Central Bedfordshire College
10002061

TEF Year Three provider submission

Provider Context
This section gives some background to place the College in context. It addresses the College's Vision and Mission, its reputation, its facilities, enrolment numbers and its curriculum and quality assurance.

Central Bedfordshire College is a general further education college which offers Higher Education. The College's primary focus is to provide vocational and technical education and training for its local community, which consists of Dunstable, Luton, Leighton Buzzard, and surrounding villages. The College provides vocational learning across the range of sector subject areas at all qualification levels from Entry Level to Level 6. There are approximately 4,500 students, including 188 students on undergraduate Higher Education programmes and 20 students taking PGCE/PCE. Prescribed Higher Education currently forms 6.4% of the College's income.

Vision and Mission
The College publishes its Vision: *Central Bedfordshire College transforms and enriches lives through learning and enterprise into employability* and its Mission: *We will provide excellent learning and progression for our communities in Bedfordshire and beyond. We will be innovative, enterprising and inclusive in what we do and how we do it. We will value and support our learners, our colleagues, and our partnerships.*

All College activity is informed by the College's strategic objectives, as detailed in the Strategic Plan which includes the following key outcomes: *to be relevant to learners, employers and parents; providing a relevant, effective curriculum within a warm learning environment; to be financially resilient and able to invest and grow.*

Aims and Objectives for Higher Education are established in and developed from the Higher Education Strategy. The Strategy was revised and approved by Governors in 2016. Its stated Aim is: *To develop a Higher Education curriculum which is highly relevant to local employers, attractive to local people, supporting their participation in Higher Education, which meets the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and which is financially resilient, supporting investment and growth.* Objectives are:

- *The curriculum is demonstrated to meet the requirements of employers as identified by employer engagement in planning and through valid labour market intelligence*
- *All courses recruit to target through a curriculum that is relevant to the local community*
- *QAA HER and subsequent regulatory activity demonstrates that the expectations of the UK Quality Code are met or exceeded.*

Reputation
The College's reputation as a provider of high quality education and training is well-established locally and regionally. It was judged "*Good with Outstanding Features*" for the second time by Ofsted in Spring 2016. Its last QAA Higher Education Review, also in Spring 2016, judged the College to meet all the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. Good practice was identified in *the impartial and inclusive nature of advice and guidance provided for students during the recruitment process* and *the introduction of Philosophical Enquiry as a methodology across all programmes to enhance student capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.* The College met the requirements of its first HEFCE Annual Provider Review in April 2017. The College holds the Matrix standard for its Information, Advice and Guidance. It is proud to have been confirmed as a Leader in Diversity by the National Centre for Diversity in October 2016, having held Investor in Diversity status for some years. In evidencing these standards, the College has demonstrated that it is held in high regard by students, employers, strategic leaders in business and the public sector and by communities.

Facilities
The College has made and continues to make strategic investment in its buildings to enhance the student experience. A large new state-of-the-art space for learning came into operation in September 2015 at the Kingsway Campus, representing £15m investment. Another new building at the Incuba in Dunstable, open for the past four years, offers high-quality accommodation for exhibitions, demonstrations and teaching and learning and has a particular emphasis on the green environment. The building of a new centre for engineering

has been completed in Leighton Buzzard and has opened for teaching this academic year. Higher Education students in Engineering will be based there from 2018. Otherwise, Higher Education students are based at the Kingway Campus, making use of modern, flexible-use lecture and seminar rooms. The new-build at Kingsway includes a new Learning Resource area which gives students access to high-quality on-line resources using their own or static devices and expert advice on accessing online recources from Learning Resource staff. IT and Computing resources have been upgraded. The Store, on the Kingsway Campus, is a building dedicated to Media, Photography and Graphics and there was an upgrade of equipment in this subject area last year.

Higher Education Enrolments

Higher Education Undergraduate enrolment stood at 188 students in December 2017. A further 30 students are recruited to join in January 2018, taking the roll over 200 for the first time. There are 20 students enrolled on a PGCE/PCE course. Of the Undergraduates, 77 are enrolled on full-time FdAs with the University of Bedfordshire and 90 on Pearson HNCs and HNDs. A further 20 are enrolled on part-time programmes with UoB and there is 1 part-time Pearson student. There were 127 new starts in September 2017 and 61 students are continuing their studies on FdAs. The current offer comprises FdAs in Child and Family Studies, Educational Practice and Special Educational Needs and Disability Studies as well as HNC/D in Business, Health and Social Care, Creative Media Production, Photography, Sport and Computing Systems and Development.

Relevance of the curriculum and quality assurance

In order to ensure relevance, the College directs its development of Higher Education programmes in line with local government data on the number of local residents who remain in education to NVQ Level 4, South East Midlands Local Education Partnership (SEMLEP) skills priorities, and feedback from the College's Level 3 students, who are looking for local progression routes into Higher Education. The College has a long-standing partnership with the University of Bedfordshire and a more recent partnership with the University of Northampton. 47% of students are registered with Pearson for HNCs/Ds. The College choses the Awarding Body whose programmes most closely match identified student and employer need. It has developed its own internal quality assurance systems to meet the requirements of all of its Awarding Bodies and to satisfy its own Governing Body that its quality assurance procedures are robust and reliable, regardless of Awarding Body. These systems were subject to Institutional Review by each partner University in 2015 and the rigorous scrutiny given then, as well as QAA HER, has given the College confidence in their reliability. For the past two years, in order to satisfy the requirements of HECFE Annual Provider Review, the Governing Body has scrutinised outcomes from the procedure and the evidence for them to satisfy themselves that procedures are robust.

