



Student Submission.

1. Approach to evidence gathering.

My role in representing Activate Learning's higher education students has been largely remote due to the geographical spread of the 6 different colleges over 8 campuses at which courses are delivered and the variety of different modes of study. I have carried out this project individually as a student with support from the Activate Learning Higher Education Learning Partnership (HELP) team via regular meetings and correspondence in order to exchange data and review progress.

Alongside this, we agreed when initially discussing the project that both the student and provider submissions would be shared between parties before final submission. I have based the content of this report on information provided by the college however it is important to declare that I received no undue influence from any staff member during the composition of this document. And all remarks/ feedback have come from higher education students at Activate Learning.

I have focused on using pre-existing evidence sources including previous NSS statistics as well as an internal survey taken by all higher education students, across all courses which I have categorised into student experiences and student outcomes. This evidence includes feedback from students studying the following courses:

FdA in Furniture Design and Make
/BA (Hons) in Furniture Design and Make (top-up)
FdA in Educational Practice
FdEd in Children's Development and Learning
BA (Hons) in Educational Practice (top-up)
PGCE
HNC in Mechanical Engineering
HNC in Electrical and Electronic Engineering
HNC in Sport and Exercise Science
HND in Sport and Exercise Science
FdSc in Sports Coaching, Fitness and Rehabilitation
BSc (Hons) in Sports Coaching, Fitness and Rehabilitation (top-up)
FdSc in Animal Behaviour and Welfare
FdSc in Companion Animal Behaviour
FdSs in Animal Science
FdSc in Wildlife and Conservation
FdSc in Zoo Management
BSc (Hons) in Animal Behaviour and Welfare (top-up)
BSs (Hons) in Animal Science (top-up)
BSc (Hons) in Wildlife and Conservation (top-up)
BSc (Hons) in Zoo Management (top-up)
FdSc in Counselling
BA (Hons) in Counselling (Top up)

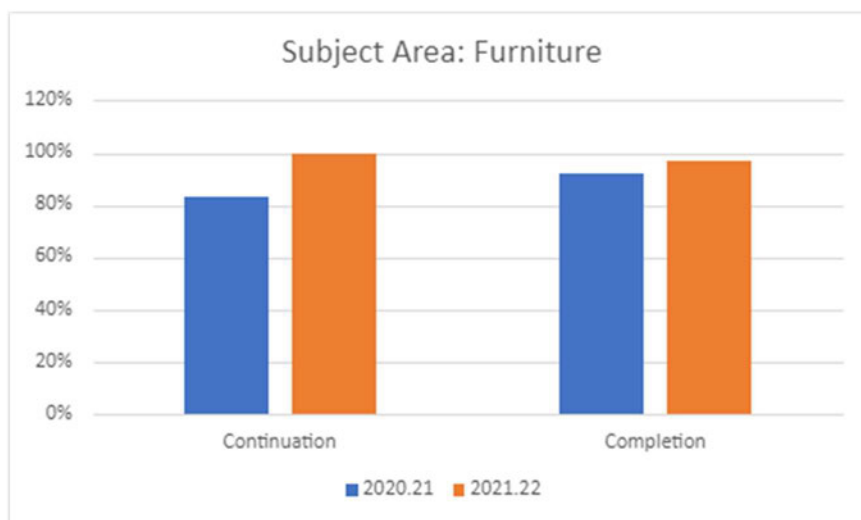
I am a Furniture Design and Make student at Rycotewood Furniture Centre on the City of Oxford College and University Centre campus. My background includes experience in the furniture design and making industry so when the opportunity arose to coordinate this report, I was keen to volunteer. I was initially drawn to my course through Rycotewood's reputation in the furniture design / making industry and its location in central Oxford The structure of the course also allows me to which is important when it comes to acquiring tools and equipment which help with our studies. I was pleased to learn that Rycotewood welcomes a large variety of students . The

2. Student Experience & Outcomes

Furniture Design and Make.

Courses include: *FdA in Furniture Design and Make, BA (Hons) top-up in Furniture Design and Make*

The Rycotewood Furniture Centre is located at our City of Oxford College and University Centre and has been educating furniture students since 1938. Rycotewood has established itself as a nationally renowned centre of excellence delivering vocational training for people looking to pursue a career in furniture design and making. The course takes on students who are both full and part time and all students are campus based (exception during covid). In total, there are 100 students studying on the furniture courses in 2022/23.



As a result of undertaking an internal student satisfaction survey during 2021/22, the following comments were made by furniture students:

Strengths	Areas for improvement
There is a real sense of community in the whole of Rycotewood. Staff and students have good working relationships and peer to peer learning is helped by this.	More interaction between year groups.
The community within Rycotewood is very helpful, a very 'happy place' to learn.	More guest tutors for specialist areas such as wood turning or carving.

