TEF Year Three provider submission
Norland College (UKPRN: 10008397)

0 Preamble

0.1 This TEF submission was compiled by a steering group, which included two student representatives of the Norland Student Staff Liaison Committee, nominated by the students. The submission is endorsed by the College Academic Board, which includes student membership. It draws extensively on material compiled under the College's quality assurance procedures, which require information drawn from a variety of student surveys, and discussion by representative bodies that include students at every level, from course committees to Board of Directors.

0.2 The Norland students provide the following statement of support:

Student members of the Norland Student Staff Liaison Committee have been directly involved in the formation of this submission, which provides a fair and full account of the educational strengths of the College. Norland's commitment to professional practice, as well as teaching and research, ensures that there are opportunities for all students. The College's dedication to listening to students facilitates an outstanding learning experience. The course and the teaching put Norlanders in the best possible position to secure highly-skilled and well-paid employment in their chosen profession.

0.3 The TEF core metrics give the College the preliminary requirement for a 'Gold' rating under the formula in the Department of Education (DfE) *Framework Specification*: three positive flags and a score of 2.5. (Though it is not significant in relation to the initial hypothesis, two of the flags are also marked by asterisks indicating that 'the core metric has an indicator value in the top 10% of absolute performance'.) However, the negative flag for 'Highly skilled employment or further study' frustrates the preliminary hypothesis. The UK Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) definitions assign the profession 'nanny' to occupational group 5. Norland is thus excluded *a priori* from an initial Gold rating by its own mission, which is to produce highly-trained and employable nannies: the more students succeed in achieving the outcome for which they aimed and have trained, the more certain the negative flag and—unless the negative flag is seen in context—a lesser award.

0.4 We argue below (see in particular paragraphs 4.9–4.16) that this Catch-22 outcome is an anomaly in a framework for assessing 'teaching excellence' where fulfilling student intentions is a key consideration. In short, there is 'a strong and convincing justification' for the negative flag: indeed, our employment outcomes reinforce the 'Gold' qualities evident in the other measures, rather than undermine them, and Norland College fully meets the criteria for a Gold rating.

1 Provider Context

1.1 Norland College's mission is to 'provide a bespoke early years higher education, training and consultancy, informed by cutting edge research, and cultivate outstanding graduates with lifelong career opportunities, professional support and continuous learning'.

1.2 The mission is discharged primarily by providing a full-time academic course leading to a BA honours degree in Early Years Development and Learning, validated by the University of Gloucestershire, and a bespoke diploma course (the Norland Diploma), which equips students with essential practical skills and placement experiences in the care and education of babies and young children. The Diploma course involves studies complementary to and

taught alongside the degree, plus a year of paid employment as a Newly Qualified Nanny (NQN), with dedicated support and supervision from the College. The College operates an in-house employment agency to help its graduates find employment. The agency, which also offers financial and legal guidance to students and alumni, is available to Norland graduates throughout their working lives, and places graduates in well-paid positions with families in all parts of the world. The College agency can place every graduate looking for work, and has a long waiting list of clients who wish to employ our students, who gain a considerable employment advantage from being able to claim the title 'Norland Nanny'.

1.3 The College has an undergraduate student population of 265, with an annual intake which has risen over the last three years to about 100 at steady state. We operate from two premises in Bath: York Place and Oldfield Park, which house administrative and teaching functions respectively. There are 25 full-time academic staff, including 10 HE teaching/management staff, 5 diploma lecturers, 4 placement staff, 1 teaching assistant and 6 academic support staff. The staff-student ratio is therefore low, and the College regards itself as primarily a teaching-intensive institution, though it offers bespoke training and consultancy services to a variety of organisations and families, based on an expanding research capacity.

1.4 The College has had considerable success in its various 'engagements' with quality assurance at national level. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) reviewed the College in 2014 under the Review for Specific Course Designation (RSDC) method, and expressed confidence in standards, quality and information; the recommendations were on 5 'desirable' matters only, and 8 features of 'good practice' were identified, including the oversight of academic standards, which is described as 'meticulous', a word not used lightly by QAA. The College Action Plan was approved without amendment, and the monitoring visit of 2016 concluded that the progress with its implementation was 'commendable.' A QAA Higher Education Review (HER) in 2017 has just reported, and finds that academic standards, learning opportunities and information all 'meet UK expectations', while the enhancement of student learning opportunities is 'commended'. The report identifies 7 instances of good practice (again using the word 'meticulous' in respect of one) and makes 4 non-urgent procedural recommendations. QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers has judged that the College has a *prima facie* case for taught degree awarding powers, and we are currently under assessment, though it is too early for report.

