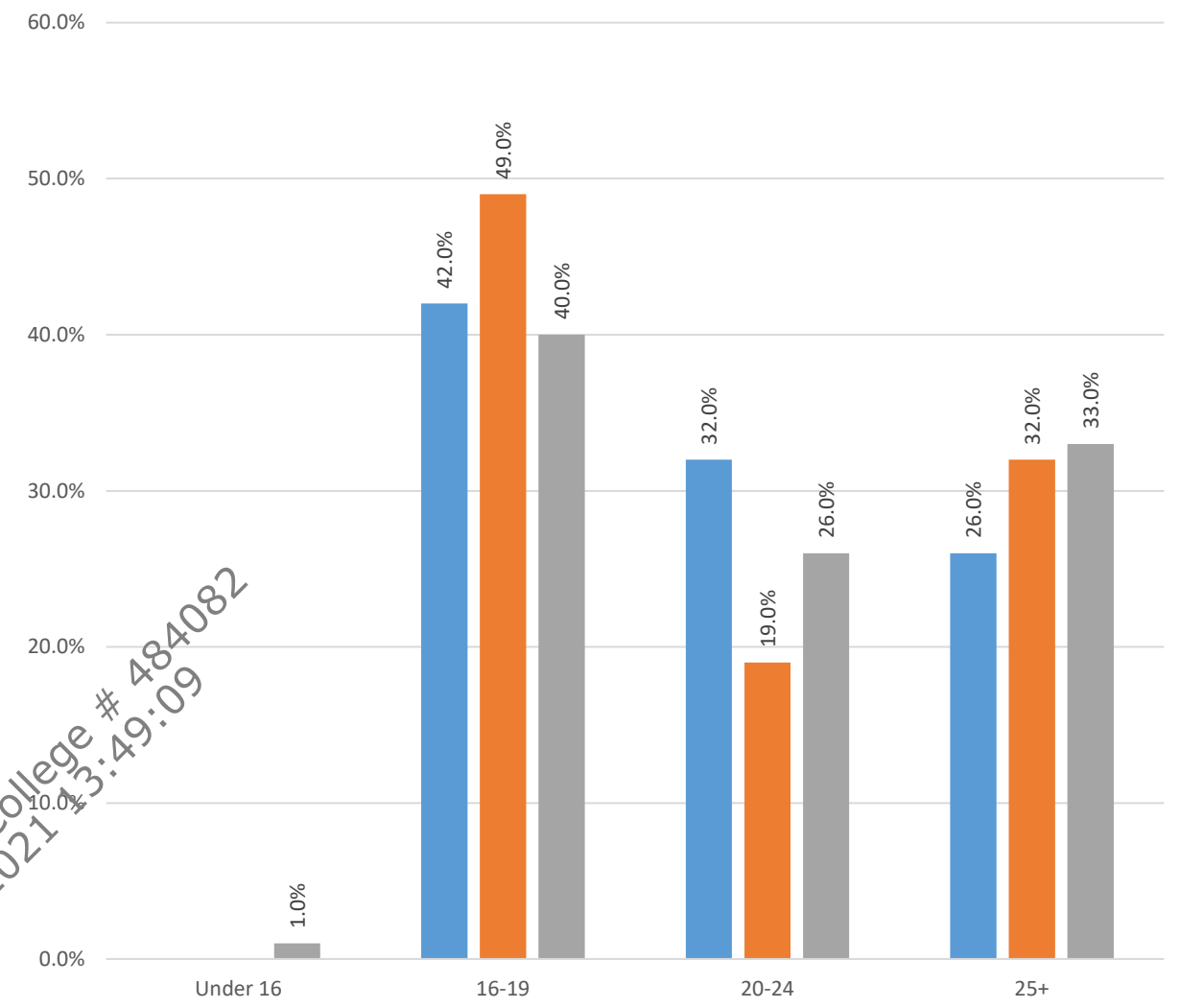
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 ■ Creative, Social Science, Sport & Fitness and Hospitality
 ■ Health & Social Care, Early Years, Essential Skills, Supported Learning & ESOL

FE Full Time Early Withdrawals by Age Band



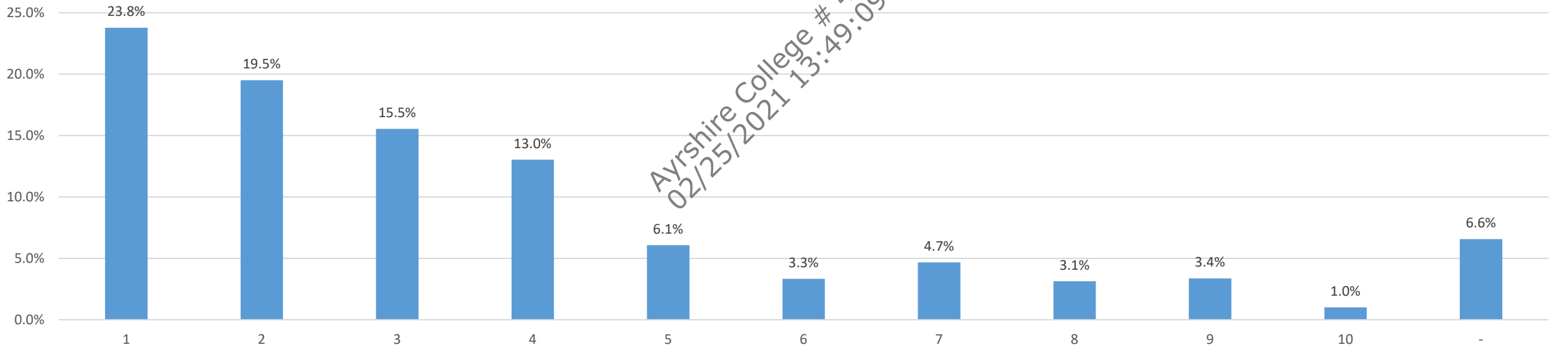
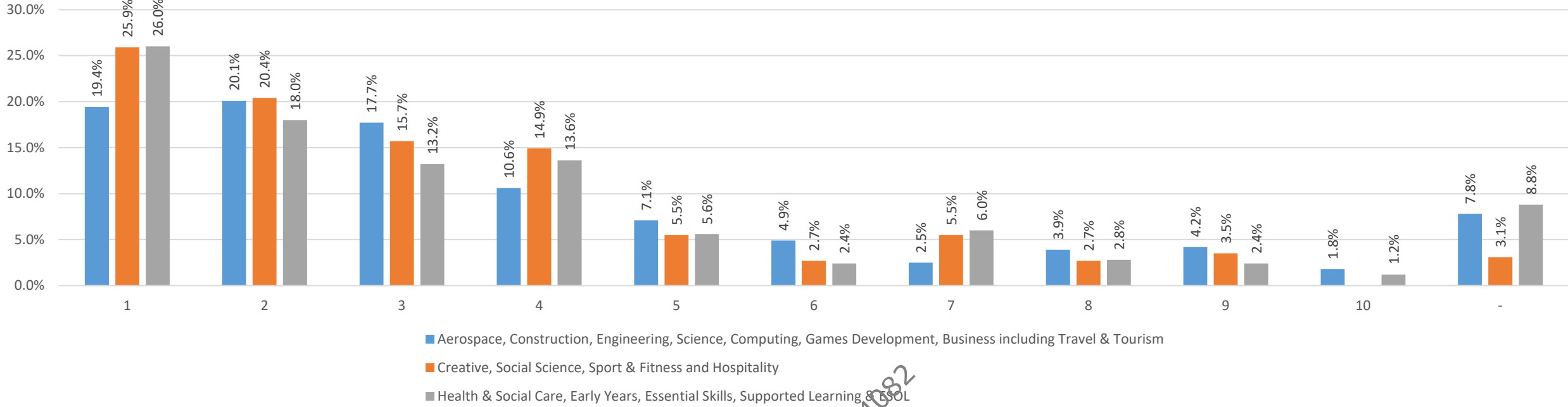
■ Under 16 ■ 16-19 ■ 20-24 ■ 25+

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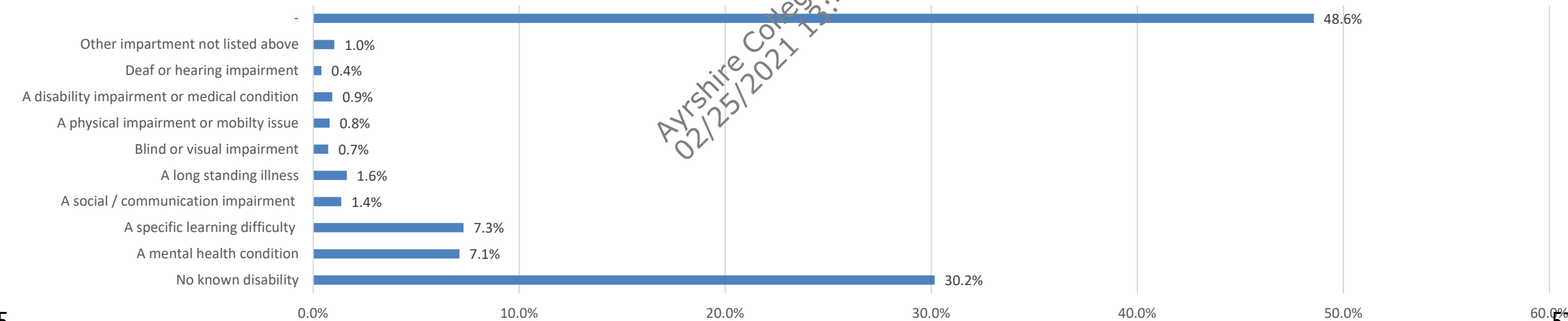
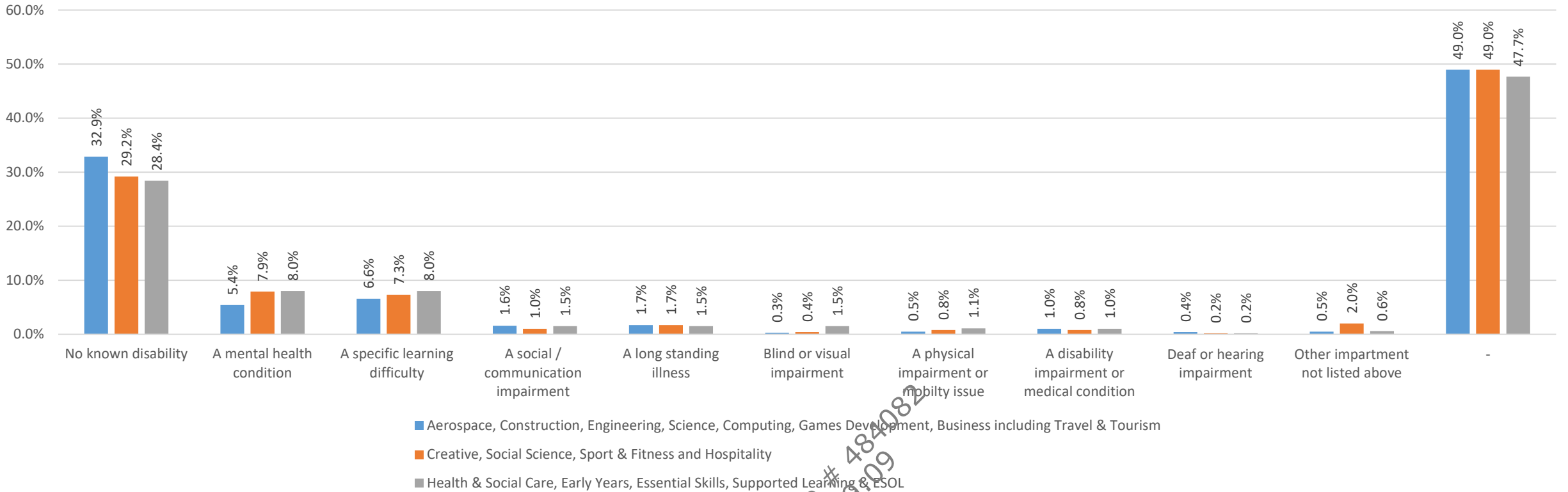
■ Aerospace, Construction, Engineering, Science, Computing, Games Development, Business including Travel & Tourism
 ■ Creative, Social Science, Sport & Fitness and Hospitality
 ■ Health & Social Care, Early Years, Essential Skills, Supported Learning & ESOL

