VISION
University Centre

TEF YEAR 3
PROVIDER SUBMISSION

JANUARY 2018

WEST NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COLLEGE
UKPRN 10007427

Name of Provider: West Nottinghamshire College
UKPRN: 10007427

TEF Year Three provider submission

Provider Context

This is the College's first TEF provider submission, but reflects our single strategic objective 'achieving excellence, reaching new heights'.

Our vision is to be 'a dynamic college for aspiring communities' with 'learners at the heart of excellence. The college is characterised by a 'one team' spirit and an unrelenting focus on being the best, doing the best, and achieving the best, so that we succeed in our ambitions. Our values are what guide our behaviour – they lie at the heart of everything that we do – whether that's delivering education and training or how we look after our team. The college believes that every member of the team is a leader in their own right.

Our values:

Respect:

- Difference breeds creativity and creativity will help us achieve our ambitions.

Responsibility:

- We are one team, united together to provide a brilliant service.

Professionalism:

- Internal or external, exceptional quality is what will set us apart.

Key features of the College are:

- An experienced, committed and ambitious governing body that has high aspirations for the college and its communities.
- An excellent reputation for the work that we do with employers and work related training.
- A significant hub for local regeneration and community prosperity, the college is at the heart of the local community and has helped raise aspirations and support the area's cultural and economic regeneration.
- Powerful partnerships that create opportunities for learners and help shape and develop the college offer.
- A leader within the further education and training sector.
- An ambitious culture that strives for excellence in all aspects of its work.
- Outstanding arrangements to support learners with high needs which means that they achieve and progress at least as well as their peers and in some cases significantly better than their peers.
- High quality, industry standard accommodation to equip learners with the skills needed for work and further study.
- A broad curriculum offer that is aligned with local and regional priorities.
- A culture and an ethos that promotes respect and exceptional behaviour amongst learners.

The College serves the communities of Mansfield and Ashfield, with a population of 230,200 (228,400 last year) with 106,600 living in Mansfield (+700 people) and 123,600 (+1,100 people) in Ashfield. Population continues to grow slowly but steadily.

The key demographic of 16-18 year-olds continues to fall in this area and will not reach the lowest point until 2019, with a two year time lag in terms of our HE provision. After that point the numbers will start to gradually increase – but even by 2022 are not projected to reach 2014-15 levels.

Employment rates have fallen in both Ashfield and Mansfield. In Ashfield the percentage in employment now stands at 72.9% (down from 73.4% last year). The drop in Mansfield has been

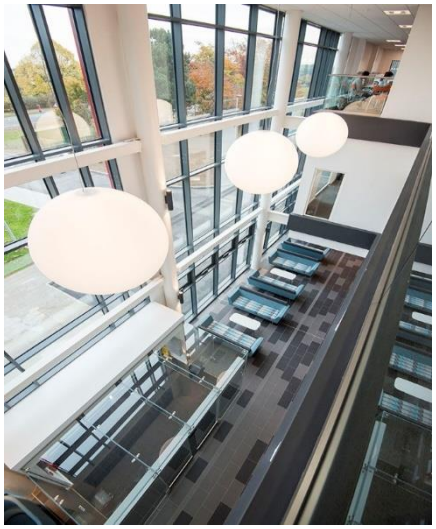
even more significant down to 74.2% (from 80.2% last year). The rate for the East Midlands has actually increased to 74.7% (up from 73.8% last year).

The largest occupations sector in Mansfield remains Elemental and Operative roles, although this has fallen significantly from 33.4% of employment to 28.8% and is now only slightly ahead of Management, Professional and Associate Professional roles. In Ashfield the largest occupations remains Management, Professional and Associate Professional, although this has fallen significantly from 39.3% to 29.6%. In the East Midlands, Management, Professional and Associate Professional remains the largest sector but has fallen slightly from 41.5% to 41.1%. The number on JSA has increased 2.2% in Mansfield (last year 1.8%) and 2.2% in Ashfield (last year to 1.6%). Regionally the rate has increased from 1.3% to 1.6%.