2 Teaching Quality

Student engagement

2.1 The TEF metrics show that students consider that their teaching provides effective stimulation and challenge, and that they feel encouraged actively to commit to their studies. The College has a positive flag in the area of 'Academic support'; and while there is no flag in the other two areas determined by scores in the National Student Survey (NSS), we exceed national benchmark measures by 3.5 in the case of 'The teaching on my course', and by 5.9 in the case of 'Assessment and feedback'. Though the College was not eligible to enter TEF 2, its students were surveyed by NSS in 2016 (for the first time), when scores were even higher, 'The teaching on my course' scoring 93%, and 'Assessment and feedback' 81%. In the split metrics, there are flags indicating performance significantly above average in the Year 2 results for 'The teaching on my course' and 'Academic support'. In her analysis of the 2017 NSS results for the Academic Board, the Vice-principal recorded disappointment with reduced scores, while noting that in 2017 they remained above sector norms for these areas. However, her report pointed out that they were likely to have been affected by delay in the opening of new teaching facilities, which meant that a planned increase in student numbers lost synchronisation with the increase in teaching space, reflected in significantly reduced scores for 'Organisation and Management' and 'Learning resources'. The new facilities

became available in time for the 2017 intake, and in 2018 we expect the scores to at least return to 2016 levels.

2.2 Our student engagement practices were identified as 'good practice' by QAA in the 2014 RSCD report: the College was found to provide 'thorough and considered response to student feedback'. The 2016 QAA Annual Monitoring Visit noted that the good practice had been built upon, reflecting our capacity for continuing enhancement: 'The College has introduced an imaginative policy on student engagement… Students emphasised that… they felt themselves to be partners in a conversation about College developments, with the opportunity to make constructive suggestions in their discussions with staff. They particularly valued the support and training they received from the [Student Engagement Facilitator].' The QAA reviewers also noted in 2016 that the College had responded to a recommendation about formal representation by including student membership on key committees 'where they contribute fully'.

2.3 In 2017 the QAA reviewers stated that students confirmed that 'lecturers provide interactive and engaging learning and teaching activities and actively seek feedback from them', and that they 'found evidence of various examples where students' feedback, both formally and informally, had prompted improvements to their learning experience.'

2.4 A further measure of 'active commitment' is willingness to respond to NSS itself: 96% of Norland students responded, against an average of 68% for the sector. In NSS 2017, 89% of students answered 'Definitely agree' or 'Mostly agree' to NSS Q27 ('Overall I am satisfied with the quality of the course'), exceeding its own scores for the three individual NSS benchmark measures in the core metrics, and greatly exceeding the same benchmarks for UK HE.

Effective stimulation

2.5 Though the 2017 score from the NSS question on intellectual stimulation is only equal to the sector average at 85%, the equivalent score in 2016 was 91%. As noted above, the College explains this change as collateral damage from the problems caused by building delays, and early indications from more recent internal student surveys suggest that the NSS score will improve again in 2018.

2.6 In relation to retention and progression, the core metrics show that Norland is in the top 10% of absolute performance in both 'Continuation' and 'Employment or further study'. In 2016/7, 100% of students who completed the degree continued into a fourth year to complete the Norland Diploma. This aspect of our work has consistently attracted positive commentary from external assessors. The 2016 QAA RSDC monitoring visit report said: 'A particular feature of good practice identified in the review report of 2014 was the systematic enhancement of the employability of the students. This has been strengthened by further integrating theory and practice and by developing the Norland Diploma which students take in parallel with the degree.' The draft report of the 2017 QAA HER confirms this finding, and two of the 'features of good practice' relate to it: 'The effective integration of academic and personal support which enables students to successfully complete their studies' and 'The highly effective preparation of students for employment in the Early Years sector'. Students themselves underline these results, which may be illustrated with two quotations from the narrative sections of the 2016 NSS: 'The course has really improved my knowledge and practice and has put me on the right path for being the childcare practitioner that I can be'; '…the placements, degree and diploma come together to really give us a really in depth knowledge base.'