FE Full Time Early Withdrawals by SIMD



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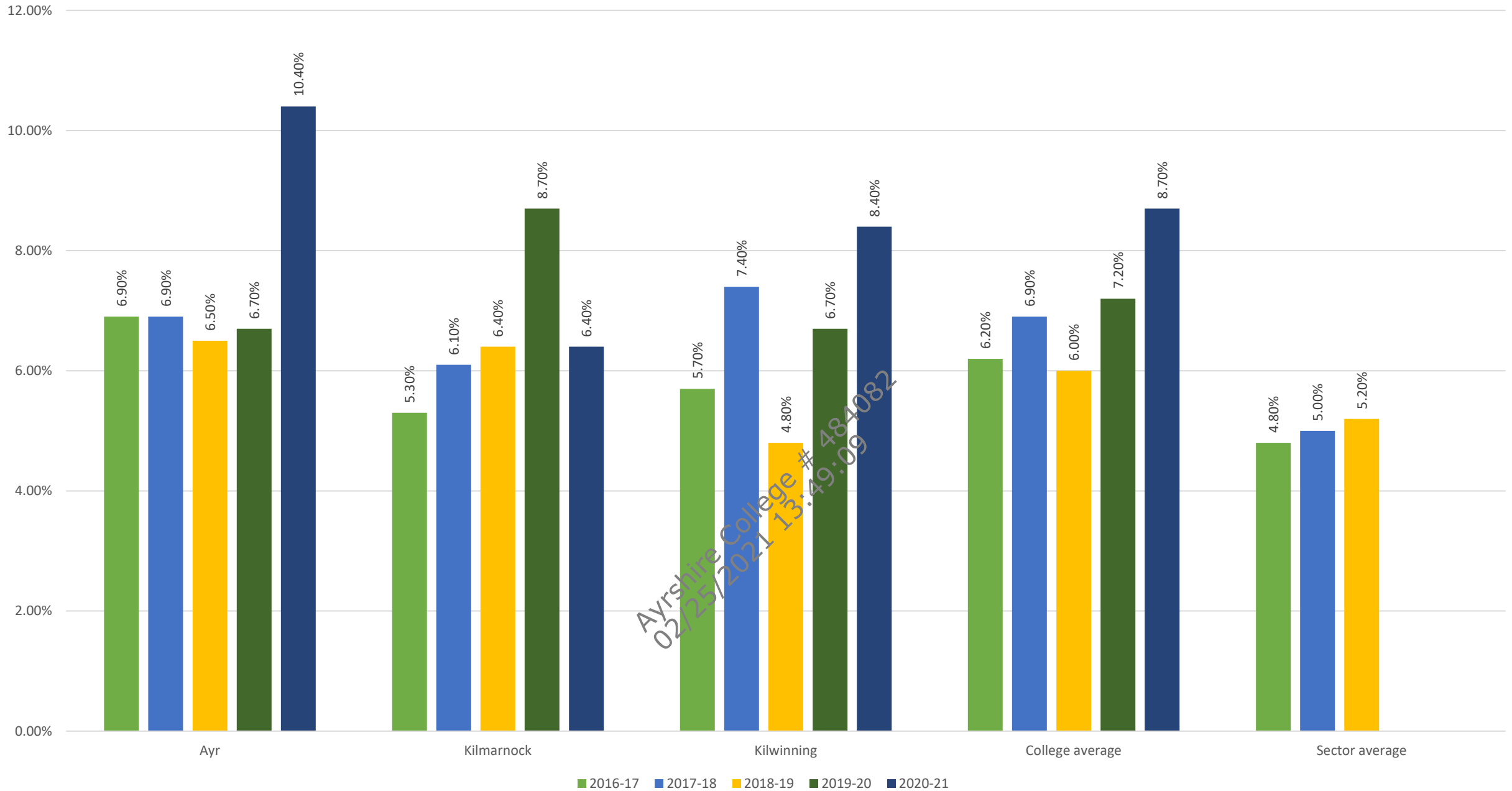
FE Full Time Early Withdrawals by Disability



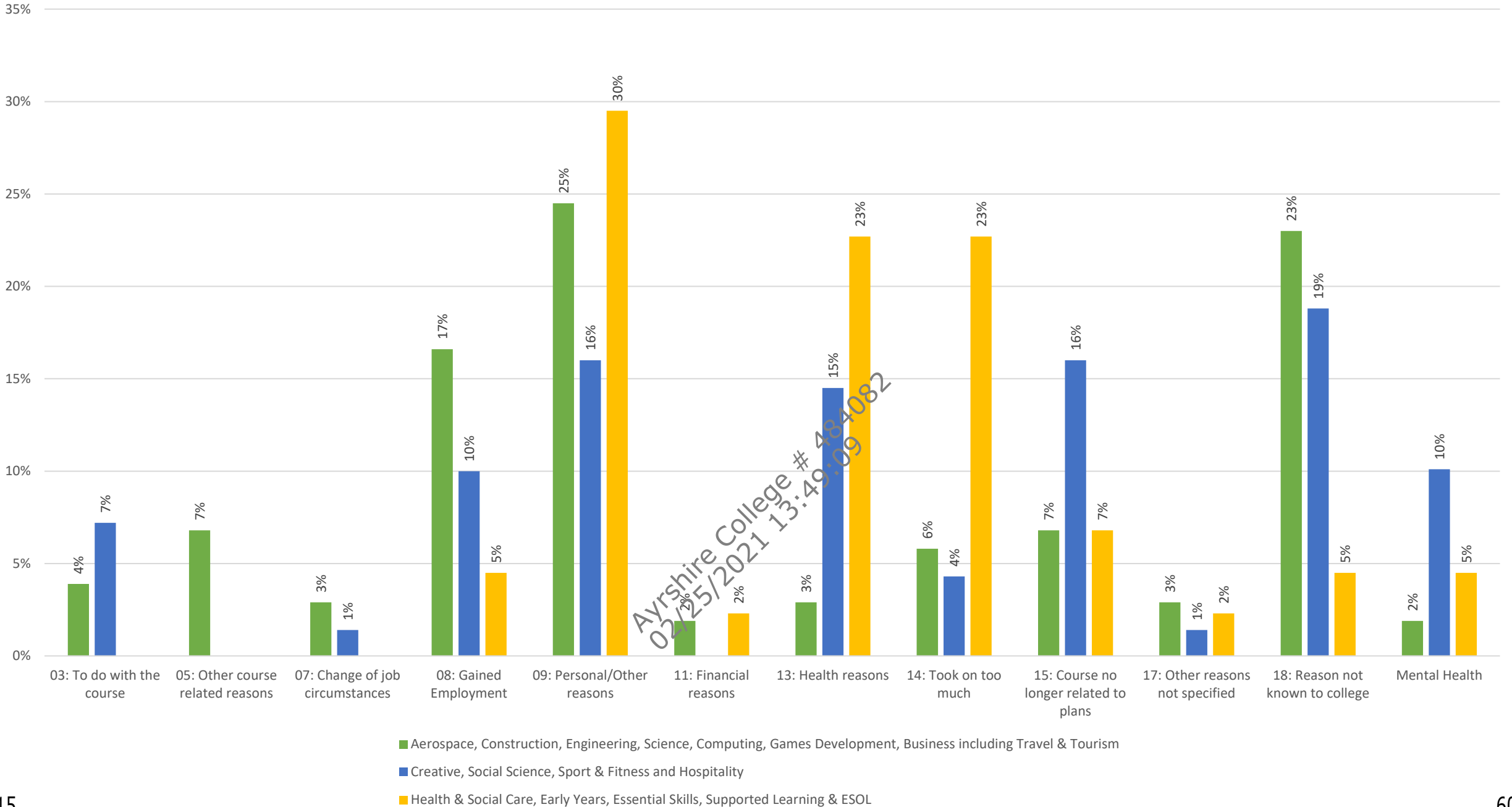
HE

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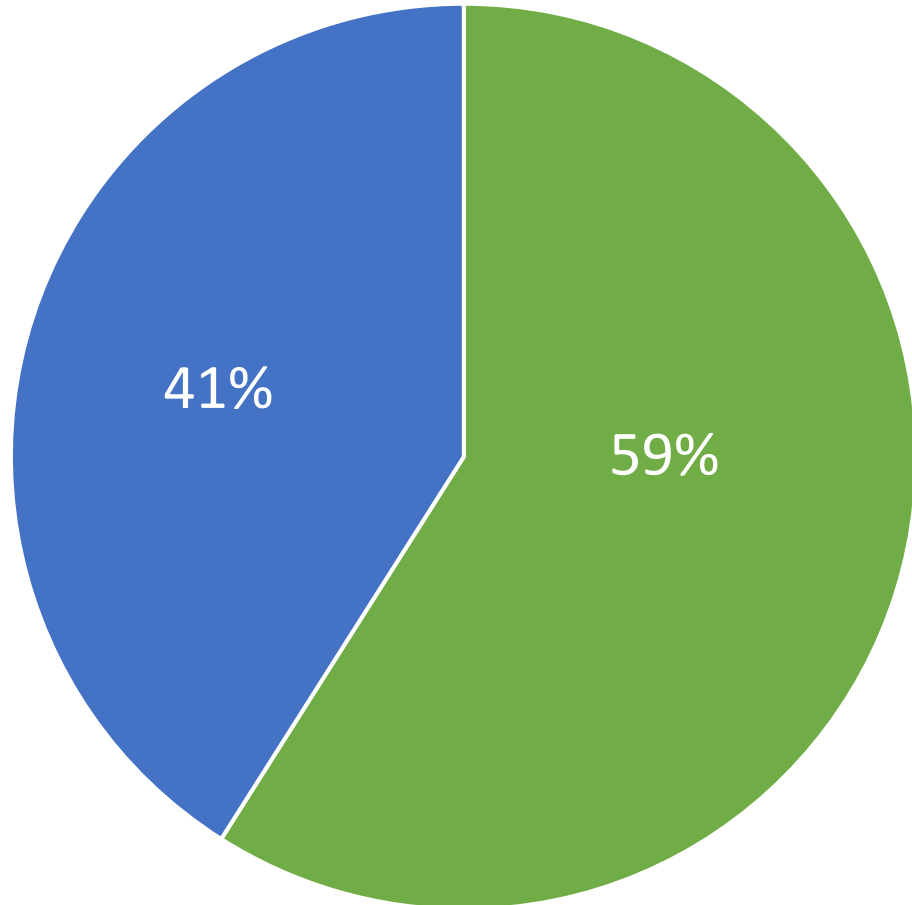
HE Full Time Early Withdrawals Rates



