Name of Provider: Stoke on Trent College

UKPRN: 10006349

TEF Year Three Provider Submission

Provider Context

Stoke-on-Trent College is a General Further Education institute which supports over 9100 occupational and vocational learners each year to meet the demands of local and sub-regional employers and stakeholders of the community it serves. The majority of enrolments at the College are part time adults with significant numbers studying on adult pre-employment and ESOL programmes. Such qualifications are significantly important to the local community of Stoke-on-Trent and play a critical role in developing social inclusion and the skills of those individuals not in employment. Almost 200 students are studying on Higher Education Awards validated by Staffordshire University. The College has transformed into a more competitive and market-driven College of Further Education. Rapidly changing technologies, increased competition, changes to student demographics and student expectations have had a significant impact upon student choice. These changes provide the College with an opportunity to confirm its commitment to exploit opportunities for growth, and continue to deliver high quality teaching and learning in relevant vocational specialisms.

Whilst there are substantial educational and employment challenges facing Stoke-on-Trent and North Staffordshire, this presents Stoke-on-Trent College with significant opportunities to contribute to the upskilling of the local workforce and increasing the level of qualifications held by the local population. Stoke-on-Trent is one of the lowest ranking areas in England for the number of good and outstanding primary and secondary schools. The average pass rate in Stoke-on-Trent schools in 2016/17 for GCSE A* C grades or equivalent, 52.8% compared to a national average of 58.5%. Aspirations in Stoke on Trent are generally low. While solid progress has been made in recent years to boost educational outcomes in Stoke-on-Trent, particularly in primary schools and the early years through the 'Stoke Speaks Out' initiative, there is still room for improvement.

The College's strategic plan has been developed to meet the needs of the local community whilst considering the changing educational landscape for Further Education. Whilst the implications of Brexit are not fully known, implications for adult funding and skills are likely to impact on curriculum design and development.

The Sainsbury Review and the Post-16 Skills Plan (2016) sets out a framework for technical and academic education and training to prepare students for sustained skilled employment to meet the needs of the "rapidly changing economy". The 15 technical routes will provide clear pathways for young people choosing either a technical or academic route once they have successfully completed their GCSEs. The College is responding to Post-16 Skills plan through a three year Curriculum Strategy document which sets out the Educational Character of the College and the ways in which the curriculum is evolving to respond to the changes in the FE sector.

The Curriculum Strategy responds to Government reforms on Apprenticeship funding with the introduction of the Levy from April 2017 and the aspiration for 3 million new apprenticeships to be in place across the UK by 2020. The vision for Apprenticeships is simple; by 2019, we want to be recognised within Stoke-on-Trent and the wider communities of Staffordshire as a good college and the "go to" place to develop technical and professional skills. The College now has a positive steer in terms of how our Apprenticeship delivery should develop over the next 3 to 5 years. This should result in a more focused learner and apprenticeship offer i.e. more specialisms, the benefit of which will be to elicit support from employers and generate more employment opportunities for our learners as we target specific employment sectors. These developments will mean some innovation in terms of the provision on offer and may require an element of investment in terms of staff

and physical resources. However, if we are to position ourselves as a college for business, these actions are crucial.

Stoke-on-Trent College Strategic Vision

The vision for the Stoke on Trent College Curriculum Offer is driven by the College Strategic Ambitions & Mission. The College will be a key partner in delivering the LEP Strategic Plan for economic priorities and is therefore driven by local economic need. The resulting Curriculum Plan focuses on the College's core business with a "back to basics" approach with an assiduous emphasis on quality improvement. In order to achieve this, the College will:

- Position itself as the College for business, enterprise, and careers
- Develop a curriculum that offers seamless progression from Entry Level to Higher Education, Apprenticeship programmes and/or employment
- Ensure the curriculum meets the contemporary needs of government and employers including the phased introduction of T-Levels, Apprenticeship Standards, the embedding of British values and the implementation of ILCT in curriculum delivery
- Establish a quality proposition that delivers a good student experience, improved outcomes for learners and grade 2 Ofsted inspection outcome
- Improve the reputation of the College by improving learner and employer satisfaction
- Continue to develop key strategic partnerships to benefit students, employers and the local community
- Embed English and maths, independent learning and employability skills to provide students with adaptable skills for employment
- Deliver an Apprenticeship offer that ensures a smooth transition from frameworks to standards to meet existing, emerging and future skills needs
- Ensure ongoing review of the curriculum offer to meet the needs of the local, regional and national labour markets, as set out in the Market Assessment.

