

TEF 2023: Solihull College & University Centre

1. Provider Context

Solihull College and University Centre (SCUC) was founded in 1954 and has been successfully delivering higher education (HE) programmes for over 25 years. As a result of an initiative driven, in part by our HE students, we successfully obtained approval from the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) to use the title Solihull College and University Centre (SCUC) in November 2015. The College operates across three campuses: Blossomfield (B91 1SB), Woodlands (B36 0NF) and Stratford-upon-Avon (CV37 9QR). Blossomfield is in Solihull town centre and is home to Animal Care, Business, Computing, Childcare, Education, Built Environment and Science provisions. Woodlands is a specialist engineering and technology campus also within the jurisdiction of Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC). Stratford-upon-Avon College, located within the famous Warwickshire town, is a traditional further education (FE) college with Level 4 programmes in Art & Design and Music.

SCUC is also the lead partner in the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Institute of Technology (GBSIoT). Through a partnership of 4 HEIs, 3 colleges and employer advisors, the GBSIoT specialises in the Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering sector.

Our current student profile comprises around 5000 Full Time FE students, 2000 Part Time students

on over 40 courses covering a wide range of subject areas, which in addition to those already listed, includes Animal Behaviour and Welfare, Business, Computing, Art and Design, Health and Social Care, Science, Social Sciences and Sports Science. This diversity of our curriculum offer is the result of continually reassessing and re-evaluating our contribution to the local and regional economies and beyond by providing high quality education and training for individuals, employers and the wider community.

An annual Skills Needs Report informs our strategic decision to align our curriculum offer with employer needs and the priorities of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP), so that we are both responsive to the needs of the local area and, where possible, able to develop courses in anticipation of future skills shortages.

SCUC's Strategic Plan 2021-24 (**Ref 001**) is aligned with the priorities of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), which has seven constituent authorities including Solihull MBC, as well as its two Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas: Greater Birmingham and Solihull LEP (GBSLEP) and Coventry and Warwickshire LEP. The College's strategic goals for 2021-2024 are:

- All students enjoying their learning, being ambitious and having very high standards of achievement enabling them to progress to employment and/or further study.
Excellent leadership and management that will ensure the highest possible standards of teaching, training, learning, assessment and support.
- Management processes that maintain financial stability and continuously improve the efficient use of resources.

- Innovative and responsive programmes that meet the needs of students and employers, respond to the demands of the LEPs and the WMCA as well as effective strategies which respond to economic growth and social priorities.
- Resources and safe and supportive inclusive learning environments that are of a consistently high quality, support the College’s evolution, promote sustainability, and inspire learning.

The College is nearing the end of its current HE Strategy, created in 2019 (**Ref 002**). Although the College’s strategic goals have been recently refreshed to meet the demands of a post-pandemic society, the HE strategic objectives remain appropriate. The HE strategic aims are:

- Develop vocational pathways from the full-time further education provision and respond to the needs of local employers,
- Identify the most appropriate accreditation routes and will develop higher education provision through both our own funding and through appropriate partnerships,
- Continue to offer higher education provision that is high quality and affordable
- Provide educational, professional and academic opportunities which are accessible to all members of the local community and in particular to those from disadvantaged areas and non-traditional backgrounds.

SCUC’s current prescribed HE provision, provided in Table 1, comprises Honours degrees, Foundation Degrees and Higher Nationals. The College has four collaborative university partners: Coventry University, Newman University Birmingham, Oxford Brookes University and the University of Northampton. The College has validated provision with these partners with the exception of Oxford Brookes University with whom franchise arrangements are in place. Higher Nationals are delivered under a partnership agreement with Pearson. Courses in Table 1 identified by an asterisk are integrated into higher or degree apprenticeships.

Table 1: SCUC prescribed HE provision 2022-23

HE Courses – Higher/Degree Apprenticeships*	Awarding Body
BSc (Hons) Animal Behaviour & Welfare	Oxford Brookes University
FdSc Animal Behaviour & Welfare	Oxford Brookes University
FdSc Veterinary Nursing	Oxford Brookes University
BA (Hons) Business & Management Practice*	Oxford Brookes University
BA (Hons) Business & Management Practice	Oxford Brookes University
BA (Hons) Professional Business & Management Practice*	Oxford Brookes University
HND Construction - Architectural Management	Pearson
HND Construction - Building Services – Electrical- HVAC	Pearson
HND Construction - Civil Engineering	Pearson
HND Construction - Construction Management	Pearson
HND Construction - Surveying	Pearson
HNC Construction - Building Services Engineering – Electrical*	Pearson
HNC Construction - Building Services Engineering – HVAC*	Pearson
HNC Construction - Civil Engineering	Pearson

HE Courses – Higher/Degree Apprenticeships*	Awarding Body
HNC Construction – Surveying*	Pearson
HNC Construction*	Pearson
HND Computing	Pearson
HND Computing – Cybersecurity- HTQ	Pearson
BSc (Hons) Games Design & Virtual Reality	University of Northampton
BA (Hons) Professional Creative Practice	University of Northampton
BA (Hons) Special Education Needs, Disability & Inclusive Practice	Newman University
FdA Special Education Needs, Disability & Inclusive Practice	Newman University
BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies	Oxford Brookes University
FdA Early Years	Oxford Brookes University
HNC Electrical & Electronic Engineering*	Pearson
HNC Manufacturing Engineering	Pearson
HNC Mechanical Engineering*	Pearson
BEng (Hons) Electrical & Electronic Engineering*	Oxford Brookes University
BEng (Hons) Mechanical Engineering*	Oxford Brookes University
FdEng Electrical & Electronic Engineering	Oxford Brookes University
FdEng Mechanical Engineering	Oxford Brookes University
BSc (Hons) Aircraft Maintenance*	Coventry University
BA (Hons) Criminology & Psychology	Newman University
HND Applied Science*	Pearson
HNC/HND Policing	Pearson

HND Computing – Cybersecurity is a Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ); HTQs are level 4 or 5 qualifications that have been approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education as meeting occupational standards for the relevant sector.

