Name of Provider: Bridgwater and Taunton College
UKPRN: 10000878

# TEF Year Three provider submission

## Provider Context

Bridgwater and Taunton College (BTC), a large general Further Education College was formed following a merger in June 2016 of Bridgwater College and Somerset College. It has approximately 21,000 students each year of whom over 1,000 are on prescribed HE courses including Degree Apprenticeships, Foundation Degrees, BA and BSc level 6 and BTEC level 4 and 5 provision, with further students on non-prescribed Higher Education courses. Curriculum areas include Advanced Engineering and the current development of the Southern Hub of the National College of Nuclear with links to EDF and the development of Hinkley Point C Nuclear Power Station. They range from the BTC farm at Cannington that supplies milk to Tesco, Animal Care and Horticulture to the Creative Arts, from Early Childhood Studies, Health and Social Care and Sports to Construction, Computing and Business.

The original foundation of Somerset College was in 1856 when a number of institutions were established nationally following the Great Exhibition in line with Government drives at the time. In 2015 following a strategic review and involvement of all stakeholders including the local authority and Local Enterprise Partnership, Somerset College went out to tender in search of a new partnership. Key criteria were that any partner organisation, as well as holding the same values and aspirations for student achievement, employability and support of the local economy, would be able to bring expertise and financial investment to the long established Higher Education provision to the College. Bridgwater College, originally founded in 1888, thirteen miles away, that had been rated as Outstanding by Ofsted in their last Inspection and who also had a successful track record of Higher Education provision was chosen from those that put in proposals for merger. Somerset College was dissolved in June 2016 and the Senior Management Team at Bridgwater took over the management of the newly formed Bridgwater and Taunton College. As part of its strategic direction BTC applied for and gained approval to create University Centre Somerset (UCS) in 2016 in order to build on and develop the HE culture at BTC.

BTC's Mission Statement is: 'We will inspire our students, customers and communities to achieve success by providing:

- Outstanding teaching, learning and skills development
- Creative and exciting partnerships with our students, staff and employers
- A welcoming, safe, inclusive and supportive environment'

BTC's Vision is to be a world class education and training organisation which creates outstanding development and progression opportunities for our students, customers, and communities through leading edge practice and partnerships with employers.

BTC's Strategic Aims for 2017-18 are:

1. Deliver outstanding teaching, learning and support services which ensure the best possible experience, progression and outcomes for students
2. Respond effectively to the current and emerging regional and national education and training needs of students, employers and communities
3. Promote within our staff a culture of innovation, creativity and passion for student success, achievement and progression
4. Maintain robust financial health which enables the College to invest in and support the development of its staff, facilities and resources for the benefit of students

Following merger, a review has been taking place of all HE-related policies and procedures. Best practice from both former colleges has been identified and adopted as part of this review, whilst also considering good practice in the sector and at BTC's four validating HEIs. BTC delivers prescribed HE programmes validated by the University of Plymouth, The Open University, University of the West of England, Oxford Brookes University and Pearson.

BTC works very closely with the Local Enterprise Partnership, Heart of the Southwest and has a long history of working with employers to meet local employment needs. Employers who sponsor their staff to attend part time HE courses at BTC include the Ministry of Defence, EDF, UK Hydrographic Office, Somerset Partnership NHS Foundation and Musgrove Park Hospital NHS Trust.

BTC has a predominantly White British student population, reflecting the profile of the local region. Statistics derived from Somerset County Council's analysis of the local demographic, based on the 2011 census data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS)[1] show the local population are 94.6% 'White British' and have only 2% with a non-white ethnic origin (which is significantly below the national average of 14%). The TEF Contextual data shows that BTC has a 96% white population and therefore 4% non-white. BTC therefore has a larger percentage of non-white HE students than are represented in the local population, in line with its inclusive strategic aims.

Somerset has an average profile of health for the South West with 5.1% of the local population describing their health as 'bad or very bad' in the 2011 census. This increases when looking at West Somerset in particular, even among the 16-24 age group which returns a higher average than for the rest of Somerset.

Areas of Bridgwater, namely Sydenham and Hamp contain above average concentrations of adults with long-term disability or health condition and dependent children. Taunton Deane shows one of the highest concentrations of people in the country living in supported medical/care conditions.

Data from the 2015/16 Somerset Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)[2], published in June 2016, show that of the 110,000 children under the age of 18 living in Somerset between 5,000 and 10,000 are in particular need, the majority living in the most deprived urban wards. About 14,300 live in low-income households which tend to be clustered particularly in Taunton, Bridgwater and Yeovil. BTC has campuses in Taunton, Bridgwater and Cannington.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)[3] 2015 shows wards in Sedgemoor, specifically the inner domains of Bridgwater to be among the top 10% of the most deprived areas in the country.

According to UCAS[4] the proportion of Somerset's 18 year-old population entering higher education remains below the national average in 2016. The UK average for 18 year old participation in HE in 2016 was about 31%, the Somerset area has consistently come in beneath this national average for participation. Most notably, Bridgwater and West Somerset at 22%, Yeovil at 21% and Taunton Deane just shy of the national average at 30.6%. Somerset as a whole reports only an estimated 39% participation in HE by the ages of 30 compared to 48% nationally.

Analysis of the student body on HE programmes (level 4 and above on any course, prescribed, or non-prescribed professional courses) demonstrates that of the 419 first year students in 2016-17, 166 come from deprived wards in Somerset. This is 40% of the first year students at UCS, which is a considerable percentage of the student body. By far the highest proportion of these (18%) come from deprived wards in Bridgwater.