Stoke on Trent College Mission

The purpose of Stoke on Trent College is to provide young people and adults with the technical and personal skills they need to gain employment, to progress their careers and so to contribute to the city's economic, social and cultural development. Our successful students will help to create a flourishing city.

We will do this by:

- Making ourselves a partner of choice for those employers, agencies and institutions that share our ambition for the transformation of Stoke on Trent
- Providing outstanding value for money, in order to secure the College's long term financial viability and its future as a key partner in Stoke on Trent's transformation
- Supplying the skills needed by local employers to grow their businesses, to employ more people, and to provide goods and services that are in demand nationally and internationally
- Building our curriculum around comprehensive pathways to employment, developed in conjunction with employers and allowing students to "step off" and "step on" at the most appropriate level

- Providing industry standard facilities, recognised by employers for their excellence and their suitability for employers' training needs
- Fostering a culture of high expectations throughout the college, in order to develop in our students the personal attitudes necessary to gain employment and to hold down jobs: ambition, reliability, integrity, adaptability
- Maintaining our reputation as an outstanding provider of educational and personal support to individual students, in order to give them the very best chance of achieving successfully
- Celebrating the rich diversity of our learners and the wider community by fostering a culture of inclusion, respectfulness and acceptance of difference across the college, where all students and staff feel highly valued and safe

The Rationale for Higher Education at Stoke-on-Trent College:

1. To provide opportunities for seamless progression for students who might otherwise not be able to successfully access Higher Education due to a range of barriers including social and emotional, cost and financial implications, or lack of support.
2. To raise aspirations by providing opportunities for students to study Higher Education in a learning environment that is supportive and inclusive.
3. To provide students with a range of educational opportunities, which enable them to develop the knowledge, behaviour and skills required to progress to higher-level skilled employment.
4. To provide students with an opportunity to study from level 3 to level 7.
5. To develop relationships with local and regional businesses with the purpose of introducing Higher Apprenticeship pathways in order to support skills shortages.

Higher Education Provision at Stoke on Trent College:

Under present arrangements and in the absence of in-house awarding powers, the relationship with HEI partners is crucial in determining the shape of higher education programmes. The College's single partner is Staffordshire University under a franchise arrangement.

The College's Higher Education Strategy recognises the overall authority of University quality procedures for University validated higher education programmes. The College seeks to support and enhance these procedures but not to duplicate them. The College is committed to aligning its strategies, policies and procedures to meet the Expectations of the current UK Quality Code for Higher Education for the assurance of academic quality and standards and the development of teaching and learning. The outcome of the Higher Education Review (HER) was positive and has led to significant developments in quality enhancement arrangements within the College.

College management of Higher Education programmes is vested in the Principal, Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality, Director of Curriculum and Director of Quality. Curriculum development and standards are overseen by an HE Academic Board and each programme has a designated HE Programme Leader who is responsible for the delivery and standards of individual programmes. College Quality Boards monitor the quality of each programme.

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For University validated programmes each University supplies a Programme Advisor to support each programme team and each Awarding Body also provides External Examiners.

The College collects "the student voice" through College led HE student surveys, HE Student Council and the National Student Survey (NSS). All HE programmes have a student representative who attends curriculum team meetings as well as College focus groups. Student representatives are invited to attend the Academic Board.

The College Board of Governors, through Corporation Board meetings monitors the performance of the College's HE work. Higher Education is reported on through the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee meetings, Senior Leadership team meetings and Curriculum Management team meetings.

Higher Education growth plan:

The College intends to secure growth in Higher Education by pursuing its own direct student numbers and seeking validation, in the first instance, from the College's existing partner, Staffordshire University, and using "off the shelf" HNDs and HNCs in LEP priority areas. By securing direct learner numbers, the College plans to grow Higher National provision and introduce College-based full degrees within the next 2 years by specialising in areas of expertise such as health and related professions, childhood studies, teacher education and computing. The proposition for learners considering studying for higher education at the College will be cheaper course fees leading to lower debt levels. The target market for Stoke-on-Trent College is mature students who value learning amongst peers and want lower debt when securing a degree.

In order to achieve the ambitious growth plans set out in the Curriculum Strategy, the College needs to achieve the following outcomes:

1. Develop key strategic goals of Higher Education at Stoke-on-Trent College
2. Secure direct funding through Office for Students (OfS) application process.
3. Plan a high quality and coherent range of Higher Education provision that builds upon the academic and vocational strengths.
4. Revalidate and develop the current curriculum offer.
5. Plan internal ladders of progression from levels 3-7 that clearly link to local, regional and national needs and demands.
6. Provide opportunities for students to access support with the aim of widening participation to all students.
7. Develop our workforce to ensure that the provision is high quality and staff have expert knowledge in order to achieve high levels of retention and student success.
8. Continue to identify curriculum areas of growth by analysing local market intelligence data, LEP priorities and emerging opportunity areas for growth.

