TEF Year three provider submission

Grantham College

Contents:

1. Provider Context 2

2. Teaching Quality 5

2.1. Teaching and learning 5
2.2. Assessment and Feedback ……..... 7

3. Learning Environment 8

3.1. Academic support 8
3.2. Continuation 10

4. Student Outcomes and Learning Gain 11

4.1. Employment and further study 11
4.2. Highly-skilled employment and further study 12

5. Summary……...……..... 13

1. Provider Context

Grantham College is situated on the borders of Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire offering opportunities in further and higher education to the local population for over 60 years. The Higher Education (HE) provision, which has been significantly expanded and reorganised to meet the needs of the local population for whom full time study at a Higher Education Institute (HEI) is often impracticable, has proved an increasingly popular option with student numbers increasing from 166 in 2011 to 208 in 2016/17. The continuing development of the HE provision forms part of the strategic growth objectives of the College and is fully supported by College Governors and Senior Leadership Team, with the Principal holding specific responsibility for strategic direction of the HE provision.

The College's Public Values Statement, "Inspire, empower, achieve" was finalised in August 2010 following consultation with staff, students and governors and continues to underpin the beliefs, values, actions and activities of the College's management and staff. The College endeavours to 'Inspire' both mature students and younger students who elect to study locally while working to achieve their academic and personal ambitions by using BTEC Higher Nationals and Foundation Degree courses as a stepping stone to study for a full degree at an HEI. It seeks to. 'Empower' its stakeholders - students and local businesses - to progress personally and professionally through the provision of high quality services, to enable them to fulfil their full potential and 'Achieve' their life goals and aspirations

The College HE provision is conducted in partnership with Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU), the University of Bedfordshire (UoB) and BTEC/Pearson; consequently it is subject to rigorous external review procedures. The provision was inspected by the Higher Education Review (HER) in 2014 and by partner universities (UoB in 2015 and BGU in 2016) as part of their institutional review mechanisms. The College is also subject to an annual quality review by BTEC/Pearson. The BTEC/Pearson and institutional reviews have been positive, with new courses being developed as a result; in addition the Higher Education Review (HER) review gave the following judgements:
The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Grantham College.

- *The maintenance of the academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies **meets** UK expectations.*
- *The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.*

- *The quality of the provider's information about learning opportunities* ***meets*** *UK expectations.*
- *The enhancement of student learning opportunities* ***meets*** *UK expectations.*

In addition three areas of good practice were identified during the review process:

- *The inclusive approach to admissions that widens student participation in higher education (Expectation B2).*
- *The comprehensive and personalised academic and pastoral support provided to all higher education students (Expectation B4).*
- *The effective management of partnerships with employers that enhance the student learning experience (Expectation B10).*

The College recognises that many students, particularly the more mature students who form a significant part of the HE cohort at the College, are either unwilling or unable to study outside the local area due to personal or work commitment. To enable this cohort to access HE provision the College offers courses on a full and part-time basis. Courses utilise blended learning and course structure and delivery (accessible and varied modes of teaching learning and assessment) are designed to meet the needs of this cohort. The College is committed to widening participation in HE within the community and is working in conjunction with BGU to actively improve levels of participation from areas within the catchment area who have traditionally low levels of participation in HE through the LincHigher project (POLAR4 data for the college postcode shows low levels of participation for both young people and adults both scoring 2 out of 5 quintiles where 1 is the lowest participation quintile). The contextual TEF POLAR data shows that 57% of HE enrolments come from quintiles 1 to 3 with 39% from the lowest participation in HE quintiles 1 and 2. Although the college postcode is in the 3rd quintile for IMD data, the contextual TEF data on IMD shows that a majority of HE enrolments come from quintiles 1 to 3 with 34% from the most deprived quintiles 1 and 2. As part of its ongoing commitment to HE in the locale the College has re-focussed its HE provision to ensure that wherever possible progression routes from its HE courses are available at HEIs offering level 6 top-up courses within the area. The College is currently in the process of dissolving its partnership arrangement with the University of Bedfordshire (which has historically accredited some elements of the current HE provision) while strengthening its links with local HEIs to develop a provision more suited to the needs of present and future students. The College's commitment to expanding a high quality, locally-based HE provision is demonstrated through its investment in separate HE accommodation in the past and plans to develop new separate

accommodation for the HE provision in the future and further develop the HE offer. The college is currently working in partnership with the local authority and a local university to secure LEP funding for a university centre in the town to enhance joint delivery of STEM provision for the local population.