Aspect of Quality: Teaching Quality

The quality of teaching at the College is consistently high. Consistency is assured through policy and guidance for teachers. Policy and guidance are developed at strategic level in collaboration with students, employers and stakeholders and express the College's purpose and deliberate intention to provide excellent teaching to all. Policy outlines to teachers what the College's expectations are and sets standards so that the impact of implementation can be monitored by managers and improvement planned. The Policies which give guidance specifically to Higher Education teachers are: HE Teaching and Learning Policy; HE Assessment Policy; HE Student Engagement Policy; HE Work-based Learning, Work-related Learning and Placement Policy. These are explicitly aligned to the UK Quality Code. All College teachers and managers implement the Equal Opportunities, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, the Safeguarding Policy, the Staff Induction Policy, Student Induction Policy and the Tutorial Policy. There is a Higher Education Quality Staff Guide, which is aligned to the UK Quality Code and applies to all prescribed Higher Education work. The Higher Education Quality Staff Guide is a procedural document which sets out how teachers and teams should carry out their work. The Guide helps to assure the quality of the student experience and the maintenance of academic standards in two ways: by setting out how the performance of teachers is monitored and reviewed and how they are developed in their work; by setting out the processes for the monitoring and review of courses and programmes and how action plans should be developed and monitored. Impact and outcomes are monitored through a central Committee, the Higher Education Strategy Group which reports three times a year to the Governors' Standards Committee; this ensures that there is a strategic overview of the continuous improvement of teaching and student outcomes.

TQ1 Student Engagement

Teaching provides effective stimulation, challenge and contact time that encourages students to engage and actively commit to their studies

Higher Education student engagement is seen by the College as an essential and ongoing aspect of continuous quality improvement and an important aspect of College life…The review team found the arrangements that the College already has in place to be effective in practice and that the College is demonstrably committed to improving and developing its arrangements for student engagement by taking deliberate steps at both an individual and collective level.(QAA HER Report 2016.)

The College values the contribution of students to the design and delivery of its programmes and seeks feedback whenever it can. There is a Student Engagement Policy which guides staff about how to ensure student engagement. The QAA HER review team, in Spring 2016, **affirmed** the College's *recent steps to involve students in decisions that impact on the enhancement of their educational experience.* A full academic year later, these actions are fully embedded and their impact has been through two full cycles of impact assessment. Student representatives are routinely involved in the deliberative structure of the College and the QA cycle. There is an annual HE Student Forum when all HE students are involved in a Conference to discuss the quality of their course and make suggestions for improvement. University of Bedfordshire students attend regular Study Days at the University where they are consulted about the design and delivery of their course. There is a Student Representative on every Course Team, which discusses a Course Journal regularly and the Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) each summer; this forms the basis for the Course Quality Improvement Plan for the coming year. All students are involved in end of unit reviews, through discussion or survey, which gives evidence for the AMR but also for direct improvement in the delivery of the unit. Course Teams report to the Higher Education Strategy Group (HESG), which is the central co-ordinating body for Higher Education across the College. This Committee, too, has a student representative. It reports to the Governors' Standards Committee, which also has a student representative and meets regularly to consider HE matters. There are many examples of impact, from a change in procedure across a UoB network in order to ensure the timely publication of grades to the improvement of the written guidance of an assignment brief the better to align with revised assessment criteria of the unit. The results of the NSS are reported to the HESG, Standards Committee and Course Teams. The impact of student engagement in these processes is collected and assessed annually in the Higher Education Self Evaluation Report, approved by Governors and published on the College website along with a Quality Enhancement Plan for the coming year; this is monitored by the HESG.

Examples of the impact of student engagement in course delivery and design range from course-specific improvement to change effective at the level of strategic partnership. For instance, the written guidance published with an Assignment Brief was revised and made more specific in order to align better with amended assessment criteria in a unit. At strategic level, a concern raised by student representatives at a course team meeting had impact across a whole University network because of the way that student engagement is embedded in the deliberative structure and quality assurances processes of the College. Student representatives at a course team meeting raised a concern that Assignment grades were published late because of the slow working of the cross-marking and moderation process across a network of several colleges and the University. The matter could not be resolved at course leader/link tutor level, nor by the Higher Education Co-ordinator working with the University Account Manager, because it concerned validated University quality processes, beyond the authority of staff this level. As a matter of procedure, the concern was reported at Higher Education Strategy Group. As a matter of procedure again, the matter was reported from HESG to the Governors' Standards Committee, also including a Student Representative. The Chair of the Standards Committee was able to raise the matter directly with the University Dean of Partnerships who was able to work with the University Department concerned to ensure that the moderation requirement could be carried out more quickly, so that assessment turnaround times could be met, without compromising confidence in the accuracy of grading or undermining the quality process. The matter was monitored by HESG over the following six months and it was confirmed that the new moderation process worked more quickly and turnaround times were now being met.

Students appreciate the sustained close contact with teachers that comes from studying at the College, evidenced through the Student Forum, NSS and feedback to the University of Bedfordshire's QAA Review team. Class sizes are small. The largest this year is 18 students. Timetables are arranged to accommodate work related learning for those undertaking work experience, and work based learning for those in work and also to accommodate the needs of the large number of parents of young children in the student cohort. Students enjoy their lessons; weekly attendance is typically 93% on Higher Education courses. All students have regular contact with a small teaching team and every student has an Academic Supervisor responsible for monitoring their progress and organising effective intervention should problems arise. Attendance and engagement with VLE materials are monitored, as well as academic progress. This enables personalised approaches to learning so that teachers tailor support for learning readily to individual student need. Where appropriate, Academic Supervisors make referral to specialist support available in the College, ranging from Academic Skills provided by LRC Staff to financial and welfare support or careers guidance. Academic Supervisors identify students at risk and course teams plan interventions. The Higher Education Strategy Group receives a monthly update on a risk register of students at risk of failing to complete or achieve and monitors the impact of individual interventions for these students. For example, in January 2016, a student became homeless. Her Academic Supervisor approached the Student Welfare Team. Temporary accommodation was arranged in a local University's Halls of Residence, funded for a month from the Student Welfare Fund administered by the Higher Education Strategy Group. The student was able to remain in the local area and on her course, which she completed successfully the following summer.

