

Regulatory case report for Norland College Limited: Ongoing condition B3 investigation outcome

Summary

This report confirms that the Office for Students (OfS) has found Norland College Limited (the college) compliant with ongoing condition of registration B3 (student outcomes). Our investigation concluded that contextual factors relating to the way the indicators are constructed justified the college's performance in relation to our B3 numerical thresholds.

Background

Norland College delivers a full-time integrated degree and diploma course leading to a BA (Honours) degree in Early Years Development and Learning, and a bespoke Norland Diploma. This blends academic theory with practice, to ensure students graduate with early years knowledge, practical skills, and placement experiences in the care and education of babies and young children.

The college was selected for assessment of its compliance with ongoing condition of registration B3 (student outcomes) as part of the OfS's 2022-23 annual prioritisation cycle. As set out in 'Regulatory advice 20: Regulating student outcomes'¹) each year the OfS decides:

- which student outcome measures, modes and level of study we wish to prioritise
- whether we should focus on any particular split indicators, such as subject of study or student characteristics, or on any other themes
- how many cases we will assess in that year.

We published the final prioritised categories for 2022-23 in a statement on the OfS website in November 2022.²

Our investigation into Norland College's student outcomes focused on progression rates for its full-time, first degree courses. This was because its performance as shown in the OfS's 2022 student outcomes data dashboards indicated that only 3.7 per cent of all qualifiers from such courses between 2017-18 and 2019-20 (inclusive) had progressed into managerial or professional

¹ See OfS, [Regulatory advice 20: Regulating student outcomes](#).

² See OfS, [Statement about ongoing condition B3 prioritisation criteria](#).

employment, or further study, within 15 months of leaving higher education.³ This performance was 56.3 percentage points below the OfS's numerical threshold of 60 per cent.

Investigation outcome

As set out in Regulatory advice 20, we considered contextual information already held by the OfS that may have enabled us to judge that the college's performance in relation to the indicators in scope was justified, despite being below the relevant numerical thresholds. This included benchmark information (which allows us to understand how well a provider has performed compared with the performance for similar types of students on similar types of courses in the higher education sector as a whole), as well as information about the size and shape of the college's provision.

On benchmarking, we noted the college's performance was below the relevant benchmark for each of the indicators for which benchmark data was available.⁴ We therefore concluded that on the basis of the information we held at that stage, the OfS could not consider the college's performance against the indicators in scope justified. We then proceeded to open an investigation of the college's compliance with ongoing condition B3.

In accordance with Regulatory advice 20, we engaged with the college and invited it to submit contextual information relevant to our assessment of its performance. Our engagement involved meeting with the college to discuss our request, provide further explanation about why it had been selected for investigation, and answer questions.

The college then submitted contextual information which we assessed alongside the other information we held.

Our investigation concluded that the college's performance was justified by its context, that its graduates were achieving positive progression outcomes by accessing well-paid employment as Norland Nannies, the profession for which their studies prepare them.

Specifically, we have concluded that the college delivers courses designed to provide access to a particular profession that is not classified as managerial or professional in the way the progression indicator has been constructed.

The progression indicator is constructed using the Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) codes 1 to 3, which cover the range of SOC codes that contribute towards positive progression outcomes. We acknowledge that, for some specialist providers, students achieve employment in their intended occupation even though this may sit outside of managerial and professional employment as defined by this approach. However, this will be true of any approach that we might use to define progression outcomes and our consideration of the provider's context allows for this.

³ Available under 'Archived data' at [2022 student outcomes data](#). Progression measures are constructed from data reported through the Graduate Outcomes survey. They report on the proportion of qualifiers from higher education qualifications who have been included on the Graduate Outcomes target list, responded to the survey, and reported that they have progressed to professional or managerial employment, further study, or other positive outcomes, 15 months after gaining their qualification.

⁴ Benchmark data is not available for postgraduate provision.

The majority of the college's respondents to the Graduate Outcomes survey reported that their employment fell within SOC code 6116, 'Nannies and au pairs'.⁵ SOC code 6116 does not fall within SOC classifications 1 to 3 and therefore is not included as a positive outcome in the construction of the progression indicator. If SOC code 6116, 'Nannies and au pairs', was included as a positive outcome for the progression indicator, Norland College would have a progression indicator performance of 88.5 per cent, significantly above the numerical threshold of 60 per cent.

More than 90 per cent of respondents to the Graduate Outcomes Survey that fell into the 'Non-professional employment' category reported that they use the skills developed on their course in their employment after graduation. Additionally, the Longitudinal Education Outcomes data shows that these graduates achieve above average earnings.⁶

During the investigation, the college provided additional contextual information to the OfS about the employment destinations of its graduates, their salaries on graduation and the support it offers to its students to ensure positive progression into employment on graduation and throughout their careers as Norland Nannies.

On the basis of the contextual information submitted by the college, and taking into account the above factors, the OfS was satisfied that Norland College delivers positive progression outcomes for its graduates. We therefore judged the college to be complying with ongoing condition B3, and closed our investigation without any further regulatory action.

⁵ See [Graduate Outcomes](#).

⁶ See GOV.uk, [LEO Graduate outcomes provider level data: Tax year 2019-20](#). Median gross annual earnings for full-time UK employees in April 2020 was £31,487 (table 2, row 7). Median earnings for Norland College's 2015-16 graduates (based on 45 graduates with known earnings), three years after graduation, was £37,700.