HE Full Time Early Withdrawals by Reason

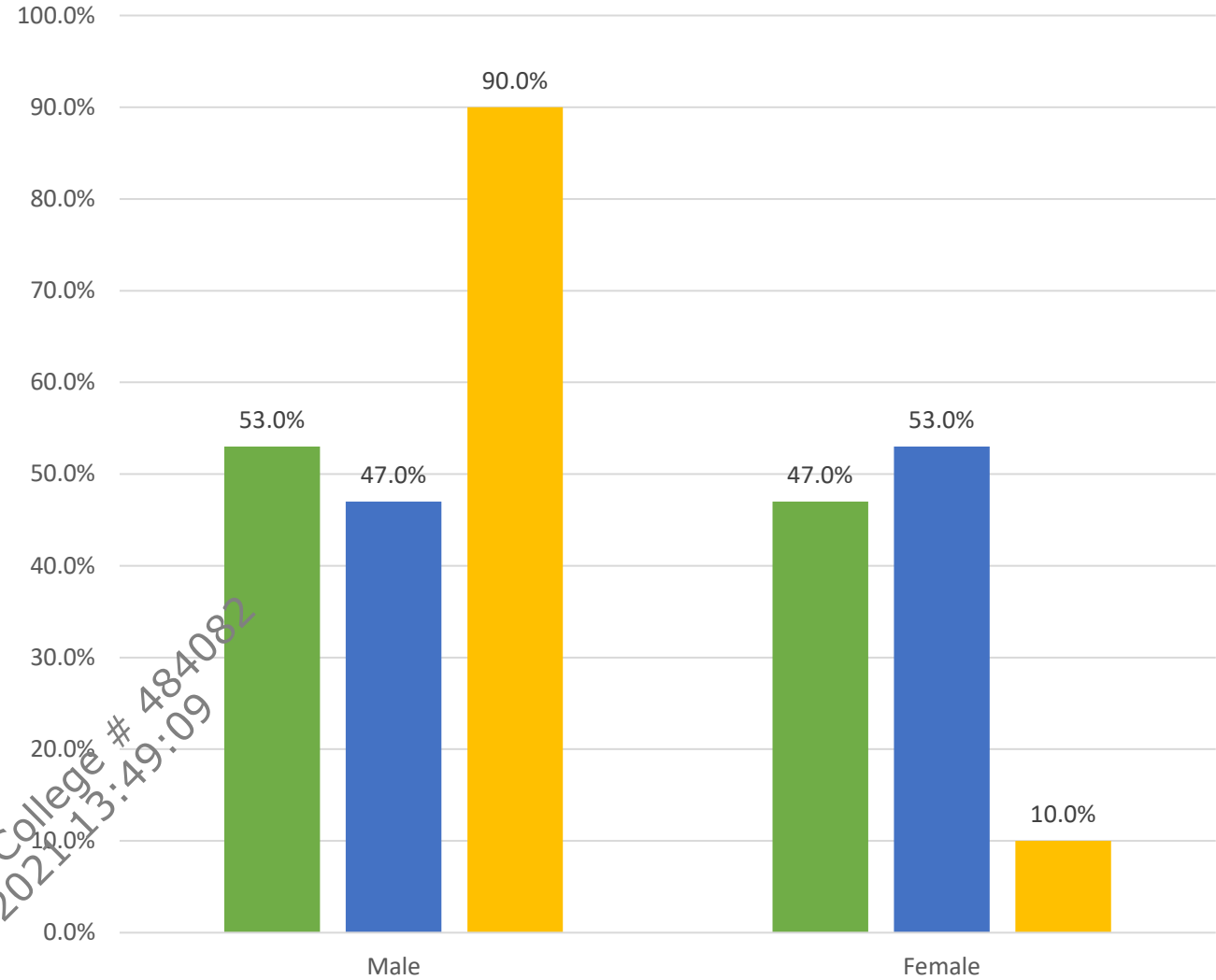


HE Full Time Early Withdrawals by Gender



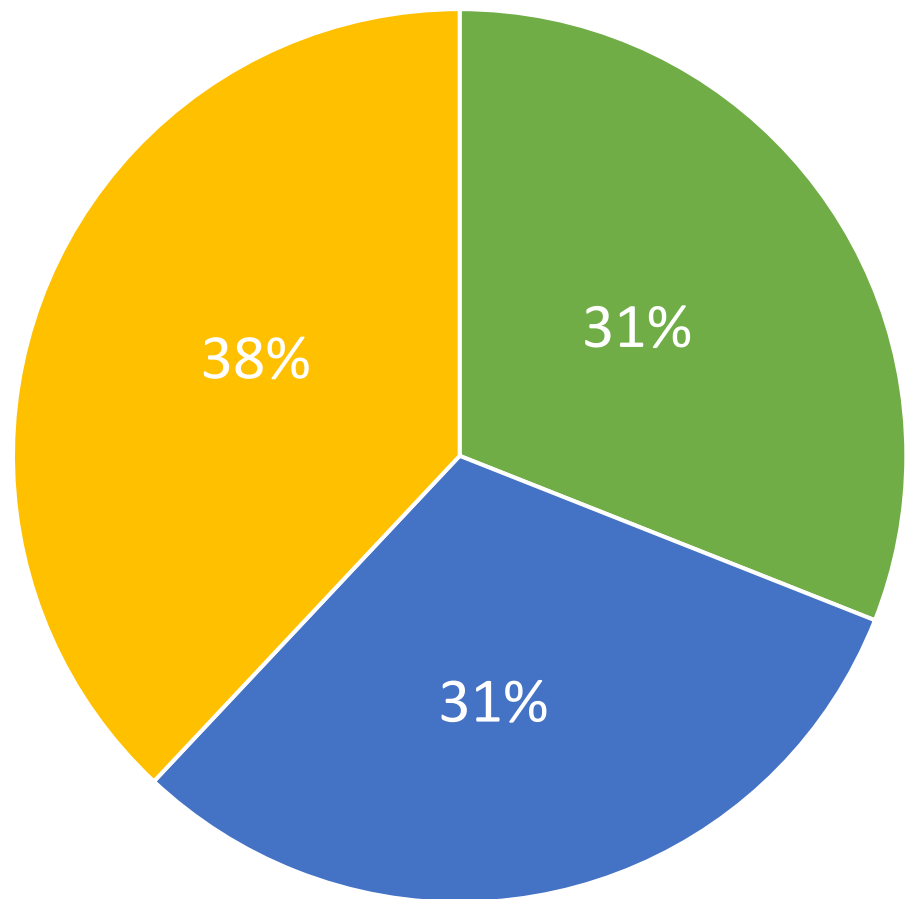
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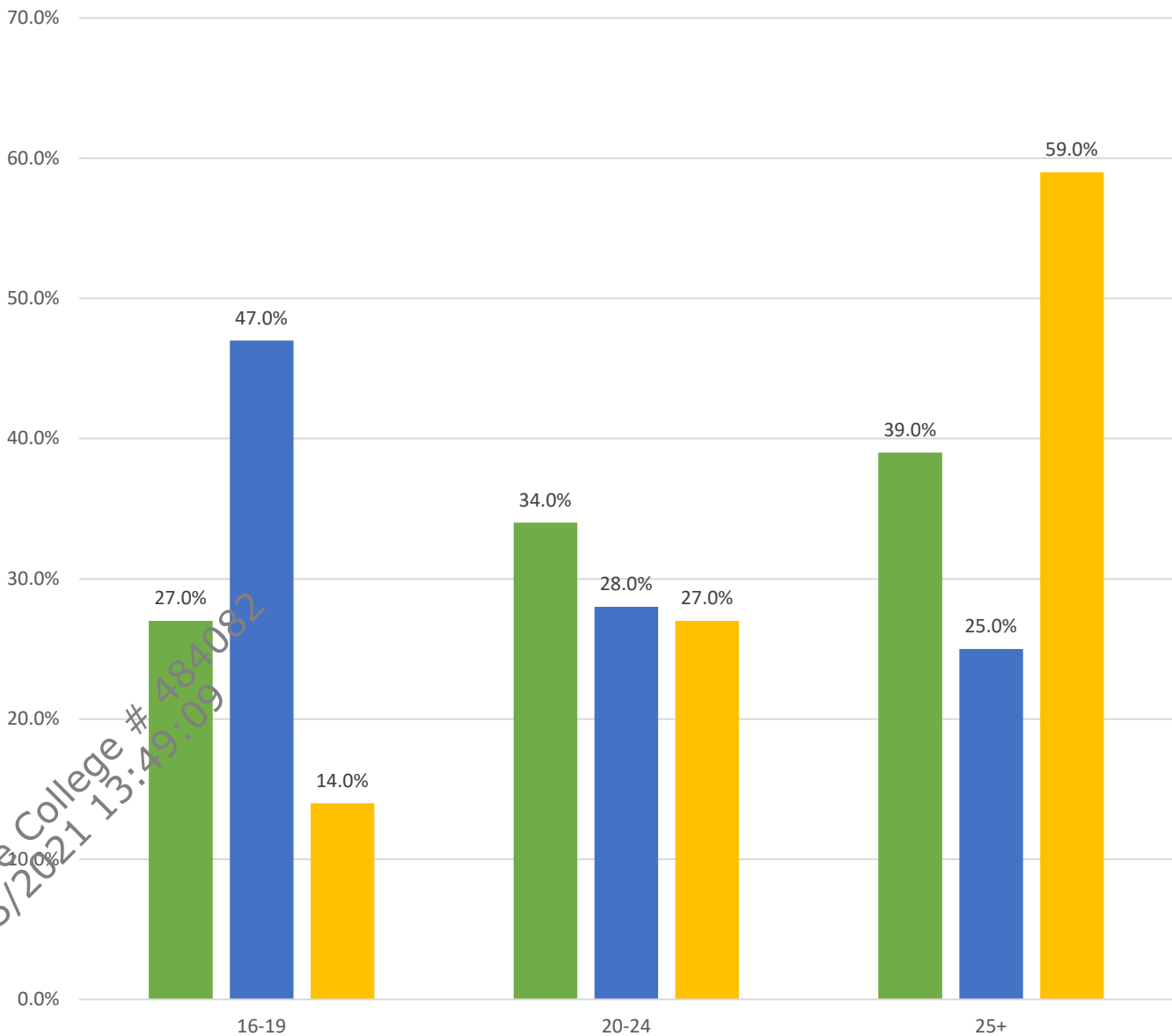
- Aerospace, Construction, Engineering, Science, Computing, Games Development, Business including Travel & Tourism
- Creative, Social Science, Sport & Fitness and Hospitality
- Health & Social Care, Early Years, Essential Skills, Supported Learning & ESOL

