



TEF 2023 submission

1. Provider context

The Trafford College Group (TCG) is a large general further education college in North-West England formed from a merger between Stockport College and Trafford College in April 2018. A second merger took place in May 2021 between TCG and the Cheadle and Marple College Network, creating a £45m institution serving the educational needs of young people, adults and employers extensively across the boroughs of Stockport and Trafford. This puts TCG in a unique position as being the only college in Greater Manchester to exist across two distinct boroughs and delivering education to a diverse demographic as a result of this.

TCG provides a broad curriculum offer, meeting the needs of many student groups across the local area and wider sub-region. This offer includes academic, adult education, apprenticeships, commercial programmes, higher education, vocational and technical courses. Current student numbers consist of around 5100 young people, over 4000 adults, 1500 apprentices and 400 higher education students.

The College operates from five campuses along a 20 mile stretch of South Manchester and Cheshire, with the majority of HE students based at University Centre Stockport College. As a mixed economy provider of further and higher education that serves our local communities, our success is contextualised to meeting the needs of our local economy and the wider context of Greater Manchester. Our work with key local, national and international employers such as NHS, Manchester Airport, Kellogg's, Siemens and John Lewis enrich our student's experiences, providing them with the essential skills and attributes that they need to succeed in life and work.

TCG has grown significantly over the past 4 years, following two mergers, to almost double its size, offering high quality education and training across the whole of Trafford and Stockport. Our commitment to a high quality, responsive education, and training for all our students has been reflected in our most recent QAA review in 2018¹, Sheffield Hallam University Collaborative Partnership Review in 2021 and a Good Ofsted inspection in 2022².

The history of Stockport College prior to merger in 2018 is complex and the College faced many challenges. During these times the College received three inadequate Ofsted inspections between 2013 and 2018, it was subject to FE Commissioner intervention and the withdrawal of two university partners for HE validated and franchised arrangements. It is important to reference this within this submission as some of the aspects of TEF indicators covers that period which is not reflective of who TCG are today as an organisation.

¹ <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/The-Trafford-College-Group>

² <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/31/130519>

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From a Higher Education (HE) perspective, the previous stand-alone institutions of Stockport College and Trafford College both delivered HE, Stockport college being the largest provider of the two. Most of the students studying on a full-time basis started at Stockport College and most of the part-time students commenced their studies at Trafford College. The data also includes indicators for students enrolled at the newly merged TCG. During and post-merger, the overall HE student population at TCG reduced substantially. This was due to a number of factors, but most notably due to the withdrawal of validation arrangements with the key university partners and the reputational impact of Stockport College's Ofsted ratings. However, TCG are firmly committed to re-focusing and re-developing the HE portfolio, with their current validating partner, Sheffield Hallam University (SHU).

The delivery of HE curriculum is central to our ambitions to become a leading provider of higher technical education that provides a transformative and vibrant student experience through enabling economic regeneration and social inclusion.

TCG is one of the highest performing FE colleges in Greater Manchester and in September 2020³ became one of the first in the UK to become part of the WorldSkills UK centre of Excellence⁴. TCG was also the first GM FE college admitted to the Chartered Institute of Further Education whose mission is to bring together the best training providers across the sector to raise standards⁵. In our most recent NSS survey⁶ our higher education student's overall student satisfaction was the second highest in the North-west which demonstrates the culture of excellence in which the College operates.

Local Context

The local authority areas of Stockport and Trafford are the most prosperous of the Greater Manchester city region. Yet within them they contain some stark inequalities between different local wards. Areas such as Partington and Old Trafford in Trafford, and Brinnington and Edgeley in Stockport are within the 2% most deprived areas nationally and the percentage of young people from those areas achieving 5+ GCSEs (Including Mathematics and English) remains low at 25%⁷. Many of our HE students are drawn from these areas which undoubtedly presents challenges.

A significant proportion of our students could be termed to be "commuter students" and live and work close to our University Centre at Stockport or to one of our other colleges within the group.

The working population for Greater Manchester is less qualified than the national average, with those holding qualification at level 4 and above 3.4% lower than England⁸. The forecast for Greater Manchester indicates that employment will rise by 8% over the next decade with significant growth in financial and professional services, creative and digital technology, life sciences and advanced manufacturing.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-achievement-rates-tables-2018-to-2019>

⁴ <https://www.worldskillsuk.org/educator-resources/centre-of-excellence/>

⁵ <https://www.fecharter.org.uk/>

⁶ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/nss-data-provider-level/>

⁷ <http://www.stockportjsna.org.uk/>

⁸ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/lep/1925185547/report.aspx>

Curriculum Context

The College currently delivers three BA Hons programmes in Childhood studies, Creative Practice and Photography, five Foundation Degrees in Early Years Practice, Youth Studies, Graphic Design, Digital Media and Sports Coaching. Our part time students mainly follow one of three Higher Nationals (HN) programmes in Construction and the Built environment, Engineering or Computing. In addition, the College also offers a number of higher-level qualifications in Accountancy (AAT), Counselling, Education and Training, Human Resources (CIPD).

