1 Introduction

Riverside College is a highly successful Further Education College providing high quality vocational, technical and professional education and training. It has delivered higher education courses for over 20 years and currently offers higher national certificates and diplomas, foundation degrees and bachelor degrees across Engineering, Health and Social Care, Counselling, Sport, Computing and IT and Education. The College also offers the Certificate/Post Graduate Certificate in Education. The majority of students enrolled onto higher education programmes at Riverside College study on a part-time basis. Currently we have 86 full-time students and 208 part-time students who have chosen to study with us. We also have 14 students following a Higher Apprenticeship route in Engineering.

Riverside College has a long established relationship with both Staffordshire University and Pearson Edexcel (HNC/HND). In collaboration with Staffordshire University and Pearson, Higher Education has become fundamental to our goal to be a catalyst for change through enabling social inclusion and mobility, lifelong learning and economic growth within the community. Staffordshire University are hugely supportive of the College's Higher Education aspirations and the partnership continues to grow from strength to strength.

Since 2015-16, there has been a continuous growth in our Higher Education provision. Our students are attracted by the geographic proximity of the College and the outstanding value for money provision, including financial incentives (bursaries) for full-time students on the first year of their foundation degree or HND programme. We have excellent and proven levels of pastoral and academic support and we offer opportunity to combine work with study; significant factors which contribute towards the development of graduate skills.

The College works at the heart of the community building local aspirations and skills. Our graduates make a contribution to economic growth and social welfare not just in Halton but across neighbouring and regional authorities. Our work with local and national employers continues to enrich and support our students' experiences to equip them with graduate skills and personal attributes needed to succeed in employment and within society.

We have a resolute commitment to placing teaching and learning at the very heart of what we do; resulting in a culture of continuous improvement and enhancement of strategies, systems and procedures, which impact, first and foremost on the student experience.

In September 2015, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) confirmed that quality of standards of provision of Higher Education at Riverside College "meets expectation". Good practice was reported in relation to the effective integration of all student support services to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. In June 2018, Riverside College was awarded a TEF Silver Award. The review panel commented on the high levels of full-time student satisfaction rates and the "exceptionally high" satisfaction rates for assessment and feedback and academic support on part-time programmes. Special recognition was also given to the professional backgrounds of staff and the College's "institution-wide approach to supporting widening participation students to ensure they continue in their studies".

The College also received an Ofsted Short Inspection in September 2015. The inspection report identified that the College 'continued to be good' and that 'safeguarding was effective'. A significant number of key strengths were identified including:

- Teaching, learning and assessment being consistently good, enabling the large majority of students to achieve their qualification and progress to employment and further study.

Riverside College is one of the highest performing Further Education colleges nationally. The overall effectiveness of the College is outstanding. Leaders, managers and governors are

ambitious, they lead by example and set high expectations for both learners and staff. Excellent teaching, learning and assessment have led to outstanding outcomes for the vast majority of learners across (across both the Further and Higher Education curricula). The College is in outstanding financial health, having grown, despite a demographic decline, from £19m to a £23m turnover. Recent investment of £12m has enhanced teaching and learning facilities and resources.

Based on Riverside College's core TEF 4 metrics (with 5 positive flags and 7 asterisk indicator values in the top 10% of absolute performance) across both majority and minority modes, the initial TEF hypothesis for Riverside College is silver. However, we make our provider submission with supporting robust evidence to validate and strengthen the initial hypothesis from silver to gold. Our TEF 4 metrics have improved on our TEF 3 metrics, and for this reason, we feel that there is a good case to present to be considered for a TEF Gold Award in 2019. Riverside College was awarded TEF Silver in June 2018.

Working in partnership with our Higher Education student representatives, this provider submission will offer a commentary against the TEF 4 metrics as well as additional supporting quantitative and qualitative data to support the submission.

1.1 Riverside College's Vision and Values

At Riverside College we believe in the power of education to enhance and transform people's lives. We strive to be sector-leading in everything we do.

- Teaching and learning are our first priority and the needs and safety of our students always come first.
- As members of the College we are partners in the success of the organisation and are all accountable for our outcomes.
- High standards are at the heart of all that we do. In our pursuit of excellence we recognise that individually and collectively we can always improve.
- Within our college community we all treat each other with respect, trust, openness, care and consideration. We celebrate student and staff success.
- We are an inclusive college where we promote and protect equality and diversity.
- We work in partnership with employers and other stakeholders so that we can make a positive contribution to local, regional and national economic development.

1.2 Strategic Aims

Riverside College's strategic aims are:

- To achieve high quality outcomes for our students by prioritising teaching and learning.
- To continue to improve levels of efficiency and remain in outstanding financial health.
- To maximise opportunities for growth.

Since 2014, Higher Education goals have seamlessly aligned to the College's strategic aims. This has resulted in goals that have successfully focused on:

- the use of robust quality monitoring systems to measure and enhance the quality of Higher Education provision (through prioritising year-on-year improvements in key performance indicators).
- Higher Education courses that are delivered with efficiency and provide value for money.
- Increased collaboration with internal and external stakeholders to achieve growth in the Higher Education provision.

Key contributors to this success have been:

- The prioritisation of enhancement led activities for continuous improvement facilitated through stronger student engagement and decision making involvement through the Higher

Education Learner Voice, end of module evaluations, annual monitoring and through our Student Partnership Agreement (co-authored with students).