Those qualified to Level 4 and above in Mansfield has fallen in the last year from 26.5% to 20.1%. In Ashfield those qualified to Level 4 and above has also fallen from 22.2% to 16.2%. The table below shows the comparison with the LEP, regional and national levels – the figures in brackets are for the previous year:

Comparison of Mansfield & Ashfield with LEP, Regional and National Qualification Levels					
Qualification Level	**Mansfield**	**Ashfield**	**D2N2 (LEP)**	**East Midlands**	**England**
Level 4+	20.1% (26.5%)	16.2% (22.2%)	32.0% (33.3%)	31.3% (31.8%)	38.2% (36.7%)
Level 3+	44.2% (47.6%)	43.1% (47.8%)	53.4% (55.3%)	52.8% (54.3%)	56.9% (57.1%)
Level 2+	61.3% (64.7%)	65.2% (71.6%)	73.3% (73.4%)	72.4% (72.3%)	74.3% (73.4%)
Level 1+	77.2% (80.9%)	85.8% (88.7%)	85.6% (86.0%)	85.0% (85.3%)	85.3% (85.0%)

It is against this backdrop that in 2016-17, the College opened its doors to a £6.5m University Centre, part funded by the Local Enterprise Partnership (D2N2). The centre aims to provide a mixture of higher levels skills for a community whose progression to higher education falls significantly behind national and regional averages. The centre offers a range of top-up degrees, higher national awards and foundation degrees, as well as professional and higher apprenticeship programmes targeted at local employers.



The student population is overwhelmingly local, and many students highlight the significance of being able to access affordable, university-level study close to home.

Our students' comments:

NSS 2017

- The study hours fit in well with my work and home life.
- The part-time courses are in an evening enabling me to continue working whilst studying.
- Flexibility around my work life and feeling at home.
- The college is quite local to me so commuting isn't too much of an issue.
- Easy to travel to and considerably cheaper than other universities.
- I do not have to travel far or spend money on accommodation.
- It is close to home so I am able to work my two jobs while I study.

Pulse 2017

- Being able to do a degree level course close to home.
- Being able to study whilst working full time.
- Fits around prior commitments.
- Not having to travel far to study the course and the cost of the course compared to university prices.
- Still studying with people I've known for 3 years.
- I have been here for three years, and this is my fourth, so it is a familiar environment so I can concentrate on learning rather than adapting to my surroundings.

Teaching Quality

As highlighted within our provider core metrics, the College performs above benchmark levels for both teaching quality measures on our full-time provision, and is in the top 10% of absolute performance for assessment and feedback.

Let our students tell you about the teaching they have experienced:

NSS 2017

- I feel the tutors are supportive, but still make sure we are responsible for our own learning.
- I feel the staff have been supportive especially when times are tough and you just want to give up on the workload.
- The tutors are amazing. Clearly passionate about what they do, what they teach us is influenced by their various and wide-ranging experiences, helping to give us new opinions and options to explore with.
- [Tutors] seem to work tirelessly and I feel they should be commended for their efforts.

Pulse 2017 (mirrors NSS)

- Being taught by the best minds in the world![1]
- The tutors are incredibly helpful and supportive. I feel comfortable coming into college and asking for help if needed.
- Every session is engaging and always motivates me to work and try the best in everything.
- Everyone wants you to achieve something.
- This course is challenging and I like that.
- I genuinely believe [the tutors] want the best for you and they will do anything to help.

[1] We are however mindful that the student has not provided evidence to substantiate this comment.

What our students have to say about their experience of assessment and feedback:

NSS 2017

- Positivity coming from lecturers; this includes negative feedback on work but applied in a positive way so that students react on this and produce better work.
- The tutors' praise and feedback, and the atmosphere the course has.
- All the staff are good at explaining work prior to starting and give useful feedback on how to improve.
- Feedback has been timely and helpful to develop my academic progress.

Pulse 2017

- The joint observation was of great benefit as it brought both tutor and mentor together so they are able to support me most effectively.
- Sufficient feedback is given when an assignment has referrals.
- The staff have gone above and beyond to help me achieve my grades so far.
- I have achieved a merit recently, and this was as a result of feedback from my tutor and prior knowledge gained in level 4.