HE Full Time Early Withdrawals by Age Band



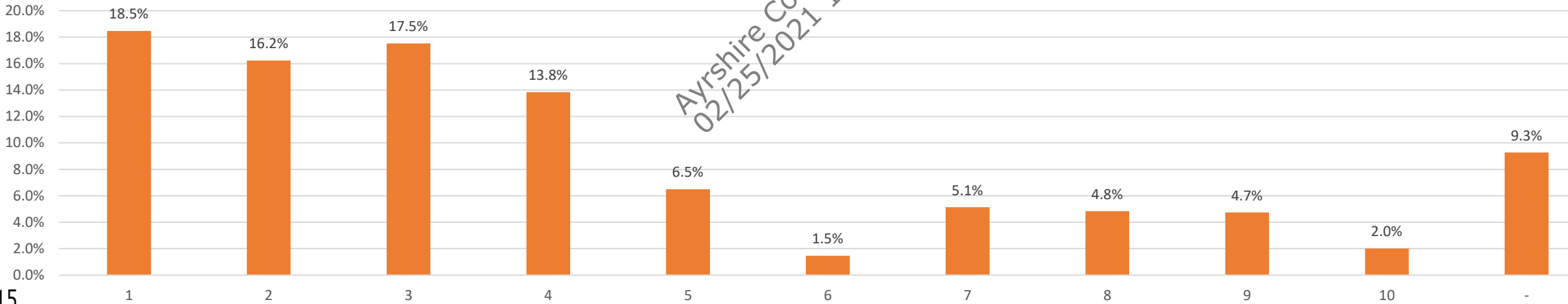
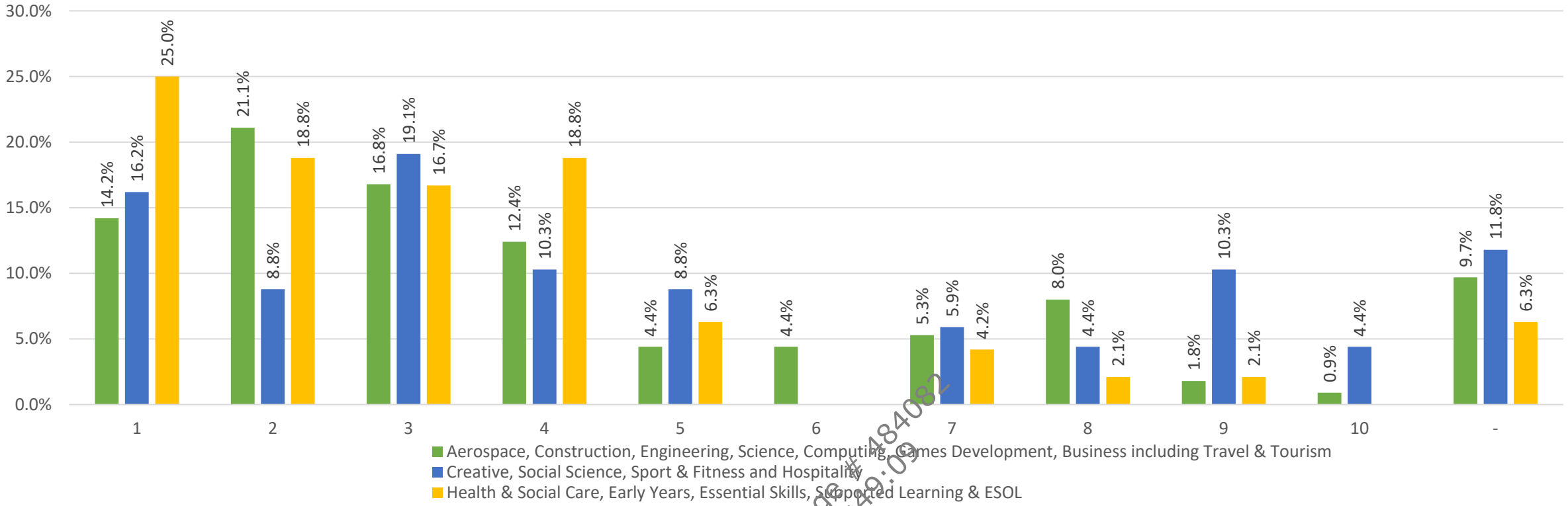
■ 16-19 ■ 20-24 ■ 25+

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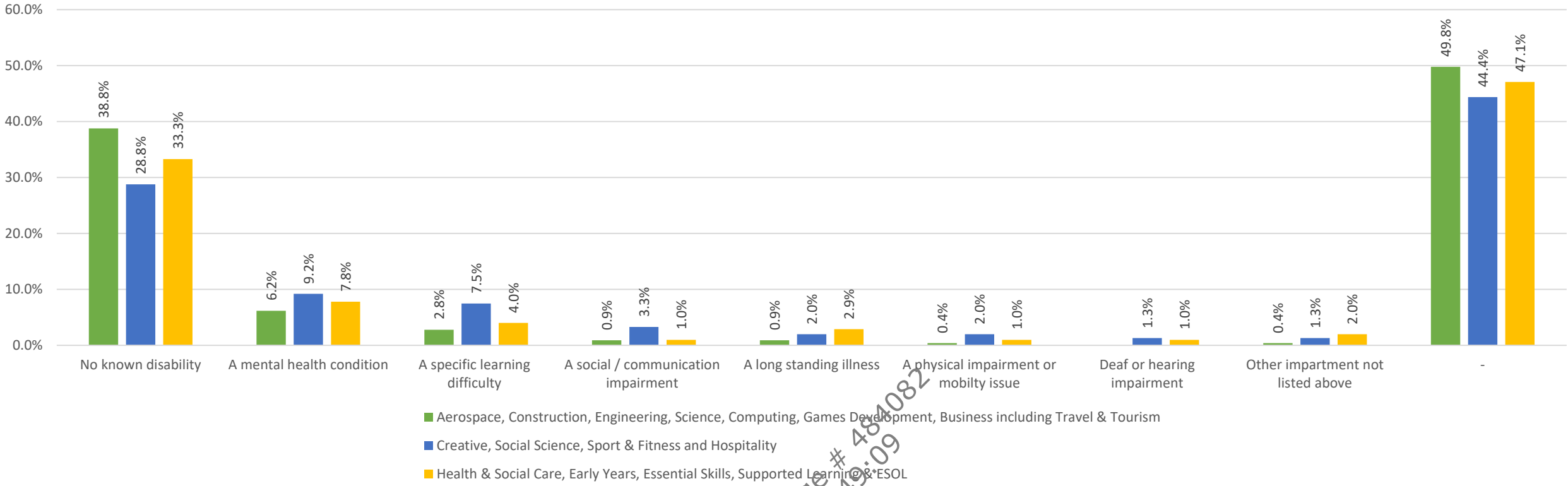
■ Aerospace, Construction, Engineering, Science, Computing, Games Development, Business including Travel & Tourism
 ■ Creative, Social Science, Sport & Fitness and Hospitality
 ■ Health & Social Care, Early Years, Essential Skills, Supported Learning & ESOL

HE Full Time Early Withdrawals by SIMD



Ayrshire College
02/25/2021 13:49:09

HE Full Time Early Withdrawals by Disability



Ayrshire College # 484082
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Learning and Teaching Committee

4 March 2021

Subject: 2020-21 Student Support Funds Position as at 11 February 2021

Purpose: To update Members on the Student Support Funds position and projections as at 11 February 2021

Recommendation: Members are asked to note the contents of this paper.

1 Background

The College is responsible for administering student support funds on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Scottish Government and Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS).

2 Current Situation

The following sections of this paper provide details of the position of each student support fund as at 11 February 2021.

Members should note that while projected expenditure figures are included within this report there are a significant number of variables still to be factored including student retention rates, actual awards still outstanding and 2021 winter start courses.

Financial projections will continue to be refined throughout the year for reporting to both the Strategic Leadership Team and the Business, Resources and Infrastructure Committee.

2.1 SFC Funds Provided for Bursary Support

Total 2020-21 SFC Student Support Funds are £10,607,955. Table 1 below details the bursary support funds provided by SFC for 2020-21 together with projected expenditure figures as at 11 February 2021.

Table 1

Student Support Fund	Budget	Projected Expenditure	Difference
SFC Bursary	£9,335,000	£7,333,965	£2,001,035
FE Childcare	£517,138	£280,203	£236,935
HE Childcare	£278,459	£110,184	£168,275
FE Discretionary	£477,358	£780,062	£(302,704)
Total	£10,607,955	£8,504,414	£2,103,541

The above figures are based on the most up to date information on student applicants based on all students continuing with the College. Student Funding will

continue to review and revise the numbers to take account of student withdrawals, once these have been confirmed by the curriculum areas. The figures also include initial projections for 2021 winter start courses. These courses have, however, traditionally attracted students who would be EMA eligible rather than eligible for bursary due to their expected age. Members are asked to note that the figures in Table 1 include the award of £200 paid to all bursary students, approved by SLT by email on 8 February 2021.

The figures set out in Table 1 also include circa £1,900,000 which relates to 255 care experienced students. The College has actively promoted the additional support available to care experienced students and continues to do so. Therefore the level of support and the number of identified care experienced students is expected to increase during AY2020-21.

