Statement from Michaela Draganic, Student President: As president of the student council, on behalf of the Regent student body, I would like to support the attached document. We have student representatives that meet twice a term with the student experience team to discuss student issues and matters of concern. The college has developed a 'You Said We Did' poster programme which are displayed on notice boards throughout the college and updated regularly giving students feedback on issues raised. Our voice is always listened to and acted upon in a timely manner. Teachers are knowledgeable and accessible, helpful and giving good information to us. The student support team are also very helpful giving advice and guidance at regular times. Most students attending college come from recommendations from friends and family showing how good the college and teaching is.

Statement from Dr Selva Pankaj, Chief Executive: Regent College Higher Education was launched in 2010 to meet the needs of a small group of A-level students at one of our sixth-form colleges who, though capable, struggled with the A-level curriculum. They needed a more appropriate level-4+ study option and became our first HND cohort. Since then we have relentlessly been striving to meet the diverse needs of students ill served by traditional HE. For example, the mean age on entry of our students is thirty-four, and over one-third attend classes in the evening in order to be able to maintain daytime caring or part-time work commitments.

Catering for students with diverse educational backgrounds is challenging. Yet I am proud of the way we have risen to the challenge. The RCHE team consistently go beyond the call of duty to ensure that every student has the best chance of realising their potential, and one student commented, *'I actually feel part of the team'*. However, we do not see ourselves solely as providers of a programme of study; rather, we acknowledge the importance of preparing students for life beyond the classroom. In recognition of the challenges faced by adults today we devised *Thinking into Character*, a revolutionary and transformational programme. Delivered via our Regent Virtual Campus, we have made it available to all our students to help them develop by setting personal, educational and career goals and identifying achievements they can build upon.

After nearly a decade growing and maturing our HND provision, we have now partnered with Bucks New University and the University of Northampton in the delivery of honours degree programmes. This is benefiting our students, not only directly by providing a seamless progression route to a level-6 award, but also indirectly by giving the staff who teach them an opportunity to engage with university academics and share best practice. We are looking to the future with great enthusiasm: further HE portfolio developments are in train with the University of Bolton and Bishop Grosseteste University; in 2019 we open a new campus in central London; and we are working towards securing taught degree awarding powers and university title.

Introduction

1. RTC Education Ltd, t/a Regent College Higher Education, opened in 2010 as part of a family-owned, private education group established in north-west London in 2000. Within the context of our Group and the UK's transformative alternative HE sector, **our mission is to provide students with an academic and professional higher education – based on robust academic standards and high-quality learning opportunities – to meet graduate and employer needs**. Our group ethos is encapsulated in our motto, *'The end of education is character'*, reflecting our 'whole person' perspective and recognising the crucial role that learning plays in building effective and socially responsible citizens of the world.

2. We have been delivering **Pearson's suite of two-year, full-time business HND programmes** on our Wembley campus since our 2010 launch. We have three intakes per year and as of December 2018 we have 1,073 students registered. In July 2012 we gained Specific Course Designation for the programmes from the then Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. We had a successful QAA Review for Educational Oversight in spring 2014 and Higher Education Review (Alternative Provider) in autumn 2016. Following an annual monitoring visit in autumn 2017 the QAA commended us on our progress implementing the HER (AP) action plan. This is the best outcome possible, and we were one of only a handful of alternative providers to achieve it. The QAA determined that no monitoring visit was required in 2018. In December 2018

the Office for Students confirmed that our application for inclusion in the register of English higher education providers had been successful.

3. Having grown and matured as an HE provider over the last decade we value the opportunity to engage with the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework as a national initiative across the traditional and alternative sectors. We are keen to demonstrate how our deliberate steps to improve the quality of learning opportunities have delivered excellence in teaching and student outcomes above the baseline quality threshold. We received a provisional award in TEF Year 2 and a one-year Silver award in TEF Year 3; our goal is to secure a Gold rating within the new subject/provider TEF framework. Our TEF Year 4 metrics for student satisfaction, continuation and outcomes derive from our HND cohorts, and the evidence we provide of performance above the baseline quality threshold and of excellence against the TEF criteria also relates to HND provision. We recognise that the starting point for the initial hypothesis is formulaically Bronze based on the flags for our DLHE-derived metrics; however, we demonstrate here that **broader consideration of our core and split metrics undermines the starting point for the initial hypothesis and in fact corresponds to Silver**.

4. The starting point for the initial hypothesis fails to take account of the **absolute high and significantly above-benchmark values of our indicators for student satisfaction and continuation**. With an indicator of 90.4% our core metric for Continuation has a double positive flag, and further double positive flags across all the splits. This outcome is outstanding given our proportion of widening participation (WP) students and our students' entry qualifications. With indicators between 86.2% and 91.2% all three core metrics for student satisfaction are starred, and our absolute performance therefore sits within the top ten per cent of all providers. Two also have positive flags, indicating performance significantly above benchmark; the third starred student-satisfaction metric does not have a flag, but with no negative flags across the splits is effectively also positively flagged. Thus, all three are both starred and positively flagged. These student-satisfaction outcomes are again outstanding, not only given that we are new to the NSS, but also – and especially – given features of our student body which reflect our commitment to WP, but for which the NSS-derived metrics are not benchmarked (62% of students from IMD Q1/2 neighbourhoods; 84% without an entry tariff).