The College works closely with the local community to develop a quality assured range of vocational and applied higher education programmes that meet the needs of local employers and students. The College currently offers a range of HNC/D qualifications through BTEC/Pearson in Art and Design, Business, Computing and Systems Development, Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Performing Arts (Acting) Creative Media Production and Sports Coaching. These qualifications are complemented by specialist courses, developed and offered in partnership with BGU, which allow students to study locally for specialist Foundation Degree Awards (FdAs) in Health and Social Care, Childcare, Education and Special Educational Need and Disability. Each FdA course has identified progression routes which allow students the opportunity to progress to the HEI to complete a full BA in their chosen specialism and the College is in the initial stages of negotiating with local HEIs to develop progression routes to enable students on BTEC programmes to top up to BA/BSc programmes. The College also currently offers PGCE and Cert Ed. qualifications under the aegis of UoB but is seeking to transfer this provision to an alternative provider when the agreement with UoB ceases in 2019

The quality assurance and improvement aspect of the College's HE provision is informed by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the requirements of partner institutions with awarding powers for the named qualifications. Working in partnership has enabled the College to develop robust internal quality assurance procedures which ensure that the proposed new courses accredited by BTEC undergo a rigorous approval process to gain approval from SLT and the Governing Body before applying for awarding body accreditation. Where courses are developed by the College with its university awarding bodies as part of collaborative partnerships, or for single delivery at the College, staff apply the University's guidance which facilitates engagement with the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements and relevant external reference points for both new programmes and revalidations. *QAA HER Report p.5*, which can be found on the QAA website. (TQ3, in this document reference is made to the TEF Assessment Criteria in Table 2 of the TEF Specification by using the codes in the reference column of that table)

Existing programmes are monitored on a termly basis through the Subject Assessment Board (SAB) process to ensure that quality is maintained throughout the student journey.

The 'student voice' is considered to be a vital component of the quality review process and student representatives are invited to attend both the SAB meetings and Course Team Review (CTR) meetings attended by the subject teachers and members of the College management team to ensure that student views are heard and noted and where appropriate suitable action ensues. Students are also invited to complete module review forms at the end of each module and to take part in the National Student Survey (NSS) and in 3 internal surveys conducted by the College to gather information on pre-course and induction information, on-course satisfaction and end of year comments (TQ1, TQ2, TQ4). This information is analysed and forms part of the Subject Assessment Reviews carried out annually to assess, refine and develop curricula. (TQ3). Twice yearly student representatives from all HE courses are invited to attend a Student Forum with the Curriculum Manager for HE which provides a confidential opportunity for the College to actively engage with students and for them to provide feedback on issues relating to their courses and experience as students.

2. Teaching Quality

"The foundation degree offered by Grantham College appealed to me for a number of reasons and the flexibility of the course made it possible to have a balance between my work and personal life. As a mature student, this was initially an area of concern for me as I was unsure as to how I would juggle all of this. Completing the course on a part-time basis with the invaluable support and expertise from our lecturers I found that my confidence grew. The content of the course was extremely interesting throughout the three years and beneficial to me in my career." – Ashley Blake, Student, FdA SEND

2.1. Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning on HE provision at Grantham College is excellent. This is confirmed by the core metrics for the majority mode of 'Part Time other undergraduate UG' which show both a positive flag and a high value indicator as the absolute value is 11 points above benchmark. This reflects the high satisfaction with teaching expressed by part time students in the NSS. Full time students also express a high satisfaction with teaching and the core metrics show a high value indicator as the absolute value is 7.7 points above benchmark.