This will be achieved through the development of the HE Strategy Implementation action plan and working group.

Teaching Quality

The College has clear systems, procedures and processes as part of the Higher Education structure to ensure that Academic Standards are met and that teaching, learning and assessment is monitored. All quality assurance and improvement is overseen by the Higher Education Academic Board that is informed and monitored by the board of Governors

through the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee. The College also operates a Higher Education Quality Board, Higher Education Assessment & Awards Boards, a Higher Education Programme Leaders and Teachers Group and a Higher Education Student Council all of which report to the HE Academic Board. In each instance, their purpose, terms of reference, membership and reporting structures are included in the Higher Education Strategy.

The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is assured through the implementation of the College's Teaching and Learning Development Procedure that includes all College provision as well as a separate section for its Higher Education provision. Application of this procedure for Higher Education provides opportunities for students' development of independent learning, higher level academic skills and ensures that the Higher Education student experience is distinctive from their previous learning experiences. Articulation and implementation of this strategic approach to teaching and learning promotes a shared understanding among staff, students and other stakeholders.

All staff teaching on Higher Education programmes are appropriately qualified within their chosen discipline and hold a relevant teaching qualification. Academic staff are also required to engage in a minimum of 30-hour continuous professional development on an annual basis which could include relevant scholarly activity. New staff are supported by the relevant Head of Faculty and are allocated a mentor from within the programme team. Additionally, new staff are supported through their induction period using developmental observations of teaching and learning and subsequent development plans. To support further development, each faculty also has a bespoke CPD plan that is informed by student feedback, the observation of teaching and learning and feedback from External Examiners. As part of the partnership with the validating university, all staff teaching on Higher Education awards have Staffordshire University Associate Lecturer status and are required to be approved by the university ensuring that they hold relevant qualifications, have appropriate training and professional experience.

The College operates an annual awards scheme where staff are nominated by either colleagues or students and are recognised for their contribution to teaching, learning and assessment. In addition to this, where a good learning experience is identified, staff receive acknowledgement from the Quality Team.

The College has implemented a framework that underpins all teaching, learning and assessment known as the "Stoke Approach". While the Stoke Approach was developed within the Further Education context its principles are extended to those staff who teach on Higher Education programmes. The Stoke Approach promotes high standards and expectations for all staff and students and provides staff with appropriate support in raising attainment. It promotes good progress and stretch and challenge through careful planning and assessment and aims to support students in developing the skills required in employment and/or to support progression. The Stoke Approach strengthens all development within the teaching, learning and assessment. Throughout this framework, good practice is identified and recognised, with the College providing opportunities for staff to become "Beacons" within their area of expertise. Beacon staff further support the development of teaching, learning and assessment through targeted developmental support.

Teaching quality is monitored by the system of Higher Education teaching observations whereby the outcomes from these observations can be analysed to show specific areas of strength and/or areas for development within teaching and learning. The Colleges observation programme is well developed with a select team of trained observers being involved in the formal observation of teaching and learning. Further to this, the quality of teaching is observed informally through learning walks and developmental observations. All outcomes are collated centrally by the Quality Team and shared with the individual staff and

Heads of Faculty who manage Higher Education Awards. All staff receive a teaching and learning developmental plan where actions are completed within 6-8 weeks. All formal observations are moderated to ensure validity of judgements and feedback is used to inform staff development.

The implementation of teaching, learning and assessment procedure and the associated process has seen teaching quality, as judged by the National Student Survey (NSS); see a year on year increase in percentage satisfaction although in 2017 the number of respondents was isolated to one Higher Education award. The TEF Metrics for 2015/16, where the response rate was more significant, also reflects effective teaching.

Overall, 90% of Higher Education students feel confident that teaching is developing their skills (College on programme survey 2017). External Examiner feedback is also positive and demonstrates that methods of teaching and learning are effective. External Examiner feedback also confirms that academic standards are being met across all awards and that all actions raised are promptly addressed by programme teams.

Through the NSS (2015/16) and College based surveys, assessment and feedback has been identified as an area for further development particularly around the timeliness of feedback on some awards. This is acknowledged within the Higher Education quality improvement plan and is an area of focus for academic staff development within these areas with development activity having already taken place. Where applicable, reference to these developments is identified within with Award Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs) and Module Monitoring Reports (MMRs). Despite this, External Examiner feedback suggests that in most cases assessment and feedback is appropriate. Assessment processes are also monitored by the validating university through Assessment Award Boards which again confirm that academic standards are being met. Assessment Award Boards are conducted at the university and by their regulations with College staff in attendance.