For part-time provision, the core metrics paint a different picture, but the numbers targeted were very small (16 in 2014-15, 10 in 2015-16, and 11 in 2016-17). In both 2016-16, and 2016-17, the target group was predominantly the FdA Children's and Young People's Services, where students were affected by significant staff changes and absences within the team. A student explains (NSS 2017):

> *Coming from a teaching profession myself, I understand how difficult it is to manage a change in staff while trying to teach others. On my course, the teaching team has changed several times over the last two years. However, the existing team have made every effort, though under staffed at times, to keep our course ticking over as smoothly as possible.*

A specific action plan was put in place for this course and the data on continuation, retention and achievement have improved (see below).

Although in 2017, NSS overall satisfaction is lower for the 11 part-time students, they scored more highly on most questions (by between 1 and 19 points) with the exception of those shown below. Review of these responses will be an action for part-time course teams for 2017-18.

	Full-Time %	**Part-Time %**	**Overall college %**
#2. Staff have made the subject interesting.	78	64	77
#17. Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively.	67	55	66
#9. Marking and assessment has been fair.	85	73	84
#4. My course has challenged me to achieve my best work.	84	73	83
Overall Satisfaction	77	73	77

Students who completed the college Pulse survey were generally more satisfied with their student experience (between 3 and 16 points difference) than those responding on NSS.

The following activities contribute to our success, and enable a focus on continuous improvement and enhancement:

Student Engagement

In 2016, the University of Derby Partnership Review commended the College for the opportunities provided for student engagement and development, including the use of surveys and Babble On drop-in sessions. Just as the College recognises the need for differentiation in its approach to teaching and learning, we also recognise that different students will prefer to provide feedback differently, and the range of mechanisms used to capture HE student feedback reflects this:

- National Student Survey (NSS),
- the college Pulse Survey mirrors the NSS questions, but is completed by those students not targeted for NSS (predominantly Year 1 and Top-up students).
- the college QDP on-line course surveys (enabling benchmarking against other HE in FE providers)
- module surveys (on-line)
- course representatives (who attend course committee meetings and in some cases, local focus groups e.g. Engineering) and student advocates
- Babble On! Sessions (scheduled informal drop-ins)
- Student Conference workshop

For 2017-18, we have listened to feedback from our students about 'survey-fatigue', and also to the suggestion from NSS scores that staff could better value students' views and opinions[2], and have just completed our first round of module review meetings, enabling discussion with the full group of students, and offering an opportunity to highlight actions taken as a result of their previous feedback. These have been very positively received.

The college promotes student engagement through its induction programme and Student Guide, as well as through the Student Charter, and the views of students help to inform and shape their experience at both college and course level:

College-wide changes we've made based on student feedback:

- Modes of communication with students (shift to text messages and social media)
- Extended opening hours for the University Centre to support self-study
- Higher print credit for HE students, and extended borrowing facilities
- Additional self-issue laptops available in the University Centre
- LRC staffing levels
- Changed format of the Complete HE package (induction package, which includes HE Student guide and core reference text)
- Central induction event

Changes we've made at course level based on student feedback:

- Timetabling changes
- Assessment design & timing
- Extensive use of feedforward as well as feedback
- Increased number of student visits and guest speakers
- New course design
- Provision of specialist software
- Action planning where needed eg in 2017, FdSc Sport and Exercise Science improved from 43% to 98% on teaching, and from 51% to 98% on assessment and feedback following a focus with the team

[2] Pulse Survey scored 83%, as against NSS 67%, on this question, suggesting that the issue may have been local. Nonetheless, all groups have seen this as a positive change.

In addition, current students are consulted on proposed changes to courses, ranging from minor modification to complete revalidation.