To support economic growth, we also offer several higher apprenticeships in collaboration with our industry partners in sector areas such as construction, engineering, health and social care, leadership and management and procurement. This submission will be focusing on the TEF indicators around our full-time and part-time students.

HE students at TCG are predominantly drawn from local areas of least participation in HE (50% from Polar quintiles 1 and 2 in 2021 and 46% in 2022), 75% of our students are mature (average age of 27), often working and caring for families alongside studying. The proportion of males and females is fairly split at 48% and 52% respectively which is broadly in line with the national profile (43% male and 57% female, HESA).

The volume of part-time students continues grow and since 2018-19 this has increased by 7% to 52%. We anticipate this number to further grow through our employer responsive team and changes to the HE landscapes through higher technical qualifications reforms and the introduction of the lifetime loan entitlement.

In 2020-21 27.4% of students declared a learning difficulty or disability which is significantly above the sector of 15% (HESA 2020). The ethnicity of our HE community represents our communities that we serve with 80% White-British and 20% from the BAME community.

Purpose, Mission, and Strategy⁹

The TCG purpose is 'Unlocking Potential, Fostering Success'. We pride ourselves on always driving to deliver the highest quality of education and training to all our students and helping them realise their own ambitions. Our purpose goes beyond the education we provide to individual students and relates to how we unlock the potential to businesses communities and our own TCG colleagues and how we ultimately foster their success. The values underpinning this are:

- **Ambitious** – we set high expectations and standards for students, colleagues and out communities
- **Inclusive** - We value individual differences and creating an environment where everyone has the same opportunities
- **Resilient** – We believe that every challenge is an opportunity to learn develop and become stronger
- **Collaborative** - we work together support one another share ideas and include success

⁹ https://trafford.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/01/TCG_strategic_plan_21-24_v3.pdf

- Inclusive - we value individuals' differences and creating an environment where everyone has the same opportunities
- **Respectful** - we allow ourselves and others to grow by treating each other with thoughtfulness and an open mind.

We continue to have ambitious plans to increase the availability and accessibility of technical HE that will meet the needs of the local and regional population as well as the wider economy. In response to several key reports such as Skills for Jobs¹⁰, Higher Technical Education Reform¹¹ and the Greater Manchester Skills Strategy¹², we are shaping excellence in higher level technical education and one of the first higher technical qualification (HTQ) providers in the country.

Our TCG strategic plan reflects the changes that TCG has undergone in recent years and allows us the opportunity to respond to the current educational climate and to enable us to successfully navigate the policy and funding changes ahead. At its heart is our constant endeavour to meet the needs of our staff, students, local businesses and our communities.

Our strategic priorities are:

- Strategic Priority 1
Providing high quality, responsive education and training for all our students enabling their success and supporting their progression.
- Strategic Priority 2
Establishing TCG as a sector leading employer so that our colleagues thrive and deliver the highest quality of education and experience to all our students and stakeholders.
- Strategic Priority 3
Driving business recovery, renewal and productivity through transformational relationships with employers.
- Strategic Priority 4
Clearly defining and delivering our corporate social responsibility and civic duty as an anchor institution for our local communities.

Underpinning our overall TCG strategy is the Higher Education Strategy 2021-2024 which clearly demonstrates our intention to be a leading provider of HE within our local boroughs and Greater Manchester (GM) region.

Our vision is to develop the higher skills offer within the college to:

- provide an excellent quality, accessible, value for money and employment-focussed offer
- allow our students to achieve their full potential, progress in their chosen career and increase their potential for higher earnings in response to the growing demand for higher level skills
- ensure that our employers benefit from a skilled workforce that will enable growth, generate innovation and increase their productivity

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/skills-for-jobs-lifelong-learning-for-opportunity-and-growth>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-technical-education-reforms>

¹² https://www.manchester.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/28279/draft_new_work_and_skills_strategy.pdf

Bringing our vision to life are a definitive set of HE strategic objectives which set out our direction of travel as a newly merged organisation.