The proportion of first year students is higher than the number of second year students who come from deprived wards. Out of the 300 second year students in 2016-17, 113 come from deprived wards. This is 38% of the second years. Again the highest proportion of these (16%) come from deprived wards in Bridgwater.

[1] http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/census-datasets/
[2] http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/cyp
[3] http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html
[4] http://www.ucas.com/corporate/data-and-analysis/ucas-undergraduate-releases/he-entry-rates

The TEF contextual data supports this where it shows a three year average for prescribed HE. It confirms 105 students (19%) from POLAR Quintile 1, and 115 (20%) from Quintile 2 (wards least likely to participate in HE). It also shows 100 students (9%) from Quintile 1 and 190 (17%) from Quintile 2 which are students coming from areas considered most deprived in the National Index of Multiple Deprivation. It should also be noted that West Somerset, which is within the immediate catchment area of BTC, has been designated an Opportunity Area in order to target government funding to the area as it has such a low percentage of mobility and high level of deprivation.

In line with its mission, BTC is working to improve the life chances of the local population and widen participation. This has involved taking strategic decisions to have a positive impact in local schools to enable and develop the skills necessary for children to progress and achieve in Further and Higher Education. To this end it created an Academy Trust in 2012. BTC has effective relationships with local schools through the Trust. In 2016 the Bridgwater College Trust Annual Report[5] confirmed that this spanned four separate academies; Bridgwater College Academy (BCA) (an all-through academy from nursery to secondary), Hamp Academy, Brymore Academy and West Somerset College. All together the Trust is responsible for around 3,000 pupils in Somerset, many attending schools in some of the most deprived wards of the county. This work aims to raise aspirations of pupils to progress into HE and to raise standards at the schools, including attainment. In 2016 the annual report detailed the significant improvement in standards that have been seen as a result of the Trust's interventions, not least in terms of attainment.

The Trust plans to expand over the next two to three years such that a further 1000 children could be part of this successful model in a school that could be judged as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted, and no longer in schools that are struggling or failing. The current schools were turned round from 'Requires Improvement', 'Serious Weaknesses' and 'Inadequate' to 'Good', (West Somerset within 17 months). Key elements found to be successful are: strengthening the management and building resilience so that the individual schools/academies are less vulnerable; sharing good practice across the trust through the building of professional networks. The Trust supports the academies in strategic areas of operation and intervention. Activities across the Trust, in 2016, included the radical redesign of education to provide one all through lifelong learning campus focused strongly on individualised learning pathways and a seamless transition from preschool to university level education and training or employment (BCA).

The overarching strategic intent of the Bridgwater College Trust is to ensure that *every* child in *every* Academy achieves by attending an Academy that:

- positively impacts on their life chances as a result of making outstanding progress academically.
- provides rich and diverse opportunities which stretch individuals, raise their aspirations and broaden their horizons.
- prepares young people well for the next stage in their learning and personal development.
- has an unconditional positive regard for children and young adults making them feel valued and included.
- nurtures their personal development in a safe environment where students develop an advanced understanding of their responsibilities to themselves and others.

This strategic intent for young people, enacted through the Bridgwater College Academy, continues into the policies and practices in place at Bridgwater and Taunton College itself. This is so that from school through to their Higher Education experience students are supported, encouraged, facilitated and stretched to achieve their best and go on to successful employment. BTC is committed to providing focused information and support for progression through FE and into HE and the new University Centre Somerset (UCS) for students studying at BTC.

[5] http://www.bridgwater.ac.uk/college-information.php?category=7&page=266

The TEF Data Maps show that BTC's students are very much local within the region of Somerset and Devon and that the majority stay locally after graduating. It is also clear from the maps that there are less than average highly skilled jobs available in this region. This therefore impacts on the possibility of students who wish to or have to remain locally, actually finding highly skilled jobs after graduating.

Policies and procedures within BTC have been established to implement the strategic mission and vision. Fundamental principles of equality and supporting diversity run throughout them.

## Teaching Quality

The TEF Core Metrics in BTC's majority mode for 'Teaching Quality' show NSS full time student satisfaction to be within 0.1 of the benchmark in relation to 'the teaching on my course'. The metrics give a positive flag (+) for student satisfaction with assessment and feedback indicating above benchmark satisfaction in this area. The split breakdown of these metrics indicates further positive flags for students on first degrees, mature students and those from Quintiles 3 to 5 on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (those from less deprived areas).

The part time metrics need to be treated with great care as the numbers of part time students eligible to undertake the NSS survey are so small. Although there is a headcount of 355 part time students, the vast majority of these are on HNC and HND Top Up programmes and are not therefore eligible to undertake the NSS survey. Of the 355 part time students, only 44 of them were eligible to do the NSS. These results only capture the opinion of those out of the 44 eligible students who actually completed the survey. The interpretation and resultant response/action has to be appropriate and proportionate. This is made more difficult by the fact that individual course data is frequently unavailable for analysis as less than 10 students in a number of groups completed the survey.

34 part time students (out of the 44 who were eligible), over three years, were satisfied with 'the teaching on my course'. There were in fact only 7 students out of 11 eligible students in year 3 whose results are included. In addition, the z-score of -1.3 indicates a fair degree of probability that the results are down to chance. These part time students are spread across a range of courses. They are not a separate cohort on one course. The teaching on their course is therefore the same as that experienced by the full time students whose satisfaction is in line with the benchmark. If only 3 more students had expressed satisfaction with the teaching on their different courses the benchmark would have been met. Care therefore needs to be taken in interpreting these results as they are being disproportionately affected by small student numbers. However this is not to ignore the fact that BTC needs to be aware of and respond to individual part time students' concerns. Each team considers the student voice and NSS results in their Annual Programme Monitoring and produces an action plan of areas to develop and improve. Teaching strategies take account of the needs of individual students and Individual Learning Plans are used alongside personal tutorials to identify and meet individual learner needs in order to support all students in meeting their full potential.

