RTC Education Ltd
t/a Regent College Higher Education

UKPRN: 10008455

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Year Three provider submission

January 2018

TEF Year Three provider submission

INTRODUCTION

1. The Panel will see an initial hypothesis of Silver, with indicators excepting 'Higher skilled employment or further study' pointing towards Gold TEF. This submission details:
    a. **Provider Context** Factors vital to understanding the College and its students.
    b. **The Metrics** An explanation with commentary on how metrics should be viewed, given the context of both College and students.
    c. **Additional evidence against the TEF criteria** with focus on particular student groups, under the following headings:
        i. **Teaching Quality**:
            - Student Engagement
            - Valuing Teaching
            - Rigour and Stretch
            - Feedback
        ii. **Learning Environment**:
            - Resources
            - Personalised Learning
        iii. **Student Outcomes and Learning Gains**:
            - Employment and Further Study
            - Employability and Transferable Skills
            - Positive Outcomes for All

    in order to provide supporting evidence for a TEF award of at least Silver for Regent College.
2. This document will particularly reflect on the underperformance presented against indicator 'highly skilled employment and further study' and what has and is being done to address the issue of student employability and destinations upon graduating from the HND programme. Furthermore, we wish to highlight particular aspects of data gathering and treatment for this metric which we believe has resulted in a significantly skewed outcome.

PROVIDER CONTEXT

3. **Regent Education Group and the College Mission to Widen Participation**
    a. Regent College Higher Education is one of the trading names of RTC Education Ltd, a family-owned private education business which began life as Regent College, an independent school and Sixth Form College, in 2000. This was the founding business within Regent Group which today includes nurseries, after school tuition centres, sixth form colleges and a leadership academy. The ethos of the Group is encapsulated in the motto: *'The end of education is character'*, reflecting our 'whole person' perspective and recognising the crucial role that learning plays in building effective and socially responsible citizens of the world. The Group views itself as providing a small but energetic collection of provision across several parts of the wider education ecosystem, engaging with a range of other providers to create bespoke pathways to enable individual learners to achieve and progress to their full potential, regardless of their background. Regent College Higher Education therefore sits with a wider family of institutions.

b. The following key elements underpin Regent Group plans through to 2021[1]:

   i. **Mission**: Regent Group delivers shareholder value by being a reputable provider of, and partner in, high quality education and services to education in the UK and overseas, providing opportunity for learners, and meeting changing national and global needs with innovation and flair.

   ii. **Vision**: By the end of AY 2020/21 the Group will have expanded new areas of portfolio including collaborative partnerships, recruitment and executive education. This activity will grow alongside, and be leveraged by, growth and diversification of our revenue generating divisions delivering flexible and innovative options as part of established sectors responding to business and community needs.

   iii. **Values**: How we do business is underpinned by our clearly stated values:

   - **R**obust Leadership
   - **E**thical Culture
   - **G**enuine Integrity
   - **E**ntrepreneurial Spirit
   - **N**atural Compassion
   - **T**eamwork

c. Regent College Higher Education started operating in September 2010 delivering the Pearson Higher National Diploma in Business (first offered in the 2010-11 academic year). In July 2012, Regent College Higher Education gained Specific Course Designation from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills for its Pearson HND Business programmes.

d. The College has long recognised the particular role that Alternative Providers can play in reaching out to sections of society hitherto disengaged or with little experience of Higher Education and strongly identifies itself as a widening participation institution. Although Regent College Higher Education has maintained its UKVI Highly Trusted Status (now known simply as Tier 4 status), it has not actively recruited overseas students for a number of years. Instead the College concentrates on recruiting UK/EU students from its local area in North West London. This recruitment policy allied to an expansion of the pathways within the HND Business programme, has seen student numbers grow steadily to their current level of 1,336 enrolled.

e. The College had a successful Higher Education Review (AP) from QAA in September 2016 and in September 2017 was visited by the QAA for its annual monitoring review which reported ‘commendable progress with implementing the action plan’.

4. The College knows that to fully meet its students’ aspirations it needs to increase the range and level of its educational activities. From a strong foundation of quality HND provision we are partnering with universities and from February 2018 we offer a BA (Hons) Business and Management top up programme validated by Bucks New University. This significant development, together with an eventual return to Level 7 provision (we did successfully deliver a single iteration of Pearson’s Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (EDSML) Level 7 qualification in 2015/16), addresses very directly the issue of providing students with additional opportunities for progression beyond Level 5.