Student views feed into college processes at all levels, from the student governor, who also attends Standards Committee where HE is a standing agenda item, to course representatives at course committees. Pleasingly, one student (Pulse 2017) told us

> *Having the opportunity to become a student representative has enabled me to raise any suggestions and queries within student representative meetings, as well as being able to keep my peers updated with everything that is happening.*

Student feedback informs programme reviews (December, March) and annual course reports. The programme review process informs in-year action planning, and the impact of this is monitored through the HE Quality Reviews at School of Learning level (December, May). Similarly, the College Self-Evaluation Document and HE Quality Improvement Plan are informed by student feedback, and are approved by Standards Committee on behalf of the governors.

Developing Teaching and Scholarship

While the HE in FE context can appear very different from that in universities, the College's commitment to excellence in teaching and learning is central to its success. The Quality, Teaching, Learning and Performance (QTLP) team, headed by the Director: Quality and Performance provide a focus to support all teaching staff, alongside the Heads of School, and for HE, the Head of HE and International. The HE central team supports all new teams to ensure teaching and learning is at an appropriate level, and there are two identified and experienced learning consultants for HE.

Learning walks

In 2016-17, the College moved away from graded observations to developmental learning walks, and all teaching staff now have an individual development plan, with identified support from learning consultants if needed for improvement. The College has specific paperwork for HE learning walks which reflects the QAA Quality Code (B3), and which has been updated to highlight the scholarship agenda. Both individual and curriculum learning walks are carried out by Curriculum Managers, with joint observation when the CM does not have HE experience. The University of Derby also conducts supportive observations (POOTs) to ensure that college tutors are delivering at the appropriate level, and college staff are invited to join university staff development workshops. 28 learning walks were carried out on HE sessions.

Key strengths are shown below, but we have planned more opportunities for sharing of good practice as questioning, learning checks and planning for learning were also noted as areas for improvement on some learning walks.

Key strengths identified in HE teaching were:

- Staff use their expertise, subject knowledge, research and experience to plan and deliver learning
- Links to assessment and targeting high grades
- Questioning
- Students are become confident in what they are doing
- Students are motivated and keen to learn
- Learning checks/assessment for learning
- Care and support for students
- Planning for learning

Staff development

The college recognises the specificity of HE delivery, and provides the following staff development opportunities for all HE tutors, which are well-attended with positive feedback:

- Staff development sessions on all staff development days
- Twilight sessions on specific topics eg lecture capture, pro-Monitor for HE, new NSS questions
- HE Annual Planning day (July)
- Practitioner groups (teaching at level 6, new to HE, HNC/D delivery)

In addition, the University of Derby offers an academic practice programme and two conferences in July, and the LRC team remain pro-active in their support for HE tutors, and will work with them on reading lists, journal access etc. They also source and recommend new titles to tutors. Since 2016-17, Nottingham Trent University have offered Breakfast and Insight sessions for local businesses, which tutors can also attend.

Scholarship

The QAA HE Review (2015) affirmed the action being taken by the college to improve the educational provision offered to its students through the steps being taken to support staff development and scholarship at HE level. The AoC Scholarship project funded the appointment of a Scholarship Development Manager from March 2016, who has been instrumental in positive changes to learning walk paperwork, appraisal paperwork and the statement on support for scholarship.

A series of handbooks and workshops have helped to embed good practice, and this has contributed at student level to the strength of high grades across the college, as well as to positive responses on relevant NSS questions.

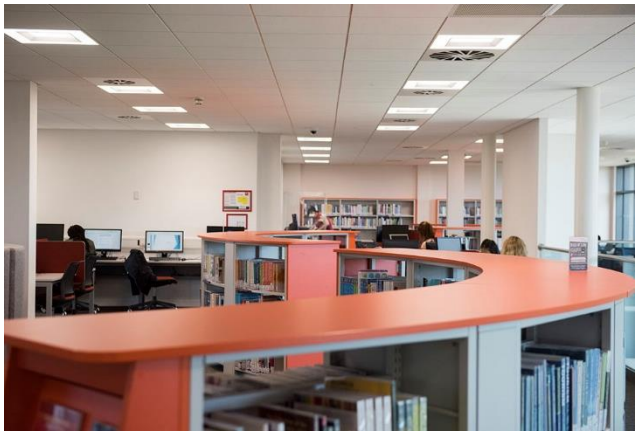
A key outcome of the project nationally will be a framework for scholarship in college-based HE, and the College will adopt this once available, ensuring not only support for staff delivering on HE provision, but also recognition.