All teaching staff are clearly passionate about the course and subject matter, which is great for our learning and enjoyment of the course.	Maybe more lessons on specific manufacturing methods.
Great support from staff regarding the course as well as guidance and advice in preparation for after graduation.	More talks from people in industry.
The facilities for the course are exceptional and having lots of skilled technicians helps when approaching new tasks.	Sometimes the 'points of improvement' section of feedback doesn't contain much in the way of explaining where marks can be gained.

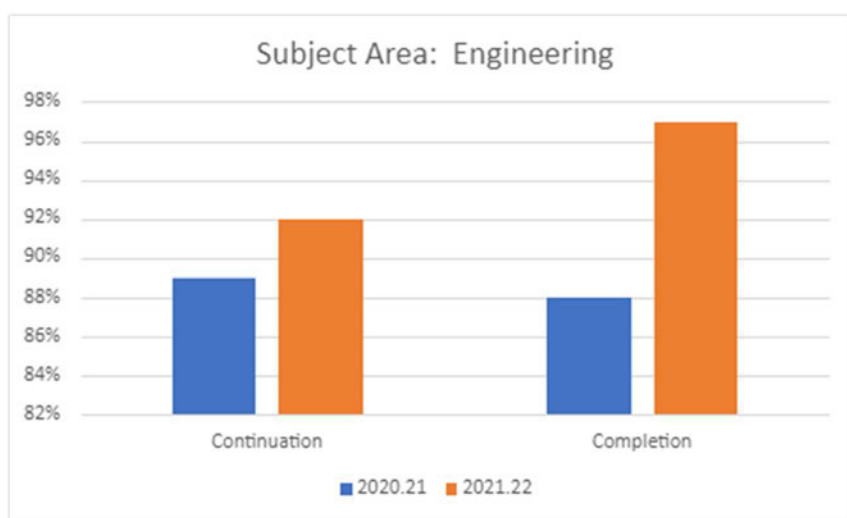
Summary

From the data/evidence above it would seem that the high continuation & completion rates on the furniture courses are due to a 'happy', positive learning environment where support is readily available and the syllabus provides freedom within students' work. On balance, the main strength of the Furniture courses is the accessibility of workshop facilities as well as experienced staff available to offer support and useful guidance. Furthermore, the main point for development would be to introduce a focus on specific industry skills which may enhance students' employability on leaving the course.

Engineering

Courses include: *HNC in Mechanical Engineering*, *HNC in Electrical and Electronic Engineering*.

Based at Reading College and University Centre, the engineering programmes are delivered on a part-time or block-release basis and all students are employed and employer-sponsored. In total, there are part-time students studying engineering in 2022/23.



As a result of undertaking an internal student satisfaction survey during 2021/2022, the following comments were made by engineering students:

Strengths	Areas for improvement
Having access to specialist software and other learning resources	A greater emphasis on practical skills to support the theory would be helpful
Having coursework-based assignments	The timelines of providing feedback could be improved.
The tutors have given excellent feedback	Due to the timetable, students can feel that at times they're being left behind.

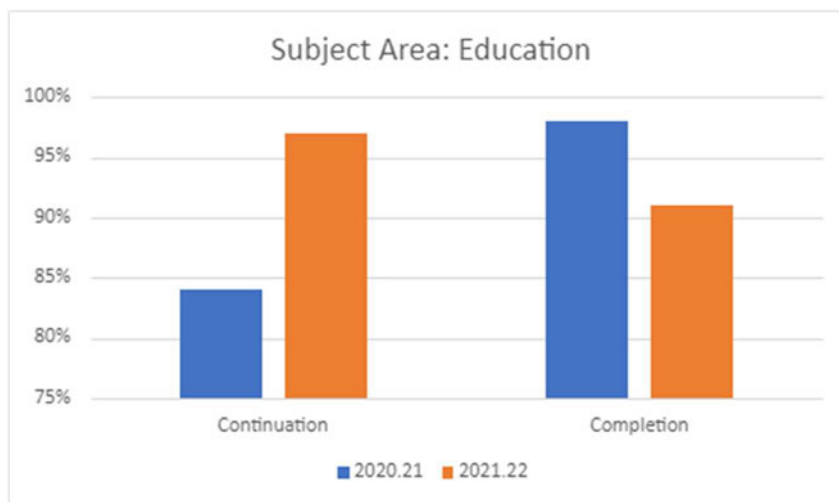
Summary

Similar to the furniture courses, the main strength of the Engineering courses is the access to software and other useful resources/facilities and the main area for further development is the structure and organisation of the courses; this could be a potential reason for the slightly lower continuation (89%) & completion (88%) rates from 2020/21 – Covid19 inevitably made structuring and coordinating timetables more challenging.