5. The development of our HE offer is not restricted to offering higher level qualifications. The College Strategic Plan, first produced in October 2014, provides a framework for long-term improvement and enhancement activity firmly focused on the needs of our current and

[1] ‘Towards 2021 and beyond’ Regent Group Plan revised 2017.

future student body. Key elements of the College Strategic Plan[2] which we hope will be helpful in providing context for this submission are:

a. **Vision** To be a top provider of private higher education in London through being renowned for high academic standards, provision of a high-quality student learning experience and the life-changing opportunities we provide for our students.

b. **Mission** To provide academic and professional education for UK, EU and overseas students based on secure academic standards, high quality learning opportunities and meeting employer needs within a transformative private education sector in the United Kingdom.

c. Values

i. Providing a student experience of the highest quality and with quality enhancement embedded in all we do

ii. Valuing opportunity, equality, diversity and inclusiveness

iii. Enabling a culture of mutual respect, professionalism, openness, empowerment, responsibility and excellence

iv. Rewarding success and always improving

v. Proactive and innovative in responding to challenges in a rapidly changing world

vi. Performance through valuing staff and continuous staff development

vii. Sustainability, value for money and adding value in all we do

d. **Strategic Objectives**

i. To provide a high-quality learning experience for our students and implement policies and procedures to ensure continuous quality enhancement of learning opportunities

ii. Improve our competiveness nationally and internationally through having an excellent reputation for academic standards and the quality of our learning experience

iii. To recruit and admit students who are fee paying and funded by the UK Government's Student Loans Company

iv. To embed equality and diversity across the College for both students and staff

v. To have high esteem with our awarding bodies/organisations and other external bodies and institutions, including UK universities as strategic collaborative partners

vi. To work towards obtaining degree awarding powers (DAP) over the next five-year period

vii. To secure and maintain the highest possible outcomes from external reviews by, for example, the Quality Assurance Agency, Pearson standards and quality visits and partner university reviews

viii. To foster a culture of excellence in all our staff, invest in their development to meet organisational objectives and become an employer of first choice

ix. To manage finances in such a way as to ensure a financially sustainable college of higher education over a rolling ten-year timeline.

[2] Regent College Higher Education Strategic Plan (updated January 2018).

6. The students the College recruits live predominantly in and around the Wembley area of North West London in the Borough of Brent. The overwhelming majority of students have been in work for a significant period of time and currently 95% of students are classified by QAA as mature. The mean age of a Regent College student on entry is currently 36 years old. 73% of current students were born outside the UK.
7. A significant proportion of our students have been or are employed in low skill/low paid jobs and in most cases, are looking for their higher education experience to help them move away from this type of employment with many anticipating starting their own businesses. For many of the students, as well as this previous employment profile, they are balancing complex childcare and family arrangements with their study. In a recent feedback survey (December 2017), students at the college said that, in terms of future employment, they had undertaken the HND in order to:
    a. Start or develop their own business - 64%
    b. Gain a promotion in an existing job - 12%
    c. Get a new/better job - 28%
    d. Other - 1%
8. It should therefore be noted that although all students are enrolled on full time programmes, the profile of a Regent College student much more closely resembles that of a traditional part time student in terms of age, employment and family responsibilities. This is hardly surprising as these characteristics are indicative of this part of London. These more complex social ties and settings contribute to slower progression by individuals to highly skilled employment or further study after their HND (Level 5) graduation. It is perhaps not surprising that at the 6 month point after graduation at which the DLHE survey is taken many of our students are still aligning SLC funding and family issues to allow them to progress to the next stage. There is no 'milk round' for our students. We assert that the level of progression for our student population after Level 5 is slower than for a typical university graduate and we welcome the forthcoming change to Graduate Outcomes and a survey point at 12 months after graduation.
9. The London Borough of Brent is one of the most deprived across a range of indicators in the capital. 33% of Brent's working population earn less than the London Living Wage (and are therefore classified as low paid) and in Black African and Pakistani / Bangladeshi communities this rises to 41% and 44% respectively. Brent residents have the 4th lowest average weekly wage in London.
10. Only 37.5% of Brent's working population are employed in SOC groups 1 to 3 (Senior professional and managerial) compared to 55.3% in London and 45.5% nationally, whilst 43.1% of Brent's working population are employed in SOC groups 6 to 9 (service, manual and low skilled) compared to 27.4% in London and 33.8% nationally.
11. Brent is one of the most diverse boroughs in the capital with successive waves of migration from a variety of ethnic communities. 56% of its residents were born outside the UK, whilst only 18% of the population identify themselves as White British[3].