1. Adapt and grow the Higher Skills offer in line with national / regional policy developments
2. Maximise recruitment opportunities through improved penetration into key market areas
3. Provide a curriculum that is employment-focused through effective partnership working
4. Develop innovative and flexible models of delivery to better meet the needs of students and employers
5. Support the development of regional and local collaborative arrangements to enable increased recruitment and progression

Embedded within these objectives are our measure of success which directly benefit our students and their journey with us, from enrolment through to skilled employment.

2. Student experience

TCG aims to offer a curriculum which is relevant to local and regional employer priorities and that powerfully addresses the identified local skills needs. Tutors take care to design their curriculum to ensure that it develops the knowledge, skills and graduate outcomes that all students need for future development, progression and employment.

Excellence in student experience at TCG is evidenced through the implementation of the Colleges vision, aims and values, supported by the college's strategic aims of the Higher Education Strategy.

The key objectives of the strategy include ensuring the provision is of the highest quality and HE learning opportunities are in an environment which is both supportive and challenging. Developing this further through our strong relationships with industry, employers, awarding bodies and the wider HE sector all support our positive impact on the student experience which we value highly.

Our teaching and learning approaches are based on meeting our students' individual needs and adapting appropriate pedagogical strategies. We do this through continual professional practice and scholarly activity. Staff develop sessions which are engaging and supportive and challenging and inspire our students to reflect on their own practices and professional approaches within their subject specialisms.

The College continues to research and develop the most effective approaches for delivering Higher Education programmes to students, building on the experience of raising academic standards with its further education learners. There is much evidence that acknowledges that non-traditional approaches are often needed when teaching mature students, many of whom have not been in education for many years and require a more holistic approach to their educational needs.

The TEF indicators demonstrate our success in the teaching that is delivered in line with our strategic approach. The Full-time (FT) students' satisfaction with 'teaching on my course' is in line with the benchmark at 84.8%. Part-time (PT) students who represent 52% of the total student population at TCG, satisfaction is 90.2%. In the most recent NSS (2022) overall student satisfaction with teaching was 84.21%, 4.26 percentage above the sector average. Students' satisfaction with 'learning opportunities' exceeded the top quartile.

TCG commitment to providing the highest quality of teaching and learning to all students is clearly evidenced through a range of internal and external mechanisms which fully support the TEF indicators above.

Observation reports show a high-level of student engagement and participation within lectures and seminars. Evidential comments include:

- ***Highly effective planning of delivery and resources evidenced through observation and the scheme of work that allow students to develop their knowledge and understanding of key concepts presented.***
- ***Group activities planned as part of the consolidation phase allowed students to effectively demonstrate that their learning has met the aims of the session and supported their attainment.***
- ***A thoroughly well-planned session incorporating a variety of pedagogically level appropriate activities to encourage engagement and a high-quality learning experience.***
- ***Highly effective planning of the session allowed students to independently explore the concepts presented and apply these to a range of professional contexts supporting their understanding and overall learning.***
- ***The use of the tutor's own professional reflections and personal experiences around the quality and grading of the previous year's work placement submissions to support learning was another central focus of the lesson. The tutor used this pedagogy to effectively challenge, critically evaluate and illustrate much of the academic content that was being taught and challenged the students to consider out of the box approaches.***
- ***Highly appropriate teaching, learning and assessment methods are used which are suitable to the level and offer students a level of autonomy which is ideal for level 6.***
- ***A comfortable and relaxed learning environment was evident which enabled students to freely discuss topics and debate openly.***
- ***The tutor created a high level of industry and application within the session through the interactions with the students and short timed activities. Students responded keenly and were highly engaged and motivated throughout.***

Independent feedback through our robust annual external examiners process, confirmed that there is clear evidence that learning and teaching practices are of a high standard and informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice and subject-specific and educational scholarship. TCG can clearly demonstrate that this evidence supports both our student experience and our overall student outcomes in line with the TEF indicators:

- ***The course is well designed with units/modules building on each other and the size and diverse range of assignments and assessments allow students to meet the appropriate standards***
- ***Engaged students will leave the programme well prepared for taking their first steps into the world of work. The resources available to students are of a good standard and allow for diverse skills development and the new studio set up is excellent***
- ***The projects developed by the team allow for students to discover who they are as creative practitioners with an excellent balance of freedom and of gaining understanding of expected and established industry practices***
- ***The curriculum design allows for clear progression from L4 to L5 and the development of the different skills required at both levels***

- ***The team has clearly done a sterling job in supporting students with complex and competing pressures and demands and with minimising the negative impact of this***
- ***strong and supportive relationship that the staff have with their students and is to be commended***

As part of the TCG continuous commitment to the delivery of high-quality teaching and learning, there is a clear strategy to support the personal and professional development of our staff. This is articulated in the Colleges staff training and development framework which ensures there is specific funding available for HE staff to undertake higher level and postgraduate study, HEA fellowship accreditation, CPD and industry updating and attendance at scholarship events, exhibitions and conferences. It is an expectation for all teaching staff to have achieved or work towards an appropriate teaching qualification within two years of appointment. 51% of HE staff hold a level 7 and above qualification and we are currently supporting 3 members of staff completing their PhD.