- Working with our HEI partner to ensure partnership arrangements are mutually beneficial in terms of fees, validation of courses, progression opportunities, and enhancement of provision and consistency of standards.
- Providing a local and value for money Higher Education provision to meet the needs of students who prefer to study closer to home.
- Teaching and learning approaches which harness technology but maximise learning outcomes.
- The review of all delivery models for responsiveness, though external stakeholder participation, partnership and networking, in relation to demand (market, employer driven, skills shortages), and flexible models of delivery and viability; whilst ensuring that student and employer views influenced the design, delivery and assessment of qualifications (such as the HNC Engineering and Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care programmes).
- An improvement of accessibility for non-traditional Level 4 learners into Higher Education programmes to achieve wider participation and promote community re-generation (such as the Foundation Degree in Education, the Foundation Degree in Counselling, the Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care. We also now offer one-year top-up degrees in these subjects

1.3 Context

1.3.1 College Context

Riverside College is a medium-sized general further education college located in Cheshire. It was formed in August 2006 following the merger of Halton College and Widnes & Runcorn Sixth Form College. The College serves the towns of Widnes and Runcorn, which have a combined population of 127,595 (2018) as well as attracting learners from outside of the borough. It operates on three centres: Kingsway (Vocational), Cronton (A level) and CRMZ (Foundation Studies).

Halton is now part of the Liverpool City Region. Following the 2016/17 Area Based Review the College was rated as green for both quality and finances. The recommendation of the Area Based Review for the College to remain as a standalone institution was approved by the Board of Governors. In 2016, the College moved to a financial rating of Outstanding.

The College offers the following types of provision: 16-18 study programmes; adult learning programmes; apprenticeships; provision for learners with high needs; higher education and traineeships.

The College recruits a large proportion of learners from areas of high social and economic deprivation. According to the Department for Education's index of multiple deprivation, the College is located in the 27th most deprived borough and the 3rd most deprived in the Liverpool City Region. Around 26% of Halton's populace live within the top 10% most deprived areas in the country. According to Public Health England, 21.7% of children under 16 live in poverty compared with 18.7% regionally and 16.8% nationally.

Many people have been long term unemployed and many have poor health. Nearly 22% of Halton's population are classed as economically inactive and the number of people claiming out of work benefits is higher than the national average. 16% of households are classed as workless compared to 14.5% nationally (NOMIS 2018). The Borough of Halton has higher than average rates of alcohol related harm, cancer rates are high and although the gap between Halton and the national rate has closed slightly, premature mortality is still above the national and regional values.

The region has recently seen significant investment with the opening of the Mersey Gateway Bridge. The College works closely with many local and regional companies, supporting their training needs through apprenticeships and bespoke programmes. The Borough has further plans

in the form of the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan Plus, which is designed to support the physical regeneration and transformation of Halton.

Whilst recognising that it must have a deep understanding of the Borough's many complex and challenging needs, the College has high ambitions and expectations of all its students, staff, parents and employers. Numerous pro-active strategies are in place to address and support the varied and complex needs of the students it serves.

1.3.2 Higher Education Context

Riverside College work actively with Office for Students funded Shaping Futures, a collaborative outreach programme, delivered across schools within the Liverpool City Region to support the most disadvantaged young people to progress into Higher Education. We are making good progress against a set of key deliverables for outreach to schools within priority wards within the region.

Higher Education cohorts at Riverside College are predominately mature (70% are 21 or over: TEF 4 metrics) with the majority mode of delivery for students aged of 21 being part-time (83%: TEF 4 metrics). A significant majority of our part-time students progress internally from our Level 3 provision.

Our TEF 4 metrics indicate 49% of our Higher Education students under the age of 21 are recruited from POLAR quintile 1, 16% from POLAR quintile 2, 12% from quintile 3, 10% from quintile 4 and 13% from POLAR quintile 5. Therefore, almost half of our students under the age of 21 come from backgrounds of the lowest participation rates in Higher Education.

The majority of students are consistently drawn from areas of least participation in Higher Education. 65% of our total Higher Education cohort come from quintiles 1 and 2. 52% of full-time students and 44% of part-time students are from quintile 1. In addition, 57% of students are recruited from quintiles 1 and 2 on the National Index of Multiple Deprivation (TEF 4 metrics).

The proportion of males and females changed slightly in 2017/18 with 48% male and 52% female, against 2016/17 with 51% male and 49% female.

TEF 4 metrics indicate 10% of students with a declared learning difficulty or disability in 2017/18, thus showing a slight increase of 1% on 2016/17 and 3% on 2015/16 (7%)

In terms of ethnicity, our TEF 4 metrics demonstrate that 98% of our full-time students declared their ethnicity as white and 1% of part-time students declared their ethnicity as 'other', which is representative of the local community with approximately 2.2% of the population drawn from ethnic groups other than white British.

As outlined earlier, Riverside College's recruitment/catchment area includes areas of high social and economic deprivation, where participation in Higher Education is historically below national averages. That aside, the College has been hugely successful in increasing the number of Higher Education students from a disadvantaged postcode. It is, a continuing target of the college to attract local residents onto its Higher Education provision and in doing so help to increase the number of Halton residents who enter into higher education, and to address this under representation.