In relation to the metrics for part time students relating to satisfaction with assessment and feedback on the NSS survey, the same points in relation to low student numbers and the disproportionate impact of this is again true. In relation to this question, 29 students out of 44 were satisfied. As stated above, these students are spread across a range of programmes, taught alongside full time students with identical assessment and feedback to the full time students whose satisfaction with exactly the same practice was sufficiently above benchmark to receive a '+'.

These raw statistics do not show the full picture of what is taking place at BTC in relation to teaching quality through the strategies that are in place. Within the curriculum team's annual Self Evaluations for 2016-17, evidence was provided across the provision to support the following judgements in relation to good practice:

- Excellent teaching, learning and assessment

- Excellent, diverse links to industry/employability
- Students and staff actively engaging with research or enrichment opportunities
- Excellent student support

In further support of these statements and to demonstrate the impact of strategies, policies and processes in place at BTC, reference will be made throughout this submission to comments made by external parties who have recently been in a position to review and evaluate teaching quality and resources at BTC.

A detailed analysis of all External Examiner (EE) reports for 2016-17 provides evidence of the following themes across the HE provision:

- The **level of support** students have received from their tutors and the library support available to them.
- The **variety, breadth and quality of assessment activities** operated by programmes, with specific reference to how this relates to employability or industry.
- Feedback relating to the **quality and quantity of feedback** and most significantly, feed-forward to students.
- Enthusiasm, dedication and high skill levels of staff.
- The strength of the working relationships between staff and students and how this **positively contributes to the student experience and outcomes.**

**Student Engagement (TQ1)**
The standard contact hours for students on HE programmes are 360 hours a year, 12 hours a week. Group sizes are small, the majority of them being around 10-12 students, although some have 20 students in a group. In response to student preference this is normally delivered over two or two and a half days a week allowing the remainder of the week to be at student discretion.

The following comments by EEs in 2016-17 are representative of comments in general by EEs and provide evidence of effective stimulation, challenge and contact time that encourages students to engage and commit to their studies:

Fine Art: “Excellent teaching is evident which is supported by visiting external contributors (MA students from the RCA & practicing artists)…On the first visit (20/03/17) students spoke very highly of their teachers’ commitment and their engagement on the course.”

Business Management: “I believe that the Course Team afforded their students in the College consistent and high standards of teaching and learning experiences…It is evident from the nature and quality of work produced that the students responded with enthusiasm and commitment”

Interior Textiles and Surface Design: “Workshop practice and teaching was excellent, particularly in the textile area. The Musgrove Hospital project was excellent. Courses were well organised.”

Annual Programme Monitoring systems in place for evaluating programme delivery and listening to student feedback continued to work effectively in the year of merger and establishment of Bridgwater and Taunton College and University Centre Somerset. Having an HE student Governor who sits on the Governors’ Standards Committee as well as having an HE Student Union President is effective in ensuring that the student voice is heard at the highest levels and taken into account. During 2016-17 the Academic Board, previously part of the approved HE structure at Somerset College continued to function in the newly merged institution. This was replaced at the end of the academic year by the establishment of the Senate. This will have oversight of HE for the new College and includes the HE Student President as a core member to ensure that the learner voice is always present and able to comment on evaluations, monitoring and target setting in relation to HE.
Students contributed to Programme Committee Meetings and via the HE Student President to the HE Area Review Group which feeds up to the Senate and then to the Standards Committee of the

Board of Governors. In addition the Cross College HE learner voice forum continued with the usual production of the 'You Said, We Did' posters for cross-college matters.

Comments from the Annual Programme Monitoring (APM) recorded in the Autumn 2017 Programme Committee Meeting (PCM) minutes demonstrates active student involvement in their learning. Typical examples of programme teams listening to and acting on student feedback include:

Computer Games: where the student rep spoke about the involvement all students had in the changes to the programme, which were approved by the validating HEI earlier this year. He said that the tutor kept his students updated throughout the process and they were consulted for their views which they could see were taken into consideration.

Computing and Internet Technologies: The student rep stated that none of the students had been particularly happy with the short and fat module delivery and it detracted from student's ability to fully immerse themselves with the subject matter. The tutor explained that the team decided to trial this method last year but following the feedback they would not be continuing with this this year.

Interior Textiles and Surface Design: Students asked if the print room could be kept open over a lunch time period. It was confirmed that the print room will be kept open during break times and lunch times.

In addition to the above mechanisms BTC considers more teaching and learning focused comments through the NSS survey and for all those not eligible for the NSS, the same questions are asked through a Student Perception Questionnaire (SPQ) survey. Each team reflects on, comments and takes action on their individual programme results from these surveys (where student numbers for the NSS allow individual programme level results to be published). Insitutional wide actions are picked up and included in the top level annual HE Enhancement and Action Plan. This ensures that comments and issues picked up from any source, (Students, EE, Academic Link Person/Academic Reviewer with the validating university, or staff) are captured and acted upon at either programme level or institutional level whichever is most appropriate.

Following this annual programme level review and evaluation, each of the four Curriculum Areas collate an Area Self Evaluation of their HE provision. Support Areas do the same. All are mapped against the UK Quality Code published by the Quality Assurance Agency. These documents and discussions inform the annual production of an HE cross College Self Evaluation Document with any further actions noted being added to the afore-mentioned HE Enhancement and Action Plan. In this way an overview can be maintained and monitored by the Senate of adherence to and activity above and beyond the expectations of the Quality Code. This is also reviewed by the Standards Committee of the Board of Governors.