Additionally, the College delivers a wide range of generic and specialist training and development activities to ensure all staff develop and extend their knowledge and skills in relevant ways which includes undertaking accredited qualifications and participating in unaccredited training sessions and workshops.

One of the 5 key strategic drivers for HE is the “strategic focus on the enhancement of Teaching, Learning and Scholarship”, through the sharing of best practice and strategic developments. The introduction of a Scholarly Lead ensures the notion of partnership and that the focus is always centered on the quality of the student experience. Examples of enhancements made:

- Full engagement in peer observations, with all HE staff completing at least three per year, and attendance at HE-specific CPD.
- Implementation of TCG commissioning of scholarship projects using an action-research model to better understand and respond to areas of development, including student employability, engaging in Peer Assisted Learning (PAL), and developing a student community. All of which will support and shape our approach to policy and practice.
- Funded scholarship projects in progress, approved in October.
- Development of a HE Learning and Teaching staff portal as a vehicle to disseminate best practice, and encourages peer engagement, complemented by a Scholarly activity blog.
- Annual staff awards in recognition of innovation in delivery and assessment, as well as more formal awards for excellence in teaching and outstanding contribution to student learning, made at the annual teaching conference.

In addition, good progress has made against those activities targeted:

- Publication of the 3rd annual scholarship journal
- External publication in the journal for Further and Higher Education¹³
- Dissemination of research at international conferences¹⁴
- Contribution to chapters including peer-reviewed text books¹⁵
- Commencing external examiner roles.
- Staff engagement in industry practice, with at least 25% of HE staff completing 5-day industry engagement. Industrial updating for staff is a strategic priority, identified by Stockport as a development need, embracing models of practice at Trafford.

Where appropriate, members of staff spend time in the workplace with industrial partners and undertake partner in-house training and upskilling days. This ensures that their teaching provision

¹³ <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1965557>

¹⁴ <https://www.eecera.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019-conference-programme-thessaloniki.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315780108-7/practitioners-flexibility-jackie-braithwaite>

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maintains academic rigour but also ensures employability and additional benefit to employers and employees, whilst supporting curriculum currency.

Teaching staff continue to communicate enthusiasm, and draw on scholarship, research and professional activity to facilitate student learning. Staff are highly qualified and experienced within their specialist areas, supported by engagement in industry activity, which is reflected in their learning and teaching and highly valued by students. This is reflected in our NSS data.

TCG's third Scholarly Activity Journal presented within the HE summer conference, helps make explicit some of the research being undertaken our commitment to establishing our students as partners in learning to ensure we build their confidence, independence and resilience to achieve at the highest level.

The HE Peer observation scheme strengthens staff collegiality and facilitates a staff community and the sharing of practices across subjects. The peer review system has confirmed several key strengths including the planning and structure, academic content and level, tutor knowledge and industry application, respect and rapport between staff and students, and good student engagement in learning.

TCG was an early adopter of the AoC national Scholarship project, providing a framework for our existing scholarly activity (e.g. pedagogy, industry engagement) to enhance the student experience and teaching practice.

In June 2018, TCG was reviewed by QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) and judged as fully meeting UK standards and the Quality of Education meeting baseline requirements. The Review team cited several areas of good practice including:

- The appointment of a Scholarly Lead has helped to progress this work and to instil values of partnership and scholarship in the College's learning and teaching.
- Effective peer observation process in place at Stockport College had been implemented at Trafford College
- Students praised the responsive nature of the College and with learning resources.
- The College encourages full student involvement in its newly established academic governance arrangements.

In our recent Collaborative Partnership Review with Sheffield Hallam University 2021, an external review from our validation partner highlighted the following commendations:

- The students who attended the review articulate and engaged. It is clear that students are proud to be TCG students and are positive about their experiences.
- TCG brought students back onto campus very quickly (COVID-19) when safe to do so and continued to implement the positive changes from online delivery.
- The clear vision of TCG senior management team.