THE METRICS

12. The College is fully aware that it has only received one years' worth of external data provided via the NSS and DLHE survey and two years of HESA continuation data, and the limited story that these figures may tell. While the College is satisfied that the three positively flagged core metrics (across academic support, continuation and teaching) are attributable to the effort that has been put into delivering an excellent teaching and learning

[3] "Diversity in Brent – Knowing our communities", Brent Council, Equality & Research Intelligence Unit, 2016

environment which supports each student, it is cognisant that the negative flag on "highly skilled employment or further study" reflects far less favourably on the experience of students at the College.

13. After reviewing our TEF workbook metrics we make the following comments and observations by way of context:

    a. **NSS derived metrics:**

        i. Our NSS metrics derive from Regent's first iteration of the NSS (dates).

        ii. From the 200 NSS denominator (199 for second indicator for "Assessment and feedback" due to 1 student not answering all questions in this scale) we see results in the top 10% of absolute performance for all 3 scales, with two positive flags (+ for "The teaching on my course" and ++ for "Academic support").

        iii. We believe that these highly commendable results from our NSS reflect improvements in and enhancements to the student experience implemented over the last two years (which were recorded in the College's recent successful QAA HER and Annual Review). It is a particularly encouraging result as these students will have benefitted from these improvements only during their last year of study.

        iv. Satisfaction was consistent across all demographic splits, apart from splits by gender (where Female students were on average 6% less satisfied across all three scales than Male students) and splits by National IMD for "Assessment and feedback" (where students from Q3-Q5 were 5.3% less satisfied than students from Q1 and Q2). Assessment and feedback has already been identified as an area of ongoing attention within the College, and development work will take into consideration the differential splits in satisfaction noticed, in line with the College's ethos of continuous enhancement of learning for all.

        v. It is worth noting that satisfaction across all demographic splits was higher than the benchmark in every instance, which is reflective of the emphasis the College places on ensuring that all students are supported satisfactorily during their studies regardless of background or circumstance.

        vi. Overall we anticipate that further development and enhancements will continue and be reflected in even better NSS feedback in 2017/18, especially as the students surveyed this year will have benefitted from the improvements already implemented during both years of their study. The results from the NSS are corroborated by our internal student surveys, and we continue to push for excellence across all three scales.

    b. **HESA derived metrics – Continuation:**

        i. The College has now completed three HESA submissions and thus has 2 years' worth of continuation data for internal analysis, although only 1 year is cited in the TEF year three metrics spreadsheet. We are very pleased that our core metric is significantly above benchmark (88.2% vs. 78.6%, ++) and that the same is true for all demographic splits with continuation for all groups achieving a double or single positively flag except POLAR, where continuation is still 9.1% above benchmark. In fact, all split metrics are within 8.6% to 10.2% above benchmark. This is a resounding success for the type of institution that the College is, and the diverse student body and local community that it supports.

        ii. Since the College's first HESA submission, Pearson have altered the progression criteria for students on the programme with the introduction of the 2016 specification and it is unclear at this point how this may affect

continuation metrics in the short- to mid-term. However, supporting students to stay the course where appropriate is a key priority, and internal analysis shows that retention on programme has been increasing year on year from 50% in 2015 to over 90% currently. Relevant actions have included identifying and addressing causes of early withdrawal, for example by providing additional support at key points on the student journey.

c. **DLHE derived metrics:**

i. Regent graduates were subject to DLHE for the first time in April 2016 and January 2017 (for inclusion in DLHE 2015/16). The surveys were conducted by telephone, and the response rate in January 2017 was over 95%.

ii. 94.9% of graduates are reported as being in “Employment or further study”, which is above benchmark and significantly so for students from a BME background (100%, +). However, the proportion of graduates in “Highly skilled employment or further study” is significantly lower at 25.6%, which is a disappointing result if taken at face value.