5. In summary, we have a star for all core NSS-derived metrics (indicating performance in the top ten per cent of all providers) and (double) positive flags for both HESA- and all NSS-derived metrics (indicating performance above benchmark at the highest level of significance). We are performing exceptionally well here. The total weighted value of these four core metrics is 2.5, which exceeds the weighting of the two DLHE-derived metrics. **A broader review of our core and split metrics therefore undermines the starting point for the initial hypothesis and instead points to Silver**.

6. Beyond our metrics, a Silver rating is supported by further corroborating evidence of performance above the baseline quality threshold and of excellence against the TEF criteria, as well as strong and convincing contextual information about the College, including factors relevant to our metrics for graduate outcomes. Consideration of this evidence is important given the mix of positive and negative flags, our two rather than three years of metrics, our small size (895 headcount, 533 FTE, in our TEF Year 4 population), and the very high proportion (67%) of local students we recruit. The evidence further undermines the starting point for the initial hypothesis and reinforces the conclusion that **a holistic, qualitative assessment of our provision points to Silver**, that is, our 'provision is of high quality, and consistently exceeds the rigorous national quality requirements of UK Higher Education'.

Our Context

7. We first produced a **Strategic Plan** in October 2014 in the context of our Group mission, vision and values. It provides a solid framework for improvement and enhancement activity firmly focused on the needs of our current and future student body. **Our vision** is to be a top provider of private HE in London based on robust academic standards, as well as the high-quality learning

experience and life-changing opportunities we provide our students. **Our values** focus on: embedded quality enhancement; opportunity, equality, diversity and inclusiveness; mutual respect, professionalism, openness, empowerment and responsibility; rewarding success; proactive innovation in response to a rapidly changing world; people development; and sustainability, value for money and adding value in all we do. **Our strategic objectives** are: to provide a high-quality learning experience for our students through the implementation of policies and procedures delivering continuous enhancement; to foster a culture of excellence through investment in staff development; to improve competitiveness in attracting staff, students and partners through our reputation for quality and standards; to secure and maintain the highest possible standing with our awarding bodies and external accrediting organisations, and secure taught degree awarding powers (TDAPs) and university title as early as the new regulatory framework for English HE allows. We shall be revising our strategic plan following the recent confirmation of our inclusion in the register of English higher education providers.

8. Our **Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy** is now in its second iteration. Following successful delivery of the 2015–18 strategy, the 2018–21 version is closely aligned to our Strategic Plan, the UK Quality Code, and significant HND curriculum changes introduced by Pearson. Its overall objective is '*to provide students with a rewarding learning experience, helping them to achieve their academic, professional and personal goals in a relaxed, supportive and friendly environment where equality and diversity are valued*'. Its detailed aims are to support our students to develop: critical intellectual enquiry (independent learning that includes the intellectual powers of analysis, synthesis, evaluation, constructive criticism, creativity and reflection) (**TQ3**); subject expertise and appreciation of context (a thorough understanding of, and enthusiasm for, the academic subjects studied, together with an ability to place them in the context of ethical, economic, environmental and global considerations) (**TQ1**); a positive approach to learning (for students to develop a willingness to accept responsibility for their own learning, to be independent learners by using initiative, self-guidance, and a commitment to life-long learning) (**TQ1**); application of knowledge (to promote skills such that our students are capable of making a significant contribution as employees, citizens, and play an active and responsible role in society) (**SO1**); and a global perspective (resulting in being prepared for an ever-changing world where technology plays an increasingly important role) (**SO2**).

9. **Executive responsibility for delivering this educational strategy lies with the Principal**. We appointed a new Principal in November 2016 following our HER (AP). The appointee had a track record of quality improvement in several institutions and was tasked with providing academic leadership across the Group's HE and FE provision. In recognition of the growth that our HE provision has witnessed we have ringfenced FE provision and in December 2018 appointed a successor Principal to the College to oversee HE development specifically. The appointee is a highly experienced HE leader, a professor of teaching and learning, a PFHEA, and a former QAA review co-ordinator; he also previously spent five years leading a London alternative provider which had several university partners and a broad portfolio of level-6 provision. The Principal is accountable to the Group Chief Executive and supported by a senior team including subject, programme and cohort leaders.

10. **Scrutiny of executive authority is performed – with due regard to the CUC's *Higher Education Code of Governance* – under the aegis of an Advisory Board**, chaired by the vice-chancellor of the University of Bolton; other members include local councillors and business leaders. The Advisory Board sets strategic direction, monitors the delivery of strategic priorities, and has oversight of quality, standards and compliance with regulatory requirements. At an operational level academic governance is provided by the Academic Board, with standing committees such as the Student Representative Committee, the Retention, Achievement, Careers & Progression Committee, and the Equality & Diversity Monitoring Group. Specific examples of the positive impact of these academic-governance bodies is provided in **TQ1**, **LE3** and **SO3** respectively. We are a member of Independent Higher Education, a national body representing leading private universities, alternative HE providers, embedded colleges and creative institutes across the private and not-for-profit HE sector. Since 2015 we have been nominated for three prizes – including best HE provider and best private education group – in the annual Education

Investor Awards, recognising organisations and individuals making an outstanding contribution to education.