The student experience continues to be supported by rigorous assessment and quality assurance processes, with students being well prepared for employment by means of well-integrated workplace learning and professional practice elements. In terms of comparability, all agreed that the required standards were being met.

Academic standards are consistently applied through the Colleges academic regulations. Staff follow the TCG policies and procedural arrangements. To regulate the Higher Education provision, regular monitoring and review processes are implemented, both internally, through the Colleges HE committee system and internal audit, and externally through the use of external examiners and academics during programme approval and review board and Assessment Boards.

We can demonstrate our commitment to this process through our indicators around assessment and feedback. FT students' satisfaction with 'assessment and feedback' at 78.9% is again in line with our benchmark. In the most recent NSS, students were positive about the criteria used in marking has been clear (76.47%) and receiving helpful comments on their work (86.27%). Students were less positive around the timely of feedback (58%) disappointedly gives a percentage of -8.8% difference between indicator and benchmark.

The decline in question Q10. "Feedback on my course work has been timely" is largely attributed to an isolated localised issue, relating to one cohort of students. Where, due to unexpected staff issue, feedback of two assessments in 2021-22 were not returned in the agreed timescale of 20 working days. This particular cohort of student's satisfaction rate for Q10 was 47.22% with 16.2% 'mostly' or 'definitely' disagreeing with the statement. To support students, extended assessment dates were given, additional academic support and resources were given. The College's actions ensured that student outcomes were not negatively affected. Overall student satisfaction for that cohort remained high at 86%. PT students, however, were 2.7% above benchmark for Assessment and Feedback.

Our 2021-22 annual survey of all undergraduate students highlighted that 95% strongly agreed that "feedback on my work has been timely and helps me to improve". TCG are totally committed to continuously reviewing the feedback processes being carried out across departmental areas and to ensure a programme level approach to meaningful student engagement to drive overall improvement around the student experience in this area.

Since merger, improving and enhancing teaching, learning and assessment and maintaining standards has been a key focus. As part of this holistic process, it is very clear that as an institution there had been some developments, however, there is still work to be done to fully embed a truly effective process following the merger activity. Establishing a consistent approach between institutional practice and institutional culture is a long-term strategic change that needs additional time to fully integrate. Another key factor to consider is the impact of the covid pandemic at only one-year post-merger at the point where clear processes and structures had not been fully aligned across all HE provision. This undoubtedly had a substantial impact on the student experience and their ability to flourish in their studies. Many full-time students based at Stockport campus were significantly affected by the pandemic and were unable to progress as planned. There is a clear correlation between effective assessment and feedback, well-structured support for students and successful student outcomes.

In supporting the achievement of this, a number of enhancement activities have been implemented strategically including the sharing of best practice towards holistic assessment; termly 'assessment best practice' workshops; Thematic 'assessment' peer observations; Periodic review of all Higher Nationals, including engagement with employers and stakeholders to determine assessment design, and focussed scholarship to inform employability strategy, with a particular focus on supporting higher level employment and the role of assessment design to enhance this.

As part of a deliberate approach, The Corporation board created a Higher Education sub-curriculum and Quality Committee in 2019-20¹⁶, chaired by an experienced senior postholder from a local Russell group university. To provide assurance that the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities are appropriate. The College operates a rigorous and robust annual Quality Cycle overseen by the Assistant Principal HE. The cycle encompasses SED and QIP processes, Quality and Resources Reviews, Staff Development, Student Surveys, Internal Inspections and teaching Observations. At the heart of the cycle is the drive to maintain high quality and effective teaching, learning and assessment. All departments, including those providing HE, receive an annual internal inspection determined by national and College priorities. Departments are graded based on the balance of evidence from learner voice, outcomes for students and observations of teaching practice.

¹⁶ <https://trafford.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/10/Terms-of-Reference-HE-CQ-Committee-.pdf>

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Subsequently, QAA (May 2018) confirmed that “The College's assessment policy and procedures are well-defined and understood by students and staff”.

The assessment of students in higher education at TCG is governed by the relevant partner HEI assessment regulations, with students commencing on HN qualifications at the College being assessed in line with the TCG HN assessment regulation.

The college is represented at each partner university assessment board with assessment boards for higher national qualifications taking place at the college. Our partner HEI boards operate predominantly on a two-stage process with a review of module and unit performance happening locally, within faculty or department, followed by a more expansive internal review and assessment board that is concerned with individual student performance, progression, confirming reassessment requirements. There is strong oversight of HN assessment board practices across TCG.