Course challenge

2.7 External examiners are required to confirm that the assessments they examine are pitched at the correct level of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and consistently do so. They are also asked explicitly to confirm that the standards reached are

comparable with those in other UK HEIs with which they are familiar, and again they consistently do so.

2.8 The overall NSS result for 'Learning Opportunities' shows that Norland performs well above average overall, with a score of 89% against a sector average of 84%. In detail, we are one point above sector average in relation to whether 'My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas and concepts in depth', and two below in relation to 'My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics'. The latter is perhaps to be expected in such a highly specialised programme. In relation to whether 'My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt', where sector average is worst, Norland performs very significantly above average, with a score of 98% against the sector 81%.

Appropriate contact time

2.9 The most recent (2017) Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) data on 'contact hours' indicates that the all-providers average student workload is 12.14 hours weekly. Students at alternative providers typically experience slightly fewer hours, at 11.92. Their data on workload by subject suggests Education students' workload is generally slightly above average, at 13 contact hours. The Norland course is strongly professional, and the hours spent by students more closely resemble those of students in science settings, where there are extensive laboratory or workshop commitments. Consequently contact hours are high at some 24 hours per week (except in the weeks devoted to placements). Tutorial hours are in addition to these commitments. In both years in which the College has been surveyed for NSS, no student has ever commented that the hours are too high: on the contrary they make comments such as: 'The vast amount of training days, speakers and workshops I have found very interesting and beneficial' (2017); 'There is so much that wouldn't be part of a normal degree or training for the early years that makes the course so unique' (2016). More recent internal surveys of students on course complement these findings, including comments like the following: 'Hugely grateful for the amount of time and effort our lecturing staff put into making time for each and every student'.

Valuing teaching

Facilitating excellent teaching

2.10 Of the 10 teaching staff for the degree programme, 9 have teaching qualifications. Of the 5 diploma staff, 4 have teaching qualifications. The small numbers and perhaps the nature of the subject make comparisons with other higher education institutions (HEIs) less meaningful, but it is informative to compare this very high proportion of staff with teaching qualifications with the data in the latest Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) figures available, published by the Higher Education for England Funding Council (HEFCE) as '2014-15 Staff record: Academic teaching qualifications' (though the College was not asked to submit data to HESA in this, the latest available year). Norland's figure of 87% would rank the College 2nd from131, only 1% below the top-ranking institution. The median figure is 45%.

2.11 Norland staff job descriptions include the expectation of continuing professional development, and staff confirmed to the 2017 HER review team that they were encouraged and supported to make use of opportunities afforded by the College for professional development, research and scholarly activity. Besides internal events, a ring-fenced budget (2.6 per cent of overall staffing budget) is available to staff for attendance at conferences and applying for Higher Education Academy (HEA) fellowship. The 2017 HER report states that students considered the staff to be suitably trained and qualified, and that both students and employers commented positively that academic staff kept abreast of current developments within the early years sector.

2.12 Peer and management observations take place every year and a summary report is produced that identifies good lecture room practice to be shared across the team. Monthly

whole-staff meetings highlight individual successes, e.g. publications and conference presentations. Weekly lecturing meetings have 'sharing good practice' as a standing agenda item, and the Teaching and Learning Committee is also a forum for staff to share ideas across the team. In the 2017 HER report, the review team concluded that the comprehensive range of staff development opportunities and its positive impact on the student learning experience is 'good practice'; and 'enhancement', including the contribution of staff development to enhancement, is 'commended'.

Rigour and stretch

Course design, development, standards stretch students

2.13 In addition to academic and practical content that QAA reviewers have considered to 'lead current practice' (RSCD 2014; see also paragraph 5.2 below), the degree course includes a programme of master classes, guest lectures and visits to ensure students' learning experiences are cutting edge, and incorporate insights into new research and developments within the sector. Examples include a master class on Emotion Coaching, a guest lecture on neurophysiology and school readiness, and a visit to a children's hospice.

