1. Provider Context

1.1. RNN Group (RNN) is a career-focused further and higher education group of three colleges; Rotherham College, North Nottinghamshire College, and Dearne Valley College merged under the RNN Group name in February 2017. Located 9km from Sheffield, Rotherham College attracts students who have low entry qualifications and whom benefit from a more personalised approach to learning than that provided by the larger universities nearby. Dearne Valley College, also in South Yorkshire, is in an improving regeneration area that previously relied on mining for its local economy. North Notts College is situated in the rural coalfields community district of Bassetlaw in the northernmost district of Nottinghamshire. RNN works at the centre of each of its local communities, significantly contributing to civic life and economic renewal. Through events, volunteering and charitable efforts, RNN reaches out to individuals and groups. In total, RNN employs or engages with over 1,500 staff to educate and train over 16,000 people each year, including over 4,000 apprentices.

1.2. Only 17.4% of the population in Rotherham and Bassetlaw are educated to Level 4 or above, compared to the national average of 27.4%. The College remains committed to increasing local and regional participation in higher level education as set out in its Access and Participation Statement. Additionally, RNN is an active member of the Higher Education Progression Partnership South Yorkshire (HeppSY+) – the regional National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP).

1.3. RNN educates school leavers, undergraduates, employees and those re-joining the workforce, through a range of programmes awarded by the University of Hull, Sheffield Hallam University and Pearson. RNN actively promotes the following principles across its programmes and throughout its college network:

- A learner-centred approach that encourages active student engagement.
- Inclusive learning through the promotion of equality, diversity and equality of opportunity.
- A working partnership between students and all staff who facilitate learning.
- Learning, teaching and assessment practices that are transparent, inclusive and fair.
- Curricula that are relevant, and closely aligned with those of the partner university.
- Effective mechanisms to continuously enhance the student experience.
- Motivated academic and support staff, and the provision of on-going staff development.
- HE teaching staff are actively supported and encouraged to undertake scholarly activities to ensure best educational practice are being adopted and applied.
- A high quality learning environment.

1.4. The most recent QAA HE Review (HER) was conducted at Rotherham College of Arts and Technology during 2014.[1] The QAA concluded that the enhancement of student learning opportunities was to be commended, while the maintenance of academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its degree-awarding bodies met UK expectations. The quality of student learning opportunities and the quality of information produced about its provision were also identified as meeting UK expectations. The report highlighted five areas of good practice and no recommendations. Previously QAA reviewed North Nottinghamshire College under the IQER process and the review team reported Confidence in all aspects of the review, identifying six areas of good practice.[2]

1.5. RNN delivers higher education provision to a cohort of students which are not the UK's average HE demographic. RNN's HE student population predominantly (79%) comes from the local community; 73% of students are from POLAR areas 1 and 2; and nearly one-fifth of students (19%) declare a disability. Mature students comprise 57% of the HE population at RNN. In addition, 89% of RNN's HE students are not studying for a first degree, most are aiming instead for a sub-degree qualification. The majority of FT Higher Education students were RNN further education students who have progressed internally and live within the catchment area of the College. The average RNN HE student is a mature learner, from the local community, from POLAR area 1 and studying for a Foundation Degree (FD).

1.6. RNN adheres to an ethos of providing accessible and affordable local classroom-focused learning higher education provision. RNN provides appropriate academic and pastoral support for a challenging population demographic from POLAR areas 1 and 2.

1.7. RNNs delivers HE provision at each of its three colleges with the majority being offered at Rotherham (81%), approximately 13% is delivered at Dearne Valley with approximately 6% at North Nottinghamshire College. RNN's HE provision and the opportunities it offers to its local communities are highly valued by the Group, demonstrated by the recent investment of £10.5 million in the construction of the University Centre Rotherham - a building dedicated to Higher Education provision in the Rotherham area – University Centre Rotherham. RNN has developed a wide portfolio of subjects to meet the employer needs, student interests and the needs of the local communities. In 2018/19, RNN has around 600 learners studying PGCE, Foundation Degrees (FD), Higher National Certificates (HNC) and Diplomas (HND) and Honours degrees across a wide range of subjects including engineering, performing arts, business, computing, sports coaching and animal management.

1.8. Higher Education student satisfaction has remained above benchmark for four years, with a consistently high level of satisfaction in learning opportunities and course quality. In 2017, 81% of RNN respondents answered positively to the NSS question: 'Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course,' compared to the benchmark of 84%.

1.9. RNN has three positive flags in its FT TEF core metrics, with all three reinforced by asterisks indicating that the College is in the top 10% of absolute performance in the areas of Assessment & feedback, Academic support and Employment or further study. Additionally, the College's PT metrics indicate a top 10% of absolute performance in Academic support and Employment or further study.