QAA (2018) confirmed that “External examiners contribute fully at assessment boards and their annual reports are actively considered within the annual monitoring process and formal responses made”. More recent EE commentary indicator that:

There are numerous examples of good assessment practice, responding well to External Examiner feedback. Most recently, strengths included: the levelness of delivery and assessment; our innovative approach to assessment in Arts and the good use of live briefs; and assessment feed forward methods used in Childhood Studies to support readiness to the next academic levels. EE commentary include:

“Assignments and assessments allow students to meet the appropriate standards. Assessment of work and outcomes is thorough and rigorous, and all assignments aligned clearly with learning outcomes. The projects developed by the team allow for students to discover who they are as creative practitioners”

“There is patent evidence of an incremental learning framework developed, to ensure students learning matures across the increasing levels. There is good comparability of thresholds in academic standards between modules within a course, and between the different institutions delivering the programme”

“The fairness and rigour throughout the assessment process is transparent in the application of the assessment design and thoroughness in the marking process”

“Assignment briefs are appropriately structured with tasks mapped against unit learning outcomes, at correct level, and are included in each Unit Guide. These documents are comprehensive and underpin QA standards in delivery and maintenance of academic standards, appropriate to HN qualifications”

2.2 Resources, Support and Student Engagement

A key strand of our Higher Skills Strategy is to develop innovative and flexible models of delivery to better meet the needs of students and employers. To facilitate this, a significant investment in students learning environments and resources has been made since 2018. We have invested over £30 million pounds in physical and digital learning resources leading to outstanding student outcomes with a further £27million approved until 2024¹⁷. HE students have benefitted from a £23 million campus development at Stockport Campus¹⁸, the creation of the arts factory, a state-of-art

¹⁷ [The Cheadle College secures approval for £27 million redevelopment - Marketing Stockport](#)

¹⁸ [stockport college phase 2 - Project 3 Architects](#)

facility housing the creative arts¹⁹. A new library and HE social spaces, refurbishment of the green construction centre and a cybersecurity digital lab.

While the overall TEF indicators shows that TCG overall student satisfaction for learning resources is -6.7% since 2019 the satisfaction rates have rapidly increased by 13.7% and 15.3% difference between the indicator and benchmark values and in the most recent NSS results exceeded the Colleges benchmark by 1.1%.

FT student satisfaction with academic support at 78.6% (overall) puts us at -3.0% difference between the indicator and benchmark value. Although there is evidence to show upward trajectory from the earliest to the latest year of 4.4% and 7.2% difference between the indicators and benchmark.

The introduction of the College Student Success Framework is the College's main approach to student support, engagement and ultimately success. The framework outlines the cross-college strategies employed by curriculum and enabling teams to provide a level of consistency for all students. Internal collaboration between different teams is a key factor of the success of the framework and the student experience. Enabling teams such as Student Support, Employability and Work based Learning, Learning Mentors and Library services are complementary to the subject specific curriculum teams. They work holistically and in partnership with students to ensure that needs are clearly identified, appropriately and reasonably met, monitored and reviewed regularly for continued enhancement.

In-year rigorous assessment of student progress using a wide range of indicators inside and outside of the classroom is used to ensure that we are consistently achieving high standards in supporting our students' progress. A wide range of factors impact on our students' progress including, varied and timely assessment, high quality feedback, effective planning for individual needs, the setting of high expectations of students, rigorous tracking and monitoring of individual targets, teaching, learning and assessment that drives student progress and timely and robust student intervention activities.

TCG provides an outstanding level of tutor support at programme level, with the average student receiving 5 tutorials per year, recognised consistently through student feedback, with staff going above and beyond to support our students and make a difference to lives.

Some examples of NSS (2022) student comments around student support are:

"Staff members even go above and beyond their roles to support students with their wellbeing need. I cannot recommend the staff enough. I am very happy that I chose to study for my degree at Stockport College"

"Tutors have gone out of their way to create access to equipment, particularly when in the early stages of the covid pandemic"

"Tutors dealt with the pandemic well and the home learning was efficient. All of the topics were very useful, and they were explained well, and you had a deeper understanding excellent communication support between teaching staff and students"

The comments from the NSS clearly indicate the level of support and the deliberate approach to providing a safe, reliable and effective virtual learning environment during a most challenging time for all staff and students. It is clear from some of the TEF indicators that overall outcomes and student experience was affected during the pandemic and that many of the students at TCG had to make life-changing decisions which favoured paid employment over the continuation of studies. As an organisation, TCG committed to putting the student at the heart of all practice during this time, but this was not always sufficient to mitigate the continuation or completion of all students.