The Higher Education Programme Leaders and Teachers Group is designed to further support the development of teaching, learning and assessment specifically within for those staff involved in the delivery of Higher Education. In addition to this, the Colleges continuous professional development team provide opportunities for personalised development for individuals and/or within teams.

Through the Programme Leaders and Teachers group and through the standards set out within each award, staff are familiar College policies and procedures; admissions, teaching and learning, student support and representation which are also aligned to the relevant aspects of the UK Quality Code. The appropriateness of teaching and assessment is also aligned to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FEHQ). The College also uses systems for the uploading of student work and also serves as a system to improve rigor and minimise plagiarism.

The College actively encourages students to contribute to their learning experience and they are provided with a range of forums in which they can do this. These include the previously mentioned Higher Education Academic Board, the Higher Education Student Council and Higher Education student surveys.

The College also operates a Learner Involvement Strategy with specific reference to Higher Education and identifies the various methods of gathering and considering student opinion. This strategy outlines the process for developing Higher Education student representation including schedules for selecting and training student representatives. This strategic approach to the student voice has been particularly important in improving student engagement for those learners whose mode of study is part-time. A flexible approach to gathering student feedback including a “You said, We Did” student voice initiative has also

been beneficial for this cohort of learners and led to a variety of improvements on programme for these students.

Within this strategy, the College recognises the importance of student feedback in the teaching and learning process, therefore, students have an opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences during all forms of observation with this feedback being recorded on the Higher Education observation form. Internal College surveys administrated at induction and during the academic year include specific questions that focus on teaching, learning and assessment that also support the College in monitoring its effectiveness. Further to this, student feedback is an integral part of programme and module reviews and is reported through the annual and module monitoring process. Where applicable, all student feedback is shared individual staff and their Head of Faculty.

Student feedback is also shared at senior management though the Higher Education Academic Board. The impact of this that all areas for development are used to inform College, faculty and programme development plans that focus on key areas of weakness or to further improve/share good practice. The sharing of good practice is coordinated by the Colleges Head of Continuous Professional Development and where applicable developed through the Higher Education Programme Leaders and Teachers group. At present, 82% of students feel that the College listens to their views with 83% of students feeling they are made aware of how their feedback is acted on (College on programme survey 2017) and although this has improved compared to previous academic years the College continues to focus on this as an area for further development.

The development of threshold standards for the Virtual Learning Environment platform means that all Higher Education students have access to high quality teaching and learning resources that can be accessed outside of the classroom and has contributed to 95% of students feeling that teaching effectively develops their independent study skills (College on programme survey 2017). In addition to this, all students have access to the validating university's library and electronic resources.

Student support for Higher Education students is good and positive satisfaction can be seen within the NSS. The College has clear arrangements in place for students to access relevant support. Study skills support is available through the Colleges Accelerate programme that can be accessed through the learning resource centre. In addition to this, the College has dedicated areas with the learning resource centre that enable Higher Education students to access appropriate resources and equipment. This, in addition to high quality and well equipped classrooms has result in 86% (College on programme survey 2017) of students feeling that the resources available to them are useful and beneficial to their learning.

Learning Environment

The underlying principle of the College's Higher Education provision is to provide a learning environment that enables the transition from Further Education to Higher Education and from dependent to independent learning. Subsequently, further education students benefit from a wide range of initiatives to enhance and support this transition.

Details of progression to further study are explained to students throughout their time at the College. Level 3 students are informed of progression opportunities to Higher Education at enrolment. Throughout their programme, Level 3 Further Education students receive presentations from College Higher Education academic staff and careers staff on relevant progression opportunities; which is also supported by a specific Higher Education Careers Fayre, information from university open days and by university representatives who also share their own experiences. The College has also operated progression agreements with 2 partner universities. As a result, Further Education students are presented with a wealth of information about career pathways and opportunities to access Higher Education.

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All Higher Education students engage in a bespoke Higher Education induction that provides good opportunities for students to engage with academic and support staff, familiarise them with Higher Education processes, the learning resource centre and the support network available at the College.

On programme, individual student performance and achievement is discussed at tutorials, which provide opportunities to examine barriers to learning which may also affect achievement and subsequent progression from their FE or HE programme. The College is also actively engaged in a Catalyst funded transition/progression project with its validating university and 3 other institutions. This project analyses the effectiveness of the current systems in place by both the College and the university with an end goal of further improving transition arrangements and support for those students who progress into higher education.