Table 2 lists the College’s current non-prescribed HE. These courses are awarded by a range of professional bodies and awarding organisations as indicated in column 2. 90% of the students on these courses study part-time, predominantly attending college in the evenings alongside full-time employment. These courses are in scope for Ofsted inspection and therefore were previously subject to the College’s wider quality processes, devised to meet the needs of Ofsted, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (EFSA) and the regulations of the Joint Qualifications Council (JCQ). The effectiveness of these quality processes is evidenced through the College’s recent Ofsted inspection report where the College was graded ‘Good’ in March 2022 (**Ref 003**). The following areas of good practice were identified:

“Learners develop their independence and flourish in their local communities.”

“Learners develop a good understanding of the theoretical components of their subjects and demonstrate that they can apply this to their practical skills.”

“Teachers and assessors are well qualified and have strong links to industry.”

“Learners and apprentices talked positively about the supportive relationships they have built with staff, teachers, and assessors.”

Leaders and managers “have successfully developed a curriculum which meets local and regional skills needs.”

Table 2: Non-prescribed HE provision 2022/23:

Course and level	Awarding body
Cyber Security Technologist Level 4 Apprenticeship	City & Guilds
HR Consultant Partner Level 5 Apprenticeship	CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development)
Accounting Level 4 Professional Diploma	Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT)
Procurement and Supply Level 4 Diploma Apprentice	CIPS (Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply)
Associate Project Manager Level 4 Apprenticeship	Association of Project Management
People Management Level 5 Associate Diploma	CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development)
Operations Departmental Manager Level 5 Apprenticeship	Chartered Institute of Management
Performance Level 4 Professional Diploma	University of the Arts, London (UAL)
Art and Design Level 4 Diploma Foundation Studies	University of the Arts, London (UAL)
Advanced Diploma in Strategic People Management (L7)	CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development)
Associate Diploma in People Management	CIPD (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development)

During 2019, the College reviewed its higher-level course portfolio in terms of quality, student experience and financial considerations. There were numerous programmes with consistently low numbers of students that, while providing high quality teaching and learning, were not giving all students the HE student experience that may be expected and did not provide efficient management of college resources. It was decided to close the smaller courses to ensure HE finance could be concentrated on those courses with larger student cohorts to improve the resources and experience for those students. This has resulted in a more streamlined portfolio which is provided in Tables 1 and 2. HE student numbers have, accordingly, reduced across college over the last 4 years as depicted in Table 3.

This reduction in student numbers is also reflected in SCUC's TEF indicators which provide headline indicators of aggregated results over 4 years. There is fluctuation in the number of respondents to the NSS survey from 2019 to 2022, but the proportion of respondents in 2022 compared to 2019 is a reduction of 46% which mirrors the which the 42% reduction of prescribed HE students in that period.

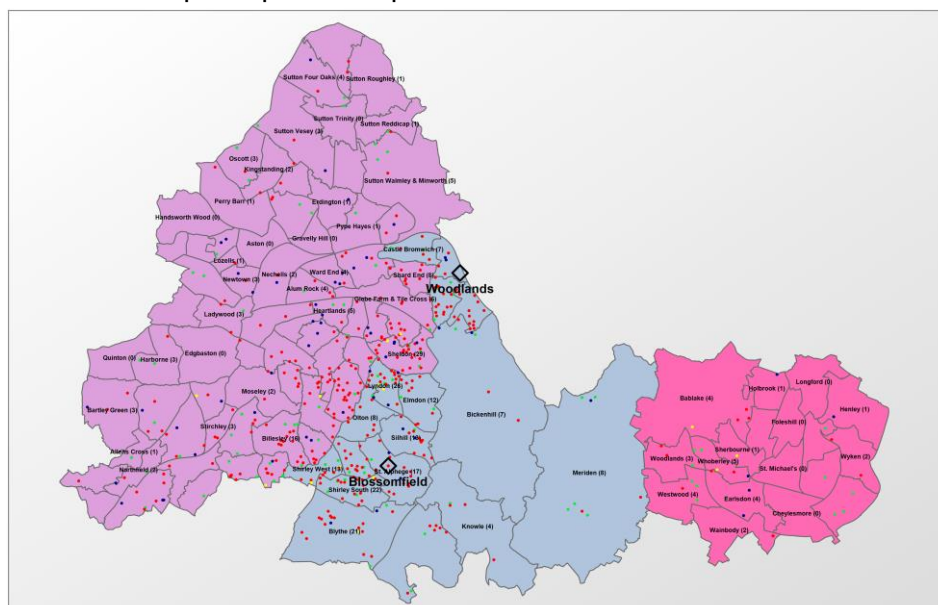
Table 3: Summary of prescribed and non-prescribed HE student numbers including apprentices 2019/20 to 2022/23

Year	Prescribed HE	Non-Prescribed HE	Total
2019-20	911	314	1225
2020-21	831	286	1117
2021-22	667	218	885
2022-23	525	175	700

SCUC serves a large geographical area which provides considerable choice for students. Most SCUC students reside in a corridor that spans from near Solihull town centre, where Blossomfield is located, to North Solihull where Woodlands is based and crosses into the Birmingham Metropolitan

Borough (BMB); this is illustrated in Figure 1. There are five universities and two colleges within BMB, with the Colleges offering HE at a total of 5 campuses. Fewer students reside in Coventry, east of SCUC's catchment area. The spread of students is summarised in the table within Figure 1 identifying the campus that students attend.

Figure 1: SCUC HE 21-22 participation map – home locations of students



District	Blossomfield	Woodlands	Stratford	Other	Total
Birmingham	186	41	5	52	284
Solihull	163	15	6	39	223
Warwickshire	23	6	23	38	90
Coventry	12	5	3	12	32
Total	384	67	37	141	629

Other Districts (not represented on map)

Academic Year	Blossomfield	Woodlands	Stratford	Other	Total
21/22	80	46	9	121	256

SCUC is more than meeting its HE strategic objective to provide educational, professional and academic opportunities which are accessible to all members of the local community and in particular to those from disadvantaged areas and non-traditional backgrounds. Black and Asian minority ethnic (BAME) students represent approximately 22% of the total student population – this is greater than the proportion of BAME individuals in the local population of Solihull (15%). There is a high proportion of economically disadvantaged students (approximately 40%) based on POLAR [or index of multiple deprivation (IMD)] figures – this differs from the local population where, although 1 in 10 Solihull residents live in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England, 1 in 3 Solihull residents live in the least deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England.¹ The majority (approx. 65%) of HE students are aged 21 or older.