¹⁹ [stockport college - Project 3 Architects](#)

A strength of our student engagement is embedded within the Partnership strategy which deliberately brings together our previous teaching and learning and student engagement strategies. This reflects the notion of collaboration between staff and students.

The TEF indicator shows student voice overall at -7.0% although the positive trajectory from year 1 to the most recent year has increased by 7.1% and 2.13% above the sector average. 84% of students in the NSS 2022 agreed that they *'have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course'* but it is not always *'clear how students feedback on the course has been acted on.'* our internal survey which all undergraduate students have the opportunity to participate in highlights that 94% felt staff *'value their views about their course'*. PT students overall student voice satisfaction is 79.8% showing a 6.2% difference between the indicator and benchmark value. Conversely the NSS 2022 category on 'Learning Community' remains high at 82.35% demonstrating the positive ethos of a community among staff and students.

Our 10-point plan for student engagement emphasises on the culture of an academic community, a space where students can take risks as practitioners and enhance their self-belief and learning agency. This is particularly important when considering the demographic of TCG students. Students are at the heart of decision making and are active partners in all college committees and quality processes and ensuring the College's curriculum and HE culture remains current and meet the needs of students, now and in the future.

The impact of our learning community continues to excel and the impact of co-research and professionalism between staff and students has in recent years received local and, in some cases, national recognition. Staff and students from our Foundation Degree Early Years have disseminated co-research at SEFDEY (sector endorsed Foundation Degree Early Years Practice) conference²⁰. Art staff and students have been involved in community based visual art commissioned projects, more recently with Stockport Exchange and Stockport Metropolitan Council²¹. We have also seen several students submit abstracts from their dissertations and major projects to external publications. An example of this is BA honours Childhood Studies student whose dissertation research published in the PMLD (profound and multiple learning disabilities) academic journal on Objects of reference; misused and misunderstood²². These are significant achievements for the College and its students.

3. Student Outcomes

In terms of student outcomes, students at TCG continue to thrive, especially when considering the demographic of our student population. As previously noted, a significant majority of TCG students come from unrepresented groups. Many of our students are drawn from areas of the least HE participation and from high levels of deprivation. Our large, mature student body are predominantly working parents, with lower entry criteria than a typical HE student and with a broad range of previous educational experience.

Continuation rates for part time students is outstanding. The TEF data indicates that part time students who remain in higher education or completed their higher education qualification 2 years after entering HE at TCG is 0.6% above benchmark overall however between year 1 and year 5 this has improved by 10.2 percentage to 6.8% above benchmark. Full time students' continuation rates is in line with the College's benchmark at -1.7% and increase from year 1 to year 3 by 12.6% and was materially above benchmark, however within the most recent year and the year of coronavirus the continuation rates for full time students dropped below the College's benchmark to -9.8%.

Upon initial registration with the Office for Students, the College was informed of concerns surrounding student outcome data regarding full-time first-degree students with particular reference to continuation rates. Through the initiatives such as the student success framework and investment

²⁰ <https://www.sefdey.com/>

²¹ [Stockport Exchange welcomes a colourful new addition - Stockport Council](#)

²² [Winter Issue - PMLD Link](#)

in a dedicated HE support team, who work holistically with curriculum teams to ensure students that may be at risk of not achieving receive early intervention and support needed to succeed, we have significantly improved the continuation rates. Our internal data shows that in 2019-20 the continuation rates improved to 85%, this is also a similar picture for students on Foundation Degree and Higher National programmes. This is also verified within the OfS Access and Participation Plan dataset²³ where course profile is also split by time series.

The TEF indicators show that the overall completion rate (2013-14 to 2016-17 entrance) is -5.9% at 71.3% although within this period this has increased from year 1 to year 4 by 5.5% difference between the indicator and benchmark value. Our internal data shows that since 2018-19 entrances, our students' achievements rates has increased to 83.5%. Part time students, who now account for 52% of the total student population are 4.9% above benchmark for completion and 7.2% above for the most recent year within the TEF data set and materially above benchmark.

Over the past few years, we have worked hard to develop strategies in closing gaps in attainment for students from different backgrounds, in particular those from underrepresented groups or those who may be at greater risk of not achieving their full potential due to a variety of circumstances. For example, disabled students' attainment is now 10 percentage above compared to non-disabled students and students from IMD 1 and 2 attainment has improved by 30% since 2016-17.

The OfS Size and shape of provision dataset²⁴ confirm that many TCG students enter HE with low or non-tariff entry points. From this starting point, TCG students go on to achieve outstanding achievement. Our analysis of award classification show that 62% of TCG students achieved a 2.1 or above in 2020-21 and 72% in 2021-22 together with 70% of other undergraduate students (FD, HNC & HND) achieving a merit or distinction in 2020-21 and 76% in 2021-22.