There is a College Induction Policy which guides teachers with a checklist of activities for the first six weeks, to orient students towards effective study in the College and at the level of the course. The HE Student Forum held annually in February assesses the effectiveness of Induction and recommends improvement when necessary. For the past three years, Induction has been judged effective by the majority of students attending the Forum. *Students reported that unit specifications are given at the start of the year and that specific sessions are held to discuss what is required for assignments.* (QAA HER Report 2016)

Teaching is supported by well-used Virtual Learning Environments, which are used to publish learning and assessment materials to students and to give ready access to portals such as JISC and Athens. UoB students use the university's BREO platform. HNC/D students use Moodle. Expectations for content are published to teachers and assured through the Observation of Teaching and Learning Process, conducted by the Learning Improvement Team. Usage is reported and monitored by Course Teams and also by the Learning Improvement Team. Materials include pre-reading and links for further research as well as quizzes and other activities and materials delivered in lessons.

The College's Tutorial Policy ensures that every student has an Academic Supervisor whose primary duty is to monitor learning and support students to set targets for improvement. ProMonitor, an online target setting and monitoring system, is used by teachers and students to record progress and set targets for improvement. The use of ProMonitor enables staff and students to have ready access to the same information about student progress, and it enables academic and quality managers to have access to the information too. The quality of SMART targets is monitored and reported on by the Learning Area Manager responsible for each course. The impact of these processes is evaluated through the Observation of Teaching and Learning process and outcomes are reported to the Governors' Standards Committee by the Learning Improvement Manager. This system is judged through this reporting process to be highly effective in encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning.

NSS 2017	College%	Region%	Sector%
I feel part of a community of staff and students	80.56	70.36	70.26

Students interviewed were very positive about the College's approach to EDI issues. For example: encouraged to express a range of views and they feel respected for doing this; they can attend focus groups on protected charateristics. (Leaders in Diversity Report 2016)
There is flexible timing – not like a normal university environment; it's flexible for my learning needs as I can still work around the course (Year Two Child and Family Studies student, HE Student Forum 2017)

TQ2 Valuing Teaching
Institutional culture facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching

The College understands that its staff are its most important resource, and its expectations of teachers are high. Teachers are systematically supported to achieve excellence and are recognised and rewarded when they do. Staff are recruited in line with the College's Recruitment and Selection Policy. An observation of teaching forms part of the interview process. Students are also asked to provide feedback based on the lesson observed.

The Staff Induction Policy applies to all members of staff who join the College. It seeks to induct all new colleagues into the mission, vision and values of the College and its policies and procedures for delivering them. The Policy outines and induction process that aims to assist new employees to perform well in their new roles as early as possible, by assimilating them into the organisation quickly and enabling them to establish positive relationships with new colleagues. Importantly, the process seeks to induct new colleagues into the values of the institution.

Teachers of vocational and technical courses typically work in a professional setting and hold professional qualifications in their subject areas. The College actively recruits such professionals into teaching, but requires all teachers to hold or work towards a PGCE or Certificate in Education. The College offers the PGCE/Cert Ed to vocational professionals in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire. Teachers receive a salary enhancement when they achieve PGCE/Cert Ed. Academic staff teaching on Higher Education courses are expected to be qualified to or working towards Level 7 in their vocational or technical subject area.

The College actively develops its Higher Education staff and supports academic staff in gaining Higher Degrees. Of the 17 staff involved in Higher Education in the last three years, one completed Masters with the University of Bedfordshire June 2014; another has received a doctorate from the Institute of Education 2015; three more completed Masters in 2016 and 2017. One teacher is working towards a second PGCE, this one specialising in teaching in Higher Education. The College promotes and supports HEA Fellowship in order to strengthen professional development and promote scholarly activity; one teacher has become a Senior Fellow and two others Fellows. Staff new to Higher Education are mentored by an experienced colleague who is supported by a Mentoring Checklist. All teachers agree a programme of professional development during Professional Review.The Learning Improvement Team refers to the Professional Standards Framework in the design of continuing professional development progammes.

The College's expectations of teachers are articulated in a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy. The Higher Education Teaching and Learning Policy is separate from but linked to this. It includes standards for teaching which reflect the Common Inspection Framework, the Professional Standards Framework and the College's Strategic Objectives. The Policy describes the Observtion of Teaching and Learning (OTL) process. All teachers receive a lesson observation each year which also includes scrutiny of student progress. OTL is subject to moderation within the Learning Improvement Team, deemed rigorous by external peer review.

Teachers whose lessons are judged to require improvement take part in an intervention processes which seeks to raise standards in teaching and assessment for all teaching staff. Where good practice is observed, this is identified and these teachers are invited to contribute to the intervention programme and other cross-College CPD activity, including Staff Conferences. One such teacher runs induction sessions for teachers currently teaching in FE who plan to step up to Higher Education teaching. Teachers use feedback from observed lessons to make continuous improvements. For instance, a Standards Verifier has noted the increased use of blogs on HE Media and Photography courses as a form of assessment to show development of ideas and critical analysis. Teachers developed this approach from OTL feedback. This year, the same teachers have offered the use of blogs in assessment as a CPD session for their peers.

The outcomes of the OTL process are reported to course teams, management meetings and Governors and form the basis for the institution to reflect, through its quality assurance process, on the quality of teaching and learning, and to plan improvement and enhancement. Most directly, these outcomes are the evidence for the design of cross-College CPD programmes by the Learning Improvement Team.

The College actively seeks potential among its own staff and develops them in-house; Teacher Education programmes (PGCE/PCE and Level 3 Award in Education and Training) are aligned to the College's own expectations and priorities. There are close links between the Teacher Education programme and Learning Improvement and the development of teachers is closely overseen by the Vice-Principal, Teaching, Learning Improvement and Higher Education.There are two Teaching and Learning Staff Conferences each year. In October, there are induction sessions for teachers wishing to extend their range from Level 3 to Higher Education teaching; in the summer, a day is dedicated to Higher Education. A programme of Continuing Professional Development sessions is run each year in twilight sessions. Other professional development activity includes mentoring, membership of networks and opportunities provided by partner Universities. CPD is well regarded. For instance, a Validation Panel at a partner University commended as good practice a CPD day which had considered "Levelness" and external reference points together with standardisation across HE subject areas.