Through these strategic systems confidence can be gained in the quality and performance of each programme and each aspect of wider HE support. In this way, a cycle of continuous quality improvement is maintained.

In his report for 2016-17, The OU Academic Reviewer for Business and Management highlighted the fact that both the curriculum and student support appeared to be of the highest standard. Further comments emphasised that the modules had a good range of assessment strategies and feedback to students on performance was regular, timely and detailed. This is in line with comments by EEs across the provision.

**Valuing Teaching (TQ2)**

BTC culture facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching. BTC's recognition and reward initiatives include:

- Annual Staff Awards, categories recognise outstanding contributions to teaching, nominated by both staff and students.

- Two Staff Development Days per year
- 15 CPD days each year on off-site learning and development for teaching staff. (Bridgwater and Taunton Contract Staff)
- "TLA Monday" teaching development/ Continuing Professional Development sessions
- Annual staff appraisals
- Employment of 2 TLA (Teaching Learning and Assessment) developers to research best practice in teaching delivery and support teaching staff at BTC
- Erasmus learning opportunities for teaching staff
- Incremental salary progression for Lecturers, Course Leaders, Curriculum Managers, Heads of Department

The TLA Strategic Vision for BTC is set out in the College's 7-Ways Evaluation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy and Procedures document, reviewed and updated annually. The seven ways that we use are: Planned graded observations for FE/ Peer Review observations for HE; Developmental Observations; Themed Learning Walks; College Inspection Reviews (to simulate inspection and other external activity); Student and Stakeholder Views (Student Voice); Professional Networks; Performance Indicators.

The TLA vision that informs this document sets out five aspects for TLA:

- Outstanding: where all students succeed, making rapid and sustained progress towards their learning goals and destinations, including higher levels of study and employment
- Celebrated: outstanding teaching and learning is recognised by students and contributes to the professional development of staff as well as being recognised externally across the education sector
- Inclusive: promotes equality of learning opportunities
- Developmental: builds independent learning, skills and behaviours
- Engaging: design and development of curriculum delivery creates engaging learning
- Pedagogically based: deploys the best ideas through reflective practice, collaboration and innovative development set in a creative culture of improvement

Specifically in relation to HE 'Progress for All' TLA expectations for Higher Education 2016-17 were produced. Good practice is being shared via the creation of an HE Community of Practice.

A particular HE focus during 2016-17 has been the encouragement for staff to apply for Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. The impact of this on students is growing as staff start to complete their applications. Aligning with the UK Professional Standards Framework published by the Higher Education Academy means that an appropriate HE culture continues to be developed in line with HE sector expectations and norms. It is in the interests of students that a cohesive HE culture is facilitated. This is particularly important following merger and also completes a College strategic aim for last year to bring about a cohesive joint culture across all three of BTC's campuses.

Peer Review, mapped to the UK Professional Standards Framework published by the Higher Education Academy, was introduced as a pilot during 2016-17. Previous years formal teaching observations using an Ofsted approach had consistently confirmed staff achieving the top grades 1 and 2 and it was considered a new approach was appropriate. This has since been adopted for HE to replace formal lesson observations. Staff teams have welcomed this more developmental approach that is more in keeping with the rest of the HE sector. Both the observer and the observed gain from the reflection that is inherent in the system that has been adopted. This is turn will impact in a positive manner on the student experience as staff reflect on and develop their skills further. The impact of this was confirmed in the minutes of the Autumn 2017 for Applied Animal Management, Animal Conservation and Countryside Management pathways, which stated that staff Peer Observations have allowed a diversity of techniques to be developed within the teaching team. This improves student experience through these teaching techniques. Following OU Institutional Approval in February 2017 the panel commended the commitment to staff

development and support, including the role of Enhanced Practitioners and Advanced Practitioners, the Mentoring process, and the principles of the Peer Review Policy. The panel also identified the Peer Review Policy as particularly noteworthy, and recommended the College to continue with its implementation along with other examples of best practice.

The majority of the HE teaching staff hold permanent contracts. There is an expectation that they are qualified to at least a level above the one they are teaching and that they are teacher trained within two years of starting employment. BTC is increasing the number of staff, (particularly engineers) who hold PhDs. Staff are also expected to have experience within industry and to use CPD days to keep up to date with developments within the industry each year. A focus on encouraging staff to become EEs within the sector has resulted in a rise in the number of staff who have been appointed as EEs. This is very beneficial for students as staff are able to bring back their experience of other HE providers and the standards of work and good practice that they see. It has also been beneficial for the staff involved and their teams where they are able to share and discuss this good practice.

**Rigour and Stretch (TQ3)**
At BTC, course design, development, standards and assessment are effective in stretching students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential.

The effectiveness of course design and development was confirmed following Higher Education Review (HER) in November 2014 when the QAA review team identified the following features of good practice at the former Somerset College: The comprehensive processes for the design and approval of new programmes (Expectations A3.1, B1); The proactive engagement with external stakeholders to design new programmes to meet professional and technical skills needs (Expectations A3.4, B1, Enhancement).

More recent validation of BTC's continuing approach is evident in The Open University report following Annual Programme Monitoring for 2015-16 in which commendations included 'The College's continuing efforts to support staff in producing appropriate documentation to meet validation requirements.'

Staff who have been involved in the validation of new programmes or changes to existing programmes have undergone training and support which has enabled them to produce effective documentation which meets the requirements of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and the Characteristics Statement for Foundation Degrees. It has had a significant impact on their ability to write appropriate learning outcomes at the correct level of the FHEQ. This will impact directly on students who undertake these programmes as it ensures that they are meeting appropriate learning outcomes. Internal Scrutiny Panels run by BTC prior to running its own Preliminary events with external input underpins the approach prior to final Internal Scrutiny before the HEI-led final validation event.