Whilst the TEF 4 metrics are positive, we would suggest our current performance is particularly impressive when set against key contextual information, the most significant of which are the impact of: the characteristics of our student population, their mobility and the availability of graduate jobs market in the region.

Although the College is strong in supporting its Higher Education students to maximise their potential to by achieving their qualification and progressing onto the next level of academic study

and into employment, our students are often fundamentally disadvantaged in the labour market due to their lack of mobility. The significant majority of our students choose to study locally and afterwards seek employment locally. This is, in part due to social and family ties and commitments, but often also because it is financially unaffordable to move away from home. For example, many of our students are parents/single parents with dependents who actively seek local employment and have restricted opportunities for geographic relocation. Relocation to areas such as London and the South East for example, where there are higher employment rates than in the North West, is also a financial barrier for most. These factors should be factored in and taken into consideration when assessing TEF 4 metrics for highly skilled employment or further study for the College achieved a single negative flag.

1.3.3 In Partnership with Employers

At Riverside College, we appreciate the importance of offering Higher Education qualifications that are relevant to the needs of employers. The College makes a significant contribution to the local economy and has an important role in supporting local businesses. With this in mind, local employers have been involved in the design of our higher education courses.

Employer involvement in programme delivery consists of guest speakers and contribution to the setting of live/contextualised assignments for students in employment or on work placement. Employers also host students, where work placement is an integral part of the curriculum. Our students also benefit from extra-curricular placements, and part-time work which provide additional opportunities for the development of transferable and employability skills. Students are supported with job applications, CVs and interview preparation and employers contribute to careers fair held on campus.

The College continues to grow its Higher Education provision. It does by responding to external and internal business growth opportunities to achieve wider participation and by improving accessibility for non-traditional Level 4 learners into Higher Education programmes. External and internal stakeholder participation and the student voice of Level 3 learners are captured to evaluate demand for new pathways/programmes, modes of study and flexible on-line delivery options.

The Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) has given clear guidance on the skills areas which will grow and in response to this, the College continues to make every effort to make sure that our students are prepared with the work-ready, personal skills and knowledge they will need to be successful in employment in growth areas of employment.

1.3.4 National Student Survey (contextualised information)

Results of the National Student Survey (2018) revealed that nationally 83% of Higher Education students were satisfied with their course, while Riverside College achieved an impressive taught satisfaction rate of 96%; placing them in the top 6 of further education institutions who offer a Higher Education provision. The table below shows Riverside College's 2018 NSS results compared with the National 2018 NSS results. It presents a very positive picture of quality of provision compared with national benchmarks.

Criteria	National (2018) Benchmark	Riverside College (2018)	Benchmark (+/-) 2018
Teaching on my Course	84%	97%	+13%
Learning Opportunities	83%	96%	+13%
Assessment and Feedback	73%	92%	+19%
Academic Support	79%	91%	+12%
Organisation and Management	75%	92%	+17%
Learning Resources	85%	88%	+3%
Learning Community	77%	81%	+4%
Student Voice	69%	82%	+13%

Two part-time programmes (Foundation Degree in Education and Foundation Degree in Counselling) received an impressive 100% taught satisfaction rate.

2 Teaching Quality

2.1 The Quality of Teaching

The TEF 4 metrics demonstrate that full-time student satisfaction with the 'teaching on my course' is 7.6% above benchmark at 91.9% resulting in an asterisk indicator value in the top 10% of absolute performance.

There are two further asterisk indictors for full-time students for assessment and feedback and academic support. Assessment and feedback is 7.4% above benchmark at 86.3% and academic support is 6% above benchmark at 89.5%.

High level of satisfaction on full-time provision is also reflected in the positive flag achieved for continuation, with metrics demonstrating 6.9% above benchmark at 91.7%, resulting in a positive z-score of 2.5. Similarly, the part-time student satisfaction with 'teaching on my course' is 9.8% above benchmark at 97.8%.

There are three further asterisk indictors for part-time students for assessment and feedback, academic support and continuation. Assessment and feedback is 9.6% above benchmark at 92.9% and academic support is 12.8% above benchmark at 94.5%.

High level of satisfaction on part-time provision is also reflected in the positive single flags for teaching and learning, assessment and feedback, academic support and a positive double flag for continuation on part-time programmes, with metrics demonstrating a positive z-score of 3.3.

Feedback from Riverside College internal Higher Education learner voice surveys in 2017-18, for all courses, demonstrated excellent feedback on the quality of teaching, assessment and feedback and academic support and these positive results were consistent with outcomes of the NSS 2018 survey. Exemplar comments from learner voice feedback on the quality of Higher Education teaching and learning include:

- XX has been an amazing tutor. She always made the lesson interesting and achievable".
- "Met all of my needs. Support offered was amazing"
- "The feedback was always helpful and constructive".
- "The feedback that was given back was timely, fair and completely understandable".
- "The module was a very valuable learning experience".
- "I have enjoyed developing learning and writing academically".
- "The module gave great strategies on how to organise work and how to do quality research".

2.2 Monitoring Quality of Teaching and Learning

There is a Higher Education Quality Cycle in place which ensures that the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is monitored closely throughout the academic year by manager and peer walk throughs.