The TEF metrics indicate that for most of these student groups, they are achieving above benchmark outcomes and have above benchmark satisfaction with their teaching, assessment, academic support and quality of the student voice. There are a few areas where there is below benchmark performance for an under-represented group; these specific differences will be addressed below.

SCUC values its close relationship with employers and its position as a provider of high-quality vocational programmes. Accordingly, this submission includes SCUC's apprenticeship programmes,

¹ Based on IMD data from : [Deprivation in Solihull The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019](#)

the portfolio of which has been included in Tables 1 and 2 above. SCUC delivers Higher Apprenticeships in Applied Science, Building Services, Cybersecurity and Engineering and Degree Apprenticeships in Aircraft Maintenance, Business & Management Practice and Engineering; these are prescribed HE due to the integration of a High National Certificate, Diploma or Honours degree. The College also delivers Higher Apprenticeships in Associate Project Manager, Cyber Security Technologist, HR Consultant Partner and Operations Departmental Manager which are non-prescribed HE.

SCUC has a well-developed system of academic governance. Two committees oversee the strategic direction and quality assurance of HE provision; HE Strategy Committee and HE Quality & Standards Board (**Ref 004**). Both committees have student representation and report directly to the Executive Management Team (EMT). The EMT comprises the Principal and CEO (Chair), Deputy Principal and three Vice-Principals covering all business areas of the College. Additionally, the HE Quality and Standards and the HE Strategy Committees report to the Corporation's (Board of Governors). This governance structure ensures oversight of the implementation of the HE Strategy and assures the College at all levels that the HE provision is meeting its stated aims, delivering a very high-quality student experience and complying with the ongoing OfS conditions of regulation (**Ref 005**).

Programme Quality Boards (PQBs), reporting to the HE Quality and Standards Committee, 'deep dive' into the quality of each programme and review Annual Monitoring Reports prior to their submission to the HE Quality and Standards Committee (**Ref 006**). Additionally, new Pearson Higher National programmes and those undergoing periodic review are subject to approval by College Programme Approval Boards which report directly to the HE Quality and Standards Committee.

Operationally, HE is the responsibility of the Dean of HE and Research who works closely with Heads of School and Assistant Principals, who line manage academic teaching staff, and colleagues who lead HE Professional Services including Admissions, Career & Finance Services, ICT Services, Learning Technologies, Library Services, Student Complaints and Appeals, Student Council and Welfare & Care Needs (**Ref 007**).

During 2021 and 2022, SCUC has started to align its previously separate quality processes for (prescribed) HE and FE (including non-prescribed HE) to enable the College to better meet the relevant OfS B conditions of registration and expectations set out in Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework (EIF). This alignment process has enabled the College to manage a consistent Management Information Systems (MIS) approach to course records and data to enable easier and accurate maintenance of Individual Learning Records and implement streamlined quality assurance processes for monitoring the student academic experience and student outcomes. For example, the MIS Dashboard classifies cohorts and widening participation characteristics on all prescribed and non-prescribed HE courses and assessment regulations cover all prescribed and non-prescribed HE courses, where it is the College's responsibility to set them. This substantial alignment process is ongoing with the current phase focused on the challenges of annual course monitoring against OfS student outcome thresholds and wider FE college benchmarks (for non-prescribed HE courses) as well as managing developmental teaching observations in line with Ofsted EIF requirements (**Ref 008**).

2. Student Experience

2.1 Academic Experience and Assessment

SE1. The provider has embedded outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment.

SCUC prides itself on providing outstanding teaching and learning which is evidenced in its above benchmark TEF NSS-based indicators for Teaching. Underpinning high quality teaching and learning is the College's HE Teaching Learning, Assessment and Scholarship Strategy (TLASS) (Ref 009). The TLASS was developed in conjunction with students – starting with the question: 'what constitutes good quality teaching and learning?' The strategy identifies 6 strategic priorities to ensure academic teaching staff are qualified, undertake appropriate CPD and facilitate scholarship-informed learning. Information on staff qualifications and CPD is provided in section SE3.

SCUC's TEF NSS-based indicator for FT Teaching is 85.3%, 2.0% above benchmark. NSS data is suppressed for PT students due to low numbers. A total of 41 FT students responded to the NSS survey in 2022 resulting in 88% satisfaction with Teaching. Apprentices were less satisfied with teaching resulting in a headline figure of 69.8% compared to a benchmark of 79.0%.

The pandemic had a significantly adverse impact on SCUC students and apprentices, which impacted on student satisfaction with teaching and assessment. There has been a focus on measures to rectify this position since face-to-face teaching resumed, and the success of these measures is illustrated by the significant improvement in student satisfaction in the current year at 89.9% for Teaching (an increase of 12% compared to 2021) and 10.1% above benchmark for the year. Measures included a dedicated number of teaching hours to recap learning from lock down year, this was specifically tailored at a module level where pre-requisite knowledge for continuing students was covered to ensure that students had the best possible opportunities to fulfil their potential.

To better explore students' satisfaction with teaching and learning opportunities, the internal College survey also asks whether 'The range and balance of approaches to teaching has helped me to learn' to which 77.6% of students agreed in 2021/22. A selection of student comments about teaching provided through the 2021/22 survey are shown in the box:

Valuing Teaching

"Teachers are always supportive and always going the extra mile to help us out to ensure that we are submitting a high-quality essay that will enable us to attain a sufficient grade".

"Teachers' guidance and positivity to help me complete modules has helped me through each semester especially under strained times"

"The lecturers have been amazing throughout the course, always available to give help and guidance when needed"

"Tutors offer regular 1:1's and are always available to talk to and very supportive. The HE area is a nice space to work in and tutors allow you to utilise quiet areas, etc".

"When staff have asked for our feedback, they have acted on this - acted on feedback from previous years and valued our opinions such as in PQBs..."

"Excellent structure and facilities available..."

The TLASS includes specific objectives for assessment:

- Designing assessments which identify strengths and areas for development in student practice, understanding and achievement.
- Integrating summative and formative assessments to the support of student learning and the development of academic and employability skills.
- Providing prompt, useful and targeted feedback on learners' achievements and diagnosis of strengths and areas for development

HE students are very positive about assessment practices including the way staff prepare them for assignments and exams; consistently helpful feedback, both written and verbal; provision of formative assessment support within timetabled sessions and tutorials; as well as one-to-one help and support in-person and, as is often the case, through e-mail or VLE contact.