11. We have long recognised the particular role of alternative providers in reaching out to sections of society hitherto disengaged from – or with little experience of – HE, and we view ourselves as a strong WP institution. While we have maintained our UKVI Highly Trusted Status (Tier 4), we have not actively recruited students from overseas for several years. Instead, **we focus on recruiting students in and around our local area in north-west London**. Sixty-seven per cent of our students are local, many from the London Borough of Brent. After successive waves of migration from a variety of sources Brent is **one of the most diverse boroughs in the capital**: 56% of residents were born outside the UK, whilst only 18% identify as White British. Brent is also **one of the most deprived boroughs in the capital** across a range of indicators: the average weekly wage is the second lowest (out of thirty-two) in London; 33% of the working population earn less than the London Living Wage, and in Black African and Pakistani/Bangladeshi communities the figure rises to over forty per cent. Only 38% of Brent's working population are employed in SOC groups 1 to 3 (senior professional and managerial), compared to 55% across London as a whole and 46% nationally; conversely, 43% of the working population are employed in SOC groups 6 to 9 (service, manual and low skilled), compared to 27% in London and 34% nationally.

12. Ninety-six per cent of our students are mature, and their mean age on entry is thirty-four. Eighty-five per cent are non-UK nationals, mostly from recent EU succession states such as Romania and Bulgaria. Many of these EU nationals have been in the UK for some years, having initially come to work, and maintain some part-time (self-)employment alongside study. In addition, many combine study with caring responsibilities. The overwhelming majority continue to live at home while studying, often after graduation as well. Indeed, in terms of the proportion who are mature and/or from ethnic minorities, have part-time (self-)employment and/or caring responsibilities, and live locally, **the profile of our students closely resembles that of the 'commuter students' who were the focus of a recent HEPI report**.[1] In comparison with traditional 'residential' students, commuter students are more likely to be the first in their family to engage with HE, have lower incomes, and be mature and from ethnic minorities; they also have to deal with the higher cost, time and unpredictability of commuting. While some of these factors are taken into account in TEF Year 4 benchmarking, not all are. This is significant because, as the report authors note, with less access to an integrated and immersive academic, social and cultural experience in their HE setting, commuter students have less opportunity to build networks, expand their social capital and secure excellent employment; consequently, they have poorer HE outcomes, and are less engaged or satisfied. While across UK HE between one in four and one in five students is a commuter student, at RCHE the figure is approximately nine in ten (11% of our students live at an address with a different postcode to when they applied). Our metrics for continuation and student satisfaction demonstrate that we are very successfully mitigating much of the impact that our students' commuter status can have on engagement and satisfaction (see, for example, the Student Hub in **LE1** and our timetabling practice in **LE3**). However, given the profile of our students and the characteristics of the local area, **it is unsurprising that we underperform against benchmark on our DLHE-derived metrics.**

13. From ongoing engagement with our alumni we also know that **some of our leavers under-report their graduate outcomes in the DLHE survey**. Some of those combining further study with non-highly-skilled employment on the census date have indicated that their most important activity is (non-highly skilled) employment rather than further study, thereby suppressing our indicator and metric for Highly skilled employment or further study. In the DLHE survey of 2016/17 leavers, which feeds the Year 3 split of our **SO** metrics, seventeen indicated that they were unemployed, yet five of these 'unemployed' leavers were in fact *self*-employed at the time, while three others were, respectively, in part-time employment, in full-time training, or on maternity leave and therefore unavailable for work. While not wishing to speculate on the reasons for this under-

[1] Maguire, D. & Morris, D. (2018). *Homeward bound: defining, understanding and aiding 'commuter students'*. (HEPI Report 114). Oxford: Higher Education Policy Institute.

reporting, the responses of a small number of leavers has had a material impact on our **SO** metrics. Had these eight 2016/17 leavers responded in the DLHE survey in line with their actual activity, our TEF Year 4 indicator for Employment or further study would have been 3.7 points higher (93.0% instead of 89.3%). The indicator would then have been just 1.4 points below benchmark (instead of 5.1), the negative flag would not have appeared, and the starting point for the initial hypothesis would have been Silver.

14. Notwithstanding these comments, we recognise that our metrics for student outcomes are disappointing, and that we need to do more to help our students realise their aspirations. We provide details of interventions, as well as evidence of their impact, in **SO** below. **We are confident that the impact of our targeted interventions will be reflected in future iterations of the metrics**.