2.14 In 2017, in a graduating class of 68 students, 19 won first-class degrees, 32 upper-second-class, 10 lower-second, and 4 ordinary degrees. (Three students are yet to complete.) These results were outstandingly good, and significantly better than the previous year's good results (36 'good honours' degrees from a class of 60). The College is required to comment on degree results formally to University of Gloucestershire as our awarding body. The College provided an account of the possible reasons for the high number of first-class degrees, in a comprehensive annual report for 2016/7, a procedure which has consistently been praised by QAA reviewers as an exercise conducted 'meticulously', and which has regularly been described as a 'feature of good practice' (see all three QAA review reports from 2014 to date). We were able to rule out lack of rigour in standards. The external examiner (appointed by the University, not the College, and with a primary line of report to the University) explicitly states that standards are properly set and applied. The University has a 'link tutor', who moderates assignments and provides a written report on them. A senior member of the University chairs final examination boards, which were held at the University until the end of 2016/7 but are now held at the College, in recognition of the awarding body's confidence in our standards. The College concluded that the outstandingly good outcomes were due to strongly increased student support, and changes in the programme to provide more varied learning opportunities, resulting in better student engagement.

2.15 2017 NSS scores show that students consider the Learning Opportunities good, with an overall score of 89% against a sector average of 84%. While positive responses to 'My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas and concepts in depth' is slightly above average at 85%, and to 'My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics' slightly below average at 83%, positive responses to 'My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt' are outstanding at 98%, against a sector average of 81%. In our field , we regard ability to apply knowledge as the surest sign of a demanding and relevant programme.

2.16 The external examiner explicitly confirms that, in her view, 'the students undertaking the BA(Hons) at Norland College show evidence of systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including the acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline. This includes an ability to deploy accurately established techniques, as well as conceptual understanding and an ability to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources.' (2017)

Courses develop independence, knowledge, understanding, skills

2.17 The Norland course exposes students to a great variety of learning opportunities, designed to exploit the fullest range of learning styles. The 2017 external examiner's report strongly

commended this aspect of our work, stating that 'I am impressed with the quality of the learning experiences that students are exposed to, such as the learning resources, practical opportunities and the broad and wide variety of assessment material. It appears that students are well-taught, and a great deal of resources and effort are put into providing the students with a variety of learning experiences. This includes support from dedicated staff, small group sessions and individual support as well as appropriate learning resources, both in the college and beyond through placements.'

Feedback

Assessment effectively supports development, progression, attainment

2.18 The College's 'Assessment and Feedback Policy' affirms that the purposes of assessment and feedback are to promote deep learning and to engage learners, and to help learners to reflect on feedback, in order to evaluate and enhance personal performance, and to provide a basis for decisions regarding progression and award.

2.19 External monitoring agencies confirm that the College's teaching, learning and assessment strategies are consistent with our academic objectives and stated learning outcomes. In 2016, the External Examiner stated: 'Students are exposed to high quality learning experiences, which is also reflected in the wide variety of assessment material', and 'I feel that staff are sensitive and fair in their marking. I was presented with examples of scripts from different modules reflecting different assessments and grades. There is a nice spread from lower to higher grades, and this is also reflected in the feedback'. QAA, in its 2014 review, commented: 'Highly motivated and efficient curriculum teams employ varied learning styles that provide every student with an opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes'.

Feedback effectively supports development, progression, attainment

2.20 The External Examiner in her 2016 report commented that students were well prepared for assessment: 'Norland College uses a wide variety of assessments; assessment material includes presentations, as well as essays and portfolios… It was evident from the work presented to me, that students … were well-supported and prepared for the relevant assignments'.

2.21 Clarity of communication to students regarding assessment criteria and practices is reflected in satisfaction rates, which have been above the national average in both NSS exercises in which the College has been eligible to engage. The 2016 NSS showed that 81% of students expressed satisfaction with assessment and feedback, against a national average of 74%. 84% of students agreed that 'Feedback on my work has been prompt', well above the national average of 72%. In the 2017 NSS, overall satisfaction for assessment and feedback had declined to 75%, though it still exceed the sector average of 73%.

2.22 Nonetheless, we have not been complacent about feedback. Overall, the External Examiner has been complimentary about the College feedback arrangements on assessment: her 2016 report stated that 'tutors use constructive feedback and the students are well-supported'. However, she also found that some tutors provided more detailed feedback than others, and advised greater consistency. In response, the course action plan for 2016/17 incorporated changes to the assessment feedback form to include specific sections on 'Areas for Development' and 'Strengths'.

