

The Cornwall College Group TEF Student Submission 2023

Approach to Evidence-Gathering

My role in Student Representation

Since beginning my degree with The Cornwall College Group (TCCG) at the Eden Project campus in September 2021, I have been elected to distinct roles representing student voice including

I gathered student opinion on the curriculum and campus experience to feed back to the Programme Manager, Head of Campus, Student Experience Manager and HE Policy and Standards Manager in termly Programme Committee Meetings (PCMs).

I represent the student voice at campus level
across TCCG at the

As a HE Student Governor, I sat on the ,
including the HE Committee, providing a student perspective and challenge to the strategic direction of the college and oversight of its activities.

Engagement with the Student Body

This submission has been informed by my various roles representing the student voice across TCCG which have provided opportunity for formal and informal interactions with peers, other student representatives, staff (academic, non-academic and leaders/managers) and Governors. It has also been informed by focus groups with student representatives from the Newquay campus and the Cornwall Counselling Institute at the Camborne Campus, which forms the largest cohort of students across the group to provide a wider insight.

Working with the college/sharing of Evidence

During the process of writing this submission, I have worked with the college's TEF working group, in particular the and the . This involved a strategy day where we shared information on the TEF data dashboard, and the context behind this data. This allowed me to assess the provider submission requirements in relation to the student submission, but also gave an insight into the TEF working group's interpretation of the data to consider alongside my own.

I have used my role across various committees to understand the college's approach to delivering high-quality Higher Education across the scope of TCCG. My regular participation in these committees, together with the access to data from Partnership Committee meetings and similar forums, has provided an overview of student trends and views across all Higher Education curriculum areas. I have worked with a range of governors and staff during these roles, and as part of the TEF process, to gain a strong understanding of the HE provisions. I have used a range of data sources such as PCM minutes, committee minutes from other elected course representatives, drop-in sessions, and informal conversations with students to provide an accurate picture of higher education across the group.

Student Experience

Teaching Quality

Students appreciate the industry-oriented delivery of relevant modules and the insight into genuine practical applications that complement taught theory. This manifests in the use of external speakers, working on live projects, learning in 'active classrooms', work placements, field trips and the deliberate inclusion of wider industry context in theory lectures. Students feel these experiences enhance their employability and improve their confidence in applying for post-graduate jobs since they are equipped with relevant experiential knowledge.

Students find the enthusiasm of lecturers to be infectious and their breadth of knowledge inspiring. The industry experience of lecturers and their applied knowledge of the material to the professional context is a huge asset to the delivery of the curriculum, which is well-balanced, so students find it to be engaging and stretching. The early and current research conducted by staff members frequently features in the delivery of relevant modules and the curriculum is enhanced by their research backgrounds. Access to live research projects such as the *ReCon Soil Project*, based at Eden Project Learning, provides opportunities for personal and professional development.

Assessment & Feedback

Students find that assignments offer a challenge whilst not feeling unattainable. The variety of assessment modes, and the alignment of the assessment mode according to context, is appreciated by students as it allows us to highlight our strengths and exercise weaker areas. This has the effect of building a broad and robust skillset over time, whilst also catering to the broadest student needs.

Generally, students find that written feedback from assignment submissions is thorough and a good balance of encouragement and critique. Feedback is often focussed and clear on the relevance to wider contexts and professional practice. Students find the oral feedback received in discussion with lecturers is often most useful. This takes place immediately in lectures or in 1-to-1 tutorials where students can understand the marking rationale and explore areas for improvement. This rich and informative discussion opportunity supports academic development over time.

Academic Support

Academic support is not limited to academic staff; students find that all members of staff are approachable and happy to assist in the various challenges that may be faced by students. This includes signposting, additional 1-to-1 tutorials, offering opportunities for networking, facilitating peer support groups and the introduction of *Studiosity*. Staff are genuinely interested in the academic interests of individual students and the tutorial framework allows students to develop these interests with the guidance and mentoring of their tutor. Students feel like staff encourage us to deepen our knowledge and expand our interests, in the most supportive way. Across the board students feel like both lecturing and support staff are invested in our future success.

Each campus has a Learning Centre where students can access a wide range of physical and online resources. Generally, students have good relationships with the who can offer academic support and help in accessing learning resources. All Learning Centres offer remote or in-person workshops to aid different forms of learning, study techniques and academic writing tools through a common 'workshop menu'. Some topics covered in these workshops include referencing, critical analysis, Excel, and academic writing. The introduction of *Studiosity* has been highly valued by students as it allows us to access support out of office hours or when the Learning Centres are closed.