Education

Courses Include: *FdA in Educational Practice*, *FdEd in Children's Development and Learning*, *BA (Hons) in Educational Practice (top-up)*, and *PGCE*

Activate learning's courses in education are located at the City of Oxford College and University Centre and Bracknell and Wokingham College campuses and include a combination of offsite and on-site teaching. Students studying PGCE attend a part time schedule whereas the remaining students attend the college full time with a total of students studying in 2022/23.



As a result of undertaking an internal student satisfaction survey during 2021/22 the following comments were made by students:

Strengths	Areas for improvement
Tutors are friendly, helpful and Approachable. ALO is easy to use and	How to improve grades overall (not just sharing rubrics) more consideration of workload.

I like that the course info / reading list etc. are all easily accessible.	
Instructors explain the expected task outcome clearly and repeatedly. Instructors are approachable and encourage questions.	Latest reading resources are not sufficient in the library. More group tasks might help to learn from one another.
The content has immediately given me theories and strategies to implement to my teaching and I am considering and evaluating my teaching approach.	Oxford College lacks access to up-to-date educational books - we do have access to Oxford Brookes library but this is difficult to get to due to and the course being held in Oxford College.
The balance of the workload and having all the deadlines at the start of the year.	The modules overlap too much and run for extensive periods of time with lots of breaks in between. It makes you lose focus and get distracted by other modules current at the time
Support for me has been very good and feedback on assignments has been excellent.	Could be given the choice to study online or offline depending on students' preference.
Tutors are super communicative and make themselves available and are always on hand to offer support.	More lectures style lessons, leaving more time at the end for completing essays.

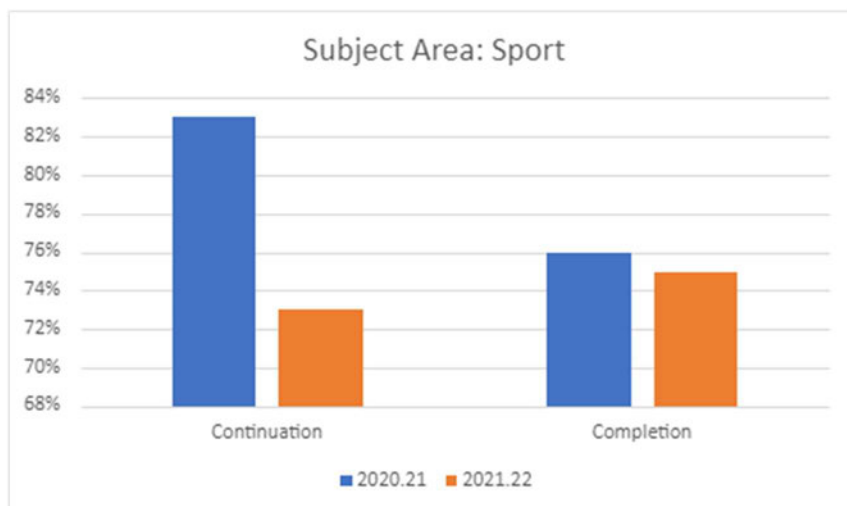
Summary

On balance, the main strength of the Education courses is the engaging, informative content which students feel they can carry forward after graduating, whereas the main area for further development is the lack of up-to-date resources and reading materials. The continuation and completion statistics are generally very high for the education courses, possibly because of the support from tutors. However, there was a slight drop in continuation rates in 2021/22. There is a chance this was a result of Covid19 – students completed the year but were not able to continue onto further years.

Sport

Courses include: *HNC in Sport and Exercise Science*, *HND in Sport and Exercise Science*, *FdSc in Sports Coaching, Fitness and Rehabilitation*, and *BSc (Hons) in Sports Coaching, Fitness and Rehabilitation (top-up)*

FdSc and BSc courses are located at the City of Oxford College and University Centre campus and are awarded by Oxford Brookes University. The HNC/D courses are delivered via blended learning with students undertaking the practical aspects of their programme at various football clubs. The courses prepare students for a career in sports, coaching, fitness and rehabilitation with onsite gyms that are filled with the latest sports and training equipment. In total, there are 178 full-time students studying sports in 2022/23.