iii. The College has noted that of the 30 students classified as being in “Highly skilled employment or further study”, 16 students were included in the “further study” part of the metric. However, further interrogation of the College’s DLHE submission (mapping to the raw TEF data provided) has identified 19 further students who identified that they were studying but that their most important activity was work (not in the “highly skilled” group). Because the study portion of their activity was not recorded as “most important”, these students were excluded from the “Highly skilled employment or further study” metric even though they had identified that they were studying. If they had been included, the proportion of students in “Highly skilled employment or further study” would be: 49/117 **= 41.9%**. This is still below the benchmark of 58.5%, but significantly closer and within 2 standard deviations of the mean (i.e. would attract a single-negative flag rather than a double-negative flag).

iv. All employment and further study metrics should be viewed in context, as there are also important characteristics concerning our student body which need to be taken into account. The College operates in a deprived area with low graduate opportunities. Many students are already working and or have family commitments, making them less likely to move or make an immediate transfer into study/higher-skilled employment: a majority of students in the most recent DLHE return indicated that their primary reason for employment was to earn a living or pay off debt. The DLHE return is very much a lag indicator which we are confident will improve as more students progress through tangibly strengthened progression pathways and support into employment or entrepreneurship.

ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE AGAINST TEF CRITERIA

14. **Teaching Quality** The College’s Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy 2015-18 is comprehensively aligned to the Strategic Plan and the QAA’s UK Quality Code. It states as its overall objective ‘To provide students with a rewarding learning experience, helping them to achieve their personal and professional goals in a relaxed and friendly environment. Regent College staff strive to deliver quality, value and flexibility through our programmes.’ Its strategic educational aims for all taught programmes are to support students to develop:

a. **Critical intellectual enquiry** Independent learning that includes the intellectual powers of analysis, synthesis, evaluation, constructive criticism, creativity and reflection

b. **Subject expertise and appreciation of context** A thorough understanding of, and enthusiasm for, the academic subjects studied, together with an ability to place them in the context of ethical, economic, environmental, professional and global considerations.

c. **A positive approach to learning** For students to possess a willingness to accept responsibility for their own learning, to be independent learners by using initiative, self-guidance, and a commitment to life-long learning.

d. **Application of knowledge** To promote skills such that our students are capable of making a significant contribution as employees, citizens, and play an active and responsible role in society.

e. **Global perspective** A global and international perspective, resulting in being prepared for an ever-changing world where technology plays an increasingly important role.

15. Particular evidence against TEF criteria which we would like the Panel to take into account are as follows:

a. **Student Engagement**

i. The College is committed to a partnership with its students to drive the quality of the learning experience and the outcomes for students. There are a range of opportunities, both formal and informal, for students to engage with the quality assurance and enhancement systems that operate at Regent College. There is a Student Charter which is made available to all students through the website and the VLE, and introduced to new cohorts of students during induction. There is a well-established Student Representative system and an annual election by student representatives of a Student President. Student Representatives, including the Student President, are full members of Academic Board and Course Board. There is a regular, usually once a term, meeting of the Student Representative Committee, chaired by the Student President, or by a staff member nominated by the student representatives themselves.

ii. Formal mechanisms for seeking student views about their learning experience are obtained through regular use of student surveys, and feedback from induction sessions for new students, who enjoy easy access to the Principal (FHE), Assistant Principal (HE), Director of Studies and/or Cohort Leaders for discussion of both academic and personal matters. Communication with students is effective through, for example the use of the VLE (HELP). The introduction of the “Talk Back” student feedback system, face-to-face communication, classroom visits by managerial staff, open access to Cohort Leaders and the ‘Open Door’ policy, all contribute to an easy flow of information. The QAA Review for Educational Oversight, January 2014 identified dissemination of College actions in response to student requests as good practice.

iii. Other examples of students engaging with the development of the College include:

a. Student representatives were involved in consultations with architects and designers in preparation for the refurbishment of the Wembley campus.

b. The Student President and Vice-President participated in the new student induction, starting from September 2017.
c. Student focus groups were involved in pilots for the new LMS enhancement to the VLE system prior to its full introduction.