3 Learning Environment

Resources

Physical resources used effectively to develop learning and skills

3.1 It is in the area of physical learning resources that the College scored lowest in NSS 2017, and students made particularly critical comments on library space and IT provision. The opening of the new buildings for the 2017 intake will, we believe, have answered many of the problems that arose in in 2016/7, when existing teaching facilities were stretched to the limit, despite the use of temporary accommodation. As described above, these difficulties were short-term, and due to building delays. While the College had allowed for contingency, assuming there was bound to be some delay, it had not allowed for the length of the delay that actually ensued.

3.2 Nonetheless, in her 2017 report the External Examiner commented that 'Students are exposed to high quality learning experiences… and… resources… This includes support from dedicated staff, small group sessions and individual support as well as appropriate learning resources, both in the College and beyond through placements'. The QAA report on the College's RSCD in 2014 commented on the 'generous provision of staffing and other educational resources.'

Digital resources used effectively to develop learning and skills

3.3 The questions related to IT provision have had the worst responses in both the 2016 and 2017 NSS exercises. A key complaint, revealed by internal student evaluation, was the speed and functionality of the Wi-Fi network. The College recognised the problem, and planned major improvements associated with the new teaching accommodation. As explained elsewhere in this submission, the building schedule did not go according to plan, and it was therefore not surprising that the 2017 results did not improve on those of 2016. However, the new teaching accommodation is now in use, and is equipped with the best fibre line available, to support the fastest Wi-Fi access available. A strategic review of IT is currently under way, with a view to the implementation of the project plan in 2018/9 and there has been a new appointment of an IT Manager, to work closely with the outsource company. The College can reasonably claim that it uses available technology creatively and well, a claim supported by the QAA monitoring report of 2016 (i.e. prior to the opening of the new facilities): 'In particular, the College has successfully consolidated the strategic approach to the use of technology-enabled learning and the exceptionally rapid development of the enriched virtual learning environment by means of carefully organised and systematic staff development. Students greatly appreciate both developments.'

Scholarship, research, professional practice

Research and scholarship enrich student experience

3.4 Norland is a teaching intensive institution, though the new mission (revised for 2017/8: see paragraph 1.1) states our intention to enrich the student experience by increased attention to research and other scholarly activities. A new principal, appointed in July 2016, brings a strong research profile to the College, and the new appointment of a Research Fellow, with some co-ordinating responsibilities, will bring a more professional approach to the management of staff activities in research, and the consultancy linked to it. The College also has a Research, Consultancy and Training department, staffed by 2 full-time consultants. All staff continuing professional development (CPD), research and scholarly activity is logged by the human resources (HR) department and staff are expected to reflect on the impact of such activity and to feed new learning into their teaching. There is a timetabled two-day internal conference each year to enable staff share the findings of their individual research projects with each other and with students. The new strategic plan (which may be found on the Norland website) explicitly links staff research with student activities, 'so that all staff and students participate in improving the processes, products, services and culture of Norland'.

Norland students are encouraged to participate directly in Norland research, and are actively prepared to do so. The second year course includes a research ethics module, and the Level 6 dissertation is a key part of the assessment requirements for the degree.

Professional practice enriches student experience

3.5 All Norland academic staff have some prior experience of working in an early years setting, as teachers, nannies, nursery workers/managers, health visitors, or children's nurses. All regularly update their competence through shadowing of early years practitioners, or nannies, or early years teachers. The backgrounds of those responsible for teaching the Diploma course, which is integrated with the degree, is particularly valuable in bringing recent practical experience to bear on the academic work. Student comments from NSS bear this out: 'Very attentive, helpful lecturers…. They're very passionate about the lecture content and have a good range of experience between them'; (2016) 'the lecturers have really good experiences to share which have allowed me to link [the course] to theory therefore learn better' (2017).

Personalised learning

3.6 The overall progress of students is rigorously monitored by all tutors under an Improving Progress' policy. Each semester, tutors meet to discuss each individual student. Each tutor gives a rating to each student and provides comments for green, amber or red ratings in a 'traffic light' system. If amber or red grades have been given, the personal tutor follows this up with a meeting during which the issues are addressed and an action plan produced. In addition, any student who receives a refer or fail grade is invited to a one-to-one meeting with the tutor to ensure that the student understands what aspects of their work require improvement and is supported to make these improvements.