Consultation with students identified that students' expectations in relation to timeliness of feedback often did not match policy nor practice. To address this issue, course teams use assessment mapping which informs students of assessment deadlines and the dates, also provided on assignment briefs, on which they will receive feedback (**Ref 010a-c**). A combination of group and individual feedback is now used within support sessions, especially when the notified period for the provision of detailed individual feedback is more than 1 week, as is the case for some longer assignments. Achieving deadlines for the provision of feedback is incorporated into staff KPIs and is monitored by the Curriculum Manager through Programme Quality Boards and surveys.

The effective implementation of the TLASS and achievement of high-quality assessment outcomes are evidenced through the TEF NSS-based indicator for FT Assessment at 75.9% which is broadly in line with its benchmark (76.5%). The College has worked hard to improve student satisfaction with assessment feedback following Covid and this is evidenced in the significant recent improvement from year 3 (71.4%) to year 4 (81.3%) - an increase of 9.9% from 2021 and 8.5% above the 2022 benchmark of 72.8%.

The effectiveness of the College's TLASS also contributes to above benchmark outcomes for continuation, completion and progression. HE student retention is high, and continuation is above benchmark at 84.7% for FT students and 88.9% for apprentices. Similarly, completion is above benchmark for FT students, PT students and apprentices at 81.8%, 80.7% and 72.5%, respectively. TEF data also confirms that progression for FT students is in line with the benchmark at 57.6% and above the benchmark for PT students at 79.9% (no TEF indicator is available for apprentices due to low numbers).

There was 80% student agreement in 2022 to the final NSS question: 'Overall, I am satisfied with the Quality of my Course' which is above the College's benchmark of 78% and is higher than any of the College's validating partner institutions, only one of whom scored above their benchmark of 76%. 82.9% of apprentices in the 2021/22 College Apprentice Survey agreed with the statement 'Overall I am satisfied with my apprenticeship programme' (90.2% in 2020/21). This very high level of student satisfaction strongly supports the assertion that SCUC has embedded outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment.

SE2. Course content and delivery inspire the provider's students to actively engage in and commit to their learning and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential.

HE student engagement at SCUC is high due to very high-quality teaching and relevant curricula. The starting point is course design. In line with the College HE Strategy, SCUC runs courses that meet the needs of employers. Regular engagement with employers enables curriculum teams to design appropriate courses and/or tailor optional modules/units to the needs of local and regional industry (**Ref 011a/b**). Student engagement is also enhanced through including students and alumni in course design. Curriculum leaders facilitate student discussions with staff and employers, to ensure the requisite skills and knowledge are delivered through the most appealing modules/units. The 3-way discussion between students, staff and employers enables students to understand why some modules are essential, even if less interesting than others, while student views have helped to identify optional modules or pathways.

SCUC implements a range of innovative policies around curriculum design, development and standards that are effective in stretching students so they can achieve their full potential. Comprehensive design principles are employed across the College and ensure that curriculum design teams give due consideration to areas of progression, coherence, flexibility and integrity. Compliance with these principles is evidenced through a continuous cycle of monitoring and review, with summary overview reports being considered by both the HE Quality and Standards and the HE Strategy Committees.

NSS data provides evidence of student stretch at SCUC and student engagement with their studies to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential. In 2022, 82% of students agreed that their course is 'intellectually stimulating' – in line with the sector. 86% of students agreed that 'My course has provided me with opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different topics' compared to a sector average of 81%, and 86% of SCUC students agreed that 'My course has challenged me to achieve my best work' compared to a sector average of 76%.

In the 2021/22 College Apprenticeship Survey, 87.8% of apprentices agreed with the statement 'I know what my targets are and how to achieve them (92.4% in 2020/21). 77.5% of apprentices agreed that they feel their 'assessor stretches and challenges me to achieve high grades' (84% in 2020/21).

The collective student voice is represented through annual quality and satisfaction surveys, including NSS and the College HE Student Survey, which is conducted with non-final year HE students, including all the standard NSS questions for which is conducted with final year students, Apprenticeship Survey and the College Settling In Survey.

Each course has an elected student representative. The student representatives routinely attend Annual Programme Monitoring and Programme Committee Meetings. Student representatives are also called upon when the College consults on development initiatives or acts on issues requiring attention, for example. Focus groups are held routinely across subject areas to supplement information gained through surveys and other formal means. Often student representatives encourage their peers to attend these focus groups and/or raise matters relating to the student experience. The College provides training for student representatives, and they are supported by the College Enrichment Team.

Student engagement also extends to involvement in course quality and review (in addition to involvement in course design as described above). At module level, students are encouraged to

complete Early Module Reviews and Student Module Evaluation questionnaires which feed into the Module Monitoring and Review Process. The outcomes of these module reviews inform Annual Programme Monitoring (**Ref 012**).

Students are motivated by employer events as they see the impact of their study and participation in the real world of work. For example, in 2021/22 SCUC hosted a career event with Astra Zeneca Biosciences and UAR (Understanding Animal Research) - about the role of Animal Technicians in Animal Research. All Foundation Degree students are required to undertake work experience/placement or appropriate work-based learning to achieve their qualification. Students complete a wide range of projects and dissertations which are typically undertaken in collaboration with local and regional employers. Most of the Engineering and Construction students are employed within their sectors. There is a dedicated a work placement officer that facilitates communication between the College and employers/placement providers and monitors the progress of the students while on placement. The College liaises with numerous employers to facilitate work experience opportunities while students are also encouraged to find placements themselves. For example, BSc and FdSc Animal Behaviour & Welfare students are offered a range of work experience opportunities in various organisations, including Birmingham Dogs Home and Drayton Manor Zoo, where they apply their knowledge in the workplace enabling them to further develop on the job skills and behaviours

In the 2021/22 College Apprenticeship Survey, 95.1% of apprentices agreed with the statement 'My employer supports me with my training' (90.2% in 2020/21).

[SE3. The provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to an outstanding academic experience for its students.](#)

SCUC is a founder member of the Research College Group who lead in practitioner research within the UK and raise the capacity for research in post-compulsory education settings. As a part of this Group, staff are currently undertaking research for the DfE into English GCSE resit material; as part of the contribution towards the access and participation of school leavers.