Timetables ensure the opportunity for "Team Time" so that teams of staff can meet weekly to work collaboratively about teaching and enrichment activities, curriculum development and course planning, internal quality assurance and the monitoring of individual student progress. Team Time facilitates formal Course Team Meetings, including students, too. This time is valued in their reports by both the QAA HER team and the Leaders in Diversity assessor.

Staff are offered the opportunity to progress, whatever their level of experience. Those new to teaching are offered formal teacher education at Level 3, 4 or 5, as appropriate and agreed with their Learning Area Manager. In recent years, the College has established the opportunity for more experienced staff to progress and contribute to the quality of teaching across the College. Excellent teachers can apply to be seconded for one or two days each week as Learning Improvement Managers or Learning Area Leads. Learning Improvement Managers form the cross-college Learning Improvement Team. They operate the Observation of Teaching and Learning programme, as trained and expert observers and their feedback is used by teachers and teams to reflect on and improve their practice. Learning Area Leads model excellent practice and work with teams within their own Learning Areas on all aspects of quality improvement. Higher Education teachers have been and continue to be well represented as Learning Improvement Managers and Learning Area Leads.

Staff interviewed expressed many areas they were proud of: "Staff's opportunities to progress with access to training with a 'real' commitment to development; Managers are asked to look for 'potential' and encourage staff to take on new roles…" (Leaders in Diversity report 2016)
The teaching is solid, very helpful, and they always give suggestions to improve and develop…(HNC Creative Media Student, HE Student Forum 2017)

NSS 2017	College%	Region%	Sector%
The teaching on my course	87.50	84.58	84.62

TQ3 Rigour and Stretch
Course design, development, standards and assessment are effective in stretching students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential.
Stretch
The QAA review team identified the following feature(s) of ***good practice*** *at Central Bedfordshire College:*

- *The introduction of Philosphical Enquiry as a methodology across all programmes to enhance student capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.* (QAA HER Report 2016)

The College adopted Philosophical Enquiry, or *Askit,* as a pedagogic approach in 2013 and it is now the core principle that informs every teacher's work. The approach has been developed in partnership with Open Futures. It has been used with widespread success in primary schools for twenty years. Central Bedfordshire College was the first FE College to adopt it. It has been used in the College's Higher Education teaching from the outset. All teachers undertake a two-day training programme with Open Futures. Some teachers have trained to the second level and act as mentors. Every class experiences a Philosophical Enquiry session at least once each term, exploring ideas arising from carefully chosen stimuli. The approach becomes embedded: teachers and students become used to framing questions which deepen understanding and learning. Open Futures describes the approach as aiming to build 'Communities of Enquiry"…developing creative, critical, caring and collaborative thinking.' The Leaders in Diversity assessment and Ofsted commend the approach

and observe the tolerance and respect for the views of others that characterises the ethos of the College. The QAA HER commends Philosophical Enquiry as enhancing analytical, critical and creative thinking.

The College is recognised nationally for its implementation of Philosophical Enquiry. Staff have presented at three FE regional and national conferences and the College is now central to a network of five others which are beginning to adopt the scheme. The Higher Education Co-ordinator gave a well-received presentation about Philosophical Enquiry at a Partners' Quality Conference at the University of Northampton in May 2017. *Our teacher will always push us. He'll always give us arguments and ask our opinions outside our zone. We're never wrong. He forces us to think…* (Educational Practice student in group discussion for the development of this submission.)

Students are challenged in their work-related learning. Live briefs are routinely used and students develop the confidence to pitch and to present to employers. This year, Higher National Media and Photography students have worked with a local school as part of the College's outreach and widening participation activity. In doing so, students have developed an explicit appreciation of their own opportunities in being able to participate in Higher Education and have enjoyed motivating children to enjoy their work and achieve. Students supported the children and teachers to use technical equipment and an animation and a photographic exhibition were produced. The activity was formally incorporated into the assessment of both courses.

NSS 2017	CBC%	Region%	Sector%
The course is intellectually stimulating	91.67	85.19	85.25
My course has challenged me to achieve my best work	91.67	81.75	81.68
My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth	88.89	84.49	84.41
My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics	91.67	84.86	84.83

Rigour

The academic standards are set and assured by the UoB and Pearson. The responsibilities for this are clearly set out. Standards are duy monitored and reported on by external examiners and Standards Verifiers, and by Quality Management processes that are clearly defined and adhered to.

The College has appropriate arrangements in place for the design, development and approval of programmes that meet the requirements of its awarding bodies and the organisation…consideration is given to employer needs within course development.

The processes and procedures in place and used by the College to deliver and manage assessment ensure that this is undertaken equitably and consistently and enable students to achieve their intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

The University of Bedfordshire and Pearson provide frameworks, policies and procedures for assessment and the award of credit and qualifications …which the College is required to follow. The College operates clear processes and procedures for satisfying these requirements, which support students effectively to achieve programme learning outcomes. (QAA HER Report 2016)

The College has been subject to Institutional Review from its two partner Universities in 2015 and QAA HER in 2016. Its processes for the design, development and approval of programmes and for assessment, moderation and the award of qualification and credit have been scrutinised and judged to be robust. Processes for programme design and development, for assuring schemes of assessment and for the recommendation of qualification are described in Policy and in the Higher Education Quality Staff Guide. These are aligned to the UK Quality Code and the requirements of Awarding Bodies and Organisations. QAA HER Report notes that staff are familiar with Awarding Body/Organisation Specifications and the External Reference Points that inform them. The reports of University Validation Panels, applications for Programme Approval to Pearson, of External Examiners and Standards Verifiers and of Examination Boards all confirm that the College's Quality Assurance processes are reliable and robust and that the Award of qualification and credit is secure. Students are well-informed about opportunities to appeal against assessment decisions, via VLE, College and University websites, their handbooks and induction. There has never been an appeal or a complaint about any aspect of Higher Education in the College.