On 19 February 2021 SFC announced winter COVID-19 discretionary funding for FE student support. This funding is to be allocated to students in immediate need of additional financial support, in particular to support students struggling to pay rent for accommodation and anyone experiencing hardship due to COVID-19 effects. Ayrshire College's share of this funding is £194,485.

In addition, SFC announced that £5,000,000 from the FE in-year redistribution exercise would be allocated to colleges to further meet student hardship needs, including digital poverty. Ayrshire College's share of this additional student support funding is £384,346.

The College's Student Funding is therefore working on proposals for how these two additional funding allocations can be effectively utilised within the timescales and guidance issued by SFC.

Student Funding will continue to monitor student numbers and projected bursary support closely. Any significant changes or anomalies to withdrawals or engagement levels will be reported to members as part of the regular reporting arrangements.

2.2 Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA)

EMAs are provided by the Scottish Government to support eligible 16 to 18 year-old students. The College's allocation for AY2020-21 is £800,000. The College is currently projecting EMA spent of £735,078 at this time. Members are asked to note that this figure includes 2021 winter start courses.

There is no financial risk in this area as actual amounts paid out are reimbursed in full to the College a month in arrears.

2.3 SAAS Funds Provided for Higher Education Discretionary Support

The College is also allocated funding from SAAS for eligible students completing HE programmes. This budget is administered in line with SAAS guidance.

Table 2 below details the HE Discretionary Fund Budget made available by SAAS for 2020-21 together with expenditure as at 11 February 2021.

Table 2

Student Support Fund	Budget	Projected Expenditure	Difference
HE Discretionary Additional	£242,268	£175,250	£67,018
Total	£242,268	£175,250	£67,018

At this stage, the College cannot allocate more than the original budget of £242,268. SAAS however, on 12 February, announced an additional £4,034,076 of HE discretionary fund for the college sector. Of this, £283,150 has been allocated to Ayrshire College. These additional funds are to be used by 31 March 2021 and any unused funds are to be returned to SAAS by 16 April 2021.

SAAS's guidance states that the funds are to be prioritised to students facing financial difficulties due to accommodation costs and then students facing financial hardship as a result of COVID-19. The College's Student Funding is therefore working on proposals for how this additional funding can be effectively utilised within the timescales and guidance issued by SAAS.

3 Proposals

No further proposals are noted in this paper.

4 Consultation

No formal consultation is required given the subject of this paper.

5 Resource Implications

No further resource issues require to be noted in this paper.

6 Risks

The disbursement of student support funds and financial monitoring arrangements are key areas of financial risk for the College. In addition, issues arising from the management of the student support funds can impact significantly on the reputation of the College.

7 Equality Impact Assessment

An impact assessment was completed in respect of the 2020-21 Student Funding Policy and Procedures.

8 Conclusion

Members are asked to note the contents of this paper.

Ayrshire College # 484082
02/25/2021 13:49:09

Michael Breen
Vice Principal, Finance
16 February 2021

(James Thomson – Director of Finance, Student Funding and Estates)

Publication

This paper will be published on the College website

Ayrshire College # 484082
02/25/2021 13:49:09

Learning and Teaching Committee

4 March 2021

Subject: Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning Report

Purpose: To advise Members of the current position and provide an update on the impact of COVID-19

Recommendation: Members are asked to note the contents of this paper

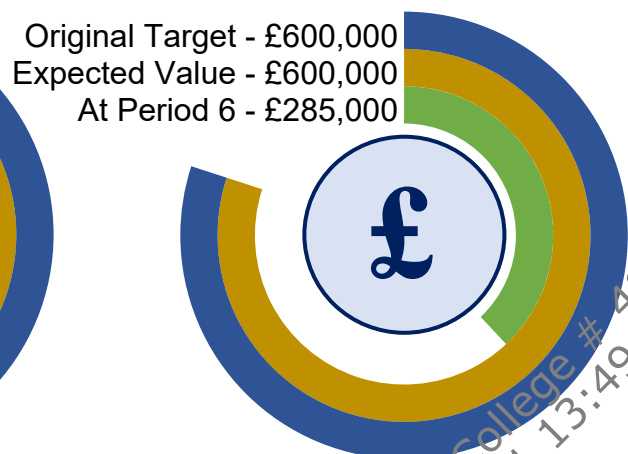
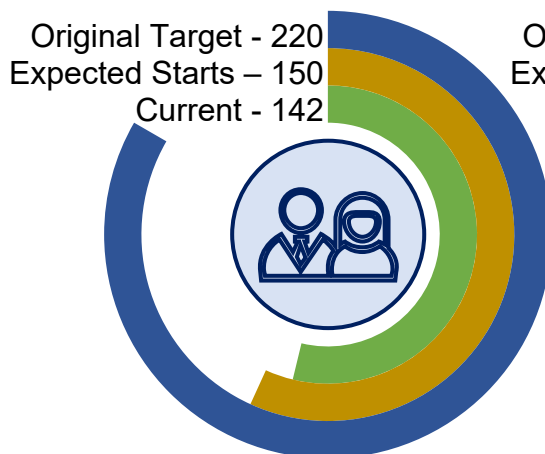
1. Background

COVID-19 has impacted on apprentice recruitment across Scotland, with some sectors experiencing a larger impact than others. Much recent activity has focussed on protecting the skills pipeline and supporting apprentices who have had their learning and development or career prospects impacted.

The content of this report describes the current position, taking into account the impact of COVID-19 on the College’s Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning provision.

2. Ayrshire College Apprenticeships Provision

Modern Apprenticeships (MAs)



The Modern Apprenticeship contract year runs from April to March each year. The volume of starts presented is in relation to the Skills Development Scotland contract year, while the financial targets and claim values are presented in relation to the College’s academic year.

Recruitment

The pace of new apprentice recruitment for 2020-21 was impacted by COVID-19 as companies were affected by lockdown. However, the apprentice pipeline remained relatively strong, particularly in STEM sectors. Apprenticeships supporting the service sectors have been impacted more significantly. Skills Development Scotland procedures that require new starts to be validated by multiple parties, primarily via wet signature, has also caused delays in processing new recruits.

The following table details the starts signed up in the 2020-21 SDS contract award over the industry sectors, alongside 2019-20 for reference.

Sector	2019-20 Award	2019-20 Starts	2020-21 Award	2020-21 Starts	2020-21 Pipeline (incentive)
Automotive	12	20	22	10	3
Construction Trades	30	31	40	27	3
Engineering	91	92	95	90	3
Food & Drink	12	7	10	0	
Hairdressing	22	16	21	7	
Hospitality	22	9	22	1	2
Sport, Health & Social Care	7	8	10	7	
Total	196	183	220	142	11

Recruitment in engineering has been strong and has surpassed original expectations. Although some companies who traditionally recruit have cancelled their apprentice recruitment in 2021, others have continued and we have also had starts from new or returning employers.

The automotive and construction sectors returned relatively early from the March 2020 lockdown period and the College saw an upturn in interest for these apprenticeships subsequent to that.

Sectors such as hairdressing, hospitality and sport returned to business after the March 2020 lockdown period and recruitment increased. Although enquiries continue, most employers in these sectors have deferred further apprentice recruitment until current lockdown restrictions have eased.

The college successfully bid for a contract to deliver Modern Apprenticeships to five South Ayrshire Council hospitality employees on a sub-contract basis, which will help offset the impact in that sector.

The college will continue to work with businesses and partners to promote apprenticeships to industry and young people, to maximise the recruitment in 2020-21 and minimise the impact of COVID-19 to the skills pipeline.

Recruitment Incentives

Two incentives currently exist to encourage employers to recruit apprentices during the period until 31st March. The Adopt An Apprentice grant has been enhanced to £5,000 during this period, to encourage employers to recruit an apprentice who has been made redundant recently. The Apprentice Employer Grant provides employers who recruit a new apprentice until 31st March with a £5,000 incentive.

These grants have increased interest in the apprenticeship programme and the College is currently dealing with a number of new pipeline enquiries.

To date, two companies have accessed the Adopt An Apprentice grant through Ayrshire College – one plumbing business and an engineering employer.

The College will continue to promote these funds to employers in order to help stimulate recruitment.

Claims

The majority of financial claims affecting this and next year's funding from SDS will be in relation to apprentices already on the programme. Although delayed or reduced recruitment has a longer term impact on funding, the largest immediate impact is related to redundancy of current apprentices. Though a large proportion of apprentices were furloughed during the lockdown period, to date we are not currently aware of any major apprenticeship redundancies related to COVID-19.

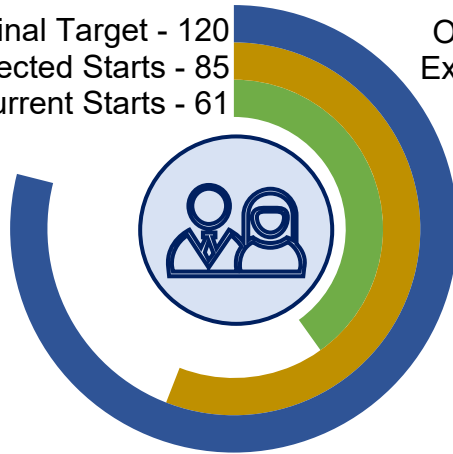
Assessors continued to support, guide and assess their candidates remotely where possible when they are on furlough, helping progress their underpinning knowledge. In sectors such as engineering and construction, financial claims are made on the basis of quarterly progress reviews. These continued while apprentices were on furlough. Some claims have been subject to delay if employer corroboration of claims is delayed or apprentices are uncontactable. In these cases, claims are subject to a recoverable delay rather than a loss of funds.

The apprenticeships team has continued to process claims remotely with subsequent Skills Development Scotland payments being received as per normal practice. Claims are currently progressing as planned through the academic year.