In 2016-17, Riverside College introduced its 'Great Teaching' initiative; at the heart of which lies the ethos that all staff whatever their grading profile have the aptitude for great teaching, the belief that their teaching can improve and that they are determined to be the very best teachers that they can be. This new and innovative approach was designed to empower teachers to take ownership of their own development through the use of democratic and coaching leadership approaches. Significant time and resources have been allocated to 'Great Teaching'. Central to this strategy is a 360-degree review which involves supportive observations from peers and trained observers, extensive student and peer feedback, teacher self-assessment and 1 to 1 coaching sessions led

by trained coaches to set challenging personal targets (based on the standards from the Education and Training Foundation).

Learners benefit from high expectations, care and support from all staff who use their expertise to deliver teaching, learning and assessment and support to meet each each individual student's needs.

Teaching, learning and assessment are excellent. The College has invested significant time and resources in the development of teachers' professional practice. This has helped to support continuous improvements in outcomes for students across both the Further and Higher Education provision. The significant majority of staff who teach on Higher Education programmes, also teach on Further Education provision.

In 2018, the College's A Level pass rate was 100% with 86% A level high grades. Similarly, there was a 100% vocational pass rate in 2018 with 89% vocational high grades achieved. At 6 November 2019, the pass rate for Higher Education programmes (with an end date of July 2018) was 96% with a predicted pass rate of 100% (5 students with pending achievements due to extenuating circumstances).

100% of staff teaching on Higher Education programmes are qualified teachers; with many having undertaken a post compulsory teacher training qualification internally at Riverside College.

The quality of teaching and learning on Higher Education programmes at Riverside College is something that we are very proud about. Supportive walk throughs have demonstrated that teaching is differentiated and pitched at the correct FHEQ level. Feedback on the quality of teaching and learning from Higher Education peer observations is also consistently good or better.

Curriculum developments in course design (reflected in Higher Education schemes of work) have continued to provide opportunity for students to become more involved in the formative assessment process, therefore enhancing opportunities for assessment for learning through successful peer and self-assessment.

The curriculum on all Higher Education programmes combines a very good balance of vocational and theoretical mix; whilst supporting students to develop higher order, skills of critical thinking and analysis. The curriculum is in line with the subject benchmarks to develop a greater understanding of skills, qualities and attributes required of employees within each sector.

Digital Learning is fully embraced within the Higher Education curriculum and teaching and peer observations report that students benefit greatly from video tutorials, discussion forums and teaching and learning approaches such as Nearpod, Kahoot, Socrative and the use of H5P content on Moodle 3 to provide greater interactivity and blended learning opportunities. In September 2018, the College launched its Digital Learning Strategy.

Progress against the aims of the Digital Learning Strategy is impressive, in so far as there is clear evidence that the strategy is:

- enhancing and extending the learning experience for all students (Quality)
- supporting the development of efficient working practices and systems (Efficiency)
- ensuring staff are equipped with the relevant digital skills to support their roles (Quality, Efficiency)
- exploring alternative markets to support growth (ie blended learning approaches). (Growth)

At least six of Riverside College's teachers on Higher Education programmes are cross-College digital learning gurus; raising the progress of and sharing good practice in digital learning approaches across the Curriculum.

At Riverside College, there is a firm commitment to continuous development of new and existing Higher Education teachers through our Staff Development Programme and also through our

Higher Education Learning Community which meets on a monthly basis. A key focus of this community is the cross discipline moderation of assessments. At Riverside College we are committed to developing the 'dual professional' and developing staff who are expert in their own teaching discipline but who are also fully appreciative of theories and principles of learning that lead to deeper knowledge and conceptual understanding. We also share good practice in the use of digital learning approaches.

New teachers receive support through the New Staff Induction Support Programme and managers through the College Leadership Programme. In addition, a bi-monthly Learning Matters community provides a monthly forum for the College Management Team to reflect on pedagogy and share best teaching practices across all levels.

2.3 Employability and Transferrable Skills

The Staffordshire University approved undergraduate courses that we deliver in franchise are underpinned by a set of graduate attributes (designed to develop and enhance student employability). These were introduced and embedded in 2012 as part of Staffordshire University's restructuring of the curriculum. With 'The Staffordshire Graduate' students are able to develop a set of attributes which cover: Discipline Expertise, Professionalism, Global Citizenship, Communication and Teamwork, Reflective and Critical Learner and Lifelong Learning.

All courses that we deliver that are awarded by Staffordshire University are required to map these employability and transferrable skills into the curriculum at all levels. Programme design is actively informed by engagement with employers.

Our strategy for developing students' employability skills encompasses curriculum design, engagement with employers through visits and guest speakers, careers advice and guidance, careers' fairs and work placement; all of which provide an holistic approach to student employability.

2.4 Supporting Teaching and Learning

To support teaching and learning Riverside College provide opportunities for our students to benefit from:

- Study support workshops
- Voluntary work
- Study trips and visits and guest speakers
- Higher Education New Student Taster Day
- Engagement with quality assurance through Higher Education Academic boards
- Work based learning activities.

In Riverside College's QAA HER report, good practice was reported in relation to the effective integration of all student support services to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Pastoral care is seen as a key strength and both academic tutorials and the Pastoral Support Worker for Adults and Higher Education plays a valuable role in developing students' confidence, mind-set, resilience and academic ability; supporting them to work towards achieving their goals on graduation.
Attendance, retention, punctuality are reported on, on a weekly basis and monitored through the College's STAR online tutor portal. Student achievement is tracked through the Higher Education mark book. Amongst other criteria, we monitor student retention data in relation to ethnicity, disability/difficulty, age, gender and widening participation background.