15. In the following sections we provide further corroborating evidence of performance above the baseline quality threshold and of excellence against the TEF criteria, reinforcing the conclusion that **a holistic, qualitative assessment of our provision points to Silver.**

Teaching Quality

16. **The excellence of our teaching is shown by the core NSS-derived metrics** for The teaching on my course (indicator 91.2%; cf. benchmark 88.4%) and Assessment and feedback (86.2%; cf. 84.1%). These metrics have a star and a positive flag and support an award of Silver. Teaching excellence is shown in other areas of the NSS, too. Our average results across relevant NSS question groups in 2018 are: Learning opportunities 92% (nine points above the sector average); Learning community 90% (+12); and Student voice 86% (+13). In all but one question we outperformed the sector. Our result for overall satisfaction is 90%, seven points above the sector average. Our NSS results are also in line with internal survey results, which since 2016 have consistently shown 91–92% satisfaction with the HND modules.

17. **TQ1 Student Engagement.** Our Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy commits us to support students to develop critical intellectual enquiry and a positive approach to learning, and we work in partnership with students to enhance the quality of their academic and broader experience with us, as well as their graduate outcomes (**SO**). In April 2018 we revised our Student Charter, setting out the respective undertakings of the College and students. It is accessible to all students via our website, VLE and student portal, and new students' attention is drawn to it during induction. We have put in place quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms which provide our students with a wide range of opportunities, both formal and informal, to engage. Evidence that this is working comes from our **average result across the 2018 NSS Student voice group of questions of 86%, thirteen points above the sector average**.

18. We have put in place **effective communication channels with our students**, for example, via our VLE and face-to-face communication. Classroom visits by senior staff, as well as an open-door policy providing access to programme, subject and cohort leaders, all contribute to an easy flow of information and an opportunity for students to discuss academic or personal matters. Further, we have revised the system for scheduling meetings between students and their cohort leader. Previously, 'office hours' were published, but this created queues and congestion so students can now arrange to see their cohort leader at any time. (See also **LE1** for details of our Student Hub, where our students can bring queries and issues to the student-experience term.)

19. We conduct **regular surveys to secure feedback from students** on their ongoing learning experience, as well as of specific milestones, such as induction. We run module evaluations using 'Regent Connect', an app we developed for students to use on mobile devices to keep up to date on matters such as submission deadlines, attendance, and forthcoming events. Students use our feedback platform, 'TalkBack', to offer constructive criticism as well as praise, and we communicate details of action taken in response via a 'you said, we did' platform. As a small institution we are particularly agile in responding to feedback and meeting student needs, and the **2014 QAA Review for Educational Oversight identified dissemination of College**

actions in response to student requests as good practice.

20. We have established **a formal student-representation system**: programme representatives are elected annually within each cohort and are full members of the relevant programme board and our College-wide Academic Board. We attract an engaged and dedicated group of students to serve as programme representatives and help enhance the student experience, for example, by advocating for individual students, representing the student body on committees and boards, participating at events, and encouraging students to complete surveys. The programme representatives also meet termly as a Student Representative Committee chaired by a Student (Vice-)President elected annually from within their number, or by a staff member nominated by the programme representatives themselves. The Committee was recently very supportive of proposed revisions to our attendance policy, and the programme representatives helped disseminate the nature and rationale for the changes.

21. Students have been closely involved in **changes to the delivery model of the HND programmes**. Historically we structured the programmes using a delivery model in which our students took four modules in each of terms 1 and 2, while in term 3 support was provided, for example, for extension studies or preparation for re-assessment. However, some students did not behave as anticipated, often failing to complete module assignments in terms 1 or 2, leaving them until term 3 instead. For these students there could be significant gaps between relevant structured teaching/learning and assessment/feedback. Since April 2018 therefore we have been moving to a more balanced delivery model: the forty weeks of terms 1, 2 and 3 are now divided into four 10-week teaching blocks during each of which our students complete two modules. These changes have been **supported by programme representatives in discussion at Academic Board**, and it is anticipated that they will increase the proportion of students who secure their award on time. Further, the lighter load in term 1 has freed up space for targeted co-curricular provision, not only (in the first year) supporting our predominantly mature students as they transition back into education after years away, but also (in the second year) preparing students for employment or further study; see **LE3** and **SO2** for further details.

22. **Further examples of students engaging with College developments** include: programme-representative involvement in consultation with architects and designers ahead of the 2018 refurbishment of the Wembley campus (**LE1**); Student President and Vice-President participation in induction for new students and student focus groups during piloting of our new VLE system (**LE1**).

23. **TQ2 Valuing Teaching.** The values articulated in our Strategic Plan include professionalism, rewarding success, innovation, and people development, while **our strategic objectives include fostering a culture of excellence through investment in staff development**. All teaching staff have an annual appraisal (or equivalent), part of which identifies continuing professional development needs and the means by which staff keep up to date in their specialist areas of teaching. We facilitate a range of staff-development activities internally and externally to support this process, for example, around changes to the Pearson HND specification. We are an institutional member of AdvanceHE (formerly HEA), and sixteen members of academic staff (out of thirty-four) have HEA fellowships; others are being mentored by our Principal, himself a PFHEA, as they work towards securing HEA fellowship. We have also supported members of the Principal's senior team to complete the online Harvard HBX Disruptive Strategy programme.

