

Performance, Curriculum and Quality Update

1.0 PURPOSE OF PAPER

For discussion

- 1.1 To provide members an update on our retention and credit position for AY 2025/26.
- 1.2 To provide members an update on our recruitment position for AY 2026/27.
- 1.3 To provide members an update on the quality enhancement and assurance activities undertaken throughout the college.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 Key items:

- Review of AY 2025/26 Withdrawals
- Review of 2025/26 Credit Position
- Review of 2026/27 Recruitment
- Quality Assurance update
- Quality Enhancement update

- 2.2 Withdrawals remain stable overall, with improvements in part-time FE and steady HE performance; however, an increase in full-time FE withdrawals highlights an ongoing need to strengthen retention, despite targeted interventions already in place.
- 2.3 Withdrawal reasons are consistent across all modes and levels, with full-time withdrawals driven by personal, mental health and attendance factors (alongside some positive progression to employment), while part-time FE is linked to school returns and part-time HE to employment changes.
- 2.4 The College exceeded its credit activity threshold earlier in the session and is expected to surpass it by 11.1%.
- 2.5 Applications are 3% higher than last year, with marginal growth in full-time FE, stable full-time HE demand, and stronger increases in part-time provision; full-time FE recruitment is near target at 98%, while full-time HE is currently at 81%.

- 2.6 Annual engagement with QAA confirmed alignment of strategic priorities with the Students' Association. It also highlighted robust approaches to quality assurance and enhancement, as well as ongoing development of academic standards. In addition, progress against the SEAP was noted alongside early planning for a revised ILQR model in advance of our TQER in AY 2028/29.
- 2.7 SFC feedback on the AY 2024/25 SEAP highlighted a strong, well-evidenced and reflective submission, with clear strengths across learning and teaching, student support, curriculum planning and outcomes, and effective alignment to enhancement priorities. Further development opportunities focus on strengthening evaluation, strategic framing, and clarity of impact and progress.

3.0 RECOMMENDATION(S)/ACTION(S) REQUIRED

- 3.1 I recommend that the Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee agree that the college is making good progress against targets.
- 3.2 I recommend that the Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee agree that the Quality team are continuing to maintain and exceed standards by supporting continuous improvement.

4.0 BACKGROUND

4.1 Credits

- 4.1.1 SFC provides teaching funding to colleges that undertake to deliver a specified volume of activity measured in 'credits' (1 credit is equivalent to 40 hours of learning). Borders College has been allocated 23891 credits in AY 2025/26, which is the same as the previous year.

4.2 KPI's

- 4.2.1 Teaching activity is measured through the following set of performance indicators, and published by SFC annually:

Total Withdrawal: Indicates the student withdrew from their studies before the programme ended.

Partial Success: Indicates that the student completed the programme but did not gain the qualification.

Learner Success: Indicates that the student has completed the course year successfully.

The SFC PIs cover four modes of study:

Full-time Further Education (FTFE): These are courses that usually begin in August and finish in June, and cover Scottish Credit Qualification Framework (SCQF) levels 1 – 6

Part-time Further Education (PTFE): These are courses lasting anything from one day to one year and cover SCQF levels 1 – 6

Full-time Higher Education (FTHE): These are courses that usually begin in August and finish in June, and range from SCQF levels 7 – 12

Part-time Higher Education (PTHE): These are courses that start any time within an academic session and range from SCQF levels 7 – 12

4.3 External Quality Assurance and Enhancement

4.3.1 As part of the governance framework for further education colleges in Scotland, we are required to participate in external reviews by a range of external organisations. These include:

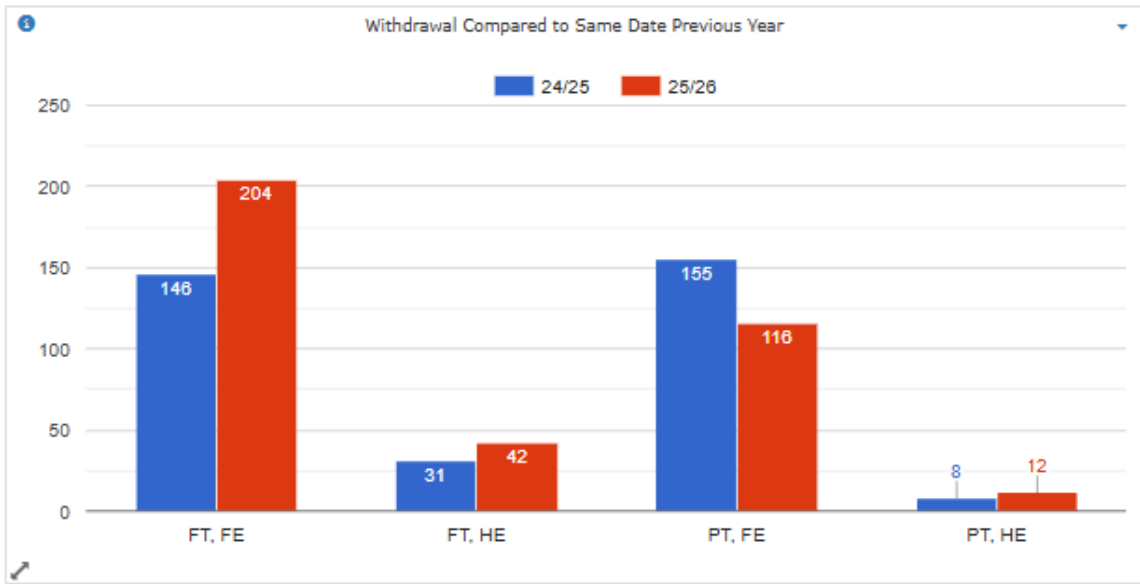
- QAA Scotland
- Qualification’s Scotland
- Scottish Funding Council

4.4 Internal Quality Assurance and Enhancement

4.4.1 Internally, as part of our robust quality assurance procedures we undertake internal audits, reviews, surveys, and focused meetings throughout the academic year to gain invaluable feedback to ensure our students learning and interests is at the heart of everything we do.

5.0 REVIEW OF AY 2025/26 WITHDRAWALS

5.1 Withdrawals Compared to same date in previous AY:



	2024/25		2025/26	
	Total Withdrawal	Retention	Total Withdrawal	Retention
FTFE	146	83%	204	80%
FTHE	31	82%	42	83%
PTFE	155	89%	116	91%
PTHE	8	92%	12	91%

Withdrawal rates are stable overall, with improvements in part-time FE and steady performance in HE. However, full-time FE withdrawals have increased, indicating a need for continued focus on retention in this area. A range of targeted interventions has already been implemented, including the establishment of a Retention and Attainment Committee and dedicated support groups for courses of concern.

5.2 Withdrawal Reasons by Mode and Level:

Full-time FE

Reason For Leaving	Total Withdrawals
WG Personal/Domestic	53
WIA Withdrawn by College for poor attendance	38
WGB Personal/Domestic - Mental Health Issues	28
WA Entering Employment	27

Full-time HE

Reason For Leaving	Total Withdrawals
WG Personal/Domestic	12
WA Entering Employment	11
WGB Personal/Domestic - Mental Health Issues	6
WIA Withdrawn by College for poor attendance	4

Part-time FE

Reason For Leaving	Total Withdrawals
WE Returning to School	48
WGG Personal/Domestic - Work Related Issues	16
WG Personal/Domestic	15
WIA Withdrawn by College for poor attendance	13

Part-time HE

Reason For Leaving	Total Withdrawals
WAA Leaving Current Employer	3
WGG Personal/Domestic - Work Related Issues	3
WG Personal/Domestic	2

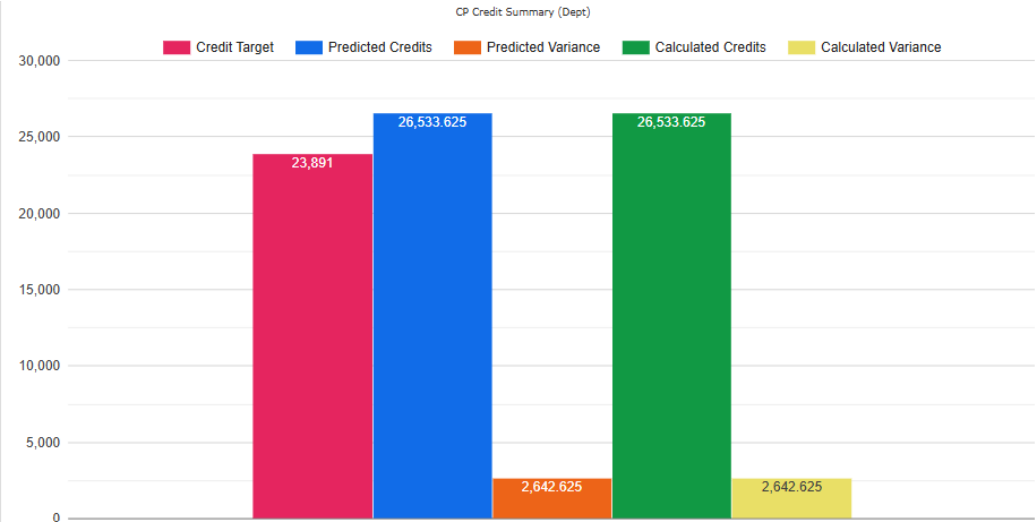
Withdrawal reasons vary by mode and level but show clear common themes. In full-time provision, withdrawals are mainly because of personal and domestic factors, including mental health, alongside attendance issues. While entering employment is also commonly reported, this should also be considered a positive outcome.