Through the receipt of HEFCE Catalyst funding, the College has been able to support industry-focused research projects that have informed the development of new programmes. An example is the BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies whose validation panel report in April 2017 is quite explicit in explaining how and why BTC's approach is effective. The panel identified a number of features which it believed worthy of commendation. These included: The process and extent of the Research Project consultation carried out during the development of the programme, including employers, practitioners, children, parents and others; The development of a comprehensive suite of programmes with a variety of access and exit points; The vocational nature of the programme; The high quality of support available to students, and the dedication of the academic and support staff. (The students met by the Panel were extremely positive about the support they received from academic and support staff); The responsiveness of the programme team in discussion.

The UCAS entry tariff for students is well below that of the university sector. Generally Foundation Degree students require 64 UCAS points, however a few such as Agriculture and Animal Conservation only require 48 UCAS points. Through small class sizes, tutorials, tailored feedback and access to wider support systems they routinely progress to a stage where they are independent critical thinkers able to graduate with good honours degrees. The number of 'good degrees' (1st or 2:1) is usually at or slightly below the average for the sector. In 2016-17 BTC had 68% 'good' degrees in comparison to the HESA average for the same sectors being 69%. As the majority of the sector has students who start from a much higher starting point as demonstrated through their UCAS tariff entry requirements this is clear evidence of stretch. Rigour is absolutely maintained not only by internal moderation but by robust EE monitoring and reporting. A further overview is maintained by each of the awarding HEIs giving even further assurance on this point.

Evidence of ongoing rigour and stretch can be found in the EEs' reports for 2016-17 which include the following examples which are representative of practice across BTC: Fine Art: "Students demonstrated a wide range of experimentation with different media, with some producing ambitious successfully-completed final works. Sketchbooks also show detailed development of ideas, challenges experienced and resolutions found to take works/projects to conclusion."

Media Make-Up: "Some complex and challenging problem solving is evident in the higher achieving projects."…. "The quality of learning and teaching is evident in the overall achievement of students. The exam board data reflects a very strong student profile of achievement for which the team should be congratulated."

The minutes of the Autumn PCMs also provide evidence of rigour and stretch. The student rep for Agricultural Management confirmed during the Autumn 2017 PCM that he feels that he is being pushed and he is eager to do the top-up degree next year. He feels that the degree will give him a variety of different career options.

**Feedback (TQ4)**

Assessment and feedback are used effectively at BTC in supporting students' development, progression and attainment. In November 2014 the QAA review team for HER identified 'the use of the Expectation and Good Practice Guide on Assessment Feedback as a reference point for teaching staff (Expectations A3.2, B1, B6)' as an area of good practice. This is an internally produced document to aid the sharing of good practice in relation to assessment feedback.

The themes extracted from the EE reports for 2016-17 confirm widespread good practice in relation to feedback, that which 'feeds forward'. Feedback comes from both formative and summative assessment to support students in developing their skills. This demonstrates the impact of the CPD done with staff in this area. The EE comments from 2016-17 in relation to feedback are particularly strong and from numerous options these are representative:

Computing and Internet Technologies: "The marking is excellent, with very detailed feedback provided to students clearly indicating where the student has done well and how they can improve."

Early Childhood Studies: "The team have evidently paid attention to the quality of feedback and feed-forward offered to students and this appears to be contributing positively to student' perceptions of their personal progress. Feed-forward is being employed with increasing confidence and includes much clearer reflections on what students need to do to improve their personal grade profiles."

Media Production: "Feedback from the tutor ….was of a high standard and involved feed forward where students were told how to improve their performance. This was excellent." …"The students (First year) I met were articulate in expressing their enthusiasm for their programme. They understood and were confident in what they were doing and how well they are progressing and what they needed to do"

## Learning Environment

The TEF Metrics associated with 'Learning Environment' show that the majority mode full time students at BTC over the last three years were more satisfied (82.8%) with academic support than the benchmark (81.6%). This is particularly true for students who are on a 'first degree' where a positive flag is shown.

The situation is much harder to analyse for part time students, as the numbers who completed the survey are too low to be analysed within the splits table. The core metrics show that 77.3% of part time students were satisfied with the academic support provided, in comparison to the benchmark of 80.4%. However this only relates to the opinion of 34 students over the last three years (in fact only 8 students in 'year 3') out of a total possible of 44 students (a response rate of 58.7%). The part time students are spread across a whole range of programmes, often with only one part time student on a course. It should be noted that these students eligible to undertake the NSS are in the same lectures as the full time students, receiving the same teaching and support. They are *not* in separate groups receiving a different experience to the main cohort. Care therefore needs to taken in interpreting these part time satisfaction results. Each curriculum team produces an action plan following their Annual Programme Monitoring in which they consider the NSS results and student feedback, taking action to improve their approaches wherever possible.

The metrics show that 1161 full time students out of 1373 (84.6%) continued on their course from year 1 to year 2. This is slightly below the benchmark of 86.4%. A strategic focus within BTC on retention and achievement has led to the improvement which can be seen in years two and three from the starting point in year one. The 'splits' reveal that students who come from areas of multiple deprivation are continuing better than those from affluent areas. Again this indicates that the focus on meeting individual student needs and supporting those from deprived backgrounds are working. As there are fewer than10 part time students spread across the Foundation Degrees no figures are reportable for continuation of these students. No issue has been identified internally with part time students when reviewing retention as part of Annual Programme Monitoring.

**Resources (LE1)**

Physical and digital resources are used effectively to aid students' learning and the development of independent study and research skills at BTC.