b. Valuing Teaching

i. Regent College is committed to the continuous enhancement of learning for all and to valuing and rewarding excellent teaching. The College sees face-to-face teaching, in its various formats, as the main platform for student learning, supported by the use of learning technologies, student-student interactions and work experience (where it can be gained). The time the Strategy has been in operation has seen a steady rise in student continuation rates to the current rate of 88.2% in 2017 (compared to the benchmark figure of 78.6%). Alongside this improvement, retention rates over the period from 2015 have consistently risen from around 50% to the current level in excess of 90%. This has been supported by the introduction of a Retention, Achievement and Completion (RAC) meeting to drive individual student performance. Stretch targets set for achievement for the 2015/16 and 2016/17 cohorts are 75% and 80% respectively, and data shows that the College is on track to achieve these. The National Audit Office report "Follow up on Alternative Higher Education Providers" (October 2017) confirmed that Regent College was one of only 10 Alternative Providers (18% of all Alternative providers) with continuation rates significantly better than benchmark. It should also be noted that this benchmark is for full time students and that the profile of Regent College students has many of the characterics one would normally associate with part time students, for whom there is a correspondingly lower benchmark.

ii. Levels of satisfaction with teaching and learning as demonstrated in the 2017 NSS are 91.3% (compared to a benchmark of 86.7). Internal survey also shows high levels of student satisfaction with teaching and learning, including 90% in 2017 and 94% in 2016.

iii. All staff who teach at Regent College have an annual appraisal (or equivalent), part of which identifies continual professional development plans and the means by which staff keep up-to-date in their specialist areas of teaching. The College facilitates a range of staff development activities internally and externally to support this process including regular development sessions with Cohort Leaders and accessing HEA Fellowships (currently 15 staff have applied for or are in process of applying for HEA Fellowships).

c. **Rigour and Stretch** The College is committed to enhancing teaching and identifying excellent practice through a process of observation, implementing a system which shares good practice and helps teaching staff further improve the learning experience offered to students. This process of reflective and supportive practice is we believe a contributor to the high level of student satisfaction with teaching on their courses and in particular the levels of support they receive for their studies (92.2% in the 2017 NSS (compared to the benchmark of 84.2)). In its December 2017 report the QAA noted 'Cohort Leaders have responsibility for retention, achievement and completion; monitoring; and follow up actions, including providing support to legacy students to submit or resubmit outstanding coursework. The work undertaken by the RAC group has resulted in improved student retention, achievement and completion and has enabled legacy student cohorts to achieve an award'. The most recent (June 2017) external examiner's report for the College

concluded that "A dynamic teaching team is supported by a robust administration process. Detailed assessment board minutes. Formal and informal tutorials are a great strength at this College." Feedback from students about the quality of support they receive includes *"studying at Regent College gave me further knowledge and experience in an area completely new for me - business management and marketing. The knowledge and confidence I received in the College motivated me to continue studying LLB Law at Middlesex University. I am very grateful and appreciate the help of all tutors in the College."* – Stefka Zamfirova (Jan 2014 Cohort) and "*My committed nature, with the help of my outstanding tutors from Regent College has made me a very conscientious student and I have finished with a Distinction grade. By studying the HND course I feel that I have gained different managerial skills which I can now apply at work on a daily basis. I enjoyed going to College every day as everything that I have studied there helped me to understand how businesses work and also taught me to manage people, which is essential for a Manager."* - Andreia Cepoi (September 2015 Cohort).

d. **Feedback** Assessment is a key component in understanding what students have learned to facilitate their progress through the programmes and fosters critical thinking and reflection. The College is committed to ensuring students receive high quality, timely formative and summative feedback to help them continuously improve. The core NSS metric for assessment and feedback from the 2017 NSS stated student satisfaction with assessment and feedback was 85.8% (compared to a benchmark of 81.4%). The most recent (June 2017) Pearson external examiner report confirmed that assessment was robust and accurate, adding "Both formative and summative assessment practices are used and it is clear that students also seek support and guidance through electronic means from Assessors. There are a wide range of assessment methods in place, with strong support in place…"

16. **Learning Environment**

a. **Resources**

i. Regent College has invested heavily in both its physical and human resources to drive improvements in the learning experience. The College recognises the importance of digital technologies in supporting and enhancing student learning. The College also recognises that many students within its intakes, are older and may not have had the exposure to and confidence with digital technologies that a younger cohort would normally be expected to have. An older student population means a lower proportion of 'digital natives'. Digital technologies are regularly exploited to support and enhance student learning from face-to-face teaching to on-line learning activities. Students are increasingly using digital technologies and social media platforms to communicate. In 2016/17 the College introduced a new VLE called Learning Management System + (LMS+) based on MS 365 in addition to the existing learning portal HELP to enable students to access more online and digital learning resources. The Study Skills module in the first term aims to extend and develop transferable digital literacy skills, both to enable students to engage fully with their studies and to take into the workplace.