Part-time FE withdrawals are mostly linked to returning to school, which is exclusively students who start a Schools Academy programme, change their subject choices, and return to school on a Friday. In part-time HE, numbers are low, with withdrawals driven by employment-related changes.

6.0 REVIEW OF AY 2025/26 CREDIT POSITION

6.1 As previously reported, the College reached its full credit activity threshold by October 2025 and is expected to exceed this by approximately 11.1% by the end of the session. This is driven by growth in full-time and part-time higher education enrolments, combined with revised SFC guidance on early withdrawals, which enables funding to be secured after a shorter period of attendance.

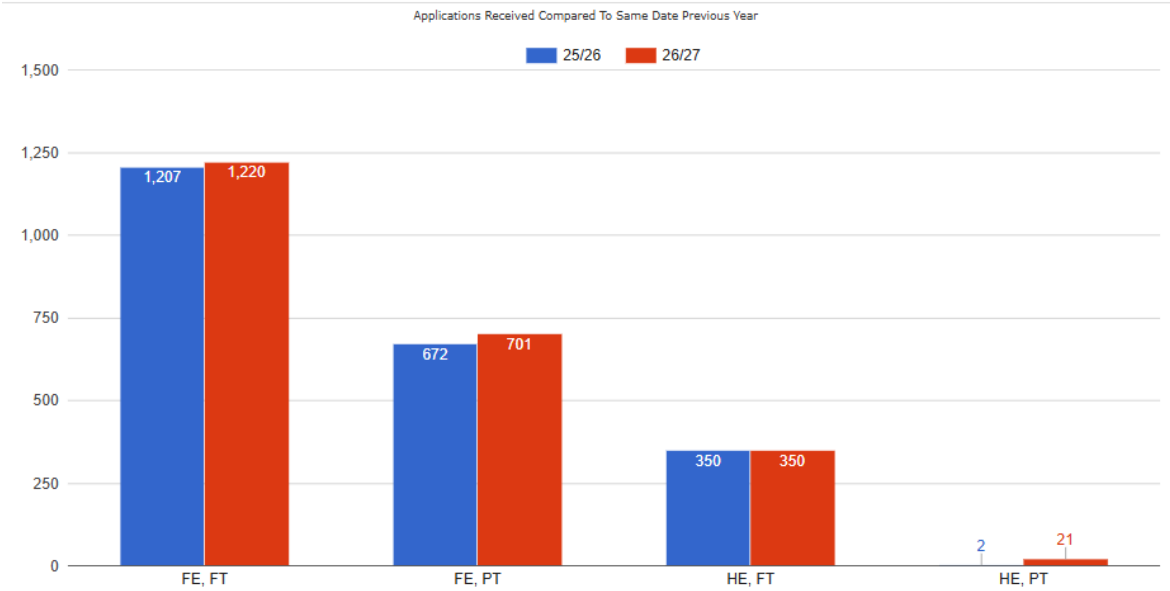
AY 2025/26 Credit Position (19 May 2026)



7.0 REVIEW OF RECRUITMENT 2026/27

7.1 As of 19 May 2026, overall applications are 3% ahead of the same point last year. Full-time FE applications have increased slightly by 1%, while full-time HE applications remain stable. Part-time provision has shown stronger growth, with applications up 7% overall. In terms of targets, full-time FE recruitment has reached 98% of target, with full-time HE currently at 81% of target.