Partnership arrangements with the validating university are strong and as a result, all Higher Education students studying at Stoke on Trent College have access to the university's facilities and resources to support their development and achievement. The impact of this arrangement can be seen more clearly for students studying at Level 3 on the Access to Higher Education Courses, Applied Science and in the Foundation Year in Science. These students are able to access a high quality learning environment for science to further enhance teaching and learning, resulting in positive pass rates. In 2016/17, 73% students progressed from Access to Higher Education programmes into Higher Education. These programmes, which include pathways in Science, Social Science and Health, provide opportunities for mature learners who have previously dropped out of education and wish to return and retrain. The College supports these learners in developing their English and mathematics as well as their study skills in preparation for Higher Education.

Students studying on full-time Further Education programmes also have an extensive tutorial programme led by a personal tutor. Using central systems, students and personal tutors have access to projected final grade profiles enabling them to clearly review performance against target and make necessary adjustments, set new targets and provide appropriate support when required to ensure that they achieve the desired outcome.

The College uses a wide range of systems that measure Higher Education student performance including a data dashboard. This system enables close monitoring of student attendance and actively promotes early identification of individual students or groups of students where attendance is low. Student attendance is followed up by programme teams and discussed with students during their tutorial. Tutors and academic staff are easily accessible and provide ongoing support for all Higher Education students. This is extended further for those students studying on the Foundation Degree in ICT where specific "distance e-contact time" is built into the students' academic calendar and timetable. This provides these learners, who are in employment and located throughout the United Kingdom, excellent accessibility to academic support, guidance and feedback. The impact of this support framework is that there is good levels of student satisfaction with the level of academic support provided by the College (86% NSS 2016 and 94% NSS 2017).

The majority of students studying Higher Education at the College are already in employment and are accessing Higher Education for career enhancement purposes. Of these, around 25% are studying on a Foundation Degree in ICT that is part of a higher apprenticeship with large national telecommunications company. This long-standing relationship has resulted in continual development of the Foundation Degree in ICT whereby a bespoke delivery model has been implemented to meet the needs of the employer and its higher apprentices. Since the start of this relationship in 2006 there has been strong and consistent employer engagement which has included managers and students from the company and the College meeting annually to review the apprenticeship programme. As lines of Business change, these meetings focus on the development of new modules, in

conjunction with the validating university, to ensure that the programme is personalised, current and fit for purpose. On other awards, such as the Foundation Degree in Education .which also accounts for around 25% of the HE student population, programme teams engage with employers to secure work placements and to review student performance within their employment. Good employer engagement on these programmes has contributed to 88% of Higher Education students felt ready to take their next step (College on programme survey 2017).

In partnership with Staffordshire University, Higher Education programmes delivered by the College are underpinned by a set of graduate attributes known as the "Staffordshire Graduate Attributes". The impact of these scheme is that all programmes are required to map a set of employability and transferable skills into the Higher Education curriculum subject area. These attributes include:

- Discipline Expertise
- Professionalism
- Global Citizenship
- Communication and Teamwork
- Reflective and Critical Learner
- Lifelong Learning

These attributes support the development of student's wider skills.

Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

Student retention and achievement is monitored through the Colleges management information system and reported to the Higher Education Academic Board, Senior Leadership Team and board of Governors. This data is used to inform annual monitoring of all Higher Education Awards awards and subsequent quality improvement plans. The success of these current systems and good teaching and learning results in most students studying on part-time Higher Education provision achieving well and remain within employment.

While the College has effective systems in place to monitor student achievement it is acknowledged that these systems could be further developed in line with those that are successfully integrated within its further education provision and to better reflect Higher Education measures.

As part of this development and in order to support student attainment and progression the College, as previously mentioned is part of a catalyst funded transition/progression project with of 4 other institutions. The purpose of this project is to analyse barriers to success by evaluating trends in achievement and progression to close gaps between learners of different backgrounds. This project will enable a better supporting framework for those students progressing into higher education.

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For those leaving Higher Education the figures are high for the EPI and graduate prospects.

DLHE data

SOT DLHE					
Loc_Description	**AcademicYear**	**Sample**	**Responded**	**EPI**	**Graduate Prospects**
Stoke-on-Trent College	12-13	152	108	98.15	82.41
Stoke-on-Trent College	13-14	115	60	98.18	76.36
Stoke-on-Trent College	14-15	92	71	97.18	76.06
Stoke-on-Trent College	15-16	97	63	98.41	73.02