As well as signposting to resources, lecturers and support staff frequently share useful external resources such as supplementary training, current job vacancies or best practice resources from the wider professional community.

Resources

Smaller campus sizes have fostered strong staff-student relationships and created closer campus communities. Students feel that this positive experience outweighs the disconnection that can be felt from other campuses.

Additionally, the opportunity that these campuses provide to learn in 'active classrooms' is a significant pull to prospective students and learning in-situ is an important aspect of the degree experience to existing students. Examples of this include conducting experiments in the biomes at Eden Project Learning; learning from resorts at home and abroad in the Golf degrees; operating from a community clinic on campus for the Counselling degrees; and surf science degrees run from Fistral Beach, Newquay – the surfing 'mecca' of the UK.

Student Voice

Student feedback is not only highly valued by staff members but frequently actioned. A recent example includes students at the Newquay campus requesting an improvement in catering provision through the LSEC in the summer term 2021. Consequently, the [redacted] reimagined their food and drink offer, with a more frequent and sustainably sourced menu now available every day of the week. This is a positive example of the efficient flow of communication [redacted], who has been particularly active in listening to student views and collaborating with key stakeholders to ensure that the views were acted upon. This also demonstrates how smaller campus size allows TCCG to be responsive to student voice and is a clear implementation of '*Learner First*', one of the five college values. Additionally, there is a strong effort from staff to respond to student concerns in an academic and pastoral context and to meet individual needs.

Summary

Overall, my impression of student experience across The Cornwall College Group is positive. Higher Education at TCCG is characterised by an approach that values student support, authentic experiences/assessment, and excellent teaching sessions that engage students. I am therefore surprised by the data within the TEF dashboard, and I do not feel that it is a fair reflection of many student's experiences across the group. I attribute this to the low response rates to the National Student Survey coupled with the fact that satisfied students are less likely to complete the survey.

Student Outcomes

Continuation

The strength of the continuation data is reflected in the feedback I have conveyed on behalf of students as a . The smaller size of the campuses allows college staff to get to know each student as an individual, and there is a culture of taking attendance seriously. Attendance is linked to success, and absences are regularly followed up to ensure that students receive the necessary support or pastoral care so as not to derail success or progression of study.

Students value the availability of shorter FdSc, HNC and HND courses that may then be topped up to a full degree. This option provides greater control over the route we take to achieving our qualifications and allows greater flexibility for students fitting study around existing careers or family life.

Completion

The strength of TCCG as the 'Career College' is reflected in the ambitions of the student body, many of whom are striving to study in an industry focused setting to enhance their careers or create opportunity for career change. From my appraisal of student motivations, I attribute the high completion rates to the ambition of students together with the ability of TCCG to cater to these ambitions.

Progression

TCCG supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies in several ways. A key place where this support is presented is within weekly 1-to-1 or group tutorials, where guidance on progression routes to post-graduate education, supplementary volunteer work, industry roles, and internships is offered. TCCG also maintains relationships with alumni, the exposure to which current students find inspiring and helpful in facilitating networking. As the 'Career College' there is a strong dedication to career guidance within tutorials and preparation for the workplace is central to the course delivery.

Furthermore, modules such as Conservation Project Management on the BSc (Hons) Applied Zoology and Conservation, where students are required to forge partnerships with conservation organisations to coordinate conservation projects, allows students to begin to effect change before graduating. The development of relevant practical skills and the opportunity to encounter the successes and challenges of real-life scenarios gained from 'baked-in' experiences, helps to produce well-rounded, confident graduates capable of having a positive impact in the industry and wider community.

How students of TCCG perceive progression varies across the cohort and is perhaps frequently at odds with the TEF definition '*progressing to managerial or professional employment, or further study.*' Many students are motivated by climate and community, which are common topics of discussion within the Student Union activity. This highlights the post-study priorities of students studying at TCCG and is reflected in the provision of courses. Students coming to TCCG to study on programmes such as Counselling Studies, Land and Ecological Restoration or Health, Welfare & Social Sciences do not necessarily measure career progression by job title or salary but by self-fulfilment; the positive impact they can have on their community; and the worthwhile change they can enact with the skills they develop at The Cornwall College Group.