The quality of the teaching delivery in HE is assessed in a number of ways. In addition to the 3 internal questionnaires issued to all students during the year students are encouraged to take part in the NSS survey and to provide specific feedback on teaching and learning through participation in SAB and CTR meetings. Student feedback is considered by the course team as part of course monitoring/evaluation processes. Ungraded lesson observations based on teaching triangles in which staff peer review the delivery of colleagues with a view to offering supportive but constructive support and advice using a critical friendship approach are used within the College to improve delivery style and content. Learning walks are also conducted by the Quality Team as part of the routine quality checks on teaching operated by the College. (TQ2)

Following an internal review of the provision in 2012/13 new policies and processes were introduced to further strengthen the development and monitoring of new programmes in order to ensure that all stakeholders, from students to governors, had a voice in the process. New handbooks were designed for all courses to ensure that students had access to full information about the course content, delivery schedules and methods and assessment processes.

Staff teaching on higher education courses within the College are expected to have, or be working towards, a formal teaching qualification at Level 5 or 6 (with remission being given for those working towards such qualifications), in addition to being qualified to at least one level above that which they teach in their subject specialism and/or having significant professional experience or qualifications in the subject area. A mentoring system is in place to support new staff and those who do not have relevant teaching qualifications. A specific academic role has been developed to support and lead on developing staff expertise in quality and standards. *QAA HER Report p.18.*

Staff working on university accredited programmes are encouraged to attend professional development opportunities offered by the university as part of the partnership agreement. Although the College does not currently require teachers to be working towards membership of the Higher Education Academy the College is actively investigating the possibility of working with a university partner to make this option available to staff. (TQ2, LE2). Staff continue to develop their professional practice in higher education by undertaking research and maintaining industry links to update subject knowledge and are supported in this by

access to the College's Staff Development Budget. To increase the level and quality of academic scholarship the College is currently involved in an Association of Colleges scholarship project. *QAA HER Report p.19* (LE2). As a result of participation in the project research has been carried out by members of staff with a 'think piece', published on the AoC website in 2016 which investigated the influence of previous professional experience of IT on the teaching of scholarly skills to HE students in an FE setting.

2.2. Assessment and Feedback of student work

Assessment and feedback on HE provision at Grantham College is very good. This is confirmed by the core metrics for the majority mode of 'Part Time other undergraduate UG' which show a high value indicator as the absolute value is 10 points above benchmark. This reflects the high satisfaction with assessment and feedback expressed by part time students in the NSS. Full time students also express a high satisfaction with assessment and feedback and the core metrics show a high value indicator as the absolute value is 14.9 points above benchmark and the split metrics show a positive flag for the only applicable level of study 'other UG'.

The HER concluded that

> *'… the College operates a robust approach to assessment … There is evidence of good assessment practice and of good support for students in assessment. HER 33 B6*

The College ensures that the assessment of student work submitted for all awards is robust, valid and reliable. It is acutely aware of its responsibilities for the assessment process and ensuring that the award of qualifications and credit are based on the achievement of intended learning outcomes for courses which are delivered under the aegis of an awarding body in order to ensure that standards are maintained and students are judged at the appropriate level. Assessments briefs are initially checked using either BTEC's assignment checking service or through the university processes to ensure that they are fit for purpose and meet the benchmarks for the qualification. Briefs, together with the marking and grading criteria for assessment are included in programme/module handbooks for students' reference. (TQ3)

Feedback to students is provided in a variety of ways designed to meet the needs of the individual student and the programme of study. Formal and informal tutorials in which

written feedback on assignment or project work is discussed with students are built into delivery. This has become a particularly important element of the programmes delivered under the aegis of the university where students access on-line feedback. Where students have had difficulty attending college due to illness feedback has been provided, at the request of the student, through Skype.