3.7 The 2017 QAA HER reviewers reported that the 'traffic light' system 'worked well', a view supported by NSS results: the core metrics show a positive flag for 'Academic support', and scores exceed national averages in all three 'Academic Support' questions.

4 Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

Positive Outcomes for All

4.1 The College has an Equal Opportunities and Diversity policy and complies actively and willingly with the provisions of the Equality Act. All QAA reports have confirmed that staff adapt teaching and learning resources to the individual needs of students, and that the College information systems facilitate this.

4.2 Nonetheless, it is the case that cultural norms have an unusually strong impact on the Norland student population. In particular, in the vocational sector in which the College operates, the workforce is overwhelmingly female. In addition, the demographic of the student population attracted to Norland has, in the past, been quite narrow, in terms of socio-economic background. The College has a standing widening participation working group, tasked with maintaining continuing oversight of equal opportunities and diversity within the student recruitment process and of supporting students from minority backgrounds, and this is delivering results, with over 80% of new students now coming from the non-independent sector. The College recently invited VI form students from a school in Southwark to attend a taster day at the College in order to encourage widening participation from minority groups. A programme of visits to and from FE colleges and other schools has been established. Norland has also recently established a LGBTQI society in partnership with the students, and is exploring various mechanisms to promote the increase in recruitment of male students. We are also actively engaged in a regional interest group for Men in the Early Years (MITEY). The fruits of these efforts are already being seen, with a five-fold increase in applications from men for 2017.

4.3 The Widening Participation action plan and academic operational plan also outline initiatives to help students to fund their studies. The College has a bursary scheme, and we ring-fence some of the College bursaries for particular demographic groups, including as care leavers, males and BME young people. We are encouraging holiday companies to recruit students to work through the vacations, to help fund their studies.

4.4 Initiatives to assist those who are at greater risk of not achieving positive outcomes extend to more narrowly academic activities. The College has an Assessment and Feedback Policy which sets out the purposes of assessment and feedback; the principles of assessment design and maintenance of standards; and the procedures for developing and marking of assessments. The policy includes provision for an 'Assessment Scrutiny Panel', whose primary function is to ensure that assessment conforms with approved programme and module specifications. Most of its members are of course teaching staff, however, membership also includes the Student Support Officer and a member of the Learning Resource Centre staff, who are there to ensure that assessments are equitable, that reasonable adjustments relating to disability are anticipated and consequent learning resource requirements can be met. The 2017 QAA HER team concluded that 'the role and inclusive composition of the Assessment Scrutiny Panel in guaranteeing that assessment is equitable, valid and reliable [and] is good practice'.

Employability and Transferable Skills

4.5 Norland degree students are also registered for the Norland Diploma, a four-year programme consisting of three years of taught provision integrated with the degree, and a fourth year of study and paid employment, the 'Newly Qualified Nanny' (NQN) year. The Norland Diploma is a programme of practical training and experiential learning which supports the students in their progression to being an early-years practitioner. In NSS 2017, 98% of respondents agreed positively with the statement 'My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt ', against a sector average of 81%.

4.6 Students put a high value on the opportunity to combine theoretical and practical work. This is reflected in the following quotations from students in the 2016 NSS: 'The course has really improved my knowledge and practice and has put me on the right path for being the childcare practitioner that I can be' and 'How the placements, degree and diploma come together to really give us a really in depth knowledge base.' They were echoed in 2017, and (as described above, paragraph 2.6) two out of seven 'features of good practice' identified in the report relate to the integration of theoretical approaches with practice.

4.7 The importance of this aspect of our work was confirmed by the 2014 and 2016 QAA reports. The 2014 QAA review stated: 'Through the combination of these two awards, a Norlander is highly skilled in the practical aspects of caring for and supporting the development of children in the 0–8-year age bracket, and has the underpinning knowledge and understanding required to carry out these duties to the highest standards'. The 2016 report said: 'A particular feature of good practice identified in the review report of 2014 was the systematic enhancement of the employability of the students. This has been strengthened by further integrating theory and practice and by developing the Norland Diploma which students take in parallel with the degree.'