24. We are committed to enhancing teaching and identifying excellent practice through a process of annual, mandatory peer observation of all teaching staff, implementing a team-based system which shares good practice and helps teaching staff further improve the learning experience offered to students, including the use of learning technologies, peer collaboration and work-based learning. Our teaching observation policy was first introduced in 2013/14 and provides for annual summary reports of observations conducted to be considered by the Academic Board. **This process of reflective and supportive practice contributes to the high level of student satisfaction with teaching and learner support**.

25. **TQ3 Rigour and Stretch.** Our Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy commits us to support students to develop, amongst other things, critical intellectual enquiry and a positive approach to learning. In line with our motto '*The end of education is character*' we have developed *Thinking into Character*, a transformational personal-development programme to help students build on their achievements by setting personal, educational and career goals. We have made the programme available to all our students on a co-curricular basis via the Regent Virtual Campus.

26. We introduced HND student assessment boards within our academic-governance framework for the purpose of considering and ratifying student marks and reviewing assessment procedures prior to this becoming a requirement in the Pearson programme specification. Our June 2017 external examiner's report concluded that '*A dynamic teaching team is supported by a robust administration process. Detailed assessment board minutes. Formal and informal tutorials are a great strength at this College.*' The September 2018 report commended '*the variety of assessment tools and methods used to cover the unit requirements in a realistic scenario context*', as well '*the use of "Turnitin" as an assessment checking, storage, tracking and feedback system*'.

27. **TQ4 Feedback.** Within the context of the summative assessment policy of our awarding bodies, as well as fair, accessible and valid assessment practice, our Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy aims to deliver assessment: (a) which fosters reflection, analysis and critical thinking across subject boundaries (**TQ1**); (b) which by providing both feedback and feedforward on a timely basis is simultaneously assessment *of* and assessment *for* learning (**TQ3**); and (c) which minimises the risk of academic misconduct (**TQ3**). In response to external-examiner comment that some assignment briefs are excessively task- and criteria-focused, resulting in student work being over-structured rather than professional or business-like, we revised our approach, with assignments now providing a more holistic approach to the task and learning outcomes (**LE2**).

28. Our approach is clearly working. The June 2017 external examiner's report confirms that assessment is robust and accurate, adding '*Both formative and summative assessment practices are used and it is clear that students also seek support and guidance through electronic means from Assessors. There are a wide range of assessment methods in place, with strong support in place*'. The September 2018 report notes that *'Assessors are giving good positive performance feedback and, where applicable, supportive academic developmental guidance for future* assessment'. **At 86.2% our NSS-derived indicator for the Assessment and feedback core metric has a star and is therefore in the top ten per cent of all providers; with no negative flags in any of the splits, it is effectively also positively flagged, and indicates outstanding performance**.

Learning Environment

29. **The excellence of the learning environment we provide is shown in our core NSS/HESA-derived metrics** for Academic support (indicator 89.9%; cf. benchmark 86.7%) and Continuation (90.4%; cf. 81.7%). The former has a star and a positive flag; the latter has a double positive flag; both support an award of Silver. Excellence in respect of the learning environment is shown in other areas of the NSS, too. Our average results across relevant NSS question groups in 2018 are: Learning resources (86%; cf. 85% sector average); and Organisation and management (88%; cf. 75%).

30. **LE1 Resources.** Our Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy commits us to provide virtual and physical learning spaces with appropriate learning and teaching support resources, and **we have invested heavily in physical, electronic and human resources** to enhance the learning environment, to drive improvements in the learning experience, and to improve student outcomes.

31. In spring 2018 we completed **a £350,000 refurbishment of our Wembley campus**. We have provided a 'Student Hub', a combined learning-resource and student-services centre where students can bring queries or issues for the student-experience team. It has open-access PCs as

well as a resource library and a quiet study space, and usage levels have increased since it was refurbished. We have also provided a common room where students can unwind or socialise in a more relaxed environment at lunchtime or in breaks between classes. As noted above, student representatives were involved in the consultation around this refurbishment project, and the September 2018 external examiner's report comments positively on the well-stocked library/learning resource and general PC access. Our Kingsbury campus, formerly home to the Group's FE provision, has been redeveloped to accommodate a new level-6 top-up programme, which launched in February 2018 (see **SO1**).

32. We recognise the importance of **digital technologies**, which are widely exploited to support and enhance student learning, from face-to-face teaching to on-line learning activities. Students also use digital technologies and social-media platforms to communicate with each other and with staff. In 2017 **we spent £60,000 on upgrading IT equipment**, including PCs for student use. We have progressively been enhancing the online platform to support our students' learning through access to digital tools and learning resources, and we are currently phasing in Regent Virtual Campus (**TQ1**). We established and appointed to an E-Learning and Resources Co-ordinator post in September 2017 to work with staff and students to further develop on-line capabilities and delivery. This resulted in the introduction of an E-Learning Strategy and has already seen the introduction of a wider range of blended-learning opportunities, including on-line quizzes and collaboration tools such as wikis, discussion fora and blogs. We recognise though that, with a mean age on entry of thirty-four – typically much older than at other providers – our students have often not had the same level of exposure to, or developed the same confidence in the use of, digital technologies: an older student population means fewer 'digital natives'. The E-Learning Strategy is therefore tailored to the needs of our diverse student body.