ii. The College appointed a new E-Learning Coordinator in September 2017 to work with staff and students to further develop on-line capabilities and delivery. This has resulted in the introduction of an E-Learning Strategy which has graded standards to incentivise uptake. This has already seen the introduction of greater blended learning opportunities including the use of on-line quizzes, use of collaboration tools such as wikis, discussion forums and blogs.

iii. Over recent years Regent College has invested heavily in both its physical and human resources to enhance the learning environment and improve student outcomes. Within the 2017 year it has invested £60,000 in upgrading student computers and IT equipment and a further £350,000 is being spent on a phased refurbishment of the Wembley campus. Student representatives were involved in the consultation process for drawing up the refurbishment proposals. The full refurbishment of the building is due to be complete by Spring 2018.

iv. The College's Kingsbury campus, which is currently used for the delivery of Further Education courses, is also being developed to accommodate the planned BA (Hons) Top-up programme being run in partnership with Bucks New University due to start in February 2018. This provision will enable the College's students to have a pathway from Level 3 to Level 6 and then on into employment.

v. In terms of human resources, and in responding to the QAA's HER (AP) report from September 2016, the college appointed a new Principal of Further and Higher Education (Nov 2016) with a proven track record of quality improvement at a number of institutions. It also increased the number of Cohort Leaders for the HND from 3 to 7 (Jan 2017) to fully address and embed new pastoral care and student support arrangements. Additional to this and continuing to drive the enhancement of the student learning experience the College has appointed:

- A Director of Quality (HE) (May 2017)
- An Assistant Principal (HE) (June 2017)
- An E-Learning and Resources Coordinator (September 2017)
- Additional Student Administrators
- A Student Finance Officer (2017)
- A Director for Students (January 2018)
- A Data Manager (Student Systems) (January 2018)
- An additional Director of Studies to oversee the introduction and implementation of a new BA (Hons) Top-up in Business and Management, validated by Bucks New University (January 2018)

b. **Personalised Learning**

i. Regent College fully recognises the nature and challenges of its student intake, the potential barriers to full engagement with learning that they may have and the intersectionality of these complex factors. To this end, in 2017 it introduced a revised Admissions Policy and Flow Chart, which the QAA highlighted as 'ensuring that all applications are treated with equity, transparency and fairness'. The policy was also reviewed against CMA guidelines to ensure compliance. The Admissions Policy commits the College to interview every suitable applicant to ensure their individual learning needs will be assessed and met. Any student without a recognised UK qualification in English Language at the correct level is required to undertake the College's own assessment test to establish if they have sufficient proficiency in English to undertake the HND programme. Students who do not meet the required standard for English language are offered options of different specialist, British Council approved, courses at the College to develop their language skills to the level where they can successfully apply for the HND.

ii. In 2016/17 The College introduced a voluntary programme of study skills at the start of the programme, additional to core teaching and learning activities on the HND. This is to enable students who had been out of education for a significant period of time to acquire the relevant skills to be

able to fully engage with their programmes at an early stage and to address early withdrawal from the programme. The effectiveness of this practice and the impact on retention resulted in these Study Skills sessions being formulated as a free bolt-on Study Skills module which was made mandatory for all students from September 2017.

iii. The College offers optional, British Council approved, English Language sessions at start of programmes for those students who feel the need to enhance and develop their academic use of English. Classes are optional (students having already met the English language requirements for HND) but are offered to all students and referrals are also made when tutors feel that particular students would benefit. A small but increasing number of students take advantage of this tuition, which is offered free of charge and may be joined at any point during the student's HND programme. Our quarterly student feedback reports highlight that all students that have received initial additional English support "know where and who to go to for English support".

iv. In its December 2017 report, the QAA noted that 'The College has recently established an Equality and Diversity Monitoring Group with the first meeting having taken place in August 2017, to ensure the principles of equality and diversity are embedded within College policies'. This group uses a data driven approach to analyse student recruitment, retention, achievement and satisfaction levels against key E&D indicators to ensure that no groups are underachieving. It has already noted that employment rates and earning amongst female graduates are significantly lower than males. In response to this the College will hold a series of focus groups with its female students in Spring 2018. The aim is that this will enable the College to more fully understand their employment destinations and how it can enhance delivery to support their future employability.