4.8 The College has its own in-house employment agency, through which consultants support Norlanders in finding positions working with families as nannies. As part of the service, the agency ensures that the Norlander's CV is up to date, arranges DBS checks where necessary and obtains references on the Norlander's behalf. The consultants then put CVs forward to families, and guide and advise the Norlander through the process of interview, job trials, working conditions, and salary and contract negotiations. Whether a Norlander finds a position through Norland agency or through another agency, Norland agency consultants remain on hand to support them with any employment related issue. Once in employment, if

a Norlander has an issue or query with regards to an aspect of early years practice, the agency is able to refer him or her to Norland's early years consultants and/or members of the Norland academic team, who can provide ongoing advice and support. Norlanders are also offered a programme of CPD training courses exclusive to them. The CPD includes training in many different areas, and is delivered both by in-house early years consultants and by external organisations. The CPD courses are not free, but are priced to ensure that self-funding Norlanders are able to attend. This continuing service is unusually comprehensive, and, excepting CPD course fees, free to alumni. It is also unique amongst UK HE early years providers.

Employability and Further Study: 'Highly Skilled Employment'

4.9 As indicated in 'Provider Context' above, this section is critical to the argument in our TEF submission: if the negative flag and the exclamation mark for this core metric are taken at face value, the Gold characteristics that earn three flags in the core metrics for 2017, and further flag in a different area in the split metrics from Year 2, are annulled. The fact that 100% of students go on to 'Employment or further study' (earning a flag) while 0% go on the 'Highly skilled employment or further study' suggests immediately that the figures obscure something anomalous.

4.10 The Norland course advertises itself as highly vocational: students who start the course know that they wish to make a career working with young children and their families, in a pre-school, early years setting, or, for the great majority, working within a family as a Nanny. As indicated by the core metrics, Norland's continuation rates are outstandingly good, with an indicator of 98.6% and a positive flag. Students know their career aspirations before they start the course, very few of them change their minds, and few fail to complete or choose to leave. The College takes great pains to prepare students for their chosen career, and to enable them to find work in it. The 'Norland Nanny' is in very high demand. The College internal employment agency is able to place every single student: there are more than 8 jobs on the agency books for every experienced 'Norlander' registered for work. For newly qualified nannies (NQNs), i.e. those in their first year post-qualification, there are more than 3 prospective employers. The College is therefore outstandingly successful in placing its graduates in the career they chose at the time of application, and for which they are qualified.

4.11 In relation to TEF, the problem lies in how the students' chosen career is categorised. The background papers to TEF, in particular Blyth and Clementon's *Analysis of highly skilled employment outcomes: Research report* (DfE, 2016), state that for the purposes of the report they take as given the standard way of defining 'highly-skilled employment' from the TEF specification (also used by Unistats), and while they 'acknowledge that some providers may perform less well against this measure for reasons unrelated to teaching quality', 'the appropriateness of that definition is not assessed further in this report'. They give an example of HEIs that may perform less well: 'specialist HEIs' with 'graduates from arts or drama degrees [who] may not consider a SOC 1-3 occupation to be a desirable outcome'. The example refers not to the employability of the students, or the support from the HEI, or even 'transferable skills', but to student intentions. Student intention is a major consideration in the Blyth and Clementon report: they state that one of the reasons that entry to a 'highly skilled' profession is so important in a measure of teaching excellence is that 'A key motivation for many students entering higher education is the attainment of the skills and qualifications needed to realise their career ambitions'. In the case of Norland, *all* graduating students are able and are enabled to 'realise their career ambitions', and we know that almost all do so, since so many are placed by the Norland agency.

4.12 As explained in the HEFCE TEF procedural guidance circular (2017/25), the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DHLE) survey asks those in employment to provide a job title, and 'That job title is mapped to the Standard Occupational Classification'. The actual jobs that Norland nannies do are not determined to be 'low-skilled' or 'non-professional' by being compared with a set of 'highly-skilled' or 'professional' attributes. The title, not the

occupational characteristics, determines the category into which the job falls. As indicated elsewhere in this submission, a Norland graduate actively wishes to be called a 'Norland Nanny': the title confers status and employability. However, a 'nanny' is coded to occupational group 5, and only jobs that are coded in SOC major groups 1-3 are counted as 'highly skilled'.