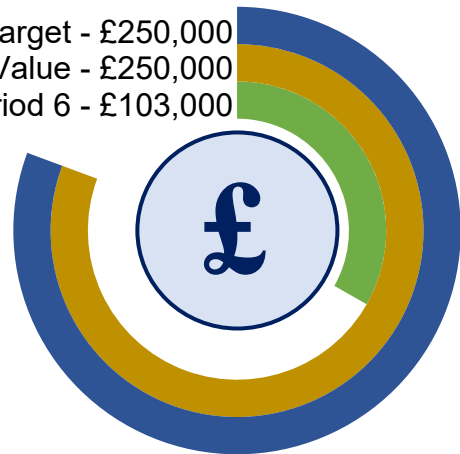
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Sub Contracted Modern Apprenticeships

Original Target - 120
Expected Starts - 85
Current Starts - 61



Original Target - £250,000
Expected Value - £250,000
At Period 6 - £103,000

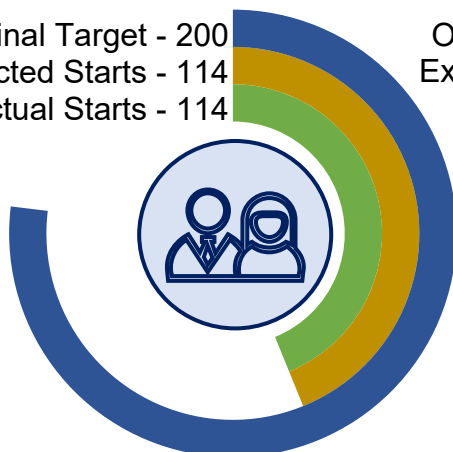


Alongside the contract held directly with SDS, the College also delivers off-the-job training to significant numbers of Modern Apprentices via contracts held with other training providers such as trade bodies and local authorities. Approximately 350 apprentices are supported by these contracts, with the majority being employed in construction trades.

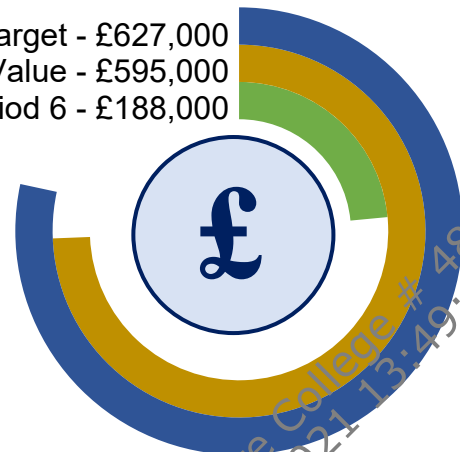
Though it varies by specific trade, overall recruitment has remained relatively strong in construction trades. Recruitment in Carpentry & Joinery and Electrical Installation has been in line with volumes experienced in previous years. Some recruitment has been delayed into calendar year 2021 due to company needs as recovery continues and workshop capacity which has been impacted by social distancing.

Foundation Apprenticeships (FAs)

Original Target - 200
Expected Starts - 114
Actual Starts - 114



Original Target - £627,000
Expected Value - £595,000
At Period 6 - £188,000



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Recruitment for the 2020-22 FA programme is as follows:

Framework	Awarded	Applications Received	Current Starts
Civil Engineering (2yr) (AC)	15	22	11
Engineering (2yr) (AC)	45	88	29
Children & Young People (2yr) (AC)	40	64	28
Children & Young People (1yr) (EAC)	15	18	10
Business Skills (1yr) (AC & SAC)	30	10	9
Scientific Technologies (1yr) (AC)	15	8	5
Food & Drink Technologies (1yr) (EAC)	10	10	10
IT Hardware & System Support (1yr) (AC)	15	5	0
Social Services & Healthcare (1yr) (NAC)	15	20	12
Total	200	245	114

As reported previously, in most sectors, applications numbers were relatively strong for the FA programme. However, there was a drop in applications converting to starts on the programme.

For 2020-21 SDS and SQA recognise that work placements for Foundation Apprentices are likely to be significantly impacted by the ongoing situation. Alternatives are being implemented, including customised units less reliant on access to workplaces and industry challenge projects for learners.

Through recent discussions with Skills Development Scotland and Scottish Funding Council, the College has been informed of a structural change to how Foundation Apprenticeships are funded. It has been indicated that funds will be dispersed via SFC, rather than SDS, in the form of additional credits from academic year 2021-22 onwards. Implications of this change will be reported when further details are available and the situation is clearer.

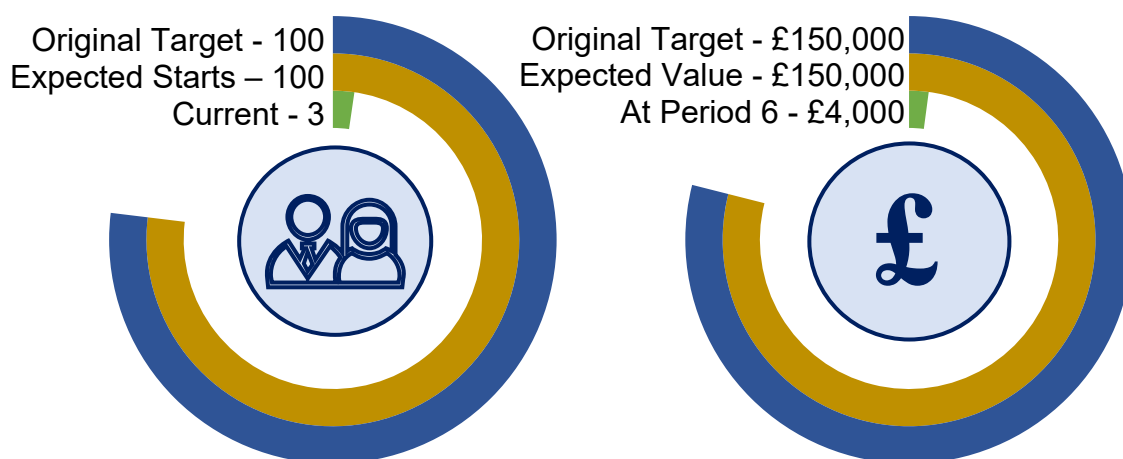
Pathway Apprenticeships (PAs)

In direct response to the significant disruption within the skills system caused by COVID-19 and to ensure that young people are offered the best chance of employment and accessibility to apprenticeships, SDS has developed Pathway Apprenticeships. Pathway Apprenticeships (PA) are designed to provide individuals with the opportunity to develop knowledge, technical skills and meta skills that prepare and enable them to access Modern Apprenticeship (MA) opportunities or progress to other positive destinations in line with their career aspirations.

These opportunities are aimed at 16-24 year olds as part of Scottish Government's Young Persons Guarantee. PAs are a combination of college-based and work-based learning, delivered over 6 months, with the initial phase very similar to Foundation Apprenticeships.

The College bid for, and was awarded, Pathway Apprenticeship places in Business Skills for young people who have secured a work experience place through the UK Government's Kickstart scheme. Close cooperation has been ongoing with the region's larger Kickstart Gateway Hosts, Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce and Local Authorities, to identify potential candidates for this provision. Kickstart placements were significantly delayed through the employer validation process in DWP and have also been delayed by the current lockdown. The ongoing impact of these delays will be monitored as, under this current contract, new starts must be registered by 31st March. It is hoped that further tranches of Pathway Apprenticeships will also be funded as a response to the pandemic.

3. Commercial SVQs



Assessment support for candidates undertaking commercial SVQs continued throughout the lockdown period. The majority of these candidates work in the Health & Social Care sector and continue to work. Although direct face-to-face observation of these candidates is currently not possible, e-portfolio is used which allows for ongoing assessment and support for uploaded evidence. Other methods of observation, such as video, are also being utilised.

Recruitment of new candidates had not been possible through the initial lockdown period and was further delayed by recent restrictions. This was, in part, because of difficulties in inducting candidates remotely but also because the services accessing the SVQs were under considerable pressure.

Significant contracts have been agreed with both East and South Ayrshire Councils to deliver SVQs to their care at home staff. Work is now ongoing to sign up candidates remotely and in a manner that doesn't impact on their service. Candidates are being signed up imminently and it is expected that targets will be achieved.

4. Other Activity

SVQ Units of HNC Provision in Health and Social Care and Early Years

Work based assessors in the Health and Social Care and Early Years sectors normally support over 400 students to achieve their full-time qualification. Courses in these areas, particularly at HNC level, have SVQ units embedded which are assessed by work-based assessors in collaboration with the Curriculum departments.

Work placements have been significantly impacted by COVID-19 and associated restrictions. SQA and SSSC have recently confirmed the deferment of SVQ units of the HNC in Social Services and Healthcare, allowing students the opportunity to pick these up at a later date. Work is ongoing in Early Years to facilitate re-designed placements that may be available for students upon the re-opening of schools and early years centres.

Apprentice Transition Plan

The College has been represented on a group comprising SDS, the SCQF Partnership and other training providers to introduce the Apprentice Transition Plan, a service designed to support apprentices who have been made redundant as a result of COVID-19. The service is intended to help affected apprentices either achieve their qualification if they are nearing the end, or receive accreditation for the learning and development they have completed to support their search for future employment. The extension of the furlough scheme has meant that this service has not been required in Ayrshire to date, though this is being constantly monitored.

Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board – Standards and Frameworks Group

The College continues to be the Colleges Scotland representative on the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board Standards and Frameworks Group. This group oversees governance of the Scottish Apprenticeship Family.

To date, the SFG group has overseen a transition to a new approval process for apprenticeship frameworks. This includes a development process that ensures a focus on industry needs and a more consistent approval mechanism undertaken by the new Apprentice Approvals Group.

Work is now underway to establish a new model of apprenticeship framework, for the future, which is more flexible and allows for easier transition between occupations.

Managing Agents Working Group

The College has been represented on a number of external groups looking to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on apprentices. As part of the Managing Agents Working Group set up by Colleges Scotland, Ayrshire College has led negotiations on a number of fronts.

After a successful renegotiation of the fee structure with CITB, the Managing Agents Working Group is now in discussion with SECTT and SNIPEF, the trade bodies for Electrical Installation and Plumbing and Gas respectively. This

negotiation is intended to establish a new fee structure to ensure the provision of apprenticeships for these sectors is sustainable in the future.

Work has also now begun with CITB to review the fee structure at the end of the agreed two year period, with a view to achieving sustainable future funding for Construction Modern Apprentices

Fuel Change

Ayrshire College is one of a group of colleges, Forth Valley, Fife and NESCol, who have worked innovatively together, using employer relationships to develop a series of industry challenges for engineering Modern Apprentices. This was introduced to keep Modern and Foundation Apprentices engaged in learning and creative thinking through the disruption associated with COVID-19. The project, named *Fuel Change* has seen apprentice teams solve industry challenges for one of six sub-sectors of engineering. Challenges focus on finding low carbon solutions for real engineering problems and it is hoped that the outputs from the challenge will align with the COP 26 conference planned in Glasgow next year. SFC and SDS have lent their support to the project.

Challenges have been set by large national or multi-national organisations including Alexander Dennis, Spirit Aerosystems, National Manufacturing Institute Scotland, BAM Nuttal, Scottish Power Energy Networks and BP.

Modern Apprentices across Scotland are currently taking part in this challenge and Ayrshire companies are well represented, with the apprentices reaching the final stages of their projects.

The challenge is now also being rolled out to our engineering Foundation Apprentices across Scotland, to help mitigate the impact that COVID-19 has had on work placements.