Any students who are presenting as a 'cause for concern', in relation to attendance, effort or personal issues are discussed at team level and also at cause for concern meetings (held with the Pastoral Support Worker for Adults and Higher Education and the manager of Higher Education). Timely action is taken and an appropriate intervention is put in place in response to causes for concern. It is the College's policy to track and monitor student achievement and progress through

HE Assessment and Academic boards, so that timely interventions can result in improved retention and success. We have developed a broad set of indicators about student engagement, which include not only attendance but also submission of work, engagement with SOLAR (our virtual learning environment) and access to the College's library resources. Academic and pastoral tutorials, Small class sizes and individualised support are essential in retaining students.

2.5 Tutorial Support for Higher Education students

Our personal tutorial strategy enables our Higher Education teachers to have a full picture of the learner assessing performance and support development from a range of perspectives.

Each learner receives at least one tutorial per semester. They frequently have the opportunity to attend two tutorials during any module and additional tutorials can be arranged outside of the rota to suit the learner. This ensures that learners have access to quality tutorials conducted by those teaching the modules.

Personal tutors use the Higher Education Induction Questionnaire/Academic Skills Profile and robust initial assessment to provide them with a full profile of the student on entry and to identify any additional learning needs. Learners who indicate a learning need are given a priority tutorial before half-term to assist and review progress in terms of DSA application. The tutor is able to differentiate support according to need, this may involve a referral to Study Services who provide diagnostic support and DSA information or a referral to the Higher Education and Adult Pastoral Support Worker who can provide further additional tutorial support to maximise the chance of student success. The impact of our tutorial system can be seen in the NSS 2018 for Academic Support and most importantly, it enriches and enhances the student experience.

The College's formal staff performance management system works alongside our Great Teaching Strategy (embedded within which are the Education and Training Foundation Professional Standards). The Great Teaching Strategy (introduced in September 2016) was designed to support the College's move towards an outstanding grade in our next inspection of Further Education and Skills.

Based on sound evidence based practice, this new and innovative approach was designed to empower teachers to take ownership of their own development through the use of democratic and coaching leadership approaches. It also brings about learning on current research in teaching and learning as well as teacher-led research and inquiry into theory and practice. This then leads to engaging research discussions across the organisation.

Significant time and resources have been allocated to Great Teaching. The process involves supportive observations from peers and trained observers using the Education and Training Foundation Standards as criteria for performance, extensive student and peer feedback, teacher self-assessment and 1 to 1 coaching sessions led by trained coaches.

Almost 2 1/2 years into the strategy there are clear and tangible benefits for teachers and students. Teachers are noticeably taking an active and increased role in their own development. This has led to a growth mind-set, where there is a strong culture of belief that teaching can always be improved; whether through traditional teaching methods or through championing smarter and more effective ways of working (for example embracing digital learning strategies). Staff are enthusiastic and committed to ensuring excellent outcomes for every student.

There has been an associated impact on students. Students have benefitted from high expectations, care and support from all staff who use their expertise to deliver teaching, learning, assessment and support to meet each individual student's needs. Staff are able to draw on excellent subject knowledge, imaginative and well-chosen teaching and learning techniques to develop students' skills and understanding at a very high level. The sharing of best practice through cross College CPD sessions, the Great Teaching virtual learning environment and through the Higher Education Learning Community has enhanced performance.

Our Higher Education students are becoming more self-aware and self-assured; their standard of work is high and the quality of teaching and learning is adding value and increasing achievement on programme. There is tangible evidence that there has been an improvement in the resilience and motivation of our Higher Education students; which has resulted in improved retention and a determination to succeed to the best of their ability.

2.6 Quality Monitoring

Riverside College has a number of processes for monitoring performance in the context of student outcomes and experiences on Higher Education programmes. These include:

- meticulous monitoring of course planning (schemes of work, Solar (VLE), course handbook content)
- weekly programme management reports on retention and attendance;
- weekly SMT operational meetings, where day to day key performance indicators are systematically reviewed and actions for improvement agreed;
- monitoring of results by module/unit through Higher Education assessment board reports;
- monitoring of academic board reports and course performance mid and end of year.

Both qualitative and quantitative data is used systematically to evaluate engagement and retention in order to gather evidence of impact for accountability, to assess value for money and to support new developments and the enhancement of the student experience. Academic monitoring systematically leads to a structured Higher Education enhancement plan, the contents of which are supported by external examiner comments and verified by both student representatives and our Senior Management Team. Below are examples of 2017-2018 external examiner feedback from one full-time and one part-time course.

2.7 External Examiner Feedback – Higher Education Programmes

Certificate/Post Graduate Certificate in Education (part-time)
"The marking of all assignments that I sampled had been conducted fairly and consistently and marks were against the marking criteria. Consequently, students were clear regarding what they needed to do in order to meet the requirements of the assignments. The feedback in all of the assignments I sampled was detailed, contained developmental feedback and was consistent."

HND Computing (full-time)
"Feedback to candidates is timely and comprehensive, allowing candidates to understand how to develop further. The use of Moodle and Turnitin to hold all assessments is good, facilitating clear audit trail and easy access for all involved to the appropriate documentation".