The College is an active participant of the Learning and Skills Research Network (LRSN) which is an open network that brings together FE and HE staff with an interest in research and the use of evidence to share ideas and work together. SCUC staff also actively support '#FEResearchMeet' - a 'free and democratic movement building and supporting engagement with research in FE, led by practitioners, for practitioners.'

The College is running an event on dual professionalism, with an SCUC HE lecturer presenting his Aspiring Leaders project on developing CPD as dual professionals.

Initiatives to support staff scholarship include a reduced teaching timetable for HE lecturers compared to FE staff to enable scholarship in HE, support for achievement of higher qualifications and the introduction of the College 'Aspiring Leaders Programme'. The College financially supports staff to present/attend at national and international conferences. although this activity has been severely reduced recently due to the pandemic. The College provides a number of research grants are available to academic staff to undertake research; £5000 in research grants was provided to SCUC's 'Aspiring Leaders' to further develop their research in 2021/22 (**Ref 013**).

College leaders support an established cross-college research group. This group of experienced and/or active researchers supports peers undertaking research with a particular focus on colleagues embarking on Masters/PhD programmes, when more support is often welcomed.

In line with its Strategic Objectives, SCUC is committed to collecting and utilising feedback from employers, professional bodies and other stakeholders. This feedback helps ensure the relevance of SCUC's programmes to society and the labour market and adds value to the student experience. The College holds regular employer engagement events, where teaching staff and local and national industry experts are given the opportunity to contribute towards course design and review, supporting the currency of staff vocational knowledge and that of the curriculum.

In addition to academic research and scholarship, employer engagement is a major activity to contribute to an outstanding student experience. The College uses strategic focus groups across a range of industries important to the region's economy including Health & Social Care, Construction, Engineering, Animal Welfare and Policing. Meetings of Sector Groups have been used to underpin HE developments, for example a Construction and Built Environment Employer Group held a Breakfast meeting at the College to discuss the impact of Higher Technical Qualifications (planned for delivery September 2023) on their workforce and engaged in planning the pathways offered and their relevance to their skills gaps. The Engineering School is active through various employer consortium groups such as the 'Connected Curriculum' initiative which hosts research workshops relating to both pedagogy and industry research in Engineering. The College is also active in various forums such as the Millennium Point STEM Round Table supporting the STEM industry and education in the West Midlands; within this forum, STEM students and professionals discuss the impact of their projects and work-based learning experience on their organisations and the wider aspect of the STEM industry.

The establishment of the IoT has allowed the College to introduce additional higher technical qualifications enabling growth in level 4 and 5 qualifications and hands on experience for students to utilise machinery and equipment to demonstrate theory into practice. Students have access to wide range of employers involved in the IoT; these enable engagement in the employment sector and opportunities for the co-design of the curriculum.

We hear very clearly from employers that they expect their workforce to be able to access their learning in flexible ways that complement the work/study balance rather than hinder it. The College already operates flexible delivery options such as part time study, evening classes and block release however, the introduction of immersive classrooms since the pandemic provided a new level of flexibility allowing the employers workforce to study at times that suit both themselves and their employers. The College intends to further expand on this integrated approach by involving employers in the delivery of elements within these qualifications. The College already partners with several employers and has consulted them in the design of some of the modules that it offers (**Ref 014**). This employer led approach further enhance the skills that students are acquiring and guarantee that they are aligned to the skills shortages in the sector.

We monitor the impact of research and scholarly activities on course specific learning resources and their application to the relevant level descriptor. We conduct an annual VLE audit (**Ref 015**) through course 'MOT', reporting to Quality and Standards Committee whereby actions are identified and tracked through Course Quality Improvement Plans. Adequacy of learning resources are visited twice with students in the December and May Programme Quality Boards (**Ref 016a/b**); this is attended by student representatives and chaired by the relevant Head of School, the outcomes and

actions raised at these committees are fed into the annual monitoring process, reported to the Senior Management Team. The rigour of the AMR process was strengthened with the requirement of initial approval by the Head of School and Assistant Principals followed by approval by validation panels with external critical friends to further enhance the judgement of the programme quality and enhance the process of peer review.

2.2 Resources, support and student engagement

SE4. There is outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider.

All of HE teaching staff have a nationally recognised teaching qualification or are in the process of obtaining one. The College runs its own teacher training programme in partnership with Newman University Birmingham and staff registered on this programme have a reduced teaching load to support successful completion.

SCUC provides a range of staff development activities and opportunities for HE academic and support staff. This includes an annual HE Conference (**Ref 017**) which all HE staff attend, featuring contributions from internal and external personnel sharing information on recent HE developments and pedagogic good practice. The College is an active QAA member and various SCUC staff have attended the QAA annual conference and events on using a flexible learning toolkit to enhance module design, reassessing assessment, the role of EdTech in creating inclusive assessment and feedback practices as well as the termly College HE Policy and Practice Network.

All HE teaching staff are required to hold a qualification at a level above that at which they teach, and the College also supports staff in achieving academic and professional qualifications that will benefit their teaching practice and provides financial assistance from the staff development fund. In recent years, this fund has been utilised to support several staff with funding towards Postgraduate study (MSc, MA, PhD) and attendance at conferences and industry related fairs. The College typically contributes 50% of postgraduate tuition fees for staff wishing to gain higher level qualifications and is currently supporting five staff on Master's degree programmes. Staff are encouraged to share their research and findings from supported activities at the annual HE Conference.

The College is a member of Advance HE and is committed to supporting all HE academic staff to achieve HEA recognition. Staff new to teaching can undertake the Academic Professional Apprenticeship within SCUC and achieve HEA Fellowship on completion of the programme. For more established lecturers, the College provides financial support for staff to obtain membership of the HEA. This committed effort has resulted in more than 95% of SCUC teaching staff being recognised as Fellows or Senior Fellows of Advance HE.

Teaching excellence is recognised at an annual awards ceremony where students and colleagues are able to nominate staff for an award. All nominees are recognised and awards are made in a number of categories. As a result of the pandemic, the awards were suspended for two years and recognising excellence will resume during 2022-23.

There are opportunities for excellent teachers to progress Teaching and Learning Leads – these roles signify a level of excellence and provide opportunities to support fellow teaching staff. Unlike progression to many management roles, excellent teachers are rewarded without the need to leave their teaching commitments behind.