v. In recognition of the varying and often, conflicting circumstances of its students the College has developed a timetabling strategy to address the issue of accessibility to the curriculum. To this end it offers optional study modes where students can attend on consecutive full days, or alternatively attend in the mornings, afternoons or evenings, or a blend of these. This has contributed to a significant improvements in attendance rising from 64% in 2016 to a current rate of over 80%

17. **Student Outcomes and Learning Gain**

a. **Employability and Transferable Skills** The profile of Regent College students outlined above and the challenges they face in returning to an educational environment and achieving their qualifications, is also mirrored by their progression into employment after their studies. The recent ONS report "Follow up on Alternative Higher Education Providers" (Oct 2017) recognised "The overall median salary reported by alternative provider graduates with a full-time employment in the UK six months after graduating is £20,500 compared with £21,500 for graduates who attended HEFCE-funded providers." The College is cognisant that as so many of its students have ambitions around new business start-ups it is likely to mean that recently graduating students will probably be at a very early stage in the development of their business. It is probable that at this stage of development the graduate's income and employment status would not put them in the highly skilled employment category.

b. In 2016 the College recognised that that for many students an HND was, in reality, a first stepping stone in improving their employability and that many wanted to progress to a full degree top-up, which they saw as significantly improving employability. The College therefore initiated a programme of sessions led by the

Student Welfare Officer to enable students to fully prepare for the process of applying through UCAS for a Top-up and preparing for interviews and the commitment required for Level 6 study. This was in parallel to sessions aimed at employability which include CV clinics, job search skills, interview skills and networking.

c. From April 2018 the College will formalise these sessions into a mandatory “bolt-on” progression module called Forward Thinking. This will run in the second year of the course and mirrors the Study skills module in the first year of the course

d. This document has been produced in collaboration with the student body at Regent College. This engagement has taken two forms; a student employability survey conducted in December 2017 to explore the motivations and expectations students have of future employment and feedback sessions, conducted in January 2018 to explore the skills and understandings students feel they need to be able to progress successfully into employment or further study after their HND programme. Outcomes of the student feedback survey on future employment include:

- 64% of respondents identified that they were undertaking the HND in order to start or develop their own business
- 98% of respondents felt that their employability would be enhanced if they were able to study a BA top-up after their HND
- 79% of respondents who wanted to undertake a BA top-up indicated they wanted to continue this study at Regent College. In comparison 16% wanted to study a BA top-up at a University

e. Prior to this survey, the College had significant informal feedback from students relating to their future plans. In recognition of the numbers of students who expressed interest in starting their own business after studying the HND the College added the HND Enterprise Unit to the programme in 2016, to help enhance the skills students will need to work for themselves. Since this time all students have studied the unit as part of their HND programme with achievement rates currently in excess of 85% for this unit.

f. In 2016 the College began actively searching for a partner university that would validate a BA (Hons) Top-up that could be delivered at the college, in recognition that many students did not necessarily feel they had the experience and social capital to be able to make the transition to a university environment to do this. In recent student employability feedback, nearly 45% of students responding felt the most valuable additional skill they needed to develop, in order to enhance employability was communication and confidence. As part of that feedback process 20% of students felt they needed further skills in leadership and management, 10% wanted further skills in starting their own business and 10% wanted additional skills in selling and marketing.

g. In November 2017 the College received validation for a franchise arrangement with Bucks New University to deliver a BA (Hons) Top-up in Business and Management. The first cohort will start in spring 2018, with the College’s own graduating HND students the primary component of the cohort. This degree top-up contains a significant number of learning outcomes where students have to explore and investigate real workplaces (either their own or as part of a short-term placement) in order to conduct case studies and to make recommendations on potential improvements to the workplace. The College views this as a significant enhancement in the potential employability of its students.

h. In response to the demand from students who wish to further develop their skills in order to start a business, the College is in the process of validating a further BA (Hons) Top-up programme with another University partner in Enterprise and Entrepreneurship aimed to start in Autumn 2018.

i. These two BA top-up options will meet the students' needs for further study, in an accessible and cost-effective environment and help develop the skills necessary for new business start-up.