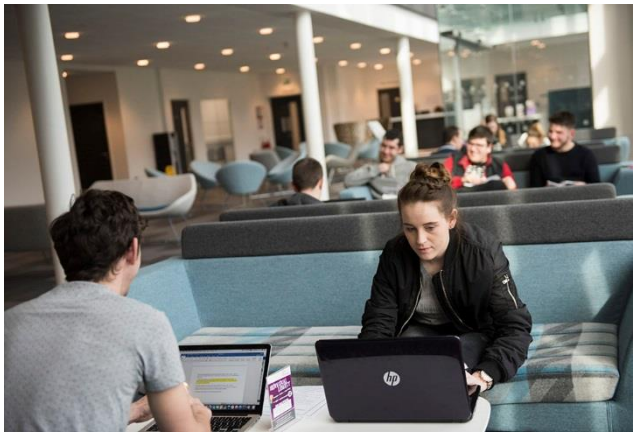
Learning Environment

The College's scores within the core metrics for academic support and continuation have been consistently above benchmark for its full-time students.

The environment itself

In October 2016, HE staff and students moved into the new University Centre, completing a journey from a single base room, to a refurbished stand-alone four classroom building, to a £6.5 million purpose-built University Centre, and reflecting the College's strategic commitment to its HE provision.





The centre offers an aspirational focus for university-level study, with teaching and learning spaces including a Microsoft suite, student study rooms, a dedicated learning resource centre, a 100-seat lecture theatre and a science laboratory together with social spaces for our HE students, and its design was carefully planned to draw on best practice from across the university sector.

Partner universities have commented favourably. The University of Derby Partnership Review (2016) commended ‘the investment in facilities and the opportunities presented by the new University Centre’. In 2017, at the Institutional Approval Event with Nottingham Trent University, the panel commended the College for its ‘commitment to developing an HE identity and culture through the facilities, staff development sessions focused on how to engage with students at HE level, and the focus on building rapport between staff and students’.

And our students said:

NSS 2017

- The new modern university building offers independent and peer group space for students to learn with great IT resources such as presentation rooms for students to practise presentations while using the whiteboard.

Pulse 2017

- A new building that is specifically for HE students
- New facilities have excellent resources and provide a peaceful environment to study.
- Feeling part of the university community!
- Great resources, new LRC and university building. Very accessible and nice to spend time here.
- Having such a lovely environment full of resources at the University centre really enables us to study to the best of our abilities at all times.

Enhancing continuation and retention

As a widening participation institution, the College is mindful that many of our students face personal and life challenges which can significantly impact on their academic performance, along with often low academic confidence and/or limited support networks in terms of study.

Overall outcomes for students are strong, and other than achievement for full-time 2 year programmes at 96% (down by 1%), all key indicators at college level across study modes are improving:

- Year 1 retention improved by 2% from 85% in 2015-16 to 87% in 2016-17
- Retention for two-year courses improved by 7% from 89% in 2015-16 to 96% in 2016-17
- Retention for full-time Top-up courses remains at 95%
- Full-time Top-up achievement improved by 5% from 94% in 2015-16 to 99% in 2016-17
- High grades improved by 12% from 51% in 2015-16 to 63% in 2016-17

Continuation Students

Overall retention for year one full-time students is at 87% overall, an increase of 2% on 2015-16. All but two courses have retention at 80%, and a specific action plan is in place which will be monitored through the HE Quality Review process. The effectiveness of this approach can be seen for the courses requiring improvement in 2016-17; the HND Music and the CertEd have improved to 100%, the FdA Children's and Young People's Services/Teaching Assistant to 82% and the FdA Sport Coaching & Development to 94%.

Completing Students

Overall retention on full-time courses remains at 95% for top-up courses, and is at 96% (89%, 2015-16) for two-year courses. Three top-up courses have retention at 100%; all are at 90% or above with the exception of the BA (Hons) Sports Studies at 88%. Retention is at 100% for the second year of all but two year courses. Again, a specific action plan is in place. Of the two year courses requiring improvement, one has been suspended due to low numbers, and the FdA Children's & Young People's Services/Teaching Assistant is now at 100%.