33. In terms of **investment in human resource** more broadly, we have put in place a campus staffing structure within which academic and professional-service staff work in close partnership for the benefit of our students. In 2016 we formally established the role of cohort leader, and each of our six HND intakes (three per year) now has a named cohort leader, supported by a named member of administrative staff. The cohort leaders are known to all students and a first point of contact and source of pastoral support (**SO3**); they monitor individual students' attendance and achievement, analyse cohort feedback, and follow up issues as appropriate (**LE3**). To drive further enhancement of the student learning experience we have also appointed: a Director of Quality (May 2017), an additional Director of Studies to oversee the launch of a new level-6 top-up programme (January 2018), and a Student Support Manager focusing on pastoral care (January 2019).

34. **LE2 Scholarship, Research and Professional Practice.** We have ensured that our teaching team have a broad profile, including experience of the world of business. Many are engaged on a part-time basis and **inform their teaching by their other professional activities and practice**. The profile of our students is such that they, too, have a broad range of life experiences, including in professional practice, and are encouraged to draw on this, including their ongoing part-time employment, in their studies. The curriculum is further enhanced by guest lectures delivered by external speakers, for example, the MD of Sunrise Radio and the CEO of Somerset Capital. We also provide our students with **opportunities to complement classroom learning with practice-based experiences off-campus**: students on the accounting and finance pathway have visited the Bank of England museum; students on the business law module have been taken to the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom and to a live hearing of proceedings in the Central Criminal Court for England and Wales (the Old Bailey), where they watched jury selection taking place and trials for alleged terrorism and theft. These visits were well received by students and further visits are planned to the Jaguar/Land Rover experience at Solihull and Castle Bromwich, as well as to the London Stock Exchange.

35. In June 2016 our students were invited to participate in a project undertaken by researchers from the University of Hertfordshire entitled 'Understanding the nature of rationality in patients with delusional beliefs'. The project engaged students in an analysis of their closely held beliefs to draw up a test case analysis for use with NHS patients who present with more

debilitating obsessions. Students were ready to share their experience and were more than willing to support work which will have a very real impact on how the NHS responds to the needs of patients, helping to restore them to good health. The researchers were extremely pleased with our students' response. They noted their clear, strong commitment, their interest in issues beyond their discipline, and their willingness to help the community and contribute to the well-being of others.

36. **LE3 Personalised Learning.** The very first aim articulated in our Strategic Plan is that every student be supported to fulfil his or her academic potential and aspirations, while our Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy is based on principles including: a learner-centred approach which encourages student engagement (**TQ1**) and provides flexibility for how, when and where learning takes place; and learning, teaching and assessment practices which meet the needs of a diverse – but overwhelmingly commuter – student body. **The implementation of the Plan and Strategy has led to steady increases in continuation rates, and the year splits in our Continuation metric show a consistent double positive flag in recent years.** These exceptional metrics are testament to the interventions we have put in place to support personalised learning, tailored to the relevant point in the student journey.

37. We fully recognise the profile of our student body and the challenges which potentially pose barriers to full engagement with learning. In 2017 we introduced a revised admissions policy, which the QAA recognised as '*ensuring that all applications are treated with equity, transparency and fairness*'. We have committed to **interview every potentially suitable applicant to ensure their individual learning needs are assessed and met.** Any applicant without a recognised English-language qualification at the appropriate level is required to undertake our assessment test to determine whether their English is strong enough to undertake the programme. Applicants unable to satisfy the English-language requirement can undertake a British Council-accredited course to develop their language skills to the required level.

38. In recognition of students' diverse circumstances and the often conflicting pressures they are under, **we have developed a timetabling strategy to improve accessibility**. We offer alternative study modes with timetabled sessions on consecutive full days, or during mornings, afternoons or evenings only, or indeed a mixed pattern. Where students experience unexpected disruption within their family or part-time employment, we respond as flexibly as possible. One year-2 student wrote to express her appreciation that we had effectively avoided her withdrawal from the HND by opening up a teaching group for just five students attending class during mornings only. The introduction of this flexibility has contributed to significant increases in attendance levels, from 64% in 2016 to over 80% in 2018.

39. For students who – post-admission – wish to further improve their use of academic English **we provide access to British Council-accredited provision in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) free of charge**. Since all students satisfy an English-language admission requirement prior to registration, EAP provision is entirely optional. It can be accessed at any point during the programme on a self-referral basis, and tutors also refer students to EAP where they feel it would be beneficial.

40. To meet the needs of our large number of learners who had been out of education for a significant period of time, and to help them acquire at an early stage skills essential to full engagement with their studies and avoid early withdrawal, in 2016/17 we introduced a voluntary programme of **study-skills support** during the first term of year 1. The support focused on conducting research, completing assignments, and time management; it was co-curricular and therefore outside core teaching and learning activities. The support was semi-formalised in 2017/18 as twenty-four 45-minute sessions (eighteen hours in total) delivered across the twelve weeks of the term. From April 2018 it was extended to twenty-four hours and reformatted as a non-credit-bearing study-skills module, mandatory for all students, and delivered in a concentrated way over the first weeks of term. After the most recent delivery (autumn 2018) 91% of students rated the module as very good or excellent overall, and between 87% and 96% gave these ratings for such aspects as the balance between instruction and practice, relevance to core HND

modules, clarity of presentation, quality of guidance, development of reading ability, critical thinking and writing.

41. In the context of some historically very poor programme completion rates, **we have put in place formal systems to monitor the progress of individual cohorts and students**. We introduced a monthly Retention, Achievement & Completion (RAC) meeting to review management information, identify problem areas, and determine appropriate interventions after internal data from 2015 suggested that only around 50% of starters were securing the HND award, an issue also noted by the QAA in 2016. Our core TEF Year 4 Continuation metric clearly shows that the RAC approach is working, and our HER (AP) noted that we had satisfactorily addressed the issues raised. In December 2017 the QAA noted '*Cohort Leaders have responsibility for retention, achievement and completion; monitoring; and follow up actions, including providing support to legacy students to submit or resubmit outstanding coursework. The work undertaken by the RAC group has resulted in improved student retention, achievement and completion and has enabled legacy student cohorts to achieve an award*'. Further, the NAO's October 2017 report 'Follow-up on Alternative Higher Education Providers' indicated that **we are one of only ten alternative providers with continuation rates significantly above benchmark**. This is all the more impressive given the 'commuter student' profile of our student body. The success of the RAC initiative has led to its remit being extended: it is now called the Retention, Achievement, Careers & Progression Committee, continues to meet regularly, and systematically reviews the progress of each cohort and each student. We have set stretch targets of 75% and 80% for the proportion of 2015/16 and 2016/17 starters, respectively, securing the HND award, and current data show that we are on track to achieve these.

Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

42. Since launching the HND suite in 2010 we have focused on supporting students' transition back into learning, recognising and addressing their diverse needs. We are increasingly successful in supporting their retention, attainment and progression, as evidenced in the recent ONS report on Alternative Providers, as well as our core metrics for **TQ** and **LE**. Now that we are confident in supporting non-traditional HE students to transition into and thrive in an HE environment, we are focusing on graduate outcomes. We set out above what we understand to be the salient issues underlying our DLHE-derived metrics. Relevant factors include the profile of our student body and the socio-economic profile of the local area from which our students are drawn and to which they return post-graduation; not all these issues are taken into account within TEF Year 4 benchmarking. We have also already noted that, such mitigating circumstances notwithstanding, we recognise the need to focus on improving performance in this area. Below we detail interventions already well underway to improve performance.

43. **SO1 Employment and Further Study.** Our mission is to deliver academic and professional HE to meet graduate and employer needs. In December 2017 we surveyed students' motivations for study and aspirations for graduate outcomes and followed up in January 2018 with focus groups looking at the skills and understanding students felt they needed to progress to employment or further study. Ninety-eight per cent of respondents felt their employability would be enhanced by level-6 study, while 64% said they were undertaking the HND in order to start a new business or develop an existing business.

44. In order to offer our students appropriate progression routes to further study we have sought university partners to validate level-6 provision. We recognise that many of our students do not have the confidence or social capital to make the transition to a traditional university environment, while others are unable to move from the local area due to caring commitments. Indeed, of those interested in a top-up, 79% wanted to undertake it with us, while only 16% wanted to move to a university instead. In November 2017 we gained approval from Bucks New University for a franchised one-year **BA (Hons) Business Management**. Several programme learning outcomes require students to explore and investigate real workplaces (either their own or as part of a short-term placement) in order to conduct case studies and make recommendations for potential improvements. The programme launched in February 2018 at our Kingsbury campus. To

address the specific skills-development needs of students wishing to start/develop their own business, we have also been working with the University of Northampton on a second level-6 top-up, and a one-year **BA (Hons) Entrepreneurship**, delivered on our Harrow campus, launched in September 2018.

45. Both top-ups have our HND graduates as their primary audience, and we see the programmes as a significant enhancement – in an accessible and cost-effective environment – to our students' immediate further-study opportunities, as well as their longer-term employability. The timing of the launch of the programmes means that their impact cannot be seen in our **SO** metrics in TEF Year 4: the two sets of DLHE results which feed into these metrics are based on responses given by our 2015/16 and 2016/17 leavers when they completed the survey at points between April 2016 and January 2018, that is, before the top-ups were launched. However, future leavers will be able to progress directly onto a top-up, and we anticipate a significant positive impact on future iterations of our **SO** metrics. **The 137 students currently registered on the two top-ups include 18% of the 2015/16 and 2016/17 leavers and 30% of the 2017/18 leavers**. This is clear evidence that the top-up initiative has been effective.

46. The development of level-6 provision is in line with our vision to expand our portfolio into new areas, including collaborative partnerships. Other developments include: level-3 foundation years (stepping stones to HE for applicants who do not satisfy the criteria for direct entry at level 4) (**SO3**); a three-year honours degree (as an alternative to the HND+top-up route) (**TQ3**); and potentially a level-7 programme (**TQ3**). We are also opening a new campus in central London in 2019, and working to secure TDAPs and university title. This **growth and diversification is delivering a flexible and innovative suite of programmes to respond to the diverse educational needs of our students**, as well as responding to business and community needs.

47. **SO2 Employability and Transferable Skills.** Our Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy aims to help students achieve their professional goals with curricula which enhance their employability and develop their skills to make significant contributions as employees. To help students secure employment we have long run sessions focusing on CV writing, job search skills, interview skills, and networking.

48. In 2018 we launched a **Student Employability & Enterprise Strategy** in response to the results, in particular around highly skilled employment, of the DLHE survey of our 2015/16 leavers. It involves: interrogating new students on their post-study employment intentions and providing advice and guidance accordingly; exposing students to real-world scenarios and live projects within the programmes; expanding our network of contacts among employers who can provide guest lectures, both within the curriculum and as extra- or co-curricular opportunities (focusing on entrepreneurs and business start-up experts); working with enterprise agencies to help students develop their business start-up ideas; offering a wider range of work-experience opportunities; actively engaging with local graduate recruiters; tracking alumni to better understand graduate outcomes.

49. We are aware that a significant proportion of our students aspire to start/develop their own business or progress to level-6 study. To help students enhance the skills needed for self-employment we trialled the Enterprise Unit in the HND suite in 2016. The unit is now embedded within all programmes, and pass rates exceed 85%. To help students secure a place for further study, we complemented employment-focused sessions in year 2 with a new series of sessions, led by our Student Careers & Support Officers, to help students understand the commitment and challenge of level-6 study, and prepare their UCAS application and interview for a top-up programme. In September 2018 **we took this initiative further by formalising and combining the employment and further-study sessions into a mandatory non-credit-bearing, co-curricular module called Forward Thinking**, which aims to extend and develop students' transferable digital-literacy skills as relevant in both an educational and employment context. Forward Thinking runs in term 1 of year 2, mirroring the Study Skills module in term 1 of year 1 (**LE3**). The module is generic and designed to widen students' perspectives on employment and further study and encourage them to engage with us on a one-to-one basis to identify and address

their individual needs and barriers. During these sessions we explore students' options, setting realistic goals and targets, working on CVs and cover letters, and researching further training and development routes. We also explore self-employment and entrepreneurship, including the fundamentals of establishing and running one's own business. The one-to-one sessions are helpful in building students' aspirations and confidence and helping them appreciate the transferability of the skills they develop. In autumn 2018 92% of students rated the module excellent or very good.

50. **Student feedback on the value and relevance of the support we provide for positive graduate outcomes in employment and further study** includes '*studying at Regent College gave me further knowledge and experience in an area completely new for me - business management and marketing. The knowledge and confidence I received in the College motivated me to continue studying LLB Law at Middlesex University. I am very grateful and appreciate the help of all tutors in the College*' (January 2014 starter) and '*My committed nature, with the help of my outstanding tutors from Regent College has made me a very conscientious student and I have finished with a Distinction grade. By studying the HND course I feel that I have gained different managerial skills which I can now apply at work on a daily basis. I enjoyed going to College every day as everything that I have studied there helped me to understand how businesses work and also taught me to manage people, which is essential for a Manager*' (September 2015 starter).

51. **SO3 Positive Outcomes for All.** We have already articulated our strong commitment to WP and set out the diversity of the background and previous life experiences of our student body. **We engage with a range of educational partners to create bespoke pathways to enable individual learners to achieve and progress to their full potential, regardless of their background**. (See also **LE3** regarding the RACP Committee.)

52. To focus on employability data and expose any gaps which may be preventing certain groups from achieving their full potential we have established an Equality & Diversity Monitoring Group. In its December 2017 report, the QAA noted that '*The College has recently established an Equality and Diversity Monitoring Group with the first meeting having taken place in August 2017, to ensure the principles of equality and diversity are embedded within College policies*'. The Group analyses recruitment, retention, achievement and satisfaction data mapped against key E&D characteristics to ensure that no groups are underachieving. It has already noted that employment rates and earnings amongst female graduates are significantly lower than males. In response, we held a series of focus groups with female students in spring 2018. The aim was to more fully understand women's employment destinations and how we can enhance delivery to support their future employability.

Conclusion

53. In this provider submission we have demonstrated that we should be awarded a Silver rating in TEF Year 4. We have shown how the starting point for the initial hypothesis is undermined by the overall pattern of core and split metrics, in particular, the over-riding significance of our excellent performance in student satisfaction and continuation. We have set out how a Silver award is supported by further corroborating evidence of performance above the baseline quality threshold and of excellence against the TEF criteria, as well as strong and convincing contextual information about the College. We offer a high-quality educational experience to all our students which is effective, in other words, our 'provision is of high quality, and consistently exceeds the rigorous national quality requirements of UK Higher Education'.