Formative feedback is given as part of the teaching process whereas feedback on assessed work is provided in a number of ways. In order to develop academic skills courses include an assignment designed to develop study skills at the beginning of the academic year which allows them to understand the level of study and the associated assessment marking, grading and feedback processes. Written feedback is expected to be constructive and provide guidance for future development forms and students are encouraged to discuss results with tutors on a one-to-one basis to encourage personal reflection and ipsative assessment. (TQ4)

When summatively assessing student's work for these courses the College's processes ensure that the standards at the College are compatible and comparable with those of other providers and the processes of assessment are conducted according to awarding partners regulations. For BTEC courses a final SAB is held at the end of the academic year whose process and purpose mirrors the Award Boards held by university partners. All assignment work is internally verified and externally moderated by the Standards Verifier (BTEC awards) or through the university processes. External examiner reports confirm the robust nature of the assessment processes in place at the College and the HER reviewers noted that *'reports from external examiners were comprehensive and mainly positive, with action arising being addressed appropriately'* by the College'

3. Learning Environment

3.1. Academic Support

The Academic support on HE provision at Grantham College is very good. This is confirmed by the core metrics for the majority mode of 'Part Time other undergraduate UG' which, similar to Teaching, show both a positive flag and a high value indicator as the absolute value is 13.6 points above benchmark. This reflects the high satisfaction with academic support expressed by part time students in the NSS. Again, as with Teaching, Full time

students also express a high satisfaction with academic support and the core metrics show a high value indicator as the absolute value is 7.0 points above benchmark.

The HER reviewers commended the College on its 'comprehensive and personalised academic and pastoral support' for HE students (LE3). Information for prospective students is available either on-line or in hard copy and a new website has recently been created. In line with the College's commitment to widening participation the College welcomes students from non-traditional backgrounds and has a robust policy for the accreditation of prior learning/experience to promote engagement with this cohort. Learning and teaching practices are designed to promote inclusive opportunities to enable all students to access the curriculum and if required these practices are modified to meet specific individual student needs and where necessary access study support. *QAA.HER report p.20*. (LE3). The College recognises that mature students and those transitioning from level 3 programmes require support in developing their academic skills and this is taken into account throughout the learner journey at the College. Study skills are embedded within the programmes but specialist support for specific skill development such as proof-reading or referencing is available through one-to-one support from the Study Skills Tutor.

The support for students with specific needs is a key priority for the College, and is provided by the dyslexia specialist and learning support advisers, all of whom work within the College's and awarding partners' specific policy and processes to address the priorities of such students. HE in a further education setting attracts students who have previously unidentified needs such as dyslexia or processing skills difficulties. The College employs specialist support staff to identify these challenges and support existing and prospective students through the process of applying for Disabled Student Allowance where appropriate. The HER reviewers commented that:

> *'The College has established inclusive systems to promote participation and support student transition into higher education for students from different backgrounds including those from Level 3, and the workplace' QAA HER Report p.21*

The transition to becoming a student in HE is not, however, one which is solely predicated on academic concerns and the College has a well-resourced non-academic student support network which includes professionally qualified and experienced staff to work with students who need support for emotional, mental-health, or financial issues in addition to the expected tutorial support from academic staff. (LE2)

The nature and level of support is reviewed and contextualised as students' progress through the different levels of study and is tailored to allow them to become independent learners. *QAA HER Report p.22.* The planned academic support planned for students within the course changes as the students develop and the intensive support characteristic of the early stages of being an HE student is gradually withdrawn to encourage students to become more independent and take ownership of their learning. Challenging individual and group projects are introduced together with increased levels of independent study which allows students to pursue their own interests within the parameters of the course and develop the higher level thinking skills which will be required for study at HEIs. There is also a move to the more explicit focus on careers and study progression opportunities for students in the final year of their higher education study Support for students in the latter stages of their course is provided through Careers advisors employed by the College and support for UCAS applications.

3.2. Continuation

No data is available under the core metrics for the majority mode of 'Part Time other undergraduate UG' but the college has chosen to supply the one page of additional data on part-time provision which shows continuation rates that compare very favourably with the UK average.

There is a negative flag and low absolute value indicator for continuation for the minority mode Full-time but the splits by year do differ. This poor indicator is explained by the inclusion of data from a single course where progression from HNC to HND was poor. The College investigated the lack of progression at the time and found that the fault lay with poor recruitment practices in the first year of the course. The College took immediate action to remedy this situation reviewing policy and practice on recruitment throughout the provision. This, together with staff training and continuing monitoring and review of recruitment and admission practices, has resulted in increased student progression from HNC to HND courses. The positive actions taken by the College to identify the problem and make appropriate changes resulted in the double negative flag in year 2 of the metrics becoming a positive flag in year 3 demonstrating the immediate effectiveness of the action taken.