Overall achievement on full-time courses is at 99% for top-up courses (94%, 2015-16) and at 96% for two year courses (97%, 2015-16). Achievement is at 100% for the majority of courses, with the exception of four courses. In all cases, only one completing student did not achieve.

For part-time courses, retention on one year courses is at 100%, and only one student did not achieve. For two year courses, second year retention is at 100% for all courses with one exception. Achievement is at 100% for all two year courses with one exception. In each case, one student did not achieve. For the three year course (FdA Children's & Young People's Services, both pathways), retention in year three is at 100%, and achievement is also at 100%.

Achievement of high grades is at 63% on full-time courses, compared with 51% in 2015-16, and at 59% (46% in 2015-16) for part-time courses. High grades are above 50% for all but two courses.

Enhancing Student Performance

The college has been pro-active in its approach to supporting students to successful completion:

- We have developed our data reporting to ensure that course teams and managers are able to monitor, analyse and act on data at course level.
- There are five Curriculum Liaison meetings each year, run through the central HE team. These identify students at risk, and ensure that intervention at individual level is timely.

- Students wishing to withdraw are referred to the central HE team, allowing an opportunity for issues to be raised which may not have been identified previously, and in some cases for intervention to enable the student to remain on course.
- There are formal processes in place for mitigation, and these are communicated to students through the Student Guide, course handbooks and at induction. For all our provision, panels are now college based and chaired by the Head of HE & International, which enables prompt feedback to students. For students on university-validated courses, their regulations apply.
- In 2016-17, we introduced mid-year progression panels, which can inform tutorial guidance and/or referral to the HE Study Skills Coach.
- High grades have been a focus for the College, supported by the work done to support both staff and student scholarship, as well as the mid-year progression panels introduced last year.

Support for study

A small community

The College typically has between 450 and 470 students enrolled on its HE courses, with group sizes of a maximum of 20. This smaller study environment suits many of our students:

NSS 2017

- Smaller class sizes make it easier to concentrate when working at college, and there's easy access to tutors to receive feedback.
- It is a small college and so learning is more personal.
- The small cohort has provided a more personal experience.
- It is easier to travel to than a larger university and the classes are much smaller, so there is a lot more help available and the teachers are really helpful and engaging.

Pulse 2017

- Having smaller classes and being able to get 1 to 1 time with tutors. Learning is more intimate.
- Lots of support because of our small groups.
- The sense of community being in a small group.
- There is a lot more support than with a university or distance learning.
- For me the smaller and more concentrated element in comparison to a university is what made me want to do my BA Hons top-up degree.

Tutorial support

While academic support per se is built into module delivery, all HE students are also entitled to three additional tutorials which offer a blend of academic and pastoral support, with a focus on progress on the course. These are structured in broad terms to ensure consistency across all courses, but also the flexibility to focus on individual needs, and are noted on the College's ProMonitor system which can be seen by both staff and students. At the recent external validation of the College's Self-Evaluation Document, this process was explored and commended as good practice. At the Institutional Approval event with Nottingham Trent University, the panel commended the College for 'the way in which the personal tutorial system has been embedded and built into the culture of higher education at the college'.

Key to the pastoral support available to students is the team of Support Coaches, who work with individual students across the College, and who can refer students directly to a linked counselling

service if required. The Scholarship Development Manager has also produced a 'Welfare and Well-Being' handbook for students, working in conjunction with the team at Nottingham Trent University.

Additional Learning Support

The College has a central Additional Learning Support team, who work closely with the central HE team and course tutors to ensure that students can access the support that they need. Key activity to ensure that students understand how to access support includes:

- High-profile presence at all HE Information events
- One-to-one follow-up with all students disclosing ALS needs at application
- Promotion of early disclosure at all pre-course applicant events and meet the tutor events, as well as at pre-course study skills workshops
- Promotion during central induction and Student Conference (November)

The team will work with individual students to facilitate the DSA process, and will liaise with third party providers where appropriate. In addition, they work closely with the HE Study Skills Coach to dovetail study support, or meet with students where, for example, one-to-one working has identified potential dyslexia.