A similar industry challenge is being developed in partnership with McLaughlin & Harvey to support Foundation Apprentices in Civil Engineering.

5. Conclusion

Members are invited to note the information contained in the progress report.

Gavin Murray
Director of Curriculum
23 February 2021

(Stuart Millar - Head of Apprenticeships and Work-based Learning)

Publication

This paper will be published on the College website.

Ayrshire College Outcome Agreement Self-Evaluation Report for AY 2019-20

Ayrshire College, as with all colleges in the sector, faced significant disruption when it was required to move delivery of its learning, teaching and support services online, from 23 March 2020, as a consequence of the national lockdown imposed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This short report focuses on the scale of the impact of the pandemic on progress and expected delivery against targets for the College in AY 2019-20.

Specifically, this report will:

1. Reflect on available statistical/performance data for AY 2019-20.
2. Outline qualitative and quantitative progress against priorities outlined in the College's Outcome Agreement for AY 2019-20 and analyse the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on achievement of these priorities.
3. Report on the impact of lockdown from March 2020 on the remaining part of the academic year and outline key issues arising.
4. Report on early mitigations in place to address challenges moving into AY 2020-21.

1. Reflection on available statistical/performance data for AY 2019-20

This narrative reflects the fact that audited statistical data, for AY 2019-20, is not yet available and so the data presented in this report is Ayrshire College's own data.

SFC Activity Target

Table 1 provides detail of the SFC activity target and the College's final position. It is pleasing to note that the College exceeded its credit activity target although being aware of the SFC's commitment not to recover funding if colleges fell below core activity targets because of the pandemic in AY 2019-20.

Table 1 – Credit activity target and final position

SFC Activity Target AY 2019-20	124,943
Final position	125,751
Difference to target	808

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Key Performance Indicators

Further Education Full-Time – FE FT

Performance, with reference to completed successful, on FE FT programmes declined by 1.4% from 66.2% in 2018-19 to 64.8% in 2019-20. In addition, partial success figures increase by 2.3% from 8.7% in 2018-19 to 11.0% in 2019-20. Although many variables contribute to the overall College position, it is worth noting that January start programmes are included in this analysis. Many of these courses only had six weeks of full-time learning and teaching prior to the move to online learning in March 2020. Successfully completing these courses was not going to be possible and thus many students could not complete the full programme but did manage to complete some individual units.

Further Education Part-Time – FE PT

Completed successful on FE PT programmes declined by 3.8% from 80.2% in 2018-19 to 76.4% in 2019-20. Provision classified under FE PT is very diverse and, therefore, analysing performance can be complex. It is, however, worth illustrating that the further withdrawn figure increased by 3.3 % from 5.6% in 2018-19 to 8.9% in 2019-20. This reflects a pattern that was evident in higher than usual further withdrawal rates for school-college partnership programmes.

SQA Awarding Body messaging, following lockdown in March, differed between schools and colleges. Guidance on National Qualifications confirmed that school pupils and college students undertaking National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications would not be required to undertake any further assessment from 23 March. Guidance for college qualifications, however, stated that students should participate in learning and assessment opportunities until such times as sufficient evidence was deemed to be in place for lecturing staff to make a holistic assessment judgement. Many school pupils did not engage beyond the 23 March and so had to be withdrawn from school-college partnership programmes.

Higher Education Full-time – HE FT

Despite the challenging end to academic session 2019-20, it is pleasing to note that performance, with reference to completed successful, on HE FT increased by 1.9% from 66.8% in 2018-19 to 68.7% in 2019-20. SQA is the awarding body for many of the HE FT programmes in the college and SQA guidance indicated that a holistic approach, using course aims, could be taken to assessment. Feedback, from course teams, was that this was a helpful approach as competencies assessed in engagement up until 20 March 2020 could be used as evidence for units delivered later in the term.

Higher Education Part-time – HE PT

Completed successful, on HE PT, fell by 4.7% from 83.5% in 2018-19 to 78.8% in 2019-20. Further withdrawn increased by 3.1% from 2.7% in 2018-19 to 5.8% in 2019-20. Of the further withdrawn, 55% were from HNC Childhood Practice cohorts where learning could not be undertaken due to placement constraints around the pandemic.

2. Qualitative and quantitative progress against priorities outlined in the College's Outcome Agreement for AY 2019-20 and analysis of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on achievement of these priorities

In its Outcome Agreement for AY 2019-20, the College stated that it would intensify efforts to meet government priorities in key areas. The narrative, below, provides a summary of the priority areas as well as a brief overview of impact that the pandemic has had on achievement of those priorities.

It should be noted that Education Scotland was able to conduct the College's Progress Visit in January of 2020, prior to the pandemic, and assessed that satisfactory progress had been made.

- *Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)* – we will continue to work with partners and employers to offer enhanced senior phase vocational pathways and work placement opportunities for students

The College worked closely with individual schools and local authorities to ensure that the College offer, as part of the school-college partnership, complemented the vocational pathways offered in schools. Related Vocational Bursts and DYW projects enhanced these learning pathways, allowing school pupils the opportunity to make informed choices in the senior phase. The DYW Regional Group has been an integral partner in helping to source appropriate work placements for students.

- *Widening access* – we will build on our excellent progress in attracting and supporting care experienced young people and other vulnerable groups.

The volume of credits delivered to the 10% most deprived was 23,739 credits - 18.9% of the total delivery. This is slightly below the 19.3% delivered in AY 2018-19.

Meanwhile the volume of credits delivered to students declaring as care-experienced was 8,981 credits - 7.14 % of the total delivery. This is above the 6.3% delivered in AY 2018-19.

Further detail on how the College continues to support vulnerable students is contained in sections 3 and 4.

- *Apprenticeship family* – we will increase our Foundation and Modern Apprenticeship portfolio and develop partnerships with universities delivering Graduate Apprenticeships

AY 2019-20 saw a significant increase in Ayrshire College Foundation Apprenticeship starts, with 136 new starts compared to 61 in 2018-19. The College successfully delivered a range of Foundation Apprenticeship frameworks, namely Engineering, Civil Engineering, Social Services: Children and Young People and Scientific Technologies. The College offered the two ICT related frameworks, based on the potential opportunities around the Ayrshire Growth Deal, but it did not gain sufficient interest from students and identification of appropriate work placements was challenging.

The College also continued to develop its Modern Apprenticeship provision in 2019-20 and saw an increase in the number of new starts throughout the year. A total of 329 contracted MAs started against a projection of 310, despite challenges from March 2020 onwards related to the impact of COVID-19. The College has continued to develop apprenticeships in areas of regional growth, such as Aerospace and Construction. For the latter sector, the College has increased its direct contract with Skills Development Scotland, reflecting the College's ambition to have more direct influence on and relationship with the construction industry.

To date, the College has not delivered Graduate Apprenticeships on behalf of a university. However, improved links have been developed with Strathclyde University, with referrals between organisations taking place.

- *Articulation* – we will build on existing and forge new agreements with universities to enable our HE graduates to progress to degree study with advanced standing

The College had fruitful discussions with Glasgow University and, commencing in AY 2021-22, Ayrshire College, will deliver enhanced HNC qualifications in Applied Science and Mechanical Engineering. These Articulation programmes are Widening Participation initiatives. Successful students will gain direct entry to Year 2 of all BSci degrees within Glasgow University's School of Life Sciences or BEng degrees within the James Watt School of Engineering.

- *Attainment and retention* – we will continue to provide targeted interventions to retain students most at risk of withdrawal, while making progress on overall improvement in student outcomes

Refer to analysis under section 1. Reflection on available statistical/performance data for AY 2019-20 – Key Performance Indicators.

- *Gender* – we will continue our work on breaking down stereotypes in gender-dominated sectors, encourage female take-up of STEM courses, and encourage males into early years and childcare, health and social care careers.

Engineering and Renewables has had the most significant improvement in female enrolments in comparison to all other areas in the College that are currently male-dominated. It was also the only Curriculum area performing well against the SFC's previous target to increase the minority gender share by 5 percentage points by 2021 with a 14.8% increase in total female enrolment since AY 2017-2018.

There was an increase in male enrolments on Health and Social Care programmes. On FE programmes, male enrolments increased by 1%, from 10.2% in AY 2018-19 to 11.2% in AY 2019-20. On HE programmes, male enrolments increased by 5%, from 5.1% in AY 2018-19 to 10.1% in AY 2019-20.

In Early Years, FE male enrolments increased by 1.8%, from 4.8% in AY 2018-19 to 6.6% in AY 2019-20. On HE programmes, male enrolments only increased by 0.3%, from 4.0% in AY 2018-19 to 4.3% in AY 2019-20.

Although the requirement to submit an updated Institutional Gender Action Plan (IGAP) was suspended due to the pandemic, the College continued to develop its plan, as it views the IGAP as important in addressing the potentially disproportionate impact of COVID 19 on women and minorities and the need to do things differently as the country emerges from the crisis. The College received helpful feedback on its IGAP and this feedback will help frame the response moving forward.

- *Equally Safe* - We will support Equally Safe in Further and Higher Education. Our campuses will be places where students can study and flourish, with no place for sexual harassment or gender-based violence.

Very good progress was made towards the College realising its Equally Safe ambitions. It is clear that having a sound College infrastructure regarding gender-based violence mattered greatly following the Covid-19 outbreak and subsequent temporary closure of campuses. From March 2020 onwards, College messaging about available support, including external support, was regularly promoted across social media platforms. The College's commitment to tackling and ending gender-based violence has seen key milestones achieved in AY 2019-2020, such as an enhanced Safeguarding referral process with the inclusion of gender-based violence categories. The College is also now in an improved position with nearly all the Student Experience team, including the Student Association Advisor, having completed the sector endorsed, Rape Crisis First Responder training. Further to this, the College's 'Safeguarding in the College community' e-learning module, part of mandatory training, had a completion rate of 70% of staff. Throughout AY 2019-2020, the College continued successful partnership working with local and national partners, which led to a number of events and activities during 16 days of action and also marked the College becoming an official member of Fearless Glasgow.

- *Industry partnerships* – we will continue to enhance our engagement with employers to ensure our curriculum meets their needs and enable our students to gain the skills required for inclusive economic growth in the region.

The College continued to use its extensive relationships with employers to develop the curriculum and ensure it continues to meet industry needs. For example, in 2019-20, the College worked closely with Ryanair's Prestwick Aircraft Maintenance facility to develop the Performing Engineering Operations course delivered within the first year of the aircraft engineering apprenticeship. New materials and equipment were developed, in partnership, to ensure that the College continues to deliver learning and teaching to current industry requirements.

