TEF Year Four Provider Submission

1.0 Introduction and Provider Context

Loughborough College is a general Further Education (FE) College based in the Borough of Charnwood, Leicestershire. Operating from a single campus, the college delivers programmes of learning to approximately 9500 students each year including 6400 FE students for which the college was graded 'Good' in the most recent OFSTED inspection (2018), with elements of 'Outstanding'. The college is a significant provider of Higher Education (HE), and one of the largest FEC providers in the East Midlands, as well as being in the top quartile nationally. The college has maintained consistent HE student numbers in recent years following a period of growth and boasts an engaging and vibrant community of >800 HE students studying a diverse range of subjects. Each of these subjects incorporate the college's ethos of vocationally relevant HE, delivered with robust academic rigour. Further growth is forecast as new awards continue to be developed.

1.1 Our validating partners. The college enjoys validating and/or franchising relationships with Loughborough University (Sport), Nottingham Trent University (Business and Management, Public Services), the University of Derby (Music, Care and Engineering), the University of Warwick (Teacher Education) and Pearson EdExcel (suite of HN programmes) for the delivery of its HE provision to full time, part time and distance (blended) learning students.

1.2 Our structure. Following the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and with the introduction of the Office for Students (OfS) on the horizon, Loughborough College took the strategic decision in early 2017 to create a brand new 'Higher Education Department'. It was recognised that with a changing landscape for HE (alongside recognition that the TEF metrics at the time did not match the college's own belief in the quality of its provision), a clearer focus was required in order to guide HE towards achieving its mission of obtaining TEF Gold status. The formation of this department and the resulting 'Higher Education Strategy' has provided the catalyst for rapid improvement across the provision and has been instrumental in delivering excellent results in a relatively short period.

1.3 Quality of provision. The college was successfully added to the register of providers with the OfS in the 'Approved (fee cap)' category with zero additional conditions to meet other than the general ongoing conditions placed upon all providers. The college therefore has an approved Access and Participation Plan in place for 2019/20 and an effective Student Protection Plan.

The college underwent inspection from QAA in 2014 and was rated as 'Meets UK standards' in each criteria assessed. In addition to this the review team identified strengths in; supporting students; a strong and positive approach to quality management; commitment to the student voice and closing the feedback loop; an institutional culture for engagement and increasing aspirations.

In November 2017, the college took part in an 'Annual Provider Review' with HEFCE whereby no recommendations or conditions were made. In addition, in 2017, the college was awarded TEF Silver and in making this award, the TEF assessment panel took particular notice of the college's success in achieving excellent outcomes for students, making specific note of our success surrounding progression, employment or further study.

During 2018, the college underwent a revalidation of all programmes awarded by Nottingham Trent University, during which the university assessment panel made a number of commendations and identified good practice detailed later in this report.

The college operates a Self-Assessment Report process at the end of each year resulting in a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), which is monitored throughout the following year. Feeding into this, there is an annual Curriculum Development Review process, which involves an independent, multi-disciplined team of colleagues from across college, carrying out a short notice review of all quality practices. The results are shared with the team being reviewed in a developmental manner. The findings are added to the QIP where appropriate and used as a development tool.

1.4 Our student voice. The college places tremendous importance in collecting and acting upon the student voice and such value is placed that it is embedded into decision making at every level. The approach detailed in section 3.2.4 has been fundamental in achieving the 10% increase in overall student satisfaction (Q27) in the 2018 National Student Survey (NSS). An outstanding achievement that places the experience of students at Loughborough College above benchmark for every question in the survey. The overall rating for the college of 88% would (if ranked within the list of universities) place the college equal to the 12th placed university.

1.5 Our programmes. The college remains committed to providing programmes that are vocationally relevant. In a number of instances, there has been a shift towards providing full bachelors degrees rather than foundation degree/HND and top-up degree. Students graduating from the college will have had the opportunity to obtain a broad range of additional qualifications that complement their academic studies, enrich their programme and increase their employability.

In recent years, there has been a focus on developing highly accessible 'Blended Learning' programmes and Higher and Degree Apprenticeships. These are developed in response to demand from the employers we work with and the industries that we serve. The college works with a number of sports clubs and our flexible programmes allow students to continue their sporting aspirations whilst studying. The development of our outstanding apprenticeships has been a major driver for more meaningful engagement with the employers that we work with. We believe that the facility to study via these routes, has opened up the possibility of study to a wider range of entrants than ever before and has enabled the college to maintain its drive towards increasing the number of part time students accessing HE. The college's Access to HE programmes have also been developed and extended to enable more options and clearer progression routes, congruent with our core belief that study at this level should be available to all.

1.6 Student experience. Loughborough College students enjoy the unique position of belonging to Loughborough Students Union (LSU), the student union for both the college and Loughborough University students. The LSU has been voted the best in the country in a variety of surveys and offers a comprehensive range of support and enrichment activities. Furthermore, those students studying a degree at the college that is validated by a different institution to Loughborough University enjoy dual SU membership – the LSU and that of the validating partner. On the board of Executive Officers (EO) of the LSU, is the post of 'EO College' whose responsibility it is to look after the interests of Loughborough College students and to represent them. The college further supports this post by providing a place directly on the college's governing body, enabling student voice integration at the highest possible level. The EO College runs the student representative network and coordinates feedback and action in both the LSU and college committees.

1.7 Impact of the TEF. The TEF has proved to be an effective addition to the HE landscape and one that has driven significant change. The college has fully embraced the ethos behind the framework, using the TEF as a driver to further develop not only our relationship with our students, but also, how we work alongside our partners and employers. Furthermore, it has also been instrumental in shaping how we develop, reward and recognise our staff, who continue to provide the environment to deliver the excellent outcomes for which we have become synonymous.

The college has invested in a suite of data analysis tools available to all staff (via 'Clearview' our online portal), that facilitate greater understanding of our metrics and the drivers behind them. The college feels that the improvements shown in the data that drive the TEF metrics are a result of the changes that have been made in our HE provision since the implementation of the TEF. Our belief in the quality of our provision and our teaching and learning excellence is stronger than ever and this provider submission, alongside our metrics, sets out our rationale behind our belief that Loughborough College has the attributes, infrastructure, governance and student centred approach to warrant being considered as a 'Gold' rated higher education provider.

2.0 A new focus for higher education at Loughborough College

The introduction of the higher education department brought together the delivery of all of the college's degree level provision, Higher Nationals, Professional Qualifications and Access to HE programmes. The department was formed to create an HE ethos, culture and values that would prove to be supportive to both staff and students. There was a need to improve consistency, allow for clearer communication, sharing of best practice and develop engagement between staff and students in a more meaningful way. Quite simply, students were not demonstrating their satisfaction through the NSS in the same way that they were in internal surveys and with their engagement with existing feedback forums. The college wanted to understand why this was and to develop a strategy that would deliver sustained improvement across the provision.

2.1 Strategy. Created in collaboration with all HE staff members and alongside representatives of the student body, a HE Strategy was developed to capture the vision for the colleges' provision and to allow for a clear plan for the next five years. The strategy provides a vehicle that shapes our approach to how this will be delivered. Aligned to the college's overall vision, the HE Strategy has one overall mission;

> ***'To be recognised as the region's higher education college of choice for flexible, career enhancing education and training; providing a first class, supportive undergraduate learning community, which effectively meets the needs of our students and employers, whilst producing employable graduates.'***

This mission is supported by three distinct aims;

Grow *A 5% year on year increase in student numbers supported by a range of provision that encourages internal progression from Further Education into Higher Education and that meets the needs of prospective students and employers.*

Support *Provide sufficient staff development and support to deliver an excellent undergraduate student experience to support student retention and high student satisfaction, culminating in student satisfaction above national benchmark (NSS Q27)*

Excel *Provide an excellent teaching and learning experience, which adheres to the highest of academic standards within a Higher Education environment, producing above average success rates and highly satisfied & employable graduates. The College rated 'Gold' in the Teaching Excellence Framework.*

In order to deliver these aims the strategy addresses six distinct themes. Each theme providing an area of focus and each with specific targets and milestones that would drive forward the colleges' teaching quality, learning environment and student outcomes.

1. ***Our Curriculum Development***
   There are a suite of programmes to meet the needs of prospective students and employers as well as a well-rounded curriculum, which develops employability skills and professional opportunities.
2. ***Our Student Experience and Satisfaction***
   There is a range of services, opportunities and support as well as capturing the student voice effectively in order to increase student satisfaction scores measured by college surveys and NSS.
3. ***Our Employer & Partner Engagement***
   There are links with the industries that we serve to create responsive and flexible delivery models that allow the college to respond effectively to government policy and employer needs.
4. ***Our Staff Development & Teaching Excellence***
   There is a supportive staff development programme to create a first-class teaching and learning experience.
5. ***Our Marketing, Recruitment and Finances***
   There is a co-ordinated approach to local and national marketing and recruitment to support a year on year increase in student numbers and protect the college from increasing competition. The department contributes to an outstanding financial rating.
6. ***Our Governance, Reporting and Administration***
   There are clear processes and procedures in place to ensure accuracy and relevance of information available to applicants, students and partners and to ensure timely and accurate responses and returns for institutions and government.

This strategy and the formation of the Higher Education department allowed the college to change its approach and was the catalyst for developing the HE culture and ethos that is now in place. By looking at the provision as a whole through the six themes, staff have a clear guide and direction of how we achieve our goals. This is supported by an action plan that is regularly monitored and reviewed, with progress reported through the Academic Board to the governing body.

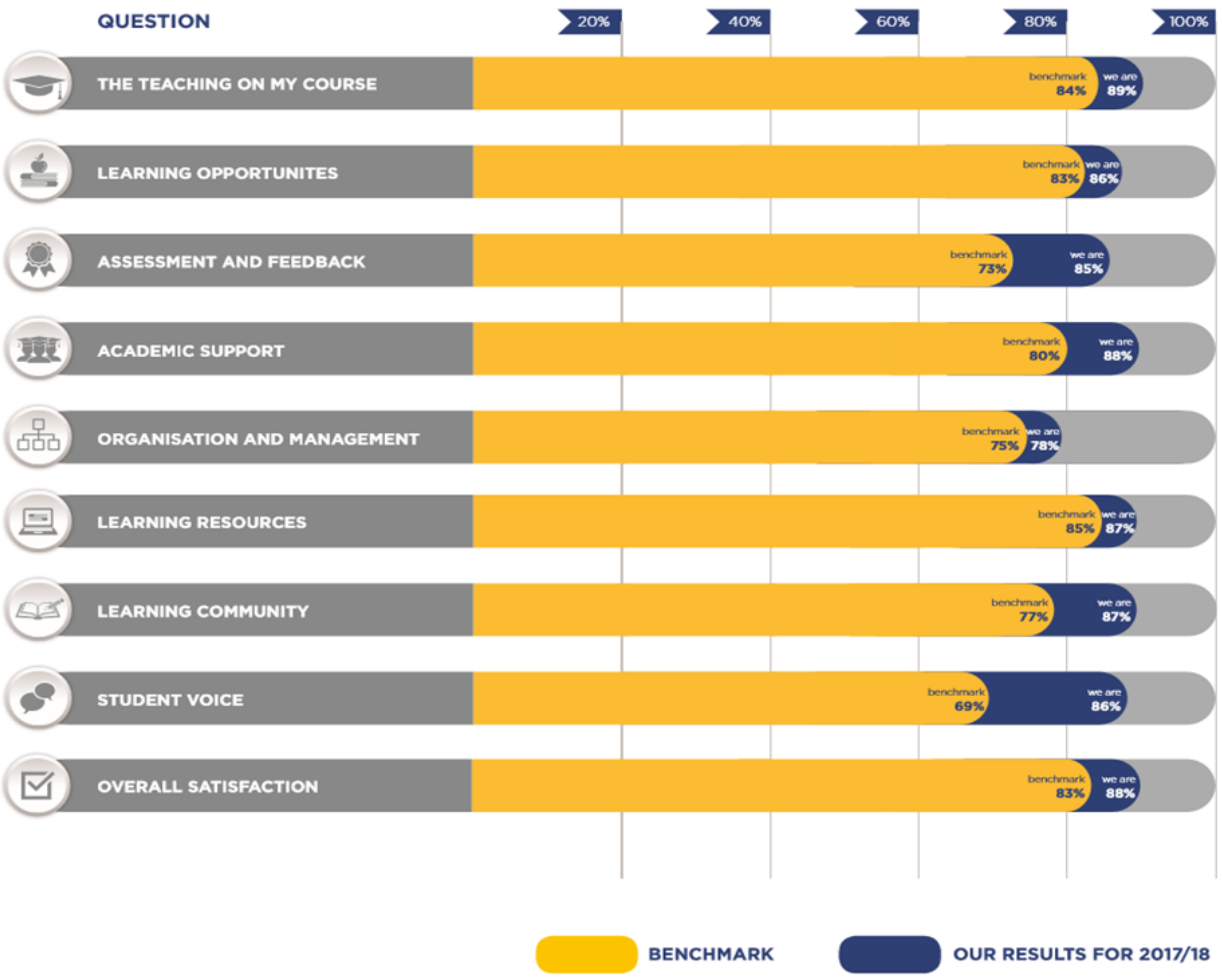
3.0 Teaching Quality

3.1 Performance against metrics. As a direct result of the change in strategy and the way that we engage with and involve students in our decision-making processes, NSS results for 2018 demonstrated the anticipated positive impact in performance. Placing students at the heart of everything we do, has resulted in the college moving from below benchmark in 2016/17 (and having two single negative flags in our TEF year 2 metrics for 'Teaching on my course' and 'Academic support') to being above benchmark for every question in the survey.

This change in approach has resulted in positive flags for every element of the NSS in the TEF metrics in the latest year. Overall, the NSS questions still provide one single negative flag in the core metric, Assessment and Feedback, which is a legacy from year 1 and 2 of the metrics. The changes that we have made and the policies that we have created and adopted, which have generated the marked increase in student satisfaction, are detailed below within section 3.0 & 4.0, Teaching Quality and Learning Environment, respectively.

The distance travelled in the NSS is significant. The main findings show;

- For 17/18, the response rate was 80%, an improvement of 12% on 16/17 and 10% higher than the national average.
- The overall satisfaction percentage for the institution was 88%, representing an increase of 10% against 16/17 and movement against benchmark from -6% to + 5%.
- Percentage scores for 17/18 showed improvement on **every** question against 16/17.
- Two curriculum teams recorded overall satisfaction of 100%.
- 'Sport' increased overall satisfaction by 11% to 96% in 17/18.
- Greatest improvement in satisfaction from 16/17 (31% increase) was to 'Feedback on my work has been timely', which posted an agreement percentage of 84%.



3.1.1 The teaching on my course. The core metric provides no flag in this area, consequently the college is closely aligned to benchmark overall. The most recent year of split metrics shows a single positive flag which serves as affirmation that the policies and initiatives put in place, following the development of our department strategy, have had a positive impact. These improvements have been made since the TEF year 2 submission, where the core metric in this area produced a single negative flag, supported by similar performance across many of the minority splits. NSS results for 2018 showed satisfaction at 89% in this area, 5% above benchmark and an increase of 10% on the previous year.

3.1.1.1 Review of teaching practice. All programmes have been reviewed for student contact time, a minimum expectation of 15 hours per week contact during the first year, is now in place. All courses now include ‘feed in’ sessions with the module tutor, an approach that requires students to attend a taught session that feeds into their assignment. The feed in sessions were implemented to develop engagement and facilitating timely completion of assessments. NSS feedback in this area again produced overwhelmingly positive, above benchmark results. Staff use a personalised learning approach and use group profiles of student learning needs to aid them to achieve this.

3.1.2 Assessment and feedback. The core metric provides a single negative flag with double negative in years 1 and 2 of the splits. The college has undertaken a significant amount of work in this area (detailed below) to ensure its performance is above benchmark and this has been rewarded by a positive flag in the most recent year. NSS 2018 results provided satisfaction levels for assessment and feedback at 85%, an impressive 12% above benchmark and a 20% increase from the previous year.

3.1.2.1 Review of assessments. Across the department a holistic review of all assessments was undertaken prior to the beginning of the 2017/18 academic year, with five main aims;

1. To ensure students were introduced to as wide a range of assessment methods as possible throughout their studies.
2. To ensure that, wherever possible, assessment content and design were vocationally relevant and provided applied experiences.
3. Limiting formal written examinations unless there was a need to show understanding that other forms of assessment could not.
4. To ensure that students are not 'over' or 'double' assessed on learning outcomes.
5. Where applicable, employers are consulted on assessment design.

This review led to a number of changes that provided more vocationally relevant assessment, ultimately streamlining assessments across the provision. One example of a change was the removal of a written examination for our level six nutrition module, replacing the exam with a series of laboratory-based practicals, which investigated the performance benefit of selected supplements.

We believe that the assessment guidelines that have been implemented have not only achieved the initial five aims detailed above, but have also improved student satisfaction and have contributed to our impressive results for continuation, employment and further study metrics. This belief is supported by External Examiner feedback who stated '***Assessment processes have been adapted in response to previous external examiner feedback and the changes offer a more coherent feedback package for students***.'

Assessment design and planning has also facilitated improvements to feedback methods as outlined below and plays a significant part in preparing our students for employment. The impact of this can be evidenced by our extremely positive metrics in this area, stemming from our performance in the Destination of Leavers from HE (DLHE) survey results, showing that an outstanding 98% of Loughborough College graduates are employed or engaged in further education within 6 months of graduating.

3.1.2.2 Review of feedback methods. Historically, the feedback that the college provides to students has been universally praised and commended in the highest terms by external examiners, validating institutions, internal quality audit teams and assessors;

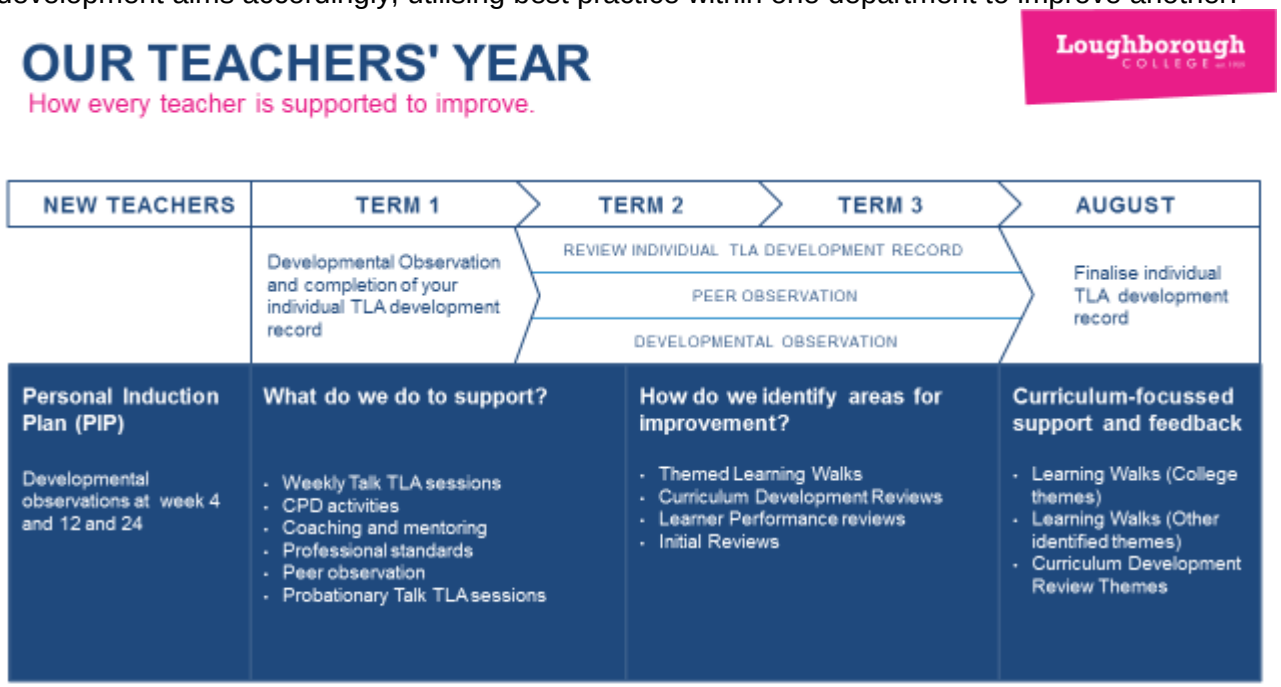
> '***The level of interaction between first and second markers on a piece of assessed work is outstanding. I saw uplifting and warm feedback, rich in encouragement and clarity and offering full support on the student journey'.*** External Examiner
>
> ***'Quality of the tutor feedback on assignments is exemplary, identifying the strengths and shortcomings of student work, and written advice is very detailed in order to support students in subsequent assessment tasks'.*** NTU Validation Panel
>
> ***'There is real warmth and encouragement in the feedback being given to students, and this nurtures a spirit, a sense of common fellowship and ambition. It is quite a heady mix. There is equality and fairness built into the system, which I applaud'.***
> External Examiner
>
> ***'The whole process from the planning of modules, conception of assignment, marking, feedback and moderation is of a very high standard. The course is well organised and managed. The staff should be congratulated on their dedication to the course and their students, who are clearly at the heart of everything they do'.***
> External Examiner

A considerable amount of work has been carried out engaging with students addressing any disconnect between their expectations regarding feedback and what is considered outstanding practice from our peers. The results showed that students' perception regarding timeliness of feedback were an issue. This has been addressed by adopting a different approach to assessment mapping and introducing feedback sessions for students within support sessions. Communication has improved and students now receive a date on assignment briefs for when they can expect to receive their feedback. This date is incorporated into staff KPIs and is monitored by the Curriculum Manager. In light of these interventions, students now rate our feedback above benchmark in line with the comments we were receiving from partners.

3.2 Additional evidence. Loughborough College has a designated Head of Teaching and Learning supported by a team of Teaching and Learning Leads (TAL) who collectively support staff across the college on curriculum based activities. The HE department has its own dedicated TAL who receives 20% remission from their own contracted teaching hours in order to support and mentor teaching staff within the department. New staff and those new to teaching also receive a reduced teaching demand in their first year to ensure teaching practice is consistent with the outstanding delivery of experienced staff. These staff are provided with a Personal Induction Plan (PIP) and have additional developmental observations, supported by manager feedback during weeks 4, 12 and 24.

All staff teaching on HE programmes receive a 10% reduction in teaching hours to enable them to engage with scholarly activity. There is an expectation for teaching staff to engage with in-house staff development and monitoring of this, any research outputs and of scholarly activity, is carried out through the annual appraisal system. Staff are supported to further develop as detailed below.

3.2.1 The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Aspirational Model. The TLA Aspirational Model brings together a full cycle of developmental activities throughout the year and provides each staff member the opportunity to gain feedback on their practice, learn from industry experts and peers and ultimately demonstrate sustained improvement. Working in teams or subject areas, managers and TALs can review common themes and plan TLA sessions with identified development aims accordingly, utilising best practice within one department to improve another.



As part of the model, the college introduced weekly 'Talk TLA' at the start of 2015/16 academic year. This initiative is compulsory for all teaching staff and is based upon collaborative activities

between teaching staff, Teaching and Learning Leads and Curriculum Managers. Often focussed upon feedback from the learner voice, all staff together across the college have a dedicated hour each week where they are off timetable, to discuss, present, share and practice different teaching initiatives and assessment strategies.

From the start of the 2017/18 academic year following the formation of the Higher Education department, HE staff across multiple disciplines collaborated to share good practice and new teaching ideologies relevant to an HE setting. This initiative included utilisation of guest speakers from other HE institutions and similarly, opportunities were created to attend lecture series and symposiums at partner institutions. Examples of this include attendance at the '(Nottingham) Trent Institute for Learning and Teaching' (TILT) symposium and at the teaching and learning lecture series held at Loughborough University. Teaching staff involved with programmes validated by University of Derby attend and contribute to regular teaching and learning forums specific to their subject area.

The department is keen to continue to learn from colleagues in the FE sector and links between the two areas of the college remain strong. HE teaching staff share ideas with colleagues from FE and embrace the use of technology within the classroom, ensuring they are as up to date as possible with new teaching initiatives.

3.2.2 Teaching observation schemes. Here at Loughborough College, teaching observation takes many forms. Staff are required to peer observe each other in a non-judgemental developmental format once per semester. Results of these peer observations are primarily intended for the observer and observee however an edited version is sent to TALs who collate information, looking for themes and use these to inform Talk TLA sessions and college wide CPD events. In addition to peer observations, TALs and curriculum managers complete three 'Learning Walks' per year, in which they will visit classrooms, observe teaching and speak to students about their understanding and gather opinion. These activities further feed into Talk TLA and help to inform CPD. Over the course of each year 100% of teaching staff will experience developmental observations and be given the opportunity to reflect on practice.

3.2.3 Technology & educational research. The college invests in digital resources to aid teachers and employs a dedicated e-learning team who provide training and regular technology updates to staff. The team produce an e-learning blog hosted on the college's intranet the purpose of which is to keep staff as up to date as possible with developments in the area and new technologies. During 2017, the college introduced 'Development Hour' every Thursday morning providing staff with the opportunity to book on to various training sessions using the staff development booking system. The e-learning team often use these sessions as a chance to showcase their work and encourage teaching staff to try new techniques and software. Use of these technologies are reviewed as part of the annual appraisal and staff are encouraged to share good examples during Talk TLA. The College has a dedicated LATTE (Learning and Technology Test Environment) room, which is equipped with technology to aid teaching practice. Staff are able to book this room to test new and innovative technologies, practice new approaches and share good practice.

Students are able to contribute towards, present at or attend our annual Higher Education Research Forum, which has included themes of teaching and learning. Staff also have the opportunity to present on their own scholarly activity and students are able to present their research projects conference style via a poster or oral presentation, in turn preparing them for further study and research. Students producing high-level research are encouraged to develop their work further and to co-create publishable work alongside their supervisor.

3.2.4 Feedback from students. Students are encouraged to provide feedback on their teaching and student experience regularly. In addition to the NSS for final year students, the college holds its own Early Findings Survey in October, a Spring Survey in February/March and each student

supplies written module feedback at the mid-point and end of each module studied. Where appropriate, immediate action is taken on feedback collected at the mid-point of the module in order to address student concerns. In addition to this, the college works closely with LSU to run a comprehensive network of student programme representatives. Each curriculum area holds regular student representative meetings and college wide forums are held each semester. The results of these meetings are fed back to curriculum teams and there are many examples of change to assessments, teaching and delivery mode that have resulted from this process. The feedback loop is completed via a series of 'You said…we did' poster campaigns and regular student newsletters emailed from the Student Registry team.

> ***'The panel commended the deliberate steps taken at college level to involve students in the development of all aspects of the student experience…examples of students' involvement in meetings at course and college level; feedback is sought in focus groups, through surveys, and at course meetings; action plans and meeting minutes show the action that is taken in response to student feedback; and changes made as a result of student feedback are communicated through the publication of minutes and of "you said, we did" updates…it was clear from student surveys and focus groups that students feel valued and have opportunities for informal feedback on a one to one basis and through tutorials.'*** NTU Centre review report 2015

Students also play an important role in the governance of our programmes and are involved at all levels of decision-making. There is a HE student governor and student representative on the college's Academic Board. Students are also invited to team meetings and are consulted on curriculum design, assessment methods and delivery methods. Focus groups are used to involve students in change, an example of this is the re-design and refurbishment of the Undergraduate Centre, including the student common room and learning spaces. Students were consulted at each phase with many ideas incorporated into the final works.

3.2.5 External examiners. Each programme has a number of external examiners appointed via the validating/franchising institution. The college takes great care to engage with and facilitate the effectiveness of this process ensuring that teaching staff meet with examiners on a regular basis throughout the year rather than at one annual event. This ensures examiners develop a good understanding of the aims and direction the programme. Furthermore, teaching staff are able to discuss new ideas and embed examples of good practice. External examiners have consistently commended the teaching and learning across the college;

> ***'Quality assurance is excellent and meticulously documented. The internal verification is exemplary.'*** Hospitality Management external examiner 2018
>
> **'*You should be very proud of the achievements of both your students and yourselves. I have read some terrific feedback which will undoubtedly improve your students and I have seen some truly innovative assessment packages.'***
> Events Management external examiner 2018
>
> ***"I remain, in my second year as External Examiner, very impressed and motivated by the high standards set by the Loughborough College teaching team. They are overseeing some work of real quality, engagement and ambition."***
> NTU provision external examiner 2018

3.2.6 Maximising student engagement. From the formation of the Higher Education department in 2017, activities that allow students to take ownership of their own learning and their own student experience have been prioritised. A number of initiatives have been launched specifically with this in mind, many of which have also proved successful in improving teaching and learning. Initiatives include:

1. Each curriculum team has launched their own social media presence, engaging with students via mediums such as Facebook and Twitter. Lecturers are encouraged to publish relevant articles with module or course tags, enabling use as a teaching and learning tool.
2. Weekly emails from course leaders informing students of any opportunities available, changes in timetable, upcoming assessments etc.
3. Monthly department wide newsletters distributed in a variety of formats, updating students and staff on department news, progress against targets and notable events.
4. Module workshops – drop in or bookable opportunities to meet with lecturers in an informal setting to discuss issues or gain clarification.
5. Easier booking of appointments with staff through 'Calendly', an online booking platform giving students direct access to designated spaces in staff calendars.
6. Academic Tutor support – engagement with a personal Academic Tutor in group or 1:1 settings for pastoral or study skills support.

Engagement overall has increased significantly by including students and alumni in course design itself. By involving students in discussions with staff and employers, changes have been made to programmes and modules as well as new modules added. An example is the inclusion of additional optional modules in the second and third year of study to enable students to specialise more of their credits in a particular area of interest. This has had an additional benefit of opening more pathways for specialised postgraduate programmes.

3.2.7 Staff development, training and recognition. The college supports staff in achieving recognised teaching qualifications in a variety of ways. The college runs its own teacher training programme in partnership with Warwick University and staff choosing to enter this programme receive a reduction in teaching load whilst completing this qualification. HE staff are encouraged to complete the Academic Professional Apprenticeship in conjunction with our validating partner Loughborough University. Loughborough University have developed their own Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice and mapped this to the Apprenticeship allowing Loughborough College staff to access this via the apprenticeship route. The college has allocated funds from the apprenticeship levy to secure places for September 2019. The college will also support staff who choose an alternative route to a teaching qualification, through either financial means or facilitating this through their teaching activities.

The college is a member of Advance HE and provides financial support for staff to obtain membership of the Higher Education Academy (HEA Fellowship is condoned on those completing the Academic Professional Apprenticeship). At time of writing, 68% of staff teaching on HE programmes hold a teaching qualification; the remaining staff are either in the process of obtaining one or due to start, 94% of staff are employed on a permanent basis. At the re-validation of the college's partnership with Loughborough University during 2016, Loughborough University commended the college for their approach to the governance of learning and teaching.

All HE teaching staff are required to hold a qualification at a level above that at which they teach and the college also supports staff in achieving academic and professional qualifications that will benefit their teaching practice. Staff can bid for financial assistance from the staff development fund. In recent years, this has been utilised to support several staff with funding towards Postgraduate study (MSc, MA, PhD) and attendance at conferences and industry related fairs. Staff are encouraged to share their research and findings from supported activities at the annual research forum.

A number of HE teaching staff are engaged in external examiner positions at other institutions, a practice that is encouraged throughout the department. These posts enable staff not only the chance to share their own good practice, but also to experience ideas from the wider academic community.

Teaching excellence is recognised at an annual awards ceremony where students and colleagues are able to nominate staff for an award. All nominees are recognised and awards are made in a number of categories. At the 2017/18 awards ceremony, 61% of staff teaching on HE programmes were nominated for an award by their students.

Opportunities for progression are identified through the ongoing appraisal system and where staff show excellence in their teaching, there are opportunities to progress to Teaching and Learning Leads without the need to leave their teaching commitments behind.

4.0 Learning Environment

4.1 Performance against metrics.

4.1.1 Academic support. With no flags present in our core metrics, the picture is once again one that shows a significant and planned improvement as a result of the initiatives and policies put in place from the HE Strategy. With negative flags in year 1 and 2, steps were taken to engage staff and students in this metric, developing a new approach that incorporates the whole student life cycle. A positive flag in year three offers recognition of the progress made and that these initiatives, which provide a personalised approach, have had a planned and significant impact. At 88% satisfaction in the NSS, the college is 8% above benchmark having recorded a 13% improvement over the previous year.

4.1.1.1 Review of academic support. The college introduced academic tutoring to its curriculum offer in 2010; this has developed into a highly organised support network for students, whereby it provides academic tutorials, 1:1 support, study skills sessions and pastoral care. HE students in the college have a Programme Leader whose responsibility it is to monitor their progress, educational attainment and signpost for further support from the Academic Tutor. A year one study skills module is present in the majority of programmes offered (not possible as a module in some franchised provision but still available to students) and this approach was commended by Loughborough University in their 2016 re-validation; ***'The students spoke highly of the tutoring model and the support that they received in this way'***; ***'The panel commends the college for its approach to personal tutoring'*.**

Additionally, the 2014 QAA review commended the college for; ***'The introduction of the Academic Tutor role which is effective in improving students' success (Expectation B4)'***.

A former graduate commented;

> ***'Tutors and lecturers put students at the centre of the learning experience, utilising a range of teaching and learning methods to cater for individual needs. I benefitted from small seminar groups and one to one tutor meetings, which provided the essential support I needed to be successful in the academic environment'*.**

In addition to the academic tutoring and of the study support sessions previously detailed, the college has taken a 'whole life cycle' approach to the way it supports its students. Starting with pre-application and application advice, the college now employs a dedicated Undergraduate Admissions Officer who provides consistent and timely advice for students engaged in the application cycle. Students with additional support needs are identified early (on application where disclosure is made) and the HE Admissions Officer liaises with the college's wider student support team to ensure that additional support needs are put in place. There then follows a personalised induction programme for all new students including face-to-face staff introductions, subject specific facility tours, library and e-learning inductions and the ability to meet with existing students. All students are invited to meet with their tutor during the first term to monitor progress, consider future ambitions and receive pastoral care.

We believe that this personalised approach is not only a significant factor in producing a positive flag in year 3 of the splits for academic support, but also contributes to our successes in continuation.

4.1.2 Continuation. The college has double positive flags in not only the core metric but also in each of the three years' splits. These double positive flags are supported almost across the board throughout all of the minority splits, showing that continuation has long been a strength of the college. The college also ranks within the top 10% nationally for its performance on continuation within its part time student body. We believe that a number of factors contribute to these results as outlined below.

4.1.2.1 Continuation measures. In addition to increased contact time for students, study support sessions and Academic Tutor support, the college takes an all staff approach to supporting students, whether that is to stretch and challenge those most capable or identify and support those at risk. All students are 'RAG' (Red, Amber, Green) rated within the first six weeks of a module commencing, based upon their levels of engagement, attendance and performance in regular formative assessments/tasks. Students deemed to be in need of additional support are referred to their Academic Tutor, who provides additional study skills interventions and monitors progress. The college holds midyear examination boards, at which each student is discussed individually, allowing early intervention where opportunities for academic stretch or concerns regarding progression are identified.

A student achievement bursary is available to students progressing from Loughborough College Level 3 programmes, which provides a financial incentive for achievement at first attempt.

4.2 Additional evidence. Over the last three years, the college has invested heavily in its learning environment and the campus as a whole. A £9m refurbishment of the college's main teaching block was completed in 2015 and has resulted in increased and improved, modern teaching spaces for all of its students. HE students have their own dedicated Higher Education Centre, complete with open access computer suite and there are dedicated study, computer and presentation rooms available throughout the campus for students to use. The Higher Education Centre was refurbished prior to the 2018/19 academic year with the introduction of self-service laptops available for students and further computer suites for study. Learning Resource Centre investment has, following learner voice feedback, focussed on electronic resources (e-books and e-journal access) alongside significant investment in the availability to students of computers on a temporary loan basis. The quality of facilities on offer to students led one recent graduate and elite athlete to comment;

> '***At Loughborough College I've had access to facilities which are second to none, as well as complete understanding when it's come to my training and playing commitments. The team has been brilliant at helping me stay on top of everything and maintain the quality of my work'***.

4.2.1 Exposure to research and professional practice. Where validation agreements allow, students are given the opportunity, funded by the college, to attend academic conferences as delegates and to present their own research where applicable. Each year our largest cohort of students on sport degree programmes are able to attend and/or present at the annual British Association of Sport and Exercise Scientists student conference. Final year students are also able to attend the full annual conference for insights into the latest research and practice.

The aforementioned annual Research Conference provides further opportunity for students to engage with research and present their own findings to a wider audience. Many programmes also include an element of placement within them, providing the opportunity to experience professional practice. The assessment within all of the provision is related to vocational practice wherever possible. The college engages with local partners to achieve this and the approach to vocational,

practice led programmes and assessment design was commended as an area of good practice in the 2014 QAA review;

> ***'The commitment to developing programmes that are responsive to the needs of learners and employers (Enhancement)'.*** QAA 2014

Former Applied Sport Science student and current Performance Analyst commented;

> **'*This applied nature, as well as the additional opportunities available, allowed me to develop skills which, after graduating, helped me to land an analyst internship at Reading FC and, ultimately, my current job at Manchester City FC'*.**

4.3 Technology enhancing access. The college has made a significant commitment to blended learning across its provision. This has enabled access to HE for a number of students who would otherwise be unable to study at this level. In addition to this, blended resources are also made available to campus-based students alongside recordings of key lectures in order to aid revision. Furthermore, as the college has a high number of elite athletes, we are able to allow for academic and sporting success by providing these resources. Our approach to accessibility in this manner was commended by Loughborough University in their 2016 revalidation.

In addition to the above, the Learning Resource Centre have a series of online study skills resources openly available for students to access which are intended to support the study skills module and drop in sessions they provide.

4.4 Student Registry. With the creation of the HE department, a student facing Student Registry has also been established, thus creating a hub for advice, support, guidance and governance for the student body. Acting as a 'one stop shop' for student queries the Registry team is responsible for accuracy of student records, boards of study and enrolment data. The Registry also keeps records for ethics committees and extenuating circumstances panels as well as the Academic Board.

5.0 Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

5.1 Performance against metrics. A clear strength of the college's higher education provision is its commitment to embedding employability skills throughout the curriculum. Double positive flags in both '*Employment or Further Study*' and '*Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study'* categories, are supported consistently throughout the splits with no negative flags present. Core to this are a number of strategies that led the QAA review team 2014 to identify the following as an area of good practice;

> ***'The varied range of opportunities available to students to enable them to develop employability skills (Enhancement)'***. QAA 2014

The college's performance in the DLHE over a number of years has ranked Loughborough College graduates amongst some of the most employable in the country with an impressive 98% employed or in further education or training within six months of graduating. This figure represents an increase of 2% on the previous year.

5.2 Engagement with employers. The opportunities that we provide to students to engage with employers are generated through a longstanding relationship with local and national employers, built up over many years engagement with both FE and HE departments. The HE department operates an employer forum and holds regular breakfast meetings as an opportunity to network and liaise with business over placement opportunities, assessment design, curriculum design, guest lectures and research opportunities. The OFSTED graded outstanding work that we do with employers within our apprenticeship team, is now being extended through our engagement with

higher and degree apprenticeships, further fuelling interaction and opportunity generation with those employers that we work with.

"We have been working with Loughborough College to assist in the training of our workforce since 2017 and have found their flexible approach to learning extremely beneficial for our organisation. We have students on a range of courses from Level 2, Performing Engineering Operations to Level 5 Mechanical Engineering; all of whom feel fully supported and motivated to achieve. We have found Loughborough College staff are approachable and accessible and work closely with students to enable them to settle into academic study seamlessly."

Learning & Development Co-ordinator Mercedes AMG HPP

5.3 Young Enterprise. Over the past four years, the college has created a close partnership with Young Enterprise in the development of its approach to entrepreneurship and enterprise initiatives. In 2014 all college validated programmes introduced an enterprise module (optional initially for all students) which required students to enter the Young Enterprise Start Up competition, the assessment for the module being the business plan, marketing appraisal and business pitch to the judging panel that forms the requirement of the competition. This programme has developed and is currently offered to all higher education students (whether as part of a module in validated provision or as an additional activity for those on franchised programmes) with 13 teams entered into the competition in the current year. The college is now a centre for regional enterprise competition and has had a team represent the college at the UK national finals in each of the past four years winning the competition outright (against competition from high profile universities and colleges from across the country) and going on to represent the UK at the European finals in Helsinki. Our timeline for involvement with the competition shows our progression and dedication to entrepreneurship;

- 2014/15 - Loughborough College enters Young Enterprise competition for the first time and reach the national finals
- 2015/16 - Loughborough College students win 'Individual Entrepreneur of the year', 'Best Trade Stand' & 'Best Presentation'
  - Loughborough College reach national finals
- 2016/17 - Loughborough College host regional finals and have two teams reach the national finals
  - Loughborough College students win the national final and went on to represent the UK at the European finals in Helsinki.
- 2017/18 - Loughborough College host the national finals of YE start up competition and have two teams reach the national finals
  - Loughborough College lecturer awarded 'Young Enterprise Ambassadors Award
- 2018/19 - Loughborough College have 13 teams entered into the competition with students collaborating across subject areas in multi-disciplinary teams

This commitment led to the college finishing as runner up in the national 'UK Entrepreneurial School' awards and were commended for;

> **'*The way the college has invested in the development and delivery of enterprise to students and for their passion and enthusiasm resulting in sustained and outstanding success'.***
>
> Young Enterprise 2016

A former student, who was part of a Young Enterprise team in 2015/16, contacted the college following his successful application for employment stating;

> **'*I can't stress to you enough how much that module has helped me to progress. As soon as I mention it in interviews, employers want to know more. I am now employed doing a similar role at Proctor & Gamble'*.**

5.4 Student development week. Traditional 'reading Week' has been replaced by a student development week where the focus is on vocational skills and academic achievement. Students can select from a number of activities, which provide them with vocational qualifications and experience and/or catch up/revision sessions for their modules. During 2017/18, over 200 qualifications were achieved by students adding to the value of their degree and to their employability overall. Vocational qualifications on offer are designed to be attractive to employers and cover areas that increase work readiness, one of the most desired attributes employers seek from new recruits. These qualifications include; Safeguarding, Working with Children, First Aid in the Workplace, Leadership (ILM), Coaching qualifications in a variety of sports, Gym Instructors Level 2 award and Kinesiology Taping. Academic opportunities include revision sessions, 1:1 appointments with teaching staff and Academic Tutors, mock examinations and study skills. We also work with our employer network and other academic partners to produce a series of guest speakers to further inform, engage and inspire our students.

5.5 Employability. Validated provision has an Employability module embedded into the curriculum that requires students to research and plan their career path, whilst also reflecting on their achievements to date and qualities required to be successful in their chosen area. The innovative assessment includes a graduate assessment day which has been designed in partnership with employers and industry specialists. Designed to mimic that of a 'real world' assessment, students are required to research, apply for, present, debate, analyse and be interviewed for one of a number of available positions. The college engages local employers to assist in the assessment of candidates and there have been a number of cases where students have been offered 'real world' placements and internships as a result. The college employs a full time Higher Education Employability Advisor who runs group activities and offers one to one support for students looking to enter into a career. In 2019, the college is investing in an online platform supporting employability skills, which will be available to all students.

6.0 Summary

The college remains committed to providing a first class, life changing experience for its students and has developed the infrastructure that is delivering on this vision. Our belief is that this infrastructure is worthy of recognition by Gold TEF status supported by the following evidence;

- Three double positive flags in core metrics for highest weighted areas.
- Five positive flags and zero negative in the most recent year of splits.
- The one single negative flag in core metrics shows positive in the most recent year of the splits.
    - Performance in NSS 2018 for Assessment and Feedback is up 20% on the previous year and is now 12% above benchmark.
- Above benchmark performance in every question of the NSS.
- Outstanding performance in progression to employment or further study in DLHE (98%).
- Institutional commitment to teaching excellence.
- Investment in infrastructure to deliver excellence consistently.

The creation of an academic department focussed solely on raising standards, the improvement of teaching and learning and the student experience has had a significant impact on staff and students. This has been clearly demonstrated in each of the TEF metrics. Our outstanding teaching and assessment practices have been recognised by peers and students alike and the college continues to excel in providing the skills and vocational relevance to support students to continue and progress. Areas for improvement concerning the timeliness of assessment feedback have been proactively addressed and performance in this area is now above benchmark. We would ask panel assessors in making their judgement, to consider the impact of the strategic and operational changes made and the commendations received from the academic community in this respect.