Study skills support

The HE Study Skills Coach is a key element of the support offered to students, with a focus on three areas of intervention:

- Pre-course study skills workshops for all level 4 students, and transition workshops for level 4/5 and level 5/6.
- In-class workshops organised through the tutor
- One-to-one support sessions, which can be self-referral or may follow tutorial advice

Again, the College takes a pro-active approach to promoting the study help available, through the Student Guide and induction, to postcards which are sent to any student with referral work to complete.

The College was one of only two FE colleges who were part of the Sigma maths project, led by Loughborough University, and the HE Study Skills Coach was the key link in this project. As a result the College has legacy access to e-resources for maths support as well as broader study skills materials.

What our students tell us about the support we offer:

NSS 2017

- There is various support given, ranging from a fantastic study skills coach to a great careers advice team.
- If I do become concerned about anything or need help, one-to-one tutorials are available whenever suits me and this really encourages me knowing that help is always around the corner.
- The support from the staff and the extra help you can ask for.
- Guidance was given by staff for the students including tutorials that mentioned different aspects of the course including work experience and future career options.

Pulse 2017

- The convenience of getting support for my learning difficulties and the facilities available.
- The support networks, the tutors and staff and the facilities
- Tutor support compared to universities

- Having access to further study materials to propel myself further
- Having access to [the HE Study Skills Coach] has been really useful
- Meeting with the study skills coach has helped me and my academic abilities

The range of support for study was noted in the QAA HE Review, and also at the University of Derby Partnership Review, where the panel commended the college for 'the range of support available for students, including the personalised support from staff and the LRC, and the comprehensive provision of study skills support'.

Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

The College's commitment to achieving positive outcomes is clear in our core metrics, with employment or further study in the top 10% of absolute performance. While we continue to work to improve the scores for 'graduate-level' employment, the data should be seen against the context of a local student population with low geographical mobility, and the lack of a tradition of graduate employment in the local labour market (see above).

Over the last year the average weekly earnings in Mansfield have increased from £395 to £424. By comparison average weekly earnings have fallen slightly in Ashfield from £453 to £452. Both are still some way behind the East Midlands where average weekly earnings have increased more significantly from £479 to £502. In this context, the DLHE median salary of £18 252 for college graduates compares well with the UK median of £19 000.

Employability

Employability skills are integral to the HE offer at the College, which has a specifically vocational focus both in terms of subject areas, and in terms of the nature of the qualifications offered (HNC/D, foundation degrees.

However, the College focus on aspiration for our local communities has led to the development not only of good practice in terms of course specific employability, but also to a broader college-wide approach through the Student Conference which includes inspirational speakers from industry and commerce, and motivational coaching and the Employer Showcase events where students present their final projects. Both staff and students are also able to attend the Breakfast Insight sessions offered by Nottingham Trent University for local businesses in the University Centre, and the Scholarship Development Manager has also developed an Employer Essentials handbook which is promoted to students. The College is currently planning a Graduate Gateway to promote links between employers and students to further develop to opportunity presented by the highly visible University Centre.

Our students' take on employability:

NSS 2017

- This course is suited to the aspects of working that I want to achieve. I have expanded my knowledge and am able to implement this into the workplace.
- We have been given industry experience in the form of briefs from real world clients to help us build up a portfolio of work.
- The projects are interesting and engaging. I feel that I am using and developing skills which will be important for me to pursue a career in the field I want.
- I have personally gained a good amount of knowledge of industry standard workflow and have worked with live clients which also adds to the latter.

- [The course is] providing more opportunities to work with clients and businesses to gain work experience whilst also learning at the same time.

Pulse 2017

- The course provides encouragement towards each student's individual ambitions and career plans.
- I am grateful at being given an opportunity to develop myself which will help me in my future career.
- Getting to do a course where I get to do acting!