2.8 Enhancement and Student Consultation: the Higher Education Learner Voice

Central to all quality assurance reviews and quality improvement of our Higher Education provision is student consultation. We use a range of methods to collect evidence to support evaluation of impact including end of module/unit surveys, Higher Education Learner Voice surveys, student group surveys, Higher Education Learner Voice forums, attendance of Higher Education learner representatives at the Higher Education Learning Community (where the Student Partnership Agreement is reviewed and updated annually), student representative attendance at course team meetings and Higher Education Academic boards. We also use learner voice feedback to continue to work with our widening participation students to identify activities and interventions to support retention.

Our Higher Education student focus group surveys are led by the student representatives and encourage a student-led approach to identifying reasons for both positive and, on rare occasion, less positive responses to HE surveys. The student representative has the responsibility of probing to identify any root causes of any areas for concern, capturing a group consensus and

bringing realistic solutions to the Higher Education Learner Voice forum to improve the student experience.

Actions taken as a result of student feedback are disseminated to students through “You said, we did” posters, by the student representative to their group and through the HE Learner Voice Solar site (VLE). An example of change that has impacted positively was the updating of hardware in the Higher Education dedicated Study Room; as students had reported slow performance of some PCs.

To-date, Higher Education learner voice surveys have focused on induction, curriculum design, marketing of the Higher Education provision, student financial support, ways in which to enhance the quality of provision, transition to Higher Education arrangements, the development of study skills for progression and support to gain employment through careers events. Feedback from students supports the consistent quality of teaching, learning, assessment, feedback and academic support at Riverside College; thus reflecting our culture of continuous improvement and enhancement which puts students first and foremost and central to our vision and values. This internal feedback also triangulates with our TEF 4 metrics.

3 Learning Environment

At Riverside College, we have recruited inspiring and highly skilled Higher Education teachers with vast industrial experience to ensure learning helps our students to reach their full potential. Teachers offer outstanding support within a respectful and supportive learning environment which encourages high standards at all times.

Over the last few years, Riverside College has invested over £12 million in its campuses in order to create state of the art learning facilities and modern social areas. We have new computer suites, engineering workshops, learning centres and social areas. Teaching rooms have been refurbished to provide a more student-centred learning experience. Further investment has been made in the IT infrastructure to improve the speed of the wi-fi and our student portal has been enhanced with added functionality for students. The College has also invested heavily in i-pads to promote interactive learning; this has been strengthened by the introduction of the I-pad Project where 8 curriculum areas now have access to a dedicated trolley of 16 i-pads for use by their students. In addition, the College has 90 i-pads available for use across both campuses.

Learning is supported through Learning Resource Centres at both our Kingsway and Cronton Campuses providing access to a wide range of facilities, resources and support. There is also a dedicated study area for Higher Education students at our Kingsway Campus (where the significant majority of our Higher Education courses take place). The Learning Resource Centre staff at both Kingsway and Cronton Campus support students effectively and have delivered sessions to develop academic writing.

Students have access to e-books and e-resources through the College intranet. Riverside College’s learning resource centres have an extensive range of academic texts to support learning. E-books, digital magazines, on-line databases and digital archives are accessible through our Go-Research platform. Students who are enrolled onto programmes validated by Staffordshire University are also able to access their extensive catalogue of e-resources. There is a library digital induction available to support students and staff to make best use of library resources and facilities.

Each Higher Education course is supported by a comprehensive virtual learning environment (Solar), where internal audits have reported strong evidence of the use of a wide range of teaching, learning and assessment resources. Solar is used extensively across Higher Education programmes. Resources available to students via Solar include programme handbooks, schemes of work and extensive lesson and study skills resources. There are dedicated Higher Education Solar sites to support all Higher Education students including the Higher Education Study Skills Solar site and Higher Education Student Support.

In NSS 2018, 91% of Higher Education students agreed that learning resources supported their learning well, and they had been able to access course-specific resources (e.g. equipment, facilities, software, collections) when they needed to.

The provision of hardware and software across all teaching rooms and the learning resource centres is reviewed annually to assess currency/fit for purpose and to identify any additional resource requirements. New hardware and software are purchased annually to suit user and course delivery requirements. For example, to support the HND Computing programme, two new suites of computers were introduced in 2016-17 with specialist software including Unity (for Gaming), Blender (3D Modelling, Python, Visual Studio and Virtual Reality software.

The College uses a range of learning resources to support and enhance students' learning and development; not only in relation to their subject discipline but also wider skills such as independent learning, critical thinking and research.

In Summer 2017, the College opened its Innovation, Digital Engineering and Applications Centre (IDEA Centre). The IDEA Centre offers our students and their employers innovative STEM training facilities including an advanced manufacturing workshop, a digital technology laboratory and electronics suite, a process control workshop, a health and fitness laboratory, a project management suite, a 3D modelling suite and an Industry 4.0 suite which will prepare our Engineering students for the Industry 4.0 trend of automation and data exchange in manufacturing technologies. The IDEA Centre was part funded by the Liverpool City Region's £232 million Growth Deal (secured by the Local Enterprise Partnership) and is sponsored by local employers in a range of sectors including Automation, Aviation and Rail. The IDEA Centre provides a dynamic learning environment where our Sports, Engineering, Health and Social Care and Computing Higher Education students can develop the skill sets required to use the latest advanced technologies and to drive productivity improvements within their own field of work. In doing so, it will increase the capability of regional business to compete in global markets.