Applications Received Compared to Same Date in Previous Year (19 May 2026)



8.0 QUALITY ASSURANCE UPDATE

8.1 Awarding Body Summary of Activity for AY 2025-26

- 8.1.1 External Verification (EV) visits are still taking place and progressing well. An overview of AY 2025/26 activity will be included in the September Board report once all activity is complete.

9.0 QUALITY ENHANCEMENT UPDATE

9.1 QAA Institution Liaison Meeting ILM

- 9.1.1 We recently met with our designated Quality Assurance Specialist from QAA for our annual Institution Liaison meeting. The meeting enabled us to provide an overview of the college's strategic priorities and alignment with the Students' Association, supported by current learning and teaching strategies and delivery plans. We reviewed the college's approach to quality assurance and enhancement, including the use of data, annual monitoring, and engagement with national initiatives such as Student Transitions Enhancement Programme (STEP). Updates to academic standards and any recent regulatory changes were discussed, alongside progress since the last external review, including actions from the SEAP. We also discussed our plans to implement a new approach to Institution Led Quality Reviews (ILQR) in preparation for our TQER in AY 2028/29.

At the time of writing, the full report from this meeting has not yet been received; it will be included in the September Board report.

9.2 AY 2024/25 SEAP Feedback

- 9.2.1 We have received feedback on the AY 2024/25 SEAP, which was submitted to the SFC in December 2025. The feedback included that the SEAP highlighted a number of clear strengths, demonstrating a well-evidenced and reflective approach, supported by a strong range of internal and external sources, including external verification, QAA engagement, and awarding body feedback. It effectively identified relevant strengths and enhancement priorities across key areas such as learning and teaching, student support, curriculum planning, and outcomes, with a particularly positive focus on regional alignment, employer engagement, and support for priority groups.

The action plan was appropriately aligned to the self-evaluation and draws on positive performance in areas such as student satisfaction, outcomes, and external verification. SFC feedback also recognises opportunities to further strengthen the submission, particularly by building on this solid foundation through enhanced evaluation, clearer strategic framing and more consistent articulation of impact and progress.

10.0 IMPLICATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

10.1 Financial Implications

- 10.1.1 It is imperative good governance is applied to ensure our college can draw down all funds. It is imperative quality underpins everything we do to ensure confidence from all stakeholders.

10.2 Learner Implications

- 10.2.1 Having robust enhancement and assurance ensure our portfolio meets the needs of our students.
- 10.2.2 Quality plays a critical role in ensuring effective and positive learning experiences and outcomes for our learners.
- 10.2.3 Student engagement and partnership is a key component of the new quality enhancement approach in Scotland, and the effectiveness of student engagement is a significant focus of the review method.

10.3 Staff Implications

- 10.3.1 Delivery teams continue to engage with quality enhancement and assurance matters. This is a collaborative approach involving engaging with stakeholders to ensure the best outcomes for students.
- 10.3.2 All teams will be required to engage with the ongoing self-evaluation and action planning process.

10.4 Equality and Diversity Implications/Equality Impact Assessment

- 10.4.1 Equalities, diversity and inclusion is a cross-cutting outcome within the new SFC Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model.
- 10.4.2 Within TQER, QAA places particular emphasis on how institutions respond to and support the diversity of their student body and enable all their students to fulfil their potential.

10.5 Sustainability/Environmental Implications

- 10.5.1 Sustainable practices are taught and underpin many of quality enhancement matters. Sustainable matters are delivered within the curriculum to ensure our students have the knowledge and skills for a greener future (one example is the importance of reducing chemicals in agricultural practices).

11.0 RISK COMMENTARY

- 11.1 Failure to continually track and monitor our key performance measures could have a detrimental impact on the success of our learners.
- 11.2 Failure to meet our allocated credit threshold could result in a reduction in core funding.
- 11.3 Continuous tracking and monitoring of our measures and credits are key risk mitigations.
- 11.4 Our Quality processes provide SFC with assurance that Borders College effectively uses public investment to deliver high-quality learning provision.

11.5 The risks associated with not undertaking quality assurance is wide ranging from the loss of funding to detrimental reputational damage.

12.0 CONCLUSION

12.1 The data presented in the report provides reassurance to the Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee that the college is making good progress against targets.

12.2 The purpose of the Quality report is to provide the Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee confidence in our quality assurance and enhancement processes and procedures.

Joanne George

Director of MIS and Quality

19 May 2026

Previous Board or College Committee Approvals:

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