Broader horizons

The College works hard to ensure that studying HE in a college environment in a small town does not limit the students' experience, although students do not have access to the student clubs and societies, or cultural events, available in larger university contexts. Starting at the central induction, students are encouraged to seek opportunities to broaden their horizons and to try new experiences, whether within or outside College.

The College arranges guest speakers at both course and college level. At college level, these are wide ranging, and have for example included local and national politicians, speakers on the Prevent agenda, theatre workshops run by Pintsize Theatre Company to raise awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation and specialist sessions on sexting and the law. Student visits are encouraged at course level, ranging from theatre visits to visits to the House of Commons and the Supreme Court, and trips to Iceland and to Barcelona. A small group of students interested in post-graduate study took part in the East Midlands Scholarship conference for staff and students, organised through the AoC scholarship project. The College is now part of the Erasmus+ scheme, but our student demographic has mitigated against students undertaking a three month visit. We have hosted German students in Engineering and Danish students in IT, and will this year resubmit a bid for a key stage 2 project focused on graduate destinations to enable shorter, more feasible stays for HE students.

The College has successfully bid to the Catalyst Fund for a project on Safety of Students (SOS), with a focus around the Prevent agenda in HE, and students are involved in developing, filming and producing on-line resources as part of the project. Students are also encouraged to apply for Student Advocate posts within College, which offers opportunities not only to talk about life at College at Information events, UCAS events and in local schools, but also to host and meet with College visitors and to talk to local radio and TV interviewers.

Broader activities are available on a whole college basis, and the College Sports Development team organise a range of sports activities including male and female football, fitness classes, Zumba, Raveminton, table tennis, badminton and dodgeball. In addition to this, a range of partners are engaged throughout the year to support with promotion of a healthy lifestyle including sexual health, mental health and physical health; a pleasing 88% of participants in the exit survey said that they felt better informed about leading a healthy lifestyle.

The College's commitment to equality and diversity is highly visual throughout the College, and staff and students actively engage with national celebrations, festivals and equality and diversity months. For example, in 2016-17 students were engaged with a writing competition around black history month, signed pledges against discriminatory language as part of anti-bullying week, and participated in events and activities to celebrate LGBT month. Activities included a speaker programme including input from a trans female who spoke about her transition journey.

Across the College, the following activities are available to all students:

- volunteering inductions, volunteering group activities, one-off volunteering events

- enterprise induction and the £10 challenge
- the 554 event where donations are accepted from staff and students to support local homelessness charities
- the annual Santa Run, raising funds for a range of charities
- the Big Snore, involving 130 people, including college staff and students, sleeping out on campus to raise money for Framework, a homeless charity.

Graduation

The highlight of the College HE year is the annual graduation ceremony held at Kelham Hall near Newark. The venue and stage party including representatives from partner universities, together with keynote speakers and the formality of the event, offer an opportunity for students to reflect with their families on their achievements. In an area with low educational attainment, this event is hugely significant both locally and for individual students and their families.

A final word from two of our students:

NSS 2017

- So far, my experience within the college has been fantastic. The tutors are brilliant and spend as much time with each student as needed. I feel this course has created many opportunities for myself, and has provided me with the confidence I needed. The best thing about this college is being treated as an individual rather than just a number. I had many doubts when starting this course after returning to education at the age of 27, but my tutors assured me it's never too late to do what you love and with their help, I'm achieving a lot more than I realised I was capable of…In fact, the bond that has been created on this course not only pushes me to work harder for myself but I want to do this for my tutors too, to show them what an amazing job they really do. I could not be happier with this college.
- From the very beginning, I felt very welcome and safe. The tutors were very professional, friendly and understood my individual learning needs…As a mature student and member of an LGBT group I felt that my individuality and opinions were valued and respected. I developed my own academic skills and understanding because of strong support which was provided to me throughout the course. [The tutors] all had different teaching approaches which were very professional and inspired me to take my studying to the highest level according to my individual abilities…I found the course stimulating and individually rewarding. Towards the end, I felt that I had matured not only as a student, but also as a person…I would definitely recommend the course to anybody who is looking for the highest academic standards.