As a result of undertaking an internal student satisfaction survey during 2021/22 in which the following comments were made by students:

Strengths	Areas for improvement
The staff have been friendly and welcomed me into the course. The content of the course is varied which makes it interesting.	Perhaps to add more courses dealing with football coaching and some optional internships in professional football clubs.
I have felt incredibly supported as a student throughout my course. Tutors have listened to my doubts / questions and provided constructive feedback which was very encouraging!	Content could be released at least a few days prior to the lesson as some students might want to prepare for lessons. It would be great to do more outdoor activities e.g., visit sport centres, gymnasium etc.
Module leaders have great teaching skills. More diversity in practical and theory lessons compared to last year	ALO can provide more updates on sports teams and societies.
One area that has been good is 1:1 feedback session with lectures. Structure of each module was good and have enjoyed most of the assignments	One improvement could be to have bigger time spaces between lectures. When there's an exam to have a session on revision and the content of the exam.
Tutorial sessions with learning support tutor. Formative feedback sessions	Maybe a sports kit or Oxford Brookes hoodie can be given to students.
Contacting staff when I need and fast replies back. Feedback comments for assignments	Bursary explained to be

Summary

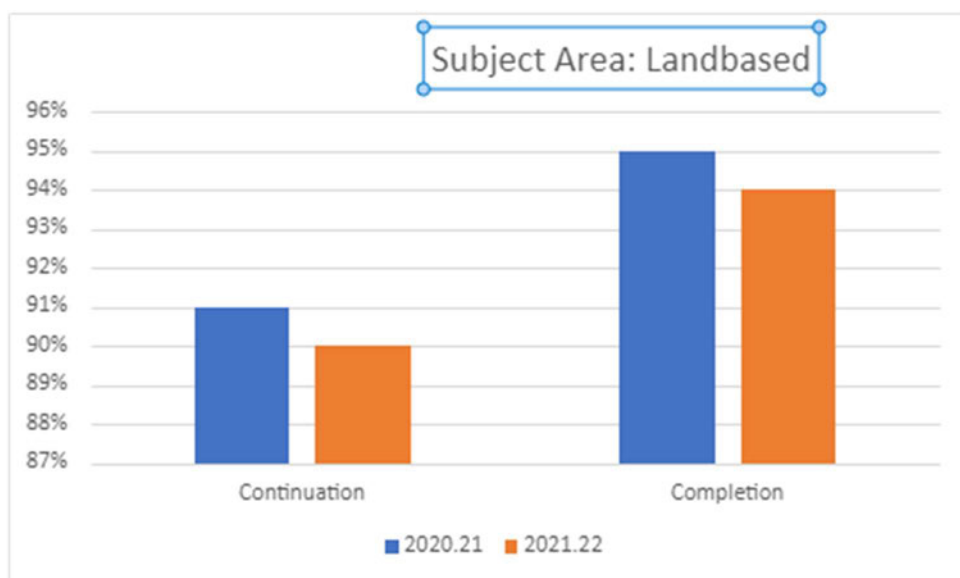
In summary, the main strength of the Sports courses is the quality of feedback from staff as well as students feeling supported by tutors. The main area which students reported could use further development is the link between Activate Learning and Oxford Brookes University - this integration doesn't necessarily occur naturally due to the sports courses

being delivered on a different campus to the majority of Oxford Brookes Courses. In comparison to the majority of Activate Learning's HE subject areas, Sports has a marginally lower continuation & completion percentage (Still achieving 73 – 83%) Several students commented on the workload of their course and lectures being very "information heavy" which suggests that the nature of the course is more intensive than others.

Land based.

Courses Include: *FdSc in Animal Behaviour and Welfare*, *FdSc in Companion Animal Behaviour*, *FdSc in Animal Science*, *FdSc in Wildlife and Conservation*, *FdSc in Zoo Management*, *BSc (Hons) in Animal Behaviour and Welfare*, *BSs (Hons) in Animal Science*, *BSc (Hons) in Wildlife and Conservation*, and *BSc (Hons) in Zoo Management*

Merrist Wood is highly regarded in the animal industry as the leading animal education establishment in Surrey, with a wide range of animal care courses. There are well-equipped animal management resources including collections of domestic, companion, and exotic animals as well as a grooming parlour and supporting facilities for canine care. The college has wide links with industry and tuition is by highly qualified and experienced tutors who ensure students gain the best possible grounding in their chosen career. In total, full-time students are studying in 2022/23.