The Greater Manchester Work and Skills Strategy suggest that there are more graduates in the region than graduate opportunities. Taking the developing local economy into consideration, there may be fewer opportunities for students to progress to graduate employment. TCG has created the *Transforming employer relationships* strategy²⁵ which is in direct response to the radical economic transformation over the next two decades with Greater Manchester playing a leading role in the delivering the Norther Powerhouse ambitions.

The strategy is a college-wide approach ensuring that every student or apprentice studying with TCG gain the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to navigate through life and work. It also acknowledges the role employers will play now and in the future of technical and professional education, ensuring clear linkage between and through levels and progress to sustainable and meaningful employment.

The strategy's 4 key priorities and many objectives demonstrate our commitment to ensuring that TCG and our students have access to a wide range of interactions with employers. There has been significant investment in resources including our Employer Partnership team and dedicated HE employability and placement officer, offering a range of careers, advice and guidance support and supporting work placements, interns, and employment with local and regional employers.

All Foundation Degree students and many HN students, who account for the largest HE population by headcount, undertake extremely successful and beneficial work-based learning credit bearing modules. These modules focus on the development of key transferrable graduate skills, alongside those of skill and knowledge. At TCG we can clearly demonstrate that those students who gain real world experience as a key part of their course, not only engage more fully with their studies, but also accrue substantial educational gain that develops insight, personal and professional attributes and a clearer focus on their career aspirations. This kind of activity will be included across all HE

²³ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/access-and-participation-data-dashboard/>

²⁴ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/size-and-shape-of-provision-data-dashboard/>

²⁵ [employer_brochure_may_2022_update-compressed.pdf](https://www.stockport.ac.uk/media/1000000/employer_brochure_may_2022_update-compressed.pdf) (stockport.ac.uk)

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programmes as part of the 21-24 Strategy, to ensure that graduate opportunities are maximised and an integral part of the overall learning experience.

We also actively work with employers through our employer advisory boards to co-design and co-deliver education and training with our students.

Our progression data as indicated within the TEF workbook is outstanding for both Full Time and Part Time. Full Time students' progression to managerial or professional employer or further study is 2.8% above benchmark and has improved by 8% percentage points difference between the indicator and benchmark value from -3.0% in year 1 to 5% above benchmark in the latest date available. Part time students' progression is at 81.5% overall, 7.3% above benchmark with the latest year available highlighting 8.9% difference between the indicator and benchmark. 86% of students in 2021-22 agreed that their course is 'meeting my career aspirations'.

Conclusion

TCG has undergone a period of substantial change in recent times, and we are responding to those changes with the commitment to ensure that any student that chooses to study with us has the possibility to achieve the best possible outcomes. We are wholly inclusive, enabling all our students, whatever their background, the opportunity to succeed. We firmly believe that the FE sector is the driving force behind the skills revolution and TCG continues to collaborate with businesses to create the highly trained workforce required to power productivity and the economy.

Our commitment to a high quality, responsive education and training for all our students, enabling their success and supporting their progression is evident throughout:

- Outstanding outcomes for part time students and overall, materially above the benchmark for completion and progression to highly skilled employment. Continuation rates continue to improve also materially above the benchmark in the most recent data provided within the TEF workbook.
- Significant improvements for full time students in completion and progression to highly skilled employment or further study. Continuation rates continue to be an area for improvement, however, for first degree students and other UG students this has improved over the previous years.
- Student experience satisfaction continues to be high with clear evidence of satisfaction improving in some key areas. TCG is above the sector average in all areas and for the average for England in all but one section (Learning Resources). However, in this section there has been a 15% increase since 2019 evidencing improvements made. TCG is in the top quartile for Learning Opportunities.
- Overall student satisfaction is among the best in the country.
- Effective student tracking and monitoring which supports and enables the development of the knowledge, skills and attributes to prepare students to succeed in life and work.
- An enjoyable and vibrant community of academic practice with examples of co-research and co-dissemination.
- Significant investment in learning resources and infrastructure which facilitates industry-led standards. This development to be supported by a range of funded investment including OFS capital bid and HTE injection funding.
- Transforming our approach with employers to ensure our curriculum is careers-focused, co-created and co-delivered with employers and informed by scholarship and industry updating for our staff.

We are confident that this submission reflects who we are, how we live our values and the level of our commitment to a transformational education experience. We are confident that we make an

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outstanding contribution to our students' futures and communities and present it to you for your consideration.