Our HNC Engineering students benefit from using a fully operational and comprehensive Pneumatics and Hydraulics workshop and an advanced materials testing laboratory with a high focus on NDT (Non Destructive Testing) giving learners to opportunity to use state of the art Ultrasonic's and Magnetic Particle testing equipment. Students have access to the latest digital fabrication equipment for prototyping, such as 3D printers. There is a strong focus on computer science and computer programming, virtual reality technologies, sensors, and robotics, flow level control systems, and pneumatic and hydraulic systems.

Our HND Computing students benefit from state of the art IT suites and specialist software which develop the skills and competences to access many exciting career opportunities in Computing and IT. Our Foundation Degree and Top-up Degree Sport students benefit from studying in a health and fitness laboratory where they have first-hand experience of using ergonometric equipment to measure heart rates, an industrial treadmill for gait analysis, heal strike and posture and balance, a Concept 2 running machine for biometric analysis and Quintic Sports Video Analysis Software, for Sports biomechanics and
performance analysis. This enables them to combine theory with practical application and develop essential skills for the health profession and leisure industries.

Our Health and Social Care students benefit from our newly refurbished clinical practice ward with the latest equipment which allows student to gain both theory and invaluable practical experience which will support them to employment in their chosen sector. At the end of academic year 2017-18, improvements were made to our fully equipped Counselling suites, allowing our Foundation Degree and Top-up Degree Counselling students to practise and develop essential skills in a realistic work environment.

Learning does not just take place within the classroom, but also between lessons. Higher Education students benefit from trips and visits both locally and regionally such as Daresbury

Science and Technology Park where our HND Computing students assisted in the organisation and judging of its First Lego League competition at the Sci Tech Daresbury laboratories; and Media City in Salford where they experienced a tour around the studio's electronics/IT infrastructure.

In 2017, Riverside College Counselling Foundation and Degree students and staff partnered with USA charity Sidewalk Talk to create its first UK division and since 2017 have provided community listening events in the UK during Mental Health Awareness Week (including working with local residents in community settings

Sidewalk Talk community listening events involve inviting members of the public to sit with volunteers and talk about anything they choose. Listeners do not give advice or make judgements; they just listen with empathy and can point in the direction of further support services if needed. Supporting people locally at community sessions and at the One Love Manchester concert provided an invaluable learning opportunity for students by developing their confidence and understanding of counselling skills and mental health.

In December 2018, Riverside College were delighted to host The World Health Innovation Summit (WHIS) Education Day which provided a platform for speakers to exchange knowledge on the healthcare industry and for communities to share ideas to help improve healthcare services. The was an inspiring event designed to raise awareness of mental health issues. The College welcomed guest speakers Gareth Presch (WHIS CEO and founder) and clinical psychologist Dr Adam Bradford Psy. D to talk about the outstanding work that is done by the organisation and discuss topics including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. In 2017, an audience of almost two hundred Counselling and Health and Social Care students attended the World Health Innovation Summit at Riverside College and listened to inspirational talks from notable guest speakers including; Labour MP and President of the Labour Campaign for Mental Health Luciana Berger, CEO of the WHIS Gareth Presch, and Traci Ruble founder and director of Sidewalk Talk.

4 Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

Riverside College Higher Education students perform well in relation to learning gain and distance travelled. We are particularly proud of this achievement because many of our students are recruited from areas of low participation in Higher Education, are mature, following a part-time mode of study and may not have achieved well in compulsory education. Overall Higher Education achievement rates for those students who complete their studies have been consistently above 95% for the past 3 academic years.

Continuation is also very good on both full and part-time programmes. This is due to the high levels of satisfaction that students experience in their academic studies. TEF 4 metrics show a positive single flag for continuation on full-time provision (z-score of 2.5) and a positive double flag for continuation on part-time programmes, with metrics demonstrating a positive z-score of 3.3.

As mentioned earlier, the College acknowledges that there is a single negative blue flag (-) in the TEF 4 metric splits (part-time mode) for highly skilled employment or further study (male). Our reported TEF 4 metrics for part-time students gaining highly skilled employment is 71.6% against a national average of 80.5%.

The college recruits 44% of its part-time students from POLAR quintile 1 and a further 11% from POLAR quintile 2. It recruits 52% of full-time students from quintile 1 and 21% from quintile 2. This has an impact on the social and financial situation for our students. The significant majority of our part-time students are not entitled to a maintenance loan, so consequently, a large number of students have part-time jobs and combine work with study to support their income. Moreover, the ability to seek highly skilled worked is directly influenced by their personal and family responsibilities and commitments and the availability of graduate employment opportunities in the North West of England compared with other regions.

Many students on our part-time Foundation Degree in Counselling students have progressed onto the BSc (Hons) Counselling (top-up year), or work as counsellors on a part-time basis in local community and educational settings. In 2018, 11 out of 12 Foundation Degree in Education students progressed onto the BA (Hons) Education (part-time), 7 out of 8 Foundation Degree in Health and Social Care students (full-time) progressed onto our BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care top-up and 100% Foundation Degree in Sport Coaching and PE (full-time) progressed onto the BA (Hons) Sport Coaching and Sport Development at Riverside College.