1.10. The only negative flag in the core metrics is for Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study for PT students. The PT students that contribute to the negative flag (82 students studying Other UG) were all already employed in their chosen sector and studied a sub-degree in

Engineering (HNC, HND), Childhood Studies (FD), or Learning Support (FD), Certificate in Education (CertEd). The majority of these students continued in employment with their employers on completing their qualifications, and while they may have increased responsibility will not necessarily have changed roles. Therefore, they are most likely to have self-reported that they are not in graduate jobs as they secured their positions prior to completing their HE qualifications.

1.11. Typically, all Engineering students remained in employment throughout their courses and following graduation without progressing to Honours degrees. The DLHE is not sufficiently nuanced to capture the increase in skills and knowledge of these employees as a positive outcome of their HE studies. Childhood Studies and teacher-training are typically low-paying careers but are still valued career paths. The students who study on the Group's Learning Support and teacher training courses are internally employed at RNN Group – and once they have received their qualification they stay with the Group. Therefore, they do not report their jobs as 'graduate employment' as they remain with the same employer they had before studying.

1.12. The employers of the Group's PT learners, however, place great value on the higher education of their employees facilitated by RNN. Accordingly, 85% of all current PT engineering students are supported by their employers and have their tuition fees paid in full by their employer. RNN currently works in partnership with 15 small engineering companies to support development of their specialist staff.

1.13. RNN maintains that its teaching excellence is meeting and exceeding the academic needs of its learners and promoting employability skills through live briefs and work experience. RNN focuses on enabling HE students to be successful in their chosen profession, enabling over 98% of all RNN HE graduates to be in work or further study within six months of graduating.[3] RNN's track record for graduate employability reinforces the Gold qualities evident in the other metrics where RNN has acquired positive flags for assessment and achievement support.

2. TQ1: Student Engagement

2.1. The RNN Group Higher Education Learning and Teaching Strategy is informed by a variety of stakeholders including students' views and experience; staff innovations and development; employer feedback. The Strategy encompasses pedagogy and provision, curriculum, delivery, e-learning, student affairs, professional development, reporting, monitoring and review, quality and standards. The HE Learning and Teaching Strategy is the preliminary resource developed and devised for student engagement and academic success for the Group's learners.

2.2. RNN Group has a clear track record of enriching the learning experience of students and their accomplishments. The practise of continuous improvement is deep-seated within the learning environment at all levels of HE activity at the College; with a strong strategic focus at senior level. This proactive approach towards continuous improvement runs through all levels of academic and student support. A wide range of outcomes are drawn upon to inform evaluation and lead to actions and performance indicators that result in an ever developing and dynamic student experience. RNN recognises that enhancement is a continuous cycle; this is reflected within the Annual HE Quality Assurance and HE Student Lifecycle.

2.3. The College regards its relationship with its students as one of a partnership, to ensure that the views and experiences of all students inform the Group's quality systems, with the purpose of understanding and enhancing all aspects of the student learning experience.

RNN Group adheres to a shared vision of enhancement, responsibility and academic pursuit. It recognises that the views of students, individually and collectively, should inform quality systems with the purpose of improving the student educational experience both for current and future cohorts. The RNN Group is committed to involving students in its planning, decision making, and quality enhancement and assurance processes in relation to teaching and learning.

2.4. The voice of the HE population is very important to RNN and is embedded throughout its quality assurance processes. Student representation is valued at all levels, from membership of the governing body, to the annual HE quality assurance review process, as well as Student Voice forums. Internal student satisfaction surveys are conducted post-induction and at the end of each academic year, where all HE learners are surveyed to gather robust feedback.

2.5. There are a number of opportunities for students to engage with quality assurance and enhancement via formal and informal processes. These are outlined in the HE Student Engagement Strategy document and the HE Student Voice handbook. The student-led forums for our Student Union and Student Voice groups store the minutes from all forums, as well as feedback and responses to the College wide surveys, on the internal portal system. This allows for all HE learners to gain access to the minutes across all campuses. In addition, a 'You Said, We Did' section on the portal is regularly updated – with feedback from students and the positive actions taken by the College, to ensure transparency and up-to-date information is provided to all HE learners. For example, a key driver for identifying relevant opportunities for development and enhancement is listening to the student voice.

2.6. Another example of enhancement is the development of the HE tutorial programme that is led by RNN's library services. Summer tutorial sessions are provided to learners who are internally progressing from level 3 to level 4, to support the learners as they move in to a higher level educational environment. The learners are given support on research and writing skills before they begin their HE course. This initiative began in 2016 and has helped to maintain excellent retention rates amongst HE learners (see Table 1 below). An enhancement to the initiative was introduced in 2017 where learners enrolled on HE courses take a refresher tutorial programme on research and writing skills during the summer to reinforce good study skills before that start of each new academic year.

2.7. RNN Group has smaller class sizes than the norm in higher education, which has been pivotal in providing personalised teaching, learning and has been a key strategic priority for the College. Typically, students work in groups of 10-15 supported by a lecturer with a recognised teaching qualification. For some students, this is a key reason to study higher education at RNN. HE students are entitled to a minimum of one-hour personal academic support from their tutor each week. The HE Team liaises with curriculum team leaders to ensure all HE learners benefit from this highly valued one-on-one support. This personalised approach facilitates a high level of student engagement with their studies and promotes a culture of active commitment throughout their course.

2.8. While the metric for Teaching is not flagged, the College is above benchmark at 85.7%. Teachers are qualified and regularly engage in CPD resulting in courses that provide effective stimulation and challenge. Students agreed with the NSS question that the course is intellectually stimulating with 85% positive response in 2017 and 89% in 2018 – each being 4% above benchmark. This clearly demonstrates the Group is above benchmark for Teaching.

2.9. The culture of continuous improvement and development is evident within the College's strategic aims and is reflected in the HE Strategy. The HE strategy promotes a planned and informed approach to developments that will provide the highest standards of teaching and learning. The HE Strategy outlines the RNN Group's commitment to promoting and

sustaining the high standards and activities which have consistently delivered the best possible learning opportunities for its students and the skills the regional economy requires. It summarises the processes used by the College to assure itself and the wider academic, industrial, professional, and general public of the quality of the learning and teaching provided across the three colleges, encompassing five sites.

2.10. The TEF metrics demonstrates that FT student satisfaction with 'Assessment and feedback' and 'Academic support' are both above benchmark at 87.8% and 91.5% respectively. For PT students, who represent 49% of the total HE student population, satisfaction with 'academic support' is above benchmark at 89.9%. In the most recent NSS (2017), actual overall satisfaction with teaching and learning was 92.2% and for assessment and feedback was 98.6%. Internal post-induction surveys and end of module surveys also indicate a continually positive experience with RNN Group's quality of teaching.

TQ2: Valuing Teaching

2.11. The College is committed to supporting the development of its HE staff both through attendance at partner university events and through internal training activities intended to facilitate a shared understanding of the College's approach to learning and teaching. College workshops typically involve external academics as well as employers, providing a forum for sharing good practice. Training events support staff in all aspects of their practice and range from the use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) to the development of pedagogical skills as well as ensuring staff remain up to date with industry standard competencies and can reflect current practice within their sector.

2.12. As of the beginning of the 2018/19 academic year, 62% of the HE academic staff hold a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education, 4% hold a Level 5 DTLLS qualification and an additional 2% hold a Level 4 Certificate in Education. In addition, 32% currently hold a Master's Degree in their specialist subject, with five additional academic staff are currently studying for a MA degree – which are all partly funded by the Group. Although not a requirement to teach on a University of Hull, Sheffield Hallam University, or Pearson validated programme, the Group employs two teaching staff who hold a PhD who teach on the Higher Education programmes at RNN.

2.13. All new staff are provided with a comprehensive induction to support their transition to the College, and if relevant to teaching in higher education. Mentoring support is also available through both the programme teams and the Quality Improvement Practitioner Team. RNN uses a bespoke teaching observation scheme that has been designed for vocational HE and is fully aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). Teaching observations are used to encourage staff to further reflect and improve on their practice, giving appropriate attention to the knowledge and skills specific to teaching at higher levels. Students report that their tutors are highly knowledgeable, committed and experienced practitioners who make a positive contribution to their learning experience.[1] The QAA HER team concluded that the "wide-ranging opportunities provided to academic staff to develop learning and teaching practices informed by the reflection and evaluation of professional practice is good practice.

2.14. RNN actively encourages and supports its staff to undertake higher degrees. HE staff who undertake Masters programmes have 50% of their tuition fees paid by the College. This has given academic staff opportunities to become more engaged in current theoretical and practical studies that they, in turn, have brought into the classroom for the betterment of their students. For staff with FE-recognised teaching qualifications wanting to develop their HE pedagogy, the College supports 75% of tuition fees to undertake a Post-Graduate Certificate

in Education (PGCE). Most staff choosing this development opportunity do so with one of RNN's partner universities.

2.15. A deliberate strategic initiative by the HE Department was implemented in 2017 to support academic staff in their applications towards becoming a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, now part of AdvanceHE. The HE Department has financially supported six successful Fellows amongst RNN Group academic staff. As a condition of the financial support, each Fellow is now currently mentoring a new applicant amongst the academic staff. The six Fellows at RNN Group are each currently mentoring another staff member for 2018/19 academic year submission. In addition, each year the HE Department runs a workshop on the HEA and the UKPSF to encourage new applicants.

TQ3: Rigour and Stretch

2.16. RNN's course design, development, standards and assessment are effective in stretching students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential. The College has an extended Approval Panel, for new academic provision provided by RNN Group, which is made up of a complement of academic staff, both from the Department receiving approval and other academic Departments, students, employers, and support units. The College made the decision to extend the panel, in 2013/14, to ensure that key stakeholders were involved and the programmes being approved met the needs of the Rotherham community. The outcome of this process is a portfolio of courses that meets local employment needs and develops students who are independent and able to progress in employment and/or their community.

2.17. RNN facilitates HE students to undertake real projects such as in collaboration with local employers or travelling abroad to broaden skills and knowledge. RNN's FdA Graphic Design students collaborate with Sheffield design agency Eleven Design to create exhibitions, with 2017's *Type Town*, a project that focused on typography inspired by Rotherham's signage and buildings both historical and modern. The exhibition came from a live brief from the design agency that the students worked towards to create their own interpretations of the brief.

2.18. Since 2016, the HNC/D Animal Management students have visited the Kwante Private Game Reserve in South Africa every summer. The reserve is part of the Africa Big 5 project which is home to the five greatest wild animals in Africa; elephants, lions, rhinoceros, leopards, and Cape buffalo. The tasks the students undertake change each year due to the demands of the reserve; previous activities included lion tracking and monitoring, predator care and interaction, fence patrol, repairs and maintenance, animal management and game drives and counts.

2.19. In 2018, RNN supported an FdA Professional Practice in Health and Social Care student to travel to Gambia to work in a Gambian health clinic. The learner practised her nursing and midwifery skills in an older hospital, with a very basic set-up. The learner promoted awareness within the clinic about the importance of monitoring a baby's movements closely throughout pregnancy. She was able to make a lasting difference by giving the women an opportunity to hear their babies' heartbeat using a foetal Doppler which the learner had enabled the clinic to purchase through fundraising.

TQ4: Assessment and Feedback

2.20. The College publicises and implements principles and procedures for assessment that are explicit, valid and reliable. The assessment of students is inclusive, transparent and promotes effective learning to support student success. The timing of assessment is well planned and enables effective and appropriate measurement of students' achievement of the intended learning outcomes. RNN has a maximum time for return of assessment feedback of 10 working days. The timeliness of feedback is essential to enable students to use the feedback to improve their next piece of assessed work. In 2018 students overwhelmingly agreed that feedback on their work has been timely with 87% agreeing to this NSS question (compared to benchmark of 76%). The College measures the progress of assessment methodology through value-added measure such as, improvement to high grades, employability skills and student satisfaction and progression.

2.21. The assessment process is thorough and supportive. Formative feedback across all subjects, is consistently praised in External Examiner (EE) reports, leaving students knowing exactly what they need to do in order to progress. For example, in the 2017/18 report for BA Education & Professional Development course, the EE stated that the feedback students received on their assignments "*demonstrated a level of rigour and criticality*" that is unique to a HE in FE programme. The examiner went on to state that students were able to demonstrate development in research in comparison between their first semester assignments and their second semester assignments, alongside the critical feedback given by RNN tutors.

2.22. Another example of a positive External Examiner report regarding student feedback is from the EE for the FdA Childhood Studies programme at RNN. The EE has acknowledged that student work "*has been fairly and comprehensively marked with second marking evident throughout and supportive*." The examiner goes on to state that the feedback received "*give[s] students clear indication of where they have met the assignment requirements … [and gives] direction for development."*

3. LE1: Resources

3.1. RNN Group has a responsibility to raise the aspirations of individuals within its communities and enable them to shape and develop a better future. An outstanding student experience is at the heart of RNN and it aims to provide a high quality, local, programme of higher education that is accessible to all. Students are at the core of everything and RNN will proactively engage them in maintaining and enhancing a high quality learning environment.

3.2. A strategic approach and an effective strategy for providing and managing good quality and sustainable learning resources has been implemented and promoted amongst staff, students and other stakeholders. This shared understanding coupled with significant investment has resulted in improvements to learning environments that provide every student with an equal and effective opportunity to achieve their intended learning outcomes.

3.3. A key driver in the development of the recently opened University Centre Rotherham (UCR) was the feedback received at various student forums. The need for an additional relaxed yet specialised environment for HE students to work in was identified through the RNN Student Voice forums. The forums became a steering group for the social and academic spaces of the UCR. The HE Strategy team considered each proposal from the forums and with consultation with learners, several ideas were adopted.

3.4. Each floor of the UCR building has a large social space with quiet study pods to allow for social and/or study opportunities for the learners. The Director of Higher Education & Skills

worked with the student focus groups to establish the needs of the learners. The final version of the social learning spaces in the UCR were informed from student feedback and research into good practice. The construction budget allocated funding to these proposals and the projects were developed in the new and innovative facility that opened for the academic year 2018/19.

3.5. Another example of the innovative approach to reviewing study spaces in consultation with learners was the furniture utilisation in the new library, opened in September 2018 at the UCR. Students stated they wanted a library space that could be modified for individual study as well as group work, where needed. This led to a fully modular library with furniture that can easily be moved for private study and group work usage. The library at the UCR was developed in close consultation with HE learners and the library was opened for the sole utilisation of HE learners at RNN Group. This has resulted in a 15% increase in library usage from the same point of October last year and a variance in the way the library is used by the learners. RNN students are consistently satisfied with their library resources as measured by the NSS; in 2018 86% of respondents (above benchmark) agreed that the library resources supported their learning well.

3.6. The College has recognised the value gained from the use of technology to enhance learning as an important means to enable students to engage fully in their programme of study and receive accurate and current information in relation to their learning and support opportunities.

3.7. RNN uses the VLE Moodle system as an effective tool for supporting and facilitating effective learning cross the Group. Information provided to students on the VLE includes handbooks, assessment briefs and general College information. The Colleges use Moodle for both its FE and HE learners, with the utilisation of Turnitin for HE learners. Minimum standards for the content to be uploaded by programme teams has been agreed by the Student Portal Committee. To ensure consistency across all higher education provision, the VLE content is regularly audited by the Head of Learning Centres. Students have reported that they find the VLE a useful reference source and that information is clear and easily accessible.[1]

3.8. The College employs a Web Developer to continue to improve the VLE interface and to provide a more interactive experience for students. Developments to the VLE are discussed and monitored through the Systems Enhancement Group and informed by student feedback. A recent development by the Wed Developer is linking Google Scholar to EBSCO Discovery e-journal content that all HE learners at RNN have access to. This means that students are now able to find RNN EBSCO content when searching Google Scholar. This development came from the feedback received from tutors and current learners, as well as, in response to recent developments in Google Classroom technologies.

3.9. Positive NSS responses around IT resources have increased from 78% in 2016 to 80% in 2017. As a strategic priority, the Group improves infrastructure with investment in software and hardware – in part – in response to the NSS responses the Group has received regarding IT resources.

3.10. RNN has a wide range of specialist resources to support its diverse HE portfolio. At Rotherham College the Animal Management students have access to a large and varied animal collection with over 250 animals. These include large and small exotic mammals, companion mammals, aquatics, amphibians, reptiles, invertebrates, farm livestock, horses and avian species.

3.11. RNN also provides a large amount of professional resources for its Engineering students. The learners benefit from industry-standard hydraulic, pneumatic and electronic equipment. The equipment has been supplied by over 60 partner companies, including: HYDAC Technology Ltd., Danfoss Power Solution, HUSCO International, Sun Hydraulics Ltd,

Kawasaki, and Shell. Computing and Systems Development students use latest software and hardware technology that is replaced with new equipment every two years. In addition, the College boasts a theatre where BA(Hons) Theatre, Acting and Performance students annually showcase their talents to fee-paying audiences.

LE2: Scholarship, Research and Professional Practice

3.12. The RNN HE learning environment is substantially enriched by student exposure to and involvement in provision at the forefront of professional practice. All HE courses are vocational, informed by employers and/or representative sector bodies.

3.13. RNN recognises the wider learning environment can be provided and/or experienced by engagement with professionals from outside of the College. For example, frequent visitor and local MP Sarah Champion, an advocate for human rights and the arts, visited RNN in 2018 to speak with HND and BA(Hons) Performing Arts students about current politics, employment and her passion for the creative arts. Students were invited to ask questions and voice opinions on the current state of the local economy, gender equality and cuts to the performing arts industry across the country. Discussions also progressed surrounding the arts and the impact it has on our cultural status as a country, as well as the path of becoming a local counsellor.

3.14. Computing and Games students at RNN work on a number of local projects to give learners real-life experiences of industry standard projects while in education. FdSc Computing and Systems Development students are working with DiscSystems, developer of the iCabbi app. The close relationship with the company has already led to three RNN graduates becoming employed FT by DiscSystems. Similarly, a close relationship with Sheffield City Council and Rotherham Council will enable students to gain hands-on experience working on the government's 5G Testbed and Trials Programme as it develops through the regional Urban Connected Communities Project.

3.15. RNN Group has a strong ethos of sharing good practice and showcasing its students in order to enhance and further develop aspects of the curriculum or educational experience of students. Every year since 2015, RNN's HNC/HND Specialist Media Make-Up students have competed and won medals at the World Skills UK event. The competition judges students by the highest standards in their chosen industry. As well as the competitions, the event also showcases skills in order to inspire schoolchildren and to give them a realistic view of working in different industries.

3.16. Other examples of benefitting from the wider learning environment have already been provided (see paragraphs 3.3 to 3.7 above). There has been investment in facilities to ensure that students are learning using up-to-date equipment and software, in line with industry standards. Employers and industry practitioners have been involved in the setting of live briefs and have been involved in the delivery as guest speakers. A majority of staff are still active within industry and pass on their experiences to students both formally and informally.

3.17. RNN is an active member of the AoC Scholarship Project. At the 2017 Project conference, an RNN lecturer presented findings from her research: *Collaboration between Specialist Make-up course and the NHS*.[4] This project illustrates a variety of themes that apply to all HE across the Group. For example, the report discusses the benefits of student working alongside professionals as part of their work-based learning (or in undertaking live briefs), students undertake research as part of their undergraduate studies, often directly related to

the workplace and work experience is realistic to support enhanced employability skills, where direct placement in a workplace is not feasible.

3.18. The College has also been involved in a Learning Gain Project with The Manchester College and thirteen other FE-based HE providers. This collaborative project explores measures that show the value of higher education in further education. In particular, it aimed to understand how students perceive the impact of their experience in higher education.[5]. The project aimed to assess how programme leaders perceive their cohort's journey through the year, and analyse student grade information and attendance data. The Learning Gain Project submitted its findings to the Association of Colleges in November 2018.

3.19. Scholarly activity is a key area of development for the Group. A particular focus for the 2017/18 academic year has been the use of the HE peer observation process, which is distinct from any FE observations that staff are required to undertake. The process was management driven, with a strategic cross curricular approach taken to pairing peers in the observation process. Particular emphasis was made to ensure that cross curricular peer observations were utilised, so that good practice and areas for development could be observed in diverse scenarios.

3.20. Academic staff were paired with a fellow HE academic colleague, from a different course. To allow for travel, pairings were made at the same campus. All staff were asked to reflect on their own practice and that of the peer they have observed. This form of scholarly activity, as well as developing their own practice, has provided a template for professional development activity within the HE teaching community across the Group.

3.21. During the 2017/18 academic year, RNN Group hosted its first HE Conference dedicated solely to HE teaching staff, entitled 'HE Identity'. The themes were around staff CPD, Collaborative Working, Scholarly Activity and Employer Engagement. One workshop was also focused on developing new HE provision within the Group.

3.22. A range of University of Hull professional development opportunities are available to partner colleges throughout the year. Activities and events are designed to support colleagues engaged in collaborative provision, include the updating on OfS, QAA and university developments and quality assurance matters. Colleagues take part in a range of activities at University of Hull events, such as the Collaborative Provision Forum, held twice a year which provides OfS and HE information updates, as well as facilitates and enables debate and the sharing of good practice in teaching, learning and assessment across the partner colleges. Education and Media have had all of their academic staff attend activities at Hull, where feedback on said events are given at the Learning and Teaching Committee meetings. Graphics team regularly attends events at Sheffield Hallam University, which are similar to the activities offered at Hull. The 'HE Identity' Day at RNN Group was to promote HE CPD activities to all academic staff, including the Higher National staff who do not have access to UoH or SHU CPD opportunities.

3.23. Twelve staff from RNN attended the most recent Collaborative Provision Forum, representing a range of curriculum areas were represented, including, Media and Photography, Theatre and Acting, Education, Applied Justice and Social Studies and Early Childhood Studies. All staff agreed the content of the day was useful in terms of updating on University of Hull policies and procedures, as well as continuing to be updated on the challenges that face HE, within the FE sector. Areas of good practice, in summative feedback and assessment briefs, were also identified and evaluated across the collaboration. Members of staff working on newly validated provision found the day particularly useful in familiarising staff with processes and meeting key contacts at the University.

LE3: Personalised Learning

3.24. The College works with staff, students and other stakeholders to articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth, enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking and apply their developing knowledge and skills to their wider experience and plans for the future.

3.25. The College's core focus is education and aims to provide an excellent learning experience for all its students. The College believes all students are entitled to an education and learning opportunities that are relevant, appropriate and accessible that builds on diverse strengths, interests, abilities and needs, in order, to foster engaged and independent students to reach their full potential.

3.26. Students are effectively supported to achieve their learning outcomes and to develop more broadly through a range of mechanisms. Higher education students are provided with an induction at the start of their period of study. Regular tutorials provide continuous individualised support and the College uses Personal Development Plans (PDPs) and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) to monitor individual student progress; the recording of which is facilitated by software (ProMonitor).

3.27. Induction meets the needs of students and provides an opportunity to integrate into the College community. Students report that induction is helpful specifically noting the inclusion of specific activities such as referencing and the use of higher level learning resources.

3.28. Individual students are provided with targeted personal support through one-to-one and group tutorials. Tutorial provision varies across programmes to allow the staff to adapt approaches to the needs of particular individuals. Students find tutorials useful in supporting their academic progression and value the willingness and accessibility of staff in supporting them to develop their personal and professional potential.

3.29. A focus on continuing improvement in learning design and practice such as through observations of teaching and learning, facilitating high levels of student engagement and has resulted in improved student success, increase in high grade achievement and an overall increase in retention across all HE courses from 86.5% in 2013/14 to 92.2% in 2017/18. The TEF metrics for FT continuation exclude some 1-year programmes but demonstrate above benchmark retention. Data for PT retention is non-reportable due to small sample sizes but is also above benchmark at 87.5 % in 2017/18 as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: HE Continuation Rates (PT) 2016 – 2018

Academic Year	PT Continuation (%)
2015/16	88.1
2016/17	85.9
2017/18	87.5

4. SO1: Employability and Further Study

4.1. As stated in the provider context, RNN's typical HE students begin their higher education journey with no or low tariff entry qualifications, they are local to the Group which is in an area of below average skills and salaries, and they are likely to be from a disadvantaged background. Nevertheless, at RNN with strongly vocational programmes and highly personalised environment, the students learn, flourish and succeed.

4.2. The Group is passionate about delivering outstanding technical and professional education and training. RNN focuses on employability which is at the heart of the HE Strategy. Continued promotion of employability is rooted in the many opportunities that are offered to students through the various degrees and subjects offered to learners.

4.3. The success of the Group's approach to supporting students achieve their educational and professional goals, in particular progression to further study or highly skilled employment is illustrated through the TEF metrics. While all PT students are already in work such that this metric should be high (and it is at 100%), the indicator for FT students is also in the top 10% of performance at 98.8%.

SO2: Employability and Transferable Skills

4.4 RNN's Higher Education Plan is substantially informed by the Sheffield City Region's Local Enterprise Partnership Growth the feedback received from the partnerships with local and city region employers and in supporting the higher levels skills requirements of the.

4.5 All RNN's higher education programmes have embedded skills development which are designed to develop students' employability and transferable skills. Importantly, all courses offered by RNN are vocational and sector-specific skills are embedded into each programme. The rigorous use of employer advisors at the course design stage assures all courses are relevant and up to date.

4.6 All Foundation degree programmes have mandatory work-based learning. Part-time programmes include 1 day per week for students to complete their work-based learning. Full-time students undertake their work-based learning via work experience blocks. Each student is allocated a workplace supervisor who oversees their professional engagement and reports back to the College at the end of the work placement. The employer of each work-based learner is surveyed during and after the hours are completed to monitor how well the learner is performing. This information helps RNN to understand how the learners are being prepared for work and to identify performance gaps. Hours required for work-based learning varies for each programme, based on the subject and is agreed between RNN and its validating partner.

4.7 Personal tutorials to assist in the development of job seeking skills and to explore appropriate progression routes for each individual. Students are supported in job searching including providing help with CVs, applications and covering letters. The College works closely with the JobCentre whose staff come into College and actively help students with applications and job searches.

4.8. The College is outstandingly successful in placing its graduates in the career they chose at the time of application, for which they are qualified.

4.9. The anomaly in RNN's metrics is the below benchmark performance for Highly skilled employment. In 2016 their report, *Analysis of highly skilled employment outcomes:*

Research report, Blyth and Clementon's 'acknowledge that some providers may perform less well against this measure for reasons unrelated to teaching quality'.[6] They give an example of HEIs that perform less well, such as specialist HEIs with 'graduates from arts or drama degrees [who] may not consider a SOC 1-3 occupation to be a desirable outcome'. The example refers not to the employability of the students, or the support from the HEI, or even 'transferable skills', but to student intentions. Blyth and Clementon state that a "key motivation for many students entering higher education is the attainment of the skills and qualifications needed to realise their career ambitions." In the case of RNN, all graduating students are able and are enabled to 'realise their career ambitions', and RNN knows that almost all do so, since so many are placed before completing their studies.

4.10. As explained in the TEF procedural guidance, the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey asks those in employment to provide a job title, and 'That job title is mapped to the Standard Occupational Classification'. The actual jobs that RNN students do are not determined to be 'low-skilled' or 'non-professional' by being compared with a set of 'highly-skilled' or 'professional' attributes. The title, not the occupational characteristics, determines the category into which the job falls. As indicated elsewhere in this submission, RNN graduates go in to job roles that are not coded in SOC major groups 1-3, but are non the less, highly skilled.

4.11. It is disappointing that RNN has a negative flag for the Above median earnings supplementary metric. This flag covers students graduating from FT HE courses from 2010 to 2012 from Rotherham, North Nottinghamshire and Dearne Valley Colleges. The now merged RNN Group is a different institution and has vocational education at its heart. The double positive flag for Employment or further study confirms this approach. Typically, over 40% of RNN's FT students are in creative art and design – a sector well-known for low salaries. A further 5% of students work in healthcare, having studied FdA Professional Practice in Health & Social Care. This course has been incorrectly grouped with subjects allied to medicine and RNN's graduates' earnings are being compared with those who have allied professional qualifications, such as physiotherapy or podiatry which attract significantly higher salaries. The College is in discussion with its awarding body to have this programme re-designated to a CAH code that better reflects the course content.

4.12. As noted above, the majority of RNN's students are local to the College and stay local upon graduation. In this respect, the graduates are at a disadvantage from working in an area with low skills and relatively low pay.

SO3: Positive Outcomes for All

4.13. As indicated by the TEF contextual metrics, RNN recruits students who are predominantly from disadvantaged backgrounds with none or low tariff entry qualifications. From this starting point, the College provides excellent learning opportunities resulting in above average retention and outstanding employment outcomes. Personalised support that is provided to all students to achieve these positive outcomes. Nearly one-fifth of all RNN HE students register a disability and these students are equally well supported. Importantly, there is not a single below benchmark performance for any under-represented groups of students at RNN, with the exception of highly skilled employment, where the performance is improved for FT disabled and BME students.

4.14. Tables 2-4 below show excellent completion and achievement rates for RNN students, which combined with the above average retention rates, demonstrate that students who begin their studies with RNN have a significantly above sector average chance of successfully completing their chosen course. Part of this success has already been

described throughout this submission including the personalised support that students receive and the highly relevant vocational nature of the courses on offer.

Table 2: HE Completion to Graduation Rates 2013 – 2018

Academic Year	Achievement (%)
2013/14	84.5
2014/15	89.4
2015/16	87.8
2016/17	89.0
2017/18	92.0

Table 3: HE Degree Achievement Rates 2017/2018 Academic Year

	Degree Classification Rates			
Academic Year	3rd	2(ii)	2(i)	1st
2017/18	3	15	17	12

Table 4: HE Foundation Degree, HNC, and HND Rates 2017/2018 Academic Year

	Higher Classification Rates		
Academic Year	Pass	Merit	Distinction
2017/18	80	34	19

4.15. Overall student satisfaction has and continues to remain above sector average, and significantly above FEC average. The academic and professional support staff place high importance in maintaining student satisfaction and RNN firmly believes that satisfied students are more likely to achieve the best possible outcomes.

4.16. Students benefit from having a good range of teachers with extensive industry expertise, including current practitioners, and those who have excellent academic experience. The quality of teaching is high and the industry relevance of learning is continually reinforced - in keeping with the vocational nature of our higher education programmes. Staff continually update their academic and specialist skills to ensure that the teaching remains current and of high quality.

4.17. A range of progression activities are undertaken to promote higher education at the College which includes specific higher education curriculum tasters, presentation evenings/talks, UCAS application activities, Student finance activities, higher education open evenings, progression boards and Careers events.

5. Conclusion

5.1. The metrics presented as part of the TEF tells only a small part of the effective, impactful, data informed and cohesive approaches RNN undertakes to ensure Teaching Excellence and employable students. The College recognises and embraces the metrics shown.

5.2. The importance and effectiveness of supporting students with progression onto continued study or employment is demonstrated throughout the range of activity and support provided to students. The impact of this is clearly demonstrated by the significantly above benchmark

levels of students entering employment or furthering their studies. The College continues to build on the development of effective and impactful interventions to enable student success.

5.3. RNN is confident this submission reflects the values and ethos of the whole College community. RNN strives for employable and high trained students, and the metrics and RNN's internal data demonstrates that RNN fully excels in this ambition.

5.4. There are significant staff development benefits from working with Higher Education institutions. All tutors delivering degrees validated by the University of Hull apply for 'Recognised Teacher Status' and can choose to become associates of the university. Recognised Teacher Status in an internal quality standards framework at the University of Hull that identifies an academically inclined and professionally experienced staff member as being highly qualified to teach on an University of Hull validated programme. Students studying for degrees validated by the University of Hull, and the other validating partner, the Sheffield Hallam University are able to use the university library and attend specialist lectures/workshops delivered by industry specialists.

5.5. Academic standards are enforced across the College and in every department. All policies are rigorous, detailed and adapted within each department. Higher Education students utilise the Higher Education portal regularly and share good practice and support one another.

References and notes

[1] QAA (2014) Higher Education Review: Rotherham College of Arts and Technology
[2] QAA (2011) Integrated quality and enhancement review: North Nottinghamshire College
[3] UCAS 2017: RNN Group
[4] Asgari, K. (2017) *Collaboration between Specialist Make-up course and the NHS*, Proceedings of Third Annual Research and Scholarship in College Higher Education Conference, AoC
[5] https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/teaching/learning-gain/learning-gain-pilot-projects/
[6] Blyth, P. and Cleminson (2016) A. *Teaching Excellence Framework: analysis of highly skilled employment outcomes,* DfE