The College developed a new relationship with Taylor Wimpey West Scotland, part of one of the UK's largest house-building firms. All Taylor Wimpey's apprentices in the West of Scotland, are now trained at Ayrshire College. As part of this new relationship, two new pre-apprenticeship courses have been developed to help achieve inclusive economic growth in the region and ensure that local communities have the chance to access high value apprenticeships in a key regional sector.

3. Report on the impact of lockdown from March 2020 on the remaining part of the academic year and outline key issues arising

Arrangements for certificating students - 2019-20

There is no doubt that the key issue that affected students and staff was the lack of timeous clarity over the arrangements for certificating college students for AY 2019-20. From 23 March 2020, colleges sought to work with all awarding bodies to ensure that alternative models of certification could be adopted which recognised, fairly, students' achievements, allowing them to progress to work or further study, while maintaining the integrity of qualifications. Due to colleges working with over 100 awarding bodies, there was variation in the length of time that it took for each one to communicate their guidance to colleges.

SQA Awarding Body issued guidance around delivery and quality assurance of college qualifications on Friday 3 April – on the evening that lecturers finished for their Spring Break. This was eight working days after SQA had issued its guidance to schools and colleges around National Qualifications - released on 24 March. As discussed above, the messaging was very different with the guidance on National Qualifications, confirming that school pupils and college students undertaking National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications would not be required to undertake any further assessment from 20 March. Guidance for college qualifications, however, was that students should participate in learning and assessment opportunities until such times as sufficient evidence was deemed to be in place for lecturing staff to make a holistic assessment judgement.

In addition, the SQA Awarding Body guidance did not cover advice for those qualifications overseen by SQA Accreditation such as SVQs. Colleges only received guidance for HNC Childhood Practice and HNC Social Services on 15 May 2020. The delayed, and different information caused confusion and frustration for students, staff and the College's school-college partnerships.

In some cases, guidance from other Awarding Bodies was not finalised until during the summer holiday period such as for some SVQs and other qualifications in the Construction, Motor Vehicle and Engineering areas. In a number of these areas, awarding bodies paused the qualification, and it was not possible to assess students due to health and safety reasons. Crucially, most deferred students were/are either undertaking modern apprenticeships or are studying in subject areas key to Scotland's economic recovery such as Construction and Engineering.

The College convened Internal Quality Assurance (IQA) panels which were required as part of the quality assurance arrangements for certification in AY2019-20. This process demonstrated that course teams managed the QA process very well and some excellent, innovative practice was identified.

The situation with certification for AY 2019-20 for students studying across Scotland's college sector contrasts with the timely decisions taken in the school and university sectors, where, in both sectors, there was an application of no detriment to students. This contributed to a sense that college students were somehow less important.

DFM Announcement – AY 2019-20 Exam Diet

The Deputy First Minister's announcement, on 11 August 2020, to revert to centre estimates for student results for the National Exam Diet affected those students who undertook National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications with Ayrshire College.

The College followed SQA guidance to estimate grades for candidates who had been due to sit their exams. Course Teams used professional judgement to estimate the grades and bands – based on staff knowledge of the students, their engagement in learning, their achievement in formative assessment and any unit tests, prelims etc undertaken throughout the year. All estimates were authorised by the Curriculum Manager before being submitted to SQA on 29 May 2020.

SQA then undertook a moderation exercise which reviewed and adjusted estimates. As a consequence of this, several candidates' certificated results were downgraded from the estimate submitted by the College.

This was subsequently overturned and the College estimated grades for candidates were accepted. Consequently, 107 Ayrshire College candidate results were 'reverted to the estimate'.

Although difficult to evidence, it is considered that the Exam Diet announcement had a negative impact on the College's recruitment to full-time courses. Work with local authority partners shows that in AY 2020-21, 409 additional students stayed on at school. This corresponds with a reduction in full-time enrolment on FE programmes.

Supporting Vulnerable Students

The College's message, throughout the lockdown period, was that, although the campuses may have been closed, staff were available to support students remotely. The College communicated regularly with students through a FAQ section on the website which was updated regularly. Social media was also used extensively. The launch of the 'Togetherall' (a digital mental health and wellbeing service) was forward promoted through social media.

The College made cash donations to each of its link Food Banks and donated goods to local organisations from its hospitality kitchens and refectories. A £50 per week discretionary payment was issued to vulnerable students. Students, on Universal Credits, were given a one-off payment of £200. Discretionary funds were made available to the student services team who were in contact with the most vulnerable and could administer these if necessary/appropriate. Finally, the Curriculum Administration, Student Services and Inclusive Learning Teams were in contact with those known to the College as vulnerable and helped as appropriate.

4. Early mitigations put in place to address challenges moving into AY 2020-21

The College's Campus Operations Steering group (COSG), originally set up to oversee the safe and effective reopening of Ayrshire College campuses, has continued to meet fortnightly during the current crisis. The Steering Group, chaired by the Principal, includes the College's Senior Leadership Team, the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, the Head of Marketing, Ayrshire College Student Association President and Vice-President, and representatives from the College's two recognised trade unions, EIS-FELA and Unison. This has ensured a partnership approach to resuming on-campus activities safely and effectively and in reviewing activities in line with the latest Scottish Government and Public Health guidance as AY 2020-21 has unfolded.

Student wellbeing and support services

Digital Poverty

With the requirement to deliver learning and teaching in a blended and restricted way, throughout AY 2020-21, the College identified that digital poverty could be a significant barrier to participation in successful learning.

A process to administer additional capital funding allocated to colleges for the provision of ICT equipment was agreed by the College's Digital Poverty Group, membership of which includes Curriculum Directors, Head of ICT, Head of Student Experience, Student Funding Manager, and also representation from the Student Association. To date, the College has received 1,250 applications to the Discretionary Digital Poverty Fund. A total of 680 devices and 70 data packages has been distributed to students. The College is also working with local authority partners to access additional funding which can be used to allocate devices to students who do not qualify under the College's Discretionary Digital Poverty Fund. The scheme has been refined and will reopen to take account of recruitment to Winter programmes due to commence in early February.

The College's Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) are open, in line with relevant guidance, to allow the College to continue to address issues around digital poverty and to provide areas conducive to learning and assessment which is critical and time-sensitive.

Student Services and Inclusive learning

Arrangements were made to facilitate critical in-person student wellbeing support services such as arrangements for safeguarding. Often these critical functions, services and support are reactive and while bookable appointments for accessing routine student support are in place, it is vital that the College continues to support the most vulnerable students in this way.

Student Services continues to provide a wide range of support remotely including:

- Workshops for class groups and online 1:1 pastoral support and guidance to students.

- Access to discretionary funds – Student Services can request same day payments for students to cover emergencies such as money for gas, electricity and food.
- Lunch vouchers – Student Services can provide a £5 e-voucher for Greggs.
- Travel warrants – students can access a travel warrant for bus or train travel if they do not have money for travel.
- Inclusive Learning offer a full range of online services including needs assessments and 1:1 support.

Mental Health and wellbeing

The College is acutely aware of the need to support mental health and wellbeing, now more than ever and continues to implement its Student Mental Health agreement and monitor progress against actions.

All Ayrshire College students have free access to online mental health and wellbeing resources and peer support through 'Togetherall.' In addition, the College recently recruited 2FTE Student Counsellors using funding provided by the SFC to all colleges for this purpose. Online counselling support is also available through the Live Therapy element of 'Togetherall.' A new replacement Mental Health liaison officer has been appointed and, finally, the College's Drug and Alcohol Liaison Officer delivers online workshops and also face to face workshops, where necessary.

Curriculum Planning

As with all colleges across Scotland, Ayrshire College had a significant number of deferred students from AY 2019-20. These students were prioritised in terms of being amongst the first students to return to campus for face-to-face learning, teaching and assessment in August 2020. Due to a combination of the volume of deferred students, alongside constraints around physical distancing requirements as well as restrictions in levels 3 and 4 of *Coronavirus (COVID-19): Scotland's Strategic Framework*, some of these students have not, as yet, concluded their studies. This, in turn, has resulted in a delay to the commencement of some first-year carpentry and joinery apprentices.

Skills' alignment

The importance of skills' alignment and curriculum planning is critical as colleges will play a central role in Scotland's economic recovery. The College has already begun a series of skills planning workshops with Skills Development Scotland to determine regional need in light of the pandemic and, of course, to identify skills requirements as part of the Ayrshire Growth Deal.

Delivery of school-college partnership programmes

In line with SFC *Credit Guidance for Colleges AY 2020-21*, the College prioritised school engagement in the senior phase. The College concluded, alongside its three local authority education partners, that certain senior phase activity should take place on-campus and jointly devised and agreed practices which sought to minimise transmission.

The College has an excellent working relationship with the local public health team and the Health, Safety and Wellbeing (HSW) manager attends a weekly Education Meeting with public health colleagues and the Directors of Education for each of Ayrshire's three local authorities. The College is confident that this close working relationship will allow quick identification of evidence that would suggest the potential for emerging bridges of transmission, whereby on-campus attendance would be immediately paused.

Arrangements for certificating students - 2020-21

The Vice-Principal, Curriculum, is part of a national group representing the College sector in discussions with SQA on HN/NC/VQ awards and qualifications. Slow progress has been made in agreeing a suitable assessment model which recognises the impact that blended and restricted blended learning is having on college students and staff. Existing arrangements are no longer operationally viable, neither are they responsive to the needs and environment in which colleges find themselves; therefore, the requirement to provide adequate contingency arrangements is greater than ever to avoid further disruption to student education and to avoid a repeat of the end to AY 2019-20 as described above.

Supporting staff

Staff coped remarkably well with the necessity to deliver all learning, teaching and support services online from March 2020 until the end of AY 2019-20. The College recognised, however, that delivering all services within a blended model for the whole of AY 2020-21 would present new challenges.

Digital Developers

Through an internal process the College recruited several staff to work additional hours over the summer months, to develop key units and subjects that could be delivered in a blended way. A number of staff were given some remission from teaching, in Semester 1, to work with the Digital Integration team to help support staff to deliver in a blended and restricted blended model. This work is now being evaluated for impact in order to inform appropriate arrangements for semester 2 and beyond.

CPD Events

The Staff Learning and Development team developed and introduced an extensive and innovative online and virtual CPD calendar across June, August, and September 2020. This programme included a range of external online conferences and webinars, as well as events facilitated internally.

The focus of the CPD period was the digital skills and learning that staff require to support the blended learning model. It also focused on staff wellbeing and remote management, as well as incorporating resources to help support mental wellbeing and resilience.

During this period, the Staff Learning & Development team also worked closely with the wider Sector Network, identifying opportunities for shared learning/resources through the 'community of sharing' initiative that was developed in anticipation of the challenges facing colleges in the new academic year. This enabled external events to be made available to Ayrshire College staff and supported knowledge sharing with other colleges across the sector.

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