j. In the medium term the College plans to build further partnerships to enable it to offer a range of additional qualifications to supplement the HND and two Top-up degree programmes. This includes; a Foundation year, to enable students who don't currently meet entry criteria for the HND to access Higher Education; a full BA (Hons) programme to supplement the HND/Top-up route and potentially a masters level qualification. This is aimed to give the College a full suite of programmes to respond to the diverse needs of its students

k. A further response by the College to the findings from its first set of DLHE outcomes and to the detailed analysis of that information and how it impacts on TEF metrics will be the development of a Student Employability Strategy in Spring 2018. The focus of this strategy will be to:

- Ensure the College collects additional information from students at entry on their employment intentions, to be able to give them more targeted advice and guidance.
- To expose students to as many "real world" scenarios and live projects as possible as part of their taught programmes.
- To expand the Colleges' employer network to be able to bring in experts and speakers, both as part of taught programmes and as additional opportunities. This will particularly focus on entrepreneurs and business start-up experts.
- Work with enterprise agencies to support students who have business start-up ideas to realise them.
- To offer greater opportunities for work experience and experience of work for students.
- To actively engage with recruitment opportunities in the area.
- To use Alumnae information to better track student outcomes.
- To increase the physical and human resources of the college to facilitate this strategy.

l. It is anticipated this strategy will be in place by the start of the summer term 2018 and the College will use a data driven approach to evaluating the effectiveness of this strategy over the next three years. The College also recognises that over coming years it will have more years' worth of TEF data metrics from DHLE to draw from and will have a much greater ability to assess and analyse the impact of actions and measures recently put in place to address student employability. It will also have more data collected from its alumni network in terms of medium to long term employment outcomes. The Equality and Diversity Monitoring Group will also enable the College to more intensely focus on E&D data in relation to employability and to expose any gaps which may be preventing certain groups from achieving.

m. In 2016 the College undertook a small pilot work placement project, working with 10 employers to provide additional workplace experience for students. This pilot helped students focus on pathway or subject specialisms. Further developments to and expansion of the placement programme are planned.

18. **Positive Outcomes for All**

a. Regent College views itself very strongly as a "widening participation" institution. As such the student cohort is significantly more diverse than most and is also significantly older, with an average starting age of 36. Almost every Regent College student has spent significant periods of time in the workplace and many continue to work, whilst also balancing family requirements with their studies. In this, the College's student profile more closely resembles that of part time students than full time.

b. The College draws its student cohort largely from the Brent area of North West London. This is an area of significant deprivation with fewer opportunities for graduate type employment and where there are significant pockets of low pay, particularly for certain ethnic groups and for women.

c. The employment experience of the majority of Regent College students is mostly around lower skill, lower paid jobs. This is one of the key motivators for the students wanting to achieve their qualifications in order to move up the employment ladder, with many (64%) seeing business start-up as their best potential opportunity to improve their economic wellbeing.

d. The College has been delivering its HND programmes for 7 years, for much of that time the primary focus has been on enabling the students to make the transition back into learning, to recognise and address their diverse needs and to support them to be retained on their programmes and to achieve. To this end the college has a steadily improving profile of attendance, retention and achievement data, as evidenced in the recent ONS report on alternative providers. This intense focus on the student probably accounts for the very strong NSS outcomes around the quality of teaching and support.

e. Due to its relatively small size the College is able to be particularly agile in responding quickly to address student needs and feedback.

f. In 2017 the College has, for the first time been able to access external, benchmarked data via NSS and DHLE, it also has significantly more sophisticated methods of collecting and analysing its own and external data, including in relation to E&D indicators.

g. Once the College was secure in its primary objective of enabling non-traditional HE students to achieve in an HE environment, it has been able to start to direct its attentions towards enhancing the students' employability once they graduate. It has already put in place and is implementing a range of further measures to improve students' employment opportunities once they graduate. These include the two BA (Hons) top-up programmes due to start in 2018 including a focus on enterprise, curriculum changes to the HND programme and a comprehensive strategy to improve student employability.

CONCLUSION

19. The College is conscious that it has only one year's worth of Metrics to draw on for the purposes of this round of TEF assessments. However we would argue that our very strong outcomes for student satisfaction from their teaching and learning experience, which translate into high continuation rates, demonstrate that the College is addressing the primary needs of its particular student cohort. We would also contend that the College continues to put in place significant additional measures to address the lower level of employment outcomes evidenced through the DLHE outcomes and indicative of the local area. We are proud that our students recognise the outstanding teaching and support that we provide to enhance their learning jouney.