As a result of undertaking an internal student satisfaction survey during 2021/22 in which the following comments were made by students:

Strengths	Areas for development
Study support has been really helpful in developing my academic knowledge	The professional development module in second year repeats much of the material that was covered in the first year.
The practical lessons have been really informative, challenging and stimulating	Communication between the teaching team and the animal keepers could be improved which would increase the opportunity for practical work.
I felt really inspired by the animal behaviour module	More detail in assignment briefs would be helpful

The additional reading material has been helpful	Course organisation could be improved - It would be helpful to have more assessments earlier on in the academic year.
Tutors are very helpful and provide good feedback. Overall teaching has been good.	More time could be spent on topics that may not be familiar to all students.
The resources are easily accessible on ALO	Sometimes emails sent to tutors aren't responded to in a timely way.
	The assessment criteria for assignments could be clearer.

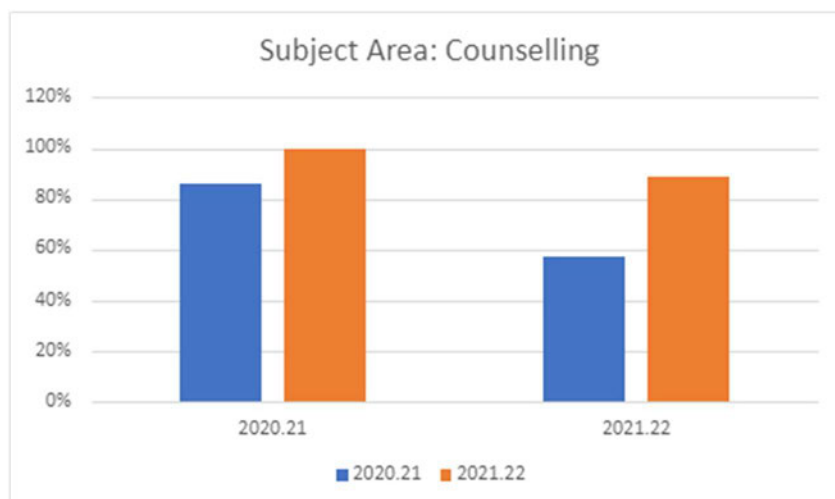
Summary

Land based courses have particularly high rates of continuation and completion; all exceeding 90%. I believe this is due to the main strength of the Land based courses being the quality of teaching staff and the content they deliver. The main area for further development is the course organisation, communication and the structure of students' timetables.

Counselling

Courses Include: *FdSc in Counselling, BA (Hons) in Counselling (Top up)*

These programmes are awarded by Middlesex University and delivered at Activate Learning's Guildford College Campus. The course aims to offer a rigorous grounding in counselling theory as well as the BACP framework for contemporary understanding. The majority of learning is completed on-campus and there are full-time students studying counselling in 2022/23.



As a result of undertaking an internal student satisfaction survey during 2021/22 in which the following comments were made by students which I have categorized by relevance to student experience and student outcomes:

Strengths	Areas for improvement
The teaching team is excellent and shares their professional experience which enhances our learning.	The availability of resources could be improved.
The organisation of the course has been excellent.	Communication with tutors could be better as they are not always available to speak to in person.
The tutors are excellent and it's helpful to be taught by practising counsellors.	Greater access to guest speakers would improve learning for students.

Summary

Overall, the main strength of the counselling courses is the utilisation of experienced tutors whereas the key areas for development are improved communication and more involvement of industry professionals.

Summary

During the compilation of this report, I have been able to draw together similar comments regarding strengths and weaknesses to identify common areas for development as well as key strengths across different areas of study.

Some of the general themes I noticed in the strengths across different courses was the availability of relevant facilities as well as the experience, teaching quality and willingness to help from tutors.

(As a FdA Furniture Design and Make student, I can support the validity of this feedback - these 2 grounds are popular topics of discussion between myself and my course mates. There is a general appreciation for the workshop facilities available to us as well as our tutors who are all passionate, helpful, and very knowledgeable.)

One field of comments which has appeared repeatedly in both strengths and areas for development is feedback from tutors. Some courses appear to deliver clear, formative, timely feedback for students whereas others report delays in receiving feedback and struggle to get a quick response when contacting tutors.

The main area for further development across all Activate Learning's course subjects is the general organisation; consideration of workload, overlapping projects, repeated content, releasing material on time etc. The students would like to see an improvement in the distribution of lesson time across their syllabus and better communication from teaching staff.

The overarching key strength of Activate Learning's HE provision is its overall focus on students' employability after progressing from their course. As a furniture student I have been able to recognise this from the start of my studies; we have been exposed to numerous industry professionals, specialist visiting speakers, external sponsorships including industry set projects and sponsored awards. Rycotewood also runs an annual exhibition which promotes students and their work to the public and furniture industry. Additionally, students have access to specialist 1 to 1 careers advice when approaching graduation which is invaluable.