The operation of the College's internal processes is scrutinised, via the submission of reports from Course Teams, by the Higher Education Strategy Group which in turn reports to the Governors' Standards Committee. Governors receive termly updates from the Vice Principal for Teaching, Learning Improvement and Higher Education, so that they are confident in signing off the College's quality assurance processes each December. The College welcomes external scrutiny from Awarding Body External Examiners and Standards Verifiers and acts on their recommendations. It invites external peer moderation of its Self-Assessment processes.

TQ4 Feedback
Assessment and feedback are used effectively in supporting students' development, progression and attainment
Teachers provide detailed feedback on assessment which is used to guide the student on how to improve their work and reach their potential. Students reported that the assessment marking grid with comments mapped against marking criteria is of great assistance and that the VLE provides tips on how to improve and gain higher grades. Progress is reviewed in regular one-to-one tutorials with academic staff (QAA HER Report 2016)

Feedback and assessment support students' progress and achievement well. Students value assessment feedback and the range of assessment activities that they have the opportunity to engage in. They report through the Student Forum that assessment is well-aligned to their workplace experience. Media and Photography students, in particular, value the live briefs set by employers.

There is a College expectation of a 3-week turnaround for assessment outcomes, so that students can be supported towards their next assignment with feedback from the last. Last year, on one course, as outlined above, the target was not met because of delays in University network moderation requirements. This was quickly resolved at strategic partnership level. Otherwise, QAA HER reports that turnaround times are met and that students appreciate this.

The Core Metrics reported for the TEF show that, over the three years in question, 82.7% of full-time students rated assessment and feedback as good (benchmark 79.2%.) Only 63.5% of part-time students agreed. The number of part-time students answering the NSS is very small. Under the partnership agreement with the University of Bedfordshire, full-time students are counted in the College's students numbers but part-time students are counted in the University's student numbers and answer NSS as University students. The part-time students in the Core Metrics report, therefore, are students who occasionally infill with full-time Higher National groups in Creative subjects. Over the past three years, the Core Metrics report identifies 13 students over the three years in question. It is likely that some students have answered the NSS twice, as completers first of HNC, then HND. It seems that five students did not report assessment and feedback as good. There are no part-time students currently enrolled on these courses, but course teams are aware and, should they receive such enrolments again, will treat part-time infill students as students at risk so that their progress and their satisfaction is closely monitored throughout.

Results and feedback are published on BREO for UoB students or ProMonitor for HN students. Academic Supervisors have specific responsibility, outlined in the Tutorial Policy, to review feedback with students and support them in setting SMART targets for improvement.

NSS 2017	College%	Region%	Sector%
Marking and assessment has been fair	80.56	73.37	73.39
I have received helpful comments on my work	91.67	74.88	74.35

Feedback always helps you prepare for further assignments. It's precise and exactly what's expected is explicit and clear… Educational Practice student in discussion in preparation for this submission.

Aspect of Quality: Resources
The College has taken deliberate steps to invest in physical and digital resources to enhance the quality of the student experience and attainment across the College as a whole and also for the benefit of Higher Education students. The deliberative structure, with the HESG, which has oversight of strategic planning for growth and the quality improvement, reporting to the Governors' Standards Committee, enables Governors and senior leaders to designate resources to enhance the quality of the student experience in a systematic way. The quality cycle evaluates the impact of investment through the Higher Education Self Assessment Report annually in October, enabling Governors and senior leaders to plan budgets in February for the following September.

LE1 Resources

Physical and digital resources are used effectively in supporting students' development, progression and attainment

Students and staff consistently treat each other's diverse backgrounds and views with respect. The recent initiative to encourage philosophical debate around contentious issues contributes to their understanding and tolerance of each other and to a safe and harmonious atmosphere throughout the college.… Students feel safe at the college. Incidents of bullying have reduced following the introduction of inhouse security personnel who know students well, keep good order and create a friendly and welcoming environment. (Ofsted 2016)

The new building at Kingsway together with its annex, The Store, is a source of pride for the College and its students. Accommodation for Higher Education teaching has been realigned to take advantage of it. The Store is a dedicated space for Media, Graphics and Photography where HE students share the space with Level 3 students who aspire to HE courses, thus facilitating progression. The Store was completely refurbished over the summer, with new IT spaces and networks and darkroom space. During the previous year, a substantial investment was made in photography and media equipment and software licences, specifically for Level 4 and 5 students, authorised by Governors in response to student feedback. Education, Childcare, Business and Computing students made use of the new lecture and seminar spaces in the main building. All HE students make full use of the new Learning Resource Centre. There is a dedicated bookable space for HE students to use for group project work. There is a well-used social space for HE students in The Store.

Digital resources are well-used by students on all courses. Media and Photography students use sophisticated, industry standard software for recording and publishing. All students use the Athens portal, subscribed to by the College, to gain free access to academic publications. BREO, the University's VLE was upgraded last year. Media and photography students have used blogs, monitored and turned in via Moodle, to assemble, present and evaluate their portfolios. Their tutors delivered training to teachers in other subjects at the Staff Conference. As a result, the uses of blogs is being evaluated on the Child and Family Studies programme to build the professional practice portfolio this year. Media and photography students have introduced Year 6 pupils from a local school to a range of digital techniques including green-screening and stop motion animation as part of an outreach project and have been able to present this work as part of their formal assessment.

An electonric Individual Learning Plan, ProMonitor, is used to monitor student progress against targets and to share information about students' attainment and targets for improvement in order to mitigate individual student risk and to identify opportunities for students to aim for higher grades.

LRC staff offer a programme of Study Skills support, on a scheduled and drop in basis, to Level 3 and Higher Education students. The sessions include Harvard Referencing, Athens, Academic Writing and Planning a Literature Review. The Head of Student Services, the manager responsible for the LRC, among a range of other services for students, attends the Higher Education Strategy Group, so that she can plan and budget for Higher Education activity at strategic level.

Guidance on BREO on referencing is brilliant! (Educational Practice student in discussion in preparation for this submission)

*The College is absolutely committed to providing a welcoming environment that is accessible to all. The main site in Dunstable has achieved just that with the brand new multi-million pound park extension. This new section does provide an excellent facility for students and staff, with the most modern facilities for the new entrance, library, dining area and a support area for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities…The College continues to excel on its Leaders in Diversity journey. Now the major building work has finished, the main entrance to the site and its annex is very modern and has created a great working and learning environment… Acess and the environment have significantly improved now the brand new flagship site is open. (*Leaders in Diversity Assessor's Report, 2016)

LE2 Scholarship, Research and Professional Practice

The learning environment is enriched by student exposure to and involvement in provision at the forefront of scholarship research and/or professional practice.

College teachers develop their own evidence base for planning their teaching from research. Last year, two teachers took part in action research, alongside a partner college, about the readiness of Level 3 and Level 5 College students to progress to University at Levels 4 and 6. They interviewed and surveyed transitional students and University staff and their report promotes the use of a range of pedagogical techniques, including flipped learning in particular, to prepare College students to take responsibility for their own learning as they progress to University from the College's Level 3 and Level 5 courses. They have disseminated their findings

to other teachers and recommended approaches are in use this academic year with Level 3 Access students and Foundation Degree students at Level 5.

Teachers on Level 3 programmes in the College are encouraged to consider Higher Education teaching and are supported in their academic progress towards identified goals through higher degrees and HEA membership.
The College's staff, including HE staff, are experts and current practioners in their vocational areas, from Accountancy, on Business programmes, to Photography. They bring their expertise and experience to the design and delivery of programmes and model excellent professional practice. They bring their professional contacts to support the College's activity, from membership of Employer Forums to offers of work experience and live briefs.
The course strengthens our knowledge at work. We know the theory now. We can back ourselves up if we have ideas for service improvement. (Educational Practice student in discussion in preparation for this submission.)
Strong teaching and tutorial support from teaching staff who are practicing photographers & convey passion for their subject. The Course encourages students to define the photographic genre they wish to pursue from an early stage of the programme. (Photography SV Report 2017)
Employers advise on curriculum development and assessment…employers vist as speakers and host visits from groups of students…employers deliver master classes, conduct mock interviews, provide advice and guidance and present recent live case studies (QAA HER Report 2016)

LE3 Personalised Learning
Students' academic experiences are tailored to the individual, maximising rates of retention, attainment and progression.
Information, advice and guidance, and the placing of the student at the centre of teaching and learning, is one of the College's strengths, identified by the QAA HER.
*The QAA team identified the following feature(s) of **good practice**: The impartial and inclusive nature of advice and guidance provided for students during he recruitment process* (QAA HER Report 2016.) This ensures that each student is placed on the right course at the right level.

The College's Tutorial Policy intends that *all students should approach their studies with confidence and enjoyment and in a spirit of lively enquiry. Students should leave us as more independent learners, ready for success in further study or employment and to be active citizens of the world around them.* The Policy defines the role of Academic Supervisor. This tutor plays a key role in tailoring each student's academic experience and orienting each student towards attainment and progression. Academic Supervisors, supported by the ProMonitor system, meet students at least six times in each academic year, but more often at students' request or if concern is flagged by academic colleagues. In these discussions, they review academic progress and give advice on improvement, expressed in agreed SMART targets which are monitored and either signed off or further developed at subsequent meetings. They give guidance throughout the student's programme in the College, from induction to progression to further study or employment. They source work-related opportunities tailored to the career aspiration of the student. When students are identified as at risk of being retained or failing to achieve, they plan and source intervention. Examples have been given earlier in the submission. The risk register is monitored by the HESG.
"I think ProMonitor has been really fantastic. It has allowed us to set up meetings with Learning Mentors when we identify students at risk" (teacher quoted in Matrix assessment report, 2015)

The Academic Supervisor is at the centre of a web of support around each student. All interventions are logged on ProMonitor, so that the impact of intervention can be assessed. Individual support begins with the information and guidance surrounding admissions.

Students with additional learning needs are identified on application and supported by the IAG team in their applications for DSA. Some students with clearly identified support needs are not eligible for DSA. In these cases, support from the College's highly regarded Additional Learning Support Team is underwritten by a Student Welfare fund administered by the HESG. In the last academic year, two students with mobility and visual impairment were supported in this way to have a Learning Support Assistant with them in the classroom. Academic Supervisors routinely secure special arrangements for assessment for mitigating circumstances for

students, working with the Examinations team. The Student Welfare team can and has supported students in financial crisis and refers students in need to accommodation. A nurse visits the College weekly to give support on all health matters, including sexual health. An increasing number of students each year experience poor mental health. The local Child and Adolescent Mental Health service has a presence on the site each week and can refer adult students to adult services after a consultation. Academic Supervisors ensure that these students have tailored assessment programme within Awarding Body guidelines and all students in poor mental health are identified as at risk and monitored centrally to ensure their retention and achievement.

The Core Metrics report for the TEF shows that 91.3% of full-time students rated Academic Support as good. This is flagged as having an indicator value in the top 10% of absolute performance.
This assessment provided strong evidence to show how IAG support is embedded cross-College. Staff are knowledgeable about what support is in place within each department and have a good understanding of when and hhow to signpost or refer students to access this support…a student centric approach could be seen at all levels and this was confirmed by both staff and students. (Matrix assessment report 2015)

Aspect of Quality: Student Outcomes and Learning Gain
Equality of opportunity is well promoted throughout the college. Managers have eliminated achievement gaps between different groups of students through careful monitoring and appropriate interventions.
(Ofsted 2016)
Retention rates for Higher Education students are good, and they achieve their intended Awards. Foundation Degree students achieve high grades. All of the College's students are taking either HNC, HND or Foundatioon Degree programmes. The great majority of completing students progress to University to take the final year to top up to a full degree. Academic supervisors keep in touch with alumni and report in Course Reviews that, for two years running, all completing students progressed to further study, employment, self-employment or promotion at work. The approach to Academic Supervision described above, with careful monitoring and target setting, has meant that, although small numbers (the most has been seven) do not complete each year for personal reasons, only one completing student has failed to achieve their Award in the past three years.

The College's systematic approach to ensuring the success of different groups of students is a strength. Its processes for monitoring and target setting ensure that managers can and do evaluate the progress of identified groups and can intervene as necessary, at course, Learning Area and whole college level. The College aims to intervene in-year should data suggest that a gap in the success of identified groups may open up. The Safeguarding, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee oversees this process and receives detailed reports on the performance of groups three times a year. It reports routinely to the Governors' Standards Committee. The Higher Education Co-ordinator, who chairs the Higher Education Strategy Group, is a member of the SEDI Committee. The SEDI Committee receives a separate report on the performance of Higher Education students at each of its meetings. It considers the success of the previous year's completers and enrolment data at its October meeting, in-year retention and applications for the following year at its February meeting and at its June meeting.

The College has maintained its success in removing all the academic gaps by diversity and has been praised by Ofsted for it. The College has invested in its capacity to support students with effective interventions. (Leaders in Diversity Assessment Report, 2016)

SO1 Employment and Further Study
Students achieve their educational and professional goals, in particular progression to further study or employment.
Higher Education students at the college achieve and progress to their next step well in the light of their starting points. Other than PGCE students and students progressing from HNC to HND, 86% entered their course with low or no tariff qualifications. Success rates (the number of starters being retained and achieving their Award) for Higher Education courses are high. For the past three years, 2015, 2016, 2017 they have been 90%, 91% and 85% respectively. All completers achieved. (The number not retained has remained very similar over the past three years. The 2017 cohort of completers was particularly small and the seven students who did not complete have had a larger impact on the percentage rate.)

Foundation Degree students do well in achieving higher grades. 60% of completing Child and Family Studies Students achieved Merit or Distinction in 2017. All Educational Practice students achieved Distinction in 2016.

HN high grades achievement was 10% in 2017. Teams have made deliberate effort to raise attainment, ensuring, for instance, that students understand more precisely what work at Merit or Distinction should look like. The Standards Verifier for Creative Media notes that *The assessor has developed their assignment briefs to ensure that there is appropriate contextualization of the higher grades.*

Most students progress to furher study or employment. Core Metrics for the TEF report 94.7 full-time students progressing to further study or employment (benchmark 94%). Supplementary Metrics (LEO) show 85.7% in sustained employment or further study (benchmark 80.2%), 58.6% having above median earnings or further study (benchmark 39%.) 96.1% of part time students progressed to further study or employment. This figure is slightly below benchmark. 96.1% represents 49 out of 51 students who progressed. 78.4% of students are reported as above median earnings or further study, in line with the benchmark.

SO2 Employability and Transferable Skills
Students acquire knowledge, skills and attributes that are valued by employers and that enhance their personal and/or professional lives
Students stated that they believed the course had developed their employability skills and produced a much more professional approach to work. Work-based programmes are seen to be inherent in the courses they are studying and employability is an intrinsic part of everything they study. Last year, all of the College's Higher Education students progressed, either to further study, to employment, to self-employment or to promotion at work. (QAA HER Report, 2016)
Student employability is at the heart of the College's Higher Education offer. The College made the strategic decision in 2001, reiterated in the 2012 Strategy for Higher Education, and again in the new Strategy, to focus its efforts on vocational programmes preparing students for employment or to enhance their opportunities for promotion at work and chooses to offer Foundation Degrees and HNs in consequence. The offer is reviewed annually by Learning Area Managers and shaped in the light of labour market intelligence gleaned from employers and partners. The current student cohort is broadly 70% in employment relevant to the subject of their course and 30% having progressed from Level Three, mostly within the College.

Sector subject areas currently represented are: Early Years (recruited in partnership with three Local Authorities as well as from the private sector); Training to Provide Learning Support (recruited from local schools and colleges, including the College itself); Media and Communication (recruited largely from progressing Level 3 students – Creative Industries staff are in high demand locally and in London); ICT for Practitioners (also recruited from Level 3 and in high demand locally and in London.) HNs in Health and Social Care and Business have recruited for the first time this year. All of the College's HE completing students who achieved their Award report to the College that they have progressed either to further study, to employment, self-employment or to promotion at work in each of the last three years. There are articulated progression routes for FdA and HN students to the University of Bedfordshire.

The College's Careers Advisors support the progression of the College's students onto Higher Education programmes, give impartial advice by phone, email or face-to-face to external candidates, and support career development and progression into further learning or employment for our Higher Education students. The great majority of the College's Higher Education students progress to a top-up year at the University of Bedfordshire, whether they have come through the University's own Foundation Degrees or via Pearson HNs. This progression is supported by Course Teams, working with the Partnerships Office off the University, which arranges tasters and progression days. The focus of these events is the enhancement in employability to be gained from a full degree.

Employability is embedded in the curriculum design and assessment of all of the College's Higher Education courses. Every programme has at least one unit which addresses and assesses orientation to the skills, knowledge and conventions of its sector. Assessment of these units is at least partially by reflection on work-based practice. For instance, in Child and Family Studies, there is a Reflective Learning unit. Students base reflection based on a child/young person they have worked with and the skills learned to so assess, support and make recommendations to aid further development of that child. There is an Applied Experience activity, based on the student's employer, considering organisational structure, macro and micro impact of national and

local policy initiatives, the roles of Governors and parents in the setting, the responsibilities of line-manaagers and the development of the mission and ethos of the setting. Each student carries out an independent project in their employment or placement to make positive changes for service users.

In Creative Industry courses, all second year students negotiate their own work placement for 2-6 weeks, working within a design or creative environment to develop their expertise within the industry. Students work with a range of employers in Bedfordshire and London and report that they are able to negotiate their activities to explore their own design interests whilst fulfilling the role required of them by the employer. The Learning Area Manager for this area has brokered a relationship with Three Counties Radio, based, like the College, in Dunstable. Photography students have placements and live briefs to work on the radio station's campaigns, designing materials and promoting the brand. Creative Media students are involved with studio work.

The College has its own Enterprise Unit, which enables teams of students from Higher Education and Further Education, to take on live projects. In 2016, Creative and Media students worked with the College and a design agency on the rebranding of the College. Students worked on the logo which has been warmly received by the College and local community and informs the design of all current digital and physical publications.

The locus of employability, then, is in work-related learning, either through placement, the student's own employment or live project briefs. The College reviewed its approach to this during 2014-15, realising through monitoring and review that this was a significant strength, but that there was differing practice in different sectors and Learning Areas. A Work-based Learning and Assessment Policy was drawn up to establish minimum expectations and standards, to enable monitoring and evaluation in a more standardised way via the Higher Education Strategy Group. This is now established and employability is routinely reported on to Governors in the annual HE Self Evaluation Report.

Employability is not confined to work-based learning. Employers advise on curriculum development and assessment through employer forums, convened by the Learning Areas. Employers visit as speakers and host visits from groups of students. Those in employment or placement share good practice in lessons. Students are supported in developing the generic skills, as well as sector-specific skills, that they will need for employment. Media and Photography students prepare online portfolios, for instance, to enable employers to select them for work or projects. They put on a well-received final exhibition in Dunstable each year. Child and Family Studies students take a Managing People assignment, where they look at a future job role higher up the career ladder and develop confidence and a better knowledge of the recruitment and selection process. Education students, as well as Child and Family Studies students, network with other practitioners through the College and the wider University network.

As well as progressing into employment or further study, the College's students also progress at work. For instance, in Child and Family Studies, an existing student is a manager of a Children's Centre and has taken on two other FdA students as family support workers. The College has employed FdA students as a trainee teacher in public services; a learning mentor; learning support assistants. Many students have been promoted within their current job roles, from play support to supervisor, supervisor to nursery manager. One student completing in 2016 reported being able to expand his business because of the knowledge and confidence he has acquired on the course.

NSS 2016	College%	Region%
The course has helped me present myself with confidence	88	81
My communication skills have improved	100	84
As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems	92	82

SO3 Positive Outcomes for All

The College takes deliberate steps to widen access and participation in all of its programmes, incuding Higher Education. Its choice of vocational Foundation Degrees and HN qualifications makes its programmes accessible and attractive to mature students with work commitments and experience. The College operates a

large Access to Higher Education programme, and applicants who do not meet entry requirements are referred to Access in order to progress the following year.

The College is very committed to developing and maintain partnerships, particularly within the Community (Matrix Report 2015) College managers are well represented on regional and local groups and networks. They have contacts within communities so that the College can reach out to those Communities to make them aware of the offer. Fourteen adult students from the Bangladeshi community in Luton, which has been under-represented on HE Programmes, as reported to Governors in the 2016 HE Self Evaluation Report, have been recruited in 2017 in response to an outreach initiative. The Higher Education Co-ordinator was, until the network closed last year, an active member of the National Network for Collaborative Outreach steering group centred around the University of Bedfordshire. The Network ran a range of activities with schools and community groups. In particular, there was outreach work to raise aspirations among home educated pupils, young carers and pupils on the autism spectrum. The University is tracking participants using the HEAT system and will report the progression of participants as they reach the age to join the College's programmes, including Higher Education. The College continues to run outreach activities with schools whose pupils do not traditioinally aspire to Higher Education. Its work in Media and Photography with a local primary school has been described. Two other primary schools have spent a week in College following a varied programme of media, sport and catering this year.

The College invests in participation data in order to improve its planning and best practice in outreach. The Higher Education Co-ordinator has joined the FE forum of NEON. The College receives an annual College Based Higher Education Impact Summary (CHELIS) from RCU and the Education and Training Foundation. The most recent reports detail participation in 2014-15 and 2015-16. In 2015-16, 28% of students were recruited from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2, in comparison with all FECs (21%) and all HEIs (16%) in its LEP region. 11% were from POLAR quintile 5, 5 points lower than all FECs and 15% low than all HEIs. In 2015-16, 110 full-time starts are reported and 40 part-time. Of these, 37% of full-time and 79% of part-time students were over 25.

Core Metrics report that 36 out of 38 full-time students from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2 continued their programme. 84.2% of BME students continued their studies, against 79.1% benchmark. The difference between outcome and benchmark is higher than for white students – 5.1 for BME, 2.1 for white. Full-time disabled students continued close to benchmark 86.2%. (benchmark 86.5) – 25 out of 29 students. Of these,In 2017, two students with mobility impairment, one of whom also had significant visual impairment, were supported to achieve through one to one classroom support throughout their course. Other disabled students were dyslexic and were supported with one to one sessions outside the classroom. Students whose mental health affected their ability to attend were supported with online materials when necessary and through regular one to one sessions with one of the College's Learning Mentors.

Staff at all levels continue to be proud of the diversity of staff, tutors and learners and particularly the attitude towards support for students and narrow attainment or retention gaps…The College's commitment to developing its facilities and accommodation to improve access for people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is demonstrated at the Dunstable site. The College collects data on age, gender, ethnicity, disability, post code and look at 'in-year' progress not just year on year. The College has made great progress in minimising achievement gaps between its diverse intake. (Leaders in Diversity Assessor's Report, 2016)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the College is proud of its Higher Education work. Its Strategic Plan for Higher Education looks forward to year on year growth. There is systematic work throughout the College to ensure continuous improvement in the quality of teaching and of the student experience. The College will continue to pursue its mission to *provide excellent learning and progression for our communities.*