Some graduates progress to train to teach on our part-time Certificate and Post Graduate Certificate in Education. Our post compulsory education and training graduates of 2017-18 are all now employed but a small minority have chosen to pursue a role in a learner support /mentor capacity as opposed to a full-teaching commitment which takes them away from the area.

The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education report issued in 2018, shows that 90% of Riverside College's graduates were in work or work/study 6 months after graduation. With 8% engaged in other activities and 1% unemployed. The median salary achieved was £29,000. The majority of our HNC Engineering graduates are under 25, and may be required to obtain further work related and vocational experience within their field before applying for higher level positions. This could feasibly take longer than 6 months for graduates to achieve their career aspirations of highly skilled roles (therefore impacting on metrics relating to highly skilled employment and further study).

As mentioned in paragraph 1.3.2, our graduates are often fundamentally disadvantaged in the labour market due to restricted opportunities for geographical relocation because of family commitments. This should be factored in and taken into consideration when assessing TEF 4 metrics for highly skilled employment. For some graduates, they may not yet be in a position to apply for managerial positions or promotion outside of the locality until such a time when their dependents are less reliant upon them.

However, that aside, in the supplementary LEO metrics and flag profile across all splits, TEF metrics (part-time) demonstrate a further two asterisk indicators for sustained employment or further study (1.2% above benchmark at 92.8%) and above medium earnings threshold or further study (2.6% above benchmark at 92%). The same metrics for full-time mode of study are less positive but as mentioned earlier, this may well be attributed to social and family responsibilities; the demographics of the area from which the college recruits and the need to gain further experience before securing highly skilled employment.

At Riverside College, we are very proud of the fact that year-on-year we are improving accessibility for non-traditional Level 4 learners into Higher Education. Our students not only achieve the outcome of a highly reputable qualification but equally as important, develop confidence and a 'can-do' attitude that promotes greater individual and social aspiration. This in turn influences member of the community in which our graduates reside by encouraging friends and family to seek similar opportunities for themselves.

4.1 Recognition of Student Achievement

The College recognises its Higher Education student achievement through a monthly student of the month award, for criteria such as commitment to study, overcoming personal challenges and effort. Our annual Higher Education graduation ceremony is attended by governors, representatives from local businesses, family and staff to celebrate and award students for their achievements. Student of the Year awards are given to exceptional students who have exceeded their potential or overcome personal challenges.

In 2016, HE Student of the Year was awarded to a HNC Engineering graduate who ten years' previously in 2005 enrolled onto the Foundation Construction Award at Riverside College. He then progressed and successfully achieved qualifications at Level 1 and 2 before completing the Level 3 Extended Diploma in Mechanical Manufacturing Engineering as part of an Apprenticeship

programme at Riverside College. He is now permanently employed in a management role at a local Engineering company.

In 2017, HE Student of Year was awarded to a Foundation Degree in Counselling graduate who became fully absorbed in every aspect of learning, including being the voice for the students as a student representative over the 3-year duration of the programme. The student took on every ounce of experience from the course to secure employment and build a local business as a counsellor working with local clients presenting with addictions.

In 2018, HE Student of the Year was awarded to a Foundation Degree in Education graduate who was the first person in the family to achieve a Higher Education qualification and also a prime example of how hard work, a desire to learn and resilience can help overcome barriers to achieve results.

5 Conclusion

The College's commitment to a culture of continuous improvement, high quality teaching, learning, assessment and feedback and stakeholder partnership is central to its key goals of efficiency, quality and growth. By putting the student at the very heart of what we do, we are able to demonstrate improved learning gain, a safe and collaborative learning culture (at the core of which lies the Higher Education Student Partnership Agreement) and a learning environment which is dynamic and where staff drive improvement through a willingness to be the best they can be. We have a strong sense of community, where students and staff are collaborative partners within the learning journey.

We believe that Higher Education (as highlighted in the HE Student of the Year case studies in Section 4.1) is a transformational experience and, for many, the catalyst for social mobility. Participation in Higher Education at a local level supports students from widening participation backgrounds to work towards and achieve their academic potential whilst providing new experiences and opportunities for personal growth and greater employment choices.

This change can only be achieved by understanding our students' backgrounds, their experiences and needs, and personalising our academic and pastoral support to help them to reach their potential. We do this very well. Key to this success is the dedicated and committed team of Higher Education teachers and pastoral support staff.

The impact of our culture and approaches is clearly demonstrated both by TEF 4 metrics and by the additional supporting information provided in this submission. With regards to our full-time provision, we exceeded benchmarks with 3 asterisks for teaching, assessment and feedback and academic support and 1 positive flag for continuation. We also exceeded benchmarks in our part-time provision with 3 single positive flags and one double positive flag for continuation. These are metrics which reflect our outstanding performance in teaching, learning and academic support. On employment outcomes, as detailed in earlier paragraphs, the geographical context is a crucial consideration. However, overall our performance is very impressive.

Our provision continues to grow in response to employer and local needs and we have an unrelenting passion to support all of our students to develop the knowledge and skills for success in life and employment.

We are confident that this submission reflects the culture and values of Higher Education at Riverside College of which we as a growing provider are very proud.