The College has taken steps to develop progression to higher levels of education by working with local universities to develop courses which not only meet local need but also offer

progression routes to higher levels of study. In addition to developing partnerships with awarding bodies and HEIs the College places strategic emphasis on engaging with, and supporting, student employability and recognises the significance of enabling students to be ready for work, or for those already at work to enhance their work-based practice. The majority of the HE students at the College are part-time and employed, or volunteers working within areas of practice linked to their programme of study. This enables them to draw on their work-related experience and inform their academic outcomes, and to enhance their practice through engagement with theoretical and technical developments. *QAA HER Report p.3.* (SO2)

4. Student outcomes and learning gain

4.1. Employment and further study

Progression to employment or further study from HE programmes at Grantham College is good as indicated by the positive core metrics for the majority mode of study which are slightly above benchmark. The core metrics for the minority mode of study are slightly below benchmark but still very high at 93.9%.

The College infrastructure for supporting student employability is well established. The College policy is to appoint subject specialists with practice-based expertise, which serves to ensure that they can reflect work-based practice, support students with Accreditation of Experiential Learning (AEL) [Evidence: 4017] and advise on vocational and professional requirements. *QAA HER Report p.40*

Student employability is promoted through the flexible delivery of courses for those who want to work and engage with higher education study at the College. The flexible delivery includes one day per week delivery to meet employer needs, and alternative modes of delivery to meet the needs of shift workers in other programme areas. *QAA HER Report p.41*. The HE curriculum outcomes also support the development of skills in information technology, research, peer review presentations, and communication and interpersonal areas, all of which are transferrable to work-related practice, and support and develop student employability. The use of guest speakers and practice-based specialists to deliver specific

curriculum areas such as safeguarding to health and social care students fully support the development of student employability in the relevant disciplines. (SO2)

Opportunities to develop employability skills are embedded within the curriculum and tutors designing BTEC courses use the Pearson guidelines to decide on the structure of individual programmes, working with the prescribed mandatory units and selecting from a range of optional units to meet the specific students' and employers' needs *QAA HER Report p.6.* Students have access to employability advice from tutors, as well as opportunities to discuss their career prospects with a specialist careers advisor during their course. The College holds the Career Mark (Gold award) for its careers advice and is able to offer information and guidance on both academic progression routes to higher level qualifications and also more general advice on career pathways to students. *QAA HER Report p.21*.

4.2. Highly-skilled employment and further study

Progression to Highly skilled employment or further study is 3 points above the benchmark for both the majority and minority modes of study demonstrating that the college is meeting the needs of employers and individuals through developing and delivering both part time and full time HE provision that helps to fill skills gaps and adds real value to students' capacity to undertake such highly skilled roles. The above is a particularly good performance given the context provided by the TEF data maps which show relatively low levels of graduates in high-skilled jobs which reflects the nature of the local economy in south Lincolnshire which offers fewer high-skilled opportunities than the national average.

5. SUMMARY

The quality of teaching and learning and assessment and feedback on HE provision at Grantham College is excellent as confirmed by student satisfaction levels demonstrated in the TEF metrics positive flags and high absolute values referenced earlier in this document. Comments from the college's recent QAA HER review back this assessment by students providing further evidence of the high standards of delivery and assessment.

Grantham College offers a learning environment to suit the needs of its students as evidenced by the positive flags and high absolute values of the TEF metrics for academic support for both the majority mode and minority mode of study. Continuation data for both modes also provide further evidence of a learning environment where students thrive and perform better than they would in the average HE institution.

The above factors lead to positive Student Outcomes for HE students at Grantham College. Progression to employment or further study from HE programmes are good as indicated by the positive core metrics for the majority mode of study which are above benchmark. Progression to Highly skilled employment or further study is also above the benchmark for both the majority and minority modes of study. This demonstrates that the college is meeting the needs of the local economy as well as individuals through developing and delivering both part time and full time HE provision that helps to fill skills gaps and builds the capacity of students to undertake such highly skilled roles.