Recent investment in teaching and learning led to the creation two new positions: Head of Teaching and Learning and Lead HE Coach. The success and impact of these roles was an increased focus on teaching and learning across each of the faculties, leading to continuous improvement and enhancement. School Learning and Teaching Groups provide a forum for staff, at grass roots level, to discuss teaching and learning and have been the impetus for significant positive change. This includes reinforcing the principles and practices of teaching, learning and research in higher education and considers learning theories and curriculum design. In addition, all researchers are required to undertake The College's 'Beginning to Teach in Higher Education' course' as part of their induction.

Over 30% of HE teaching staff are appointed External Examiners (EEs) at other institutions, a practice that is encouraged throughout the College. These roles enable staff to share their own good practice and experience ideas and practices from the wider academic community.

The College supports the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) as a key foundation of the expectations of HE teachers. A bespoke process for teaching observations has been established, known within college as 'learning visits', which is mapped to the OfS ongoing B Conditions of Registration and forms a key part of the College's work to support and develop the academic staff (**Ref 018**).

[SE5. The provider ensures a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a wide and readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs.](#)

A personalised learning approach underpins the learning environment and academic support provided by SCUC – wherever possible, individual personal learning needs are recognised, understood and met. The College implements strategies and policies including the TLASS and the HE Access and Participation Plan to provide learning, teaching and assessment which is flexible, accessible and inclusive.

The College prides itself on providing a supportive learning environment for all its students, whatever their age or level of study. In relation to HE students, this support starts from when a student first attends an Open Event or Interview and continues through to graduation. Prior to enrolment, students are supported by the College's HE Adviser, covering matters such as applications, Student Finance, Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) and accommodation and, in preparation for enrolment, students are provided with Welcome Packs and Stepping Up to University Level Study guides.

From enrolment, students are supported by their Programme Managers and undergo a comprehensive induction programme to help them settle into their studies and College life. In addition, all students are allocated a Personal Tutor and will have a series of planned individual and group tutorials across the course of the academic year. All HE Courses are allocated 2 hours tutorial time per week – these supplement the formal delivery of academic skills within modules and provide pastoral support. Typically, tutorials will alternate between group sessions which may focus on topics such as academic integrity, work placement/experience expectations and career progression, and 1:1 sessions where each student has set time with their tutor to discuss predominantly pastoral issues. They also have access to specialist individual support, as needed, from the Learning Support and Student Experience Teams. Particular attention is paid to the needs of students who transition from level 3 to HE and when transferring from a level 5 award to an appropriate Honours top-up programme. The College works closely with partner universities to ensure that students' external progression is experience as smooth and successful a transition as possible.

The College

mental health team is part of Student Services and can offer assessment, advice and develop a personalised plan of support for students including linking with appropriate external services and agencies. Student Services also offers confidential information, advice, and support to young adult carers.

The success of the strong support for all students is evidenced with TEF indicators being above benchmark for FT continuation and completion and at benchmark for FT progression.

Student responses to the NSS for academic support are high. Overall, the TEF NSS-based indicator for FT academic support is 80.3%, slightly above its benchmark of 80.1%. There was a decline in student satisfaction during the pandemic and the subsequent return to college-based tuition which resulted in below benchmark satisfaction in 2021. The College took this position seriously and acted to rectify the situation. A new role of Student Support Officer (SSO) was introduced. This role is the first point of contact for students who wish to access any support, other than their tutor – and often tutors refer students to the SSO. The SSO attends a range of group tutorials to introduce themselves and summarise the support available through the College. This very personalised approach has been welcomed by students and has resulted in a significant improvement in student satisfaction with support resulting in a 9.5% increase to 81.1% in 2022 – 6.2% above its benchmark for the year. Not all students have the confidence nor the inclination to ask for support. A variety of data reports are available through the College Dashboard to monitor recruitment, attendance, retention, achievement, success and progression. This data is used by managers, programme teams, tutors and the HE Quality Coordinator to monitor student engagement and progress throughout the academic year. Diligent monitoring of the data can flag students who are struggling academically or have reduced attendance patterns, for example. Staff are then able to make timely interventions, where appropriate, to enable students to develop and achieve. Interventions may be a quiet word with the tutor, a firm conversation by a manager or a sympathetic ear

to provide the right support in the right way for each individual. In addition to this regular continuous monitoring, quarterly meetings, known as 'HE MOT's', are attended by Heads of School, the Dean of HE and programme teams. The HE MOTs tend to include appropriate progress reports from individual interventions and cohort health checks such that any issues that may affect a group collectively can be identified and actions agreed. Any such actions are monitored with outcomes reported to the HE Quality and Standards Committee.

SE6. Physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning.

SCUC has excellent resources for its HE staff and students. Approval of new HE provision is dependent on the provision of appropriate and high-quality resources which are continually reviewed

and updated. The Life Science Laboratory at Blossomfield is a modern facility with industry-standard equipment, purchased on the recommendation of employers and an HEI partner, that replicates resources that is available in cutting-edge clinical laboratories and includes centrifuges, biological safety cabinets, various large-scale incubators and a wide range of microscopes.

The Land Based Centre, at the Blossomfield Campus, encompasses a three-storey building, complete with specialist rooms to accommodate a diverse animal family including aviary birds, parrots, skunks and rabbits. In addition, a large range of exotics including lizards, snakes, tortoises, fish and turtles enjoy life in specially designed reptile habitats. Two external barns and paddocks house goats and pigs. The Centre has been thoughtfully designed to provide first-class practical facilities for students on higher level Animal Behaviour & Welfare programmes. Performing Arts students at Stratford-upon-Avon have access to state-of-the-art recording studios and theatre with 150 seating capacity. Additionally, we partner with professional theatres such as the RSC and Birmingham Hippodrome, to ensure students have experience of nationally renowned performing venues.

The Engineering Technology facilities at Woodlands are especially impressive and includes an aircraft hangar, an advanced manufacturing centre, a materials laboratory, aero-thermal laboratory, aircraft maintenance facilities, flight simulators and wind tunnels, multi-material 3D printer and a 5-axis CNC machine. The association with the GBSIoT has provided access to significant additional resource to further enhance the College's facilities including £1 million DfE capital grant for refurbishments and engineering; £250k for Digital Connectivity Enhancement via the GBSLEP; and an £18k Emerging Skills grant: to develop training materials for national hybrid vehicle programmes. Apart from financial investment, being the lead partner of the GBSIoT provides staff and students with access to a state-of-the-art Cyber Physical Manufacturing Rig for training, research and learning, Siemens industry standard software and training as well as collaboration and networking with major companies across the West Midlands who provide input and advice on the College's HE programmes.

The College has a generous budget for the acquisition of library-based learning resources and provides both print and digital versions of core texts where available. Titles on reading lists are prioritised for acquisition. Students also benefit from access to EBSCO's HE in FE e-book collection and a range of online journals such as Engineering Source, Access Science and Education Complete.

The suitability and sufficiency of learning resources and the learning environment are considered in the context of a variety of review and approval processes including programme design, approval, monitoring and review processes; comments from EEs (**Ref 019**) and university Course Consultants, curriculum development proposal processes, Annual Programme Review and requirements for new and existing programmes are considered as part of the College's annual business planning cycle.

The Open Access Team also offer digital skills workshops focused on specific skills or tools at point of need. For example, a workshop on using the graphic design platform Canva was delivered to students in the first term in preparation for an academic poster assignment. These workshops are bookable by academic staff.

The College has a dedicated Learning Technologies Team whose work is directed by the College's Digital Learning Strategy (**Ref 020**). The key aims of which are to harness the affordances of technology to develop students' personal, social, digital and employability skills, to use technology to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of teaching, learning and assessment and to use technology to widen participation and remove barriers to learning. The team conduct research and development into new and existing technologies to identify potential developments.

There are Learning Technologists who support staff to develop their courses on Moodle, the College's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), to set up and use the College centralised individual learning platform system (ProMonitor) and to use technology to enhance teaching, learning and assessment. The VLE is used by HE lecturers to house resources and to set, receive and feedback on assignments.

In the 2022/23 academic year the College has upgraded the VLE and embarked upon a whole college project to improve accessibility, navigability and overall user experience in relation to the VLE. HE academic staff have been supported to better use the VLE functionality to reduce duplication of workload and to improve consistency for students.

In November 2022, The College's Learning Technologies Team were recognised for their work on embedding the latest technology into student learning with an AoC Beacon Award for Excellence in Training and Education.

Resources, and their effectiveness, are discussed within Programme Committees and HE Quality and Standards Committee. The College's information and communication technology facilities, the VLE and other learning resource systems are fully accessible and inclusive. The learning and social spaces are used by students from all programmes as a way of supporting collaborative learning and social exchanges as a part of their programme of study.

SCUC's commitment to the provision of physical and digital resources enables and encourages the development of staff and students' independent research and study skills. Overall student satisfaction with resources is above benchmark at 78.0% (benchmark of 77.7%). Most apprentices use resources in the workplace so the College Apprenticeship Survey seeks to ensure that apprentices can access College resources if they want to use them: 90.2% of apprentices agreed they could in 2021/22 (96.1% in 2020/21).

At the time the 2022 NSS survey was open, there were issues with Wi-Fi connectivity in the HE Student Centre, which have since been resolved, as well as the introduction of multi-factor authentication, in light of recent cyber security threats facing the sector, which meant that students' own equipment could not connect to College printers. These issues are clearly reflected in the 2022 NSS results where only 59% of students agreed that 'The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well,' down from 74% in 2021. The College acknowledges the impact the IT issues had on the student experience and conducted focus groups after resolving the issues to ensure that students were content with the IT facilities. The positive response from students can be seen in the November 2022 College Settling In Survey where 86% of HE students agreed 'I am satisfied with the learning resources provided on my course.'

SE7. The provider embeds engagement with its students, leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of its students.

SCUC sees its students as drivers of change and, views student engagement as an essential element of enhancement processes. This engagement encompasses a wide variety of opportunities for students to feedback to staff their thoughts and ideas about their student experience but also to be a part of the developmental processes taking place in the College.

Students provide feedback through elected student representatives, surveys, focus groups and directly to staff on their educational experience. The views of students, both individually and collectively, help to inform all aspects of the College from quality management systems to library developments.

College engagement with employers is highly valued and students are routinely involved in this engagement. Examples of this include workshops with the GBSLEP to identify and promote employability across the curriculum. These resulted in recommendations that were shared with the LEP Skills Board for inclusion in their forward planning. Current and alumni students involved in the social science workshop jointly presented the outcomes of the workshop to national audiences. Students in Art & Design developed workshops to support HE students to develop their own strategies to manage stress and improve resilience.

The College ensures consistent student input into decision-making processes through student representation in its governance structures including membership of the Board of Governors, HE Strategy Group, HE Quality and Standards Committee. At a more local level, students are members of Programme Management Boards and Student Staff Consultative Committees. Student engagement has helped to drive many improvements at SCUC, some of which have been discussed above.

The TEF NSS-based indicators for FT Student Voice is above benchmark at 75.7%. 82.8% of (non-final year) students agreed with the statement in the 2021/22 College HE Survey that 'I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course.' This very high satisfaction is mirrored in the 2022 NSS results in which 90% of SCUC HE students agreed with the equivalent question (no. 23) compared to a sector average of 79%.

3. Student Outcomes

3.1. Positive Outcomes

SO1. The provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

Although SCUC is an FE college with HE, there is a strong HE ethos among students and staff. This is supported by a dedicated floor of the main building at Blossomfield to HE studies but goes much deeper than physical areas. HE staff undertake a wide range of HE development, discussed in Section 2.1 above, and research-informed teaching is embedded within the TLASS. Development of the GBSIoT compliments the established ethos and provides opportunities for staff and student interaction and the sharing of good practice and research with staff, students and employers from across the IoT partners and wider afield.

The HE ethos, the very high-quality teaching and excellent support for students ensure students succeed in and progress beyond their studies. Overall outcomes for FT students are above benchmark for continuation (1.7% above benchmark) and completion (2.6% above benchmark)

The College takes a 'whole life cycle' approach to the way it supports its students. Starting with pre-application and application advice, the College's dedicated HE Admissions Officer provides consistent and timely advice for all applicants. Students with additional support needs are identified early (on application where disclosure is made) and the HE Admissions Officer liaises with the College's wider student support team to ensure that appropriate support needs are put in place. New students have a personalised induction programme including face-to-face staff introductions, subject-specific facility tours, library and e-learning inductions and the opportunity to meet with existing students.

Once on course, the highly organised support network for students, includes academic tutorials, 1:1 support, study skills sessions and pastoral care. HE students have a Programme Leader whose responsibility it is to monitor their progress, educational attainment and signpost for further support from the Academic Tutor, where appropriate. A former graduate said: "Tutors and lecturers put students at the centre of the learning experience, utilising a range of teaching and learning methods to cater for individual needs. I benefitted from small seminar groups and one to one tutor meetings, which provided the essential support I needed to be successful in the academic environment." Similarly, EEs have commended the tutorial system, such as this comment: "The students spoke highly of the tutoring model and the support that they received in this way." **(Ref 019)**

Many staff record their lectures, providing students with the opportunity to revisit and deepen their understanding of the topic(s) covered as part of their independent learning. This has proved useful for students in recapping and revising materials. A centralised Study Skills Service within the HE Centre supports the development students' study skills and compliments the tutorial system. Students can access online resources and one-to-one support from staff or peers through drop-in sessions to further develop skills such as essay writing, referencing and time management. Students can self-refer, or be directed by their Personal Tutors, Lecturers, or the Student Wellbeing Service. The scheme has been positive, with comments such as "This support has helped me with exactly what I wanted. I can now cite and reference easily and with confidence" and "I would not change anything about this service. The Skill Advisor was very flexible, understanding, organised, patient and confident. This is exactly what I needed."

SO2. There are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

The College has created its own, extensive Management Information System, which enables staff to record, monitor and make timely interventions in relation to student attendance, retention and progress. This 'early warning system' of students 'at risk' combined with very high-quality teaching, learning and assessment strategies as well as continuous student support as described above result in very high retention for the College. Where intervention is identified, staff provide support or signpost support, as appropriate, using one or more of the approaches discussed in Section SE5. Accordingly, Continuation of FT students is very high at 84.7% and above the College benchmark of 83.0%. Similarly, apprentice continuation is 88.9% compared to the benchmark of 87.5%. Continuation of PT students at 73.7% is the only headline outcome which is below the College's benchmark (77.3%), although this is substantially above the sector average of 67.3%.

The Continuation data for PT students is predominantly (97%) based on students registered on other undergraduate level 4 awards. Continuation rates declined in years 3 and 4 dropping to 64.3% for 2017/18 entrants and somewhat recovering to 67.8% for entrants in 2018/19. The TEF data indicates that the poor retention is based in the Business and Management subject area and represents HNC Business and professional courses. OfS (size and shape of provision) data confirms that 110 PT Business and Management students represented 29.5% of SCUC's PT

students in 2017/18 and 27.5% in 2018/19. As part of the curriculum review undertaken in 2019 (described above), the courses were revised, and course management improved. The College is confident that the revised and replacement courses are now being delivered to a very high quality. This is evidenced by responses from FdA Business Practice Management and BA (Hons) Business Practice Management top-up students to the internal HE Student Survey for 2021/22 which indicate extremely high satisfaction with Teaching (92.5%) and Academic Support (98.3%) and 95% of student agree that 'The course is well organised and is running smoothly.'

Completion is above benchmark across all headline outcomes. Completion of FT students is 81.8%, compared to the College benchmark of 79.2%. Completion of PT students is 80.7%, compared to the benchmark of 78.2% and completion of apprentices is outstanding at 72.5% which is substantially above the benchmark of 64.9%.

The quality of apprenticeship provision is illustrated by this extract

"There is a discernible difference in her approach and in the quality of the management she provides compared to peers in similar roles, such that she is already regarded as a strong performer after only a year in the new role. I have admired the way gets to grips with complex issues and workplace challenges and combines the knowledge and skills obtained through her studies to problem-solve and drive service improvement."

These excellent continuation and completion figures demonstrate that despite many students entering SCUC courses with low or no academic qualifications (as detailed in Section SO5), students are well-supported to develop their academic skills to enable successful achievement of their qualification aim. Similarly, the strong pastoral support described above also means that students are retained despite a wide range of difficulties that they encounter including financial issues, poor physical or mental health and for some, a considerable distance to travel to college.

SO3. There are outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses. Successful student progression is achieved through the structured support process and a strong emphasis on employability. As discussed above, employability is initially built into course design through strong employer engagement. Employability skills development is fully integrated into every HE course. This includes clear mapping of skills such as communication, problem solving, IT skills and teamwork into modules and units such that all students benefit from skills development across their course. Additionally, coursework reflects the current world of work and in many courses students undertake work placement or undertake projects relating to their work experience or current workplace. Additionally, the regular use of live briefs enables students to work with employers on real-life scenarios.

Students receive guidance and support tailored to their subject area through researching prospective career opportunities and job roles and development of job seeking skills such as creating effective CVs and the writing of successful job applications and covering letters. Students can access individual support to help identify particular relevant roles and/or with job applications from their personal tutor and from qualified, dedicated staff in the College careers centre.

Typically, 80% of SCUC students' progress internally from HNC to HND or Foundation Degree, or from a Foundation Degree to Honours Degree for example. This progression is strongly supported

by SCUC by its portfolio of courses tailored to meet the needs of the sector. The range of available qualifications is clearly described on the College website and progression routes are discussed and signposted at interview (prior to recruitment) as well as during the course.

SCUC has embedded an Employability module into its validated provision that requires students to research and plan their career path, whilst also reflecting on their achievements to date and qualities required to be successful in their chosen area (**Ref 021**). The innovative assessment of this module includes a graduate assessment day which has been designed in partnership with employers and industry specialists. Designed to mimic that of the 'real world', students are required to research, apply for, present, debate, analyse and be interviewed for one of a number of available positions. Local employers assist in the assessment of candidates which has resulted in a number of cases where students have been offered 'real' placements and internships.

EEs have commented on the impact of effective curriculum design: "Both curriculum design and delivery include a range of learning environments and assessment methods that encourage independent learning and focus on both subject specific knowledge and development of transferable skills. Students are encouraged to engage in critical assessment and intellectual argument, and I have also observed ethical consideration included in many of the samples of work. Students are encouraged to develop graduate and key transferable skills in the constructive feedback given by staff," EE, BA Professional Business & Management Practice.

The outstanding commitment to preparing students for work and to be active citizens has been nationally recognised. The AoC Beacon Awards, capture and celebrate the best and most innovative practice amongst UK further education colleges. The College has won a number of Beacon Awards recognising exceptional leadership and governance, development of students' employability skills, responsiveness to local employers and innovative approaches to improving teaