Name of Provider: **Brit college**
UKPRN: **10028216**

TEF Year Three Submission Brit College

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Introduction

1. Brit College is participating in the TEF Year Three on the basis of its first set of metrics. Whilst the College's experience in delivering Higher Education spans over 11 years, the first publicly funded HE cohort was enrolled in the academic year 2013/14. The TEF metrics therefore reflect outcomes relevant largely to this cohort. The HND programme was was being delivered for the first time at Brit College.

2. The College was aware from the onset, that the HND qualification on its own would not necessarily guarantee its students progression into Employment, or Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study. However the provision of the HND was an essential step towards the college's ambition, mapped out in the start-up policies, to make degree-level qualifications accessible to its graduates.

3. At the same time, start-up periods always present challenges. The College believes that its success should be measured by its response to such challenges. This submission outlines the outcomes of major policy reviews that were conducted in response to a variety of challenges related to this cohort.

4. This submission, in response to the negative flags on Employment or Further Study and Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study, seeks to demonstrate that these flags, which are justifiably low as they relate the College's first funded intake on a programme being delivered for the first time, do not correctly reflect the College's current status.

5. The submission confirms that the College's highly positive outcomes reflected in the TEF Year 3 Workbook, pertaining to Student Continuation, Assessment and Feedback, and Academic Support, which are recent metrics, more accurately depict the positive impact of the policies adopted as part of the College's growth strategy since the 2015/16 Academic Year. The submission also serves to confirm that had TEF allocated higher weightings to Student Continuation, Assessment and Feedback, and Academic Support, or at least matched their weightings to those allocated to Employment or Further Study and Highly Skilled Employment or Further Study, Brit College's baseline rating would have been more accurately pegged at Silver rather than Bronze as the flags in the College's TEF Year 3 Workbook currently show.

6. Key evidence documents used to evidence this submission, and are too large to include in this submission are: internal Annual Monitoring Reports for the 2013/14; 2014/15; 2015/16 and 2016/17 Academic Years; Brit College 5-Year Strategic Plan 2016-2021; Brit College Enhancement Strategy and policy documents which will be named where appropriate. These document are available to TEF on request. Data used in the submission, available in the reports, is also publicly available from sources such as the UNISTATS website, or from Brit College's TEF Year 3 Workbook

Demographics of the Local Area

7. Key and certainly most strategic of the policy reviews Undertaken since 2013 was the redefinition of the College's market in the Academic Year 2014/15. As shown in Graph 1 in the Appendix, most (66%) of the students admitted onto the first cohort were EU nationals. The College resolved to reduce significantly, the number of EU nationals admitted onto the programme with a view to eliminating reliance on this market, so as to focus on the local area.

8. This decision was justified by the consideration that Brit College is located in Tower Hamlets. This borough is ranked 6th most deprived borough in England and most deprived in London[1], based on the income domain measure (the proportion of residents in an area who are experiencing income deprivation). A quarter of residents in Tower Hamlets are income deprived.

[1] http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Borough_statistics/Population/Population_Projections_for_Tower_Hamlets_January_2016.pdf.. Accessed on 11 January 2018

However, with a growth rate of 26% compared to 10% for Greater London and 7% for England[2], Tower Hamlets is projected to be the fastest growing borough in London over the next ten years, and is expected to reach a population of 374,000 in 2026 from a current figure of 296, 300[3]. The poverty and growth rates are typical of the neighbouring boroughs such as Newham and Hackney[4], and therefore, with Tower Hamlets as its market, the entire area in fact makes up the college's target market.

9. Tower Hamlets (employment rate 9.2% in 2015)[5] and Newham (employment rate 14% in 2016)[6] have some of the highest unemployement rates in London (Average employment 4.9%). For the ten years 2001-2011, employement ranged between 6.4% and 6.7%, attributed to low skilled labour residing in the borough, particular between 18 and 25 years old. The employment rate for Hackney is 6.4% (2017 statistics)[7].

Review of Philosophy

10. With the above trends in mind, Brit College's marketing strategy[8] is rooted in the belief that it has a moral duty towards the economic growth of Tower Hamlets and its neighbours, through education and skills development. The College's mission: "*To become a leading provider of skills development to hard-to-reach communities through the delivery of innovative and customised learning programmes"* was therefore adopted with the aim of continuously improving the quality of learning opportunities for the College's students (Enhancement theme). The mission integrates Widening Participation and Employability as key drivers of the College's growth. Management also took a strong view that this mission can only be achieved through close working relationships with students as partners (Student Engagement). The four themes permit and are most appropriately suited for the College to deliver its socially-responsible obligations to its target market. It is to be noted that the College introduced these four themes at the beginning of the 2015/16 Academic Year, prior to the publication of the Green Paper[9] in November 2015 proposing the Teaching Excellence Framework, with widening participation, and employability as its key themes[10].

[2] http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Borough_statistics/Population/Population_Projections_for_Tower_Hamlets_January_2016.pdf. Accessed 11 January 2018.
[3] http://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/community_and_living/borough_statistics/population.aspx. Accessed 12 January 2018
[4] www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1KE3Tlm1Bhe4ZbE5bzhD69BZb7Js&hl=en_US&ll=51.48976696101502%2C-0.08815000000004147&z=10. Accessed on 11 January 2018
[5] https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/community_and_living/borough_statistics/labour_market.aspx. Accessed 11 january 2018
[6] https://www.newham.gov.uk/Documents/Misc/Research-Worklessness.pdf. Accessed on 11 January 2018
[7] Hackney Borough Facts & Figures Leaflet, October 2017, Produced by the Policy and Partnerships Team
[8] Brit College Strategic Plan 2016 to 2021
[9] House of Commons Business, Innovation and Skills Committee The Teaching Excellence Framework: Assessing quality in Higher Education Third Report of Session 2015–16
[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474227/BIS-15-623-fulfilling-our-potential-teaching-excellence-social-mobility-and-student-choice.pdf. Accessed on 17 August 2016.

Provider Context

11. The positive impact of major policy changes made using extensive and continuous analysis of the issues the College faced since 2013 render the current metics irrelevant to the current context in Brit College. The baseline rating derived from the metric depicts a picture of the College during a process of active redefinition of itself, its market and its responsibilities beyond education. The review in the College's philosophy, which underpins most of the policy changes constitutes the correct context within which Brit College should be assessed for the purposes of rating it on the Teaching Excellence and Students' Outcomes Framework.

12. Brit College understood its challenges at the onset and acted boldly and with speed, to map out an effective way forward**. Graph 1 shows that as a result of the deliberate change in the market, the number of students who are UK nationals or domicile in the UK has shifted from 34% to 100%.** This change was accompanied by policy changes in other areas of the College's operations, calculated to cause improvements on Teaching Quality and the Learning Environment. Implementation of such policies is a long-term process, only achievable one-step at a time. The impact of the policies has consistently been positive since their first introduction in 2015.

13. The first phase of the College's strategy aimed at putting sustainable policies, systems and structures in place, the bases of which are the Action Plan developed from the recommendations, good practice and affirmations identified by QAA during its February 2016 HER[11] (AP), and the College's own experience of delivering Higher Education since 2006. This is articulated in the College's 5-Year Strategic Plan (2016-21). **During its Annual Monitoring Review visit in February 2017, QAA stated that *"Brit College has made commendable progress with implementing the action plan from the February 2016 Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers)"*[12] and thus confirmed the successful completion of all actions in the Action Plan. This outcome implied that the College would not have a review visit in 2018, which QAA has now confirmed upon receipt of a successful Annual Review Return and supporting evidence, in December 2016. This is further evidence that the College's policies have been effective and have impacted positively on Teaching Quality and the Learning Environment.**

14. Building on the success of its policies so far, the second phase of the College's Strategy is growth through the establishment of progression routes for its students into Employment and Further Education. This is clearly articulated in the Strategic Plan which states: *"Growth through University partnership is the priority that will drive the College to its vision"*, encouraging the College to expand its provision through franchised or validated degree programmes.

15. The College has therefore been actively seeking university partnerships since 2015. These would give its students progression opportunities and therefore fulfil its strategy to offer opportunities for acquiring university education to hard-to-reach members of the local communities. Initially, the few students that progressed to university did so through informal articulation arrangements with local universities and College's with validation arrangements in place.

16. **In September 2017, Brit College signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Northampton to offer a franchised Bachelor's degree in Business and Management. The majority of the 55 students admitted onto the first cohort in October 2017 were graduates on the internal HND programme. The second cohort is due to start in January 2018.**

[11] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/BRIT%20College%20Ltd/BRIT-College-Ltd-HER-AP-16.pdf. Accessed 12 January 2018
[12] http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/BRIT%20College%20Ltd/BRIT-College-Ltd-SCD-AM-17.pdf. Accessed 12 January 2018

The Impact of Policies made to improve Teaching Quality

Enhancement

17. The College is mindful that a great deal of work is required to upgrade the skills of its applicants, beginning at the admission stage, in order to cope with the demands of higher education study, until their entry into skilled work or further education. It therefore made the Enhancement of Teaching Quality central to all its policies. The Enhancement Strategy, prepared and annually updatedy by staff and students, outlines the priorities for the enhancement of Teaching Quality. It underlines College's openness to new and innovative teaching approaches. The Enhancement strategy is available to all staff and students through the College's virtual Learning Environment.

18. The College introduced the administration of functional skills tests in literacy, numeracy and ICT to all applicants at the point of application. Successful applicants are required to pass all three tests. They then undergo strict screening to ensure their commitment to study and their ability to cope with the demands of the course through an interview. Interviews are conducted by teachers on the course to allow applicants to understand fully the demands on the course and for the teachers to identify specific learning needs. It is clear from Table 2 that the stringent admissions procedures preserved the quality of students admitted onto the programme. Students identified as having specific learning neds receive extensive support, even after the thorough screening process to increase their numeracy, literacy and ICT skills.

19. Student feedback on the earlier stages of getting onto the programme and on the support they receive during these stages is highly positive (Over 80%), showing the effectiveness of the admissions, recruitment and induction processes. These processes are defined in the Admissions, Applications and Enrolment Policy.

20. The Learning and Teaching Strategy, which was revised to allow for structural changes introduced to enhance Teaching Quality Policy, underpins the student support procedures. The Student Experience and Engagement Policy and the Student Support and Learning Resources complement the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

21. Despite the costs associated with teaching smaller groups, the College reduced class sizes from an average of 40 to 20. Teaching is now conducted in blocks allowing a lecture, a tutorial and a seminar/workshop/active learning activities to allow the translation of theory into practice. This process is complemented by masterclasses delivered by industry experts and members of the College's Employers' Forum.

22. The role of academic staff was reviewed to encourage them to assume roles other than teaching, including tutorial, mentoring and facilitation roles to promote independent learning. All members of staff actively participate in providing students with the relevant support, including academic support and pastoral support. Systems of addressing student needs are available and are also discussed with students, including personalised action plans, one-to-one review and feedback mechanisms.

23. Teaching recruitment has been revised to ensure only the best and most qualified teachers are offered jobs. Only staff with a minimum of a Master's Degree and proven teaching experience are considered for interview. Successful candidates for teaching jobs are interviewed by an interview panel consisting of senior managers and student representatives. The staff interview process now includes all aspects of teaching and assessment, including presentation of a typical teaching session, marking and internal verification of marked scripts.

24. The Staff Development Policy is linked to the staff observation and appraisal systems. Staff maintain up-to-date Continuous Professional Development (CPD) records. The College

encourages and funds membership of staff to professional bodies such as the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

25. **The extremely positive outcomes reflected in the TEF Year 3 Workbook, pertaining to Student Continuation, Assessment and Feedback, and Academic Support attest to the positive impact of the College's policies to improve Teaching Quality.**

The Impact of Policies made to improve the Learning Environment

Widening Participation

26. Brit College's mission statement: "*To become a leading provider of skills development to hard-to-reach communities through the delivery of innovative and customised learning programmes"* was announced to staff and students at the start of the 2015/16 Academic Year. It is rooted in the term *"hard-to-reach communities"* The College made a commitment to engage the hard-to-reach individuals and offer them opportunities to acquire university degrees, that would expose them to greater job prospects and to be more productive. These individuals would not have had a chance to go into higher education.

27. Diversity within Brit College, is representative of the population in the local areas. This is evidence of the effectiveness of the widening participation strategy. From the recruitment cycles so far, a typical applicant would be above the age of 18, have been away from education for considerable periods or have no formal qualification, working or has gained work experience and/or acquired other roles since leaving formal education. They would not been able, but are willing to, come back to education. These would normally have also received some on-the-job training or are running their own businesses and acquired additionsl skills which have not been recognised as formal qualifications. This is reflective of the trends within the population which include low qualifications, unrecognised qualifications and hence poor basic employability skills, particularly among those who have been out of work for long periods and low levels of English[13].

28. As a result of unemployement, a significant number of students have caring responsibilities. The College introduced flexible time-tabling, supported by the Attendance and Retention Policy in order to encourage the harder-to-reach student applicants onto its programme. This also tends to boost attendance, which positively affects achievement and progression.

29. Also, cultural bariers limit the level of confidence in some of the students, especially those who have been out of work for long periods. The College has integrated various activities in its curriculum, including social activities organised by the students, which it funds. Some of the activities organised and conducted include setting up and hosting the College's 11th Year Anniversary and participation in the marketing video. The College also delivers units meant to improve the student's presentation skills such as the Pitching and Negotiation units on the HND programme.

30. However, the College is aware that the ratio of male to female students should ideally be 50:50. Over the years, the College has been deliberately introducing ways of increasing the population of female students. **Table 1 shows the gradual increase in the percentage of female students, from 22% in the 2014/15 Academic year to 39% in the 2017-18 Academic Year.**

[13] https://www.newham.gov.uk/Documents/Misc/Research-Worklessness.pdf. Accessed on 11 January 2018

Employability

31. Brit College's ethos is rooted in working together with employers and employment organisations in the local area to promote skills development, and enhance employment opportunities. The College therefore works external organisations who provide advice on opportunities for student progression into work.

32. In 2015 an Employers' Forum was formed. An extract from the Employers Forum's terms of reference states:

> *"The College designed its curriculum to meet the needs of its target market through the selection and teaching of employment-related units on its courses. It is therefore, pertinent for the success of the (employability) theme, for the College to actively engage with employers. These employers take part in the delivery of its courses through the provision of visiting lecturers, speakers and arranged tours of students to relevant businesses.*
>
> *Some of the courses require students to acquire relevant work experience as part of the qualification. The College intends to meet this requirement through links with employers who can provide such work placements. The Employers' Forum will therefore offer guidelines on the requirements of employers and help in developing codes of ethics and expectations of employers insofar as the students and the College are concerned. In the long-run in support of the College's strategy to grow through partnerships with universities, members of the Forum will be invited to provide guidance in the development of the curriculum for validated programmes under such partnerships".*

33. **Through the direction and inspiration provided by members of the forum, students have gone on to form their own companies, or are seeing improvements in their businesses.**

34. Members of the College's Employers' Forum, some of whom are industry experts, deliver masterclasses to the students. This goes a long way in enhacing the students' learning experience. Student feedback on the quality and range of masterclasses is very positive.

35. Other resources such as the website signpost students where they can source career's advice such as The National Careers Service. There is also a page on the website where students are directed to current vacancies in local employers, such as the Canary Wharf Group, Tower Hamlets Council and recruitment agencies. The College hosts CV clinics for students provided by experts from the Employers' Forum. Companies such as Barclays Life Skills also run advisory sessions.

Student Engagement

36. Student engagement in Brit College is underpinned by the Student Experience and Enhancement Policy, which the students actively participate in reviewing. The following is an extract from the policy:

"Brit College takes deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience. It aims to capture the student voice using a variety of methods including questionnaires completed throughout the academic year, involvement on College committees, the system of student representatives and formally and informally through meetings with student groups."

37. The involvement of student as partners in everything the College does, including curriculum design and reviews, resourcing and quality assurance, enriches the learning environment. Students participate in committees that decide on strategy and policy, and have an input in the quality of the general learning environment, namely the Academic Management Team and Academic Board. Minutes of meetings, templates and student lists are available for review if required.

38. Students also participate in the governance structures including the College Oversight Board designed to introduce transparency and accountability through externality.

39. Different sections of the College structures maintain monthly and quarterly meetings with students to review aspects of its operations. Every year, a staff-student liaison meeting open to all staff and students is convened to review every aspect of the college including curriculum, resources and learning opportunities for students.

40. Within the culture of student engagement, the College reviewed the Student Attendance and Retention Policy. Students work together with staff to identify risk areas that affect their ability to stay on their course to completion. With the help of students, a traffic light system was introduced to identify at-risk students and to determine the level and nature of the dialogue required with students to reduce the risk. **Through the Annual Award for students with the best attendance records, which the students organise, attendance has greatly improved.** Attendance was one of the major challenges that the Academic Year 2013/14 cohort presented.

41. The College provides reference letters to student representatives on completion of their course, which serve to enhance their progression into Employment and Further Study. For their sense of responsibility and hard work. The following is an extract from one of such reference letters, reflecting the extent to which some students get involved within the college:

> *"Outside of her studies, …… was an active member of the student Representative body. She attended all scheduled meetings of the body and played a leading role. She was a member of the key college committees, including the Academic Board, Academic Management Team and Employers' Forum and College Oversight Board. She also attended the Annual Student Consultative Meetings.*
>
> *"……'s input in these committees lead to substantial improvements in the operations of the College. For example, …… wrote the Student Representative Handbook and the Terms of Reference of student representatives. These documents are still in use at the college both for the training of new representatives and as working documents for the current representatives. She also contributed to the drafting of the Student Handbook as well as the College's Enhancement Strategy. The Enhancement Strategy is a strategic document used as a reference throughout the College.*
>
> *"…… participated in all preparations for quality inspections and reviews including External Examiner and outside Quality Assurance reviewers' Team meetings with Students".*

42. **With 30% of Brit college students proceeding into further studies six months after graduation[14], the College believes that this is a major improvement resulting from the close working relationship between the College and its students, increasingly making the college a recruitment ground for local universities.**

43. For the 2013-14 cohort, student involvement yielded very little. Non-attendance, failure to submit work and general lack of discipline characterised this cohort**. However, continuation rates of over 92.5% for data that includes this cohort, reflects the persistent management efforts to keep them on track.** The change in the student profile made it easier for management to demonstrate to the students, a commitment to engagement, and for the students to willingly participate openly and freely within an environment of trust.

44. This is evident in the feedback from students: **In the student surveys since 2015, over 80% of students stated that they were satisfied with the College's involvement of representatives in quality assurance processes and that the selection, function and involvement of student representative within the College was highly satisfactory. The majority of the students (over 90%) were satisfied with the organisation and management as a result of potential issues such as time-tabling and availability of staff and physical resources being addressed in time and with the student input.**

[14] https://unistats.ac.uk/subjects/employment/10028216FT-BUSI-SEP-2017/ReturnTo/Search

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Appendix: Data Presentation

Graph 1: Student Profile Based on Nationality

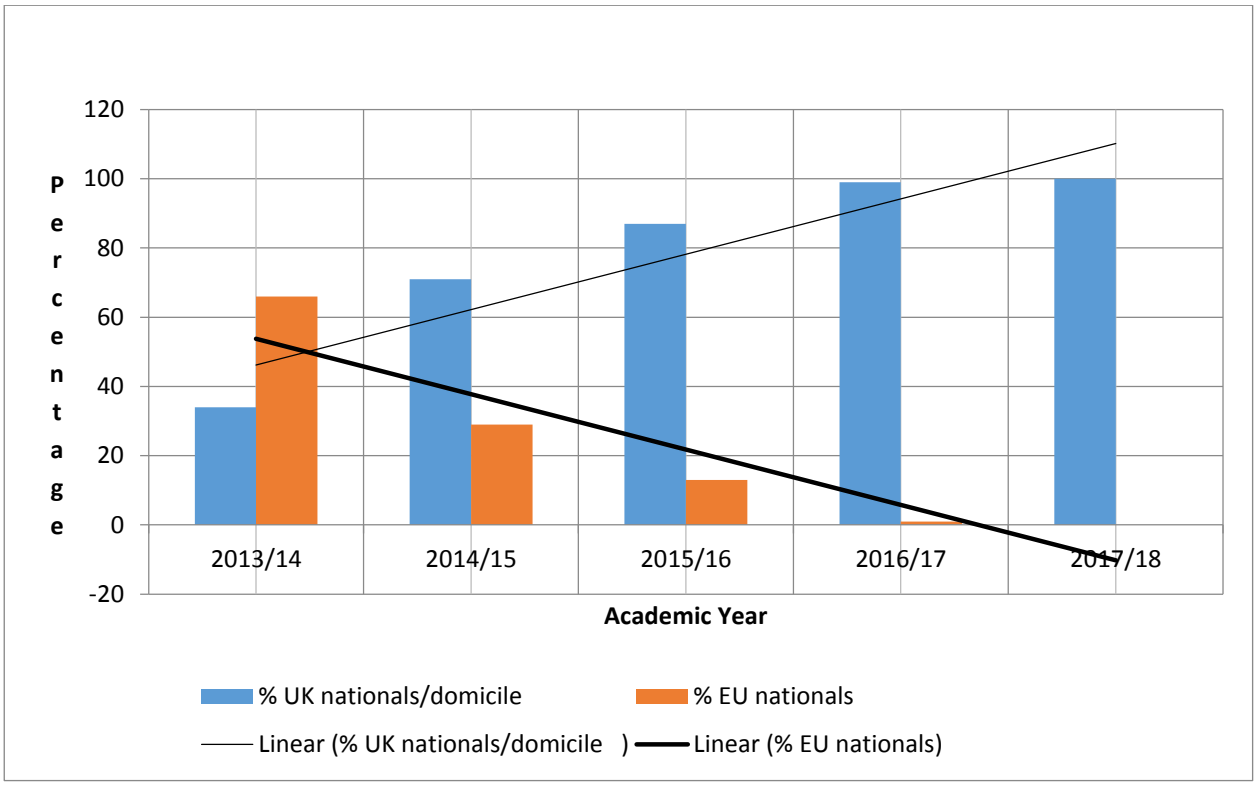

Chart is derived from student data available in Brit College Annual monitoring Reports since the academic year 2013/14

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Table 1: Trend of Female Students Admitted onto the Programme

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Male	78%	64%	61%
Female	22%	36%	39%

Table 2: Admissions Trends

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Total Applications	1043	655	722
Accepted applicants	285 (27%)	285 (44%)	300 (42%)
Rejected applicants	758 (73%)	370 (56%)	422 (58%)