4.13 Norland graduates are certainly qualified for a 'highly skilled' career in the sense that they earn 'highly skilled' salaries. According to Unistats data for courses with similar descriptors ('Education Early years single'; 'Early childhood'; 'Childhood studies') from the four university providers with similar courses nearest to Norland, the average salary six months after completing the course is £16,000–£17,000, and the salary range £13,00–£20,000. The equivalent average salary across the UK is £16,000. The Unistats data for average Norland salary after six months is £21,000, with a range of £21,000–£27,000. The HEFCE procedural guidance (Circular 2017/25) notes that the median salary after 6 months for its 'highly skilled' occupations is £21,000.

4.14 After 40 months Unistats data list the average for the four other providers' courses as £22,330, the range £17,000–£27,000. Since DHLE data has only been collected from Norland graduates for one year, data from Unistats for 40 months after graduation is not available. However, the Norland agency collects salary data, which can provide comparisons. After 28 months, those who graduated in 2014 and were placed in jobs through the Norland Agency (26 students) have an average salary of £40,760, and the range is £22,204–£100,000. For the 37 graduates in 2016 who were placed in jobs through the Norland Agency, the average salary after 6 months is £36,324, with a range of £22,887–£80,000. Average salary for all 149 Norland nannies placed in full-time, permanent positions by the agency over the last 3 years, whenever they graduated, is £40,416, and the range £21,000–£104,790. While the £104,790 is admittedly an outlier, 41% are over £40,000, and 20% over £50,000. These figures do not account for the fact that in many cases, the Norlanders are also living rent-free. Norland nannies' salaries are demonstrably commensurate with those for 'professional' or 'highly skilled' work.

4.15 Moreover, use of an extant and recognised occupational classification system other than UK SOC would mean a different result. The International Labour Office's *International Standard Classification of Occupations* (Vol 1. Geneva, 2102), distinguishes between occupational groups responsible for the care of pre-school children. In particular, it singles out one set as qualitatively different from the others. Individuals in this set 'plan, organise and conduct educational play activities that are intended to promote the development of children below primary school age' (para. 200, p. 43). Unlike those in the other groups, they are likely to have tertiary qualifications in education and early childhood development. The standard description of this group exactly fits the Norland graduate: 'Early childhood educators promote the social, physical and intellectual development of children below primary school age through the provision of educational play activities'. Critically, for the present argument, this group is identified as sub-group 2342, in the same major group as 'University and Higher Education Teachers' (2310) and 'Primary School Teachers' (2341). Like the other teachers and educators in classification, the group is labelled 'professionals'.

4.16 100% of Norland graduates realise their intentions, with a qualification that makes them eminently employable in the profession to which they aspire, in which they can expect to earn a 'professional' salary, in most cases over £38,500 within little more than two years, and potentially over £100,000. The Catch-22 is that the DHLE/SOC method of defining 'highly skilled', used uncritically, penalises Norland for its very success. If it realises its mission to achieve teaching excellence in relation to early years education, Norland must inevitably fail to achieve Gold status—unless the DHLE/SOC employment data are properly understood.

5 Conclusion

5.1 The College's current mission shows considerable continuity with its earliest objectives. Norland was founded by Emily Ward in 1892, and named the 'Norland Institute' due to its first location at Norland Place in London. Mrs Ward pioneered the professionalization of early-years education and care, recognising the need for babies' and young children's 'educare' to be elevated to a skilled profession that requires expert and high quality education and training. Mrs Ward's 1892 vision anticipated the research evidence, which demonstrates how high quality early education and childcare have positive long term effects on children's later learning and achievements. The UK government's 2012 independent review of early education and childcare qualifications (the 'Nutbrown review') emphasised the impact of a graduate workforce on child development and the need for rigorous qualifications to ensure a competent and confident workforce. The strong correlation between quality of provision and the level of early years professional qualifications has led to the rise of early years education degree courses and significant investment by government and families.

5.2 It remains the case that early years education must still strive to ensure its professionals are treated with the same respect as those in other educational sectors. Reasons have been discussed extensively in the research literature, and it is generally felt that the valuation implied by the SOC classifications is probably related to an illegitimate separation between 'care' and education', and the gender of the great majority of early years practitioners (a particularly topical factor). However, QAA has already guided the way to a less prejudiced and more intelligent approach: the report of the 2014 Review for Special Course Designation said: 'this historically significant provision retains its traditional values and continues to lead current practices', a view further supported by subsequent QAA 'engagements'. The College is convinced that the TEF panels will apply a critical and informed view of Norland's achievements to the Core metrics, and confirm a Gold award.