BTC has in the last three years invested £6.9 million in a second Advanced Engineering Centre, £12 million in refurbishing the Arts House, £10.5 million on the National College for Nuclear building, £1.2 million on an extension to the Construction Skills Innovation Centre and £1.7 million in the development of University Centre Somerset, the food area and the Quantock Restaurant.

EE reports that made particular mention of resources in 2016-17 included the following comments: Agricultural Management Top Up: "I think the ability to use the College farm as a teaching resource is a real strength of the programme. Students are able to go outside onto the farm and see what they are being taught happening in practice."

Fashion Design: "The quality of resources available to students are exceptionally high" "[Students said that] The resources were excellent and the library was also very useful…"

Motorsport Engineering: "Student Feedback received - Teaching and guidance is good, ability to have own download of software, enjoy using software with a lot of support on VLE and internet."

HND Horticulture: "Resources for horticulture are excellent and funding from Bridgwater College has enabled very good resources for HE to be put in place, including what may be considered an exemplar HE centre for students."

**Scholarship, Research and Professional Practice (LE2)**

The learning environment at the College is enriched by student exposure to and involvement in provision at the forefront of scholarship, research and professional practice. BTC runs a bidding

round each year to enable staff to apply for funds to support individual research and scholarship projects. This took over from the funding and support that BTC previously received for research projects through the former University of Plymouth Higher Education Learning Partnership Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning. BTC's Research Scholarship and Ethics Committee has been running for the last five years supporting projects each year with 16 projects being supported in 2017-18. Staff present their research findings at BTC's annual Research Symposium as well as being encouraged to disseminate externally. One of the committee's aims is to assist staff in gaining a track record of successful research that demonstrates appropriate and successful use of the allocated funds so that they are better placed to be successful in applying externally for larger research funds in the future.

Wider scholarship (in accordance with Boyer's (1990)[6] principles) as well as formal research is also captured and disseminated in an annual showcase publication. All final project reports and dissemination slides as well as the annual publication and wider information to support research are stored on the virtual learning environment so that they are generally accessible. Staff share their interests and experiences of this research with their students which inspires and informs students about first hand research in addition to the research-informed teaching that also takes place across the provision.

A previously funded project produced an interactive online resource for students to support the development of their HE study skills, Harvard Referencing and researching techniques. Student feedback on this resource has been very positive and complements the face to face 'HEad Start' programme that they also attend. BTC has signed up to being an Early Adoptee of the Scholarship Framework as part of the AoC/HEFCE Scholarship Project. This will provide funded support as we continue to develop our Research and Scholarship policy and approach for the benefit of teaching and learning.

EEs comment on scholarship, research and professional practice linked to quality teaching and learning in their reports. Such comments from 2016-17 include:
Animal Conservation and Management (suite): "Speaking to the team it is obvious that many are involved in current research and involve students giving them many opportunities to get involved. Student work clearly shows (specifically the dissertations) that they have been able to take up opportunities for research at a high level with the team."

Music: "…centre has good facilities including a range of well-equipped digital and analogue recording studios, live rooms and Mac suites. The nearby professional theatre is used for live sound teaching."

The Autumn 2017 minutes of Motorsport Engineering show that staff have attended various vocational CPD events and sessions during this academic year and in the summer based around Composites, Materials, Motorsport Electronics and Vehicle Dynamics. Much of what has been learnt is then fed into the future delivery of the modules associated with these topics.

**Personalised Learning (LE3)**
At BTC, students' academic experiences are tailored to the individual, maximising rates of retention, attainment and progression. In November 2014 the HER QAA review team identified 'the effective dialogue between the Learning Resources Services and academic staff and students (Expectations B3, B4)' as an area of good practice at the former Somerset College.

This view was reinforced in Feb 2017 by The OU Institutional Approval panel whose report identified a number of features which it believed worthy of commendation including: 'The College's student-centeredness, its commitment to the HE student, and the establishment of the University Centre Somerset, as the focus for developing an HE culture and community'.

[6] Boyer, E. L. (1990) *Scholarship reconsidered: priorities for the professiorate.* Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation

Personalised learning includes individual tutorials, individualised formative and summative feedback and differentiation techniques within the lecture/classroom to enable less able students to progress whilst stretching more able students with appropriate stretch and challenge activities. Students are also referred as appropriate to the learning support team who support students in completing applications for the Disabled Student Allowance. Those who have a learning difficulty which is not sufficiently severe to be eligible for DSA are referred to the HE Study Centre for individual support in developing their HE study skills. This is in addition to the HEad Start group sessions run by the Learning Resource Centres. A particular focus of those with Long Term Health Conditions has meant that such students are supported via tutorials and case conferences, as needed, to identify and support their needs. As a result many students have continued their studies when they were at risk of withdrawing and have completed successfully. NSS results are always high for the support from the Learning Resource Centres.

EE comments from 2016-17 demonstrate personalised learning and are summed up as follows: Textiles & Surface Design: “The effectiveness of teaching & learning was enhanced by a small dedicated team who were student-centred, empathetic & passionate about their subject. Students I spoke to really appreciated this.”

FdA Agricultural Management: “Excellent student support by staff for students during the teaching and learning process as they move from level 3 (an essentially skills based teaching and learning system) to a more academic and student centred approach.”

Motorsport Engineering: “I was particularly impressed with the level of student contact and the level of knowledge of individual students from each of the Programme Teams. The clear willingness to have one to one feedback meetings with the students is also to be commended”

In the Applied Animal Management, Animal Conservation and Countryside Management pathways Autumn 2017 PCM it was confirmed that the programmes feature small group teaching, which allows individualised support and study at a pace that is tailored to the participants.

## Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

The metrics show that 660 out of 697 (94.7%) of full time students went into employment or further study over the last three years. This is above the benchmark of 93.7%. The results for part time students are even higher and again above benchmark, with 223 out of 228 part time students (97.8%) going into employment or further study against a benchmark of 97.6%. A positive flag in the supplementary metrics shows that students from POLAR Quintiles 1 and 2, (those wards with the lowest numbers of people going into HE) have particularly done well and above average, as have ‘young people’ who have also entered employment or further study to a level that is sufficiently above average to gain a positive flag.

These outcomes clearly demonstrate that BTC’s strategies and actions in relation to equality and diversity, teaching and learning, student support and employability are working very successfully. The splits breakdown reveal that the outcomes for ‘other undergraduate’ ie the majority cohorts of students on Foundation Degrees and HNCs are particularly above average resulting in a positive flag. Strategies to raise aspirations, inspire and support students individually, are working well to achieve the above average positive flag for students from areas of multiple deprivation going into employment or further study (148 out of 154). The practices for personalised learning have also been successful in achieving above average employment and further study for those students from black or minority ethnic groups resulting in a positive flag despite the significantly higher than average predominantly white British culture of Somerset previously evidenced.

The seemingly less impressive outcomes for students in relation to going into highly skilled employment or further study (62.4% against a benchmark of 66.9% for full time and a higher 70.2% against a benchmark of 74.4% for part time) reflects the nature of Somerset and Devon and the lack of highly skilled employment in the area. It also reveals the nature of the majority of BTC’s

students who (with the exception of the MOD students) are local and wish to remain local (as shown in the TEF maps of residence prior to and after graduation).

The split metrics show an above average positive flag due to 319 out of 414 full time 'other undergraduate' students (primarily Foundation Degree (FD) and HNC) going into 'highly skilled employment or further study'. In fact the majority of them progress to Top Up qualifications. Once the FD students have completed their Honours Degrees, which they do very successfully, they tend to enter the local employment market where they find starting salaries below the £21,000 that is necessary to qualify as being 'highly skilled' in these metrics. The majority of the HNC students are already in employment and being supported by employers to gain HNC and HND qualifications. (This can be seen in the TEF Contextual data showing 250 (71%) part time engineers). Engineering and construction employers sponsor the students (typically male students, despite efforts to attract women into engineering) to do these qualifications but tend not to need them to qualify to a higher level and do not therefore support further progression. Although Honours degree Top Up routes are running and some students are following these, many do not. Engineering students often get promoted within their organisation following achievement of their HNC/D, this may not though be within the 6 months necessary to count for these metrics. It does however meet student and employer needs in line with BTC's strategic aims.

It should also be noted from the LEO contextual data that a further 11% of full time and 5% of part time students became self-employed following their studies. This is particularly relevant for the Creative Arts, certainly for Media Make-up also for Computer Games Technology students. The supplementary data shows that creative arts is the second largest group of students at BTC after engineering, with 175 students (15%). The third largest groups of students are those undertaking Early Childhood Studies and Health and Social Care. This is relevant as the starting salaries in these sectors are low and therefore impact on the TEF results, despite meeting student, employer and local community needs.

The Heart of the Southwest Local Enterprise Partnership Strategic Economic Plan 2014-2030[7] confirms key facts about the local economy that are very relevant to understanding the lack of availability of employment for local graduates with salaries of £21,000 or more. The plan states that one reason for the lack of engagement with HE Study is predominantly due to the lack of opportunities for highly skilled graduates within the region. It goes on to confirm. 'Despite some strong, dynamic and outward looking businesses, our businesses tend to be smaller, older, more insular and have lower rates of churn than national averages. We also have the second highest levels of part-time employment in England (Annual Population Survey Oct 2012-Sept 2013 ) and higher than average levels of self- employment, particularly in rural districts. Compared to other LEPS, the only top half performance we have is in the level of self-employment... These figures may indicate a lack of full time employment opportunities. The implications mean lower wages, lower household incomes and potential for 'in work poverty'.

**Employment and Further Study (SO1)**

Students achieve their educational and professional goals, in particular progression to further study or highly skilled employment. It is clear from the DLHE survey results 2016-17 and the TEF maps, that the majority of graduates enter the local economy, although Media Make-up go global working on blockbusters. The exception to this is those MOD engineering students who lose their job and return to their original location or are deployed and therefore leave the area, both of which scenarios are beyond the control of BTC but do impact on retention and progression statistics.

The LEP strategic plan[8] and the ONS[9] (table UKBAA01b 2016 Regions Tab) show that the main employment sectors of Somerset and Devon are tourism, agriculture and food and drink. Another

[7] http://heartofswlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SEP-Final-draft-31-03-14-website-1.pdf
[8] http://heartofswlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SEP-Final-draft-31-03-14-website-1.pdf
[9] https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/datasets/ukbusinessactivitysizeandlocation

significant sector is construction and BTC is currently seeing a growth in demand for skilled graduates in this area not least due to the Hinkley Point C project which is the largest engineering project in Europe. The rising population has put an increased demand on housing in the region. The Census 2011 showed that the population has risen 5.8% since the previous census to 1.667m and is set to continue to rise steadily.

The region has a strong retail sector with 16,555 businesses, fifth largest region for this in the country[10]. Students therefore enter this sector, but salaries are not high.

'Over 90% of the LEP landmass is classified as rural and is characterised by a dispersed population and a high number of SMEs. We are home to 13,000 commercial farm holdings, representing 50% of the farms in the SW. Our farms form an integral part of a wider rural economy with close links to food and drink and tourism. However despite our rural concentration over 40% of the population live in cities and urban areas (GBTS, 2010-2012. Visit Britain)'[11]

Data from the Census 2011 shows that the LEP areas have an aging population. With 21.3% of the LEP area population over 65 in the 2011 census, the ratio is higher than the average of 16% in England. Current population projections expect this proportion to rise rapidly with Devon, Somerset and Torbay all expected to exceed the 25% mark by 2021[12]. As such, Healthcare provision is likely to be a growth sector and provide career opportunities for graduates in the region. FdSc Healthcare Practice students work for the local NHS Trust but as can be seen from the DLHE Survey 2016 the following are median salaries for BTC's graduates: Nursing Auxiliaries/assistants £20,109; Care work £18,000; Nursery Nurses £14,196; Business students entering Sales and Retail £11,066 or as Sales Supervisors £16,000. It is those graduates from other courses that find salaries above £21,000 and are therefore included within the statistics as 'highly skilled'.

EE reports confirm how embedded employability and industry knowledge is within the curriculum. Representative examples include Applied Computing: "Students work on real problems and deliver effective solutions which have attracted the interest of industry, securing to a large extent their employment on completion of the programme."

Animal Conservation and Management (suite): "Graduates clearly go on to successful futures. Destinations of students into work, onto MSc and PhD study clearly shows successful employability"

**Employability and Transferable Skills (SO2)**
Students at BTC acquire knowledge, skills and attributes that are valued by employers and that enhance their personal and/or professional lives. Evidence of this is that in May 2014 the QAA review team carrying out HER identified the following features of good practice at the former Bridgwater College:The integrated approach to transition from entry to higher education, through to further study and employment (Expectation B4); The embedding of employability into the curriculum (Expectation B4); The extensive engagement with employers, including work-based learning (Expectations B4, B10); The clear and comprehensive information available to prospective students on employment opportunities relevant to their programmes (Expectations C, B4).

In November 2014 the HER QAA review team identified the following features of good practice at the former Somerset College:The proactive engagement with external stakeholders to design new programmes to meet professional and technical skills needs (Expectations A3.4, B1, Enhancement).

[10] https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/datasets/ukbusinessactivitysizeandlocation
[11] (Strategic Economic Plan 2014-2030 Final Submission: 31st March 2014 p15)
[12] http://heartofswlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/SEP-Final-draft-31-03-14-website-1.pdf

More recent confirmation that such practices are still in place and that students continue to acquire knowledge, skills and attributes that are valued by employers and that enhance their personal and/or professional lives can be seen in the reports from recent validation events. For example FD Public Services and Criminology re-validation panel report in March 2017:'The Panel commended the Programme Team on the relevant Work Based Learning (WBL) opportunities and the 999 Academy based at the College; It was also noted that the College has a wealth of experience in terms of WBL with robust policies and mechanisms in place'.

The OU Academic Reviewer for Business and Management echoed comments made by EEs across BTC when he commented in his report for 2016-17 on what he considered to be the 'impressive work surrounding integrating the student experience and employer engagement. It was particularly noteworthy to see that, for example, handbooks were produced for both students and employers, student project work had taken place where students directly presented solutions to key operational and business needs of organisations (which, in turn, gave students a real feel for the world of work and a sense of self-worth as they presented their ideas. All fantastic initiatives which are likely to give the College significant unique selling points.
Finally, the pastoral support for students seemed strong and appropriate. Personal tutors were appointed to students and time is identified to cover additional areas of study skills and students' personal development plans. **Overall, the impression was left that this was a progressive and impressive institution which had a clear direction in terms of delivering a high student experience through a relevant curriculum and supported student journey.'**

**Positive Outcomes for All (SO3)**
Positive outcomes are achieved by BTC's students from all backgrounds, in particular those from disadvantaged backgrounds and those who are at greater risk of not achieving positive outcomes. This is evident in the 94% achievement rate across the prescribed HE provision with 68% 'good' degrees in comparison to the HESA average for the same sectors of 69%.

As previously noted BTC has a greater proportion of non-white students (4%) than the local population (2%) and they do well. The metrics show particularly good results for students from Black and Ethnic Minority Groups and students from POLAR Quintiles 1 and 2 (those who least engage with HE) where BTC has an above average number of these students entering employment and further study. Long Term Health Condition tutorials and case conferences ensure support that enables students suffering from these difficulties to succeed. Appropriate Learning Support and study skills referral to the HE Study Centre ensures the success of students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Mature students and young students are all able to succeed and enter employment with part time disabled students entering highly skilled employment or further study above the benchmark. These outcomes demonstrate that despite the significant numbers of students at BTC from disadvantaged backgrounds they still succeed, demonstrating the impact of the widening participation, equality and diversity policies and practices.

This comment in the EE report for Early Childhood Studies 2016-17 sums up the positive student experiences across the curriculum: "Students have repeatedly told me that staff value each as an individual with shared and different life experiences and vastly different learning needs. This individual recognition allows students to feel valued and enthusiastic about their learning journeys, has significantly increased their self-confidence and encourages them to be as successful as they can possibly be. Successful pedagogy and learning is the result of effective relationships and it is evident that a mutual respect exists between staff and students at the university centre and this contributes to the excellent relationships evident."

As well as being awarded the 2016 Queen's Anniversary Prize (for the second time), BTC was awarded the Times Educational Supplement (TES) 'FE College of the year' award in 2016. BTC is currently shortlisted in the TES 2018 'Apprenticeship Programme of the Year' category. BTC has received it's 14th AoC Beacon Award. Individual students also routinely win national awards with the most recent ones being the Anne Voss-Bark Memorial Award 2017 by Salmon & Trout Conservation UK, and the prestigious D&AD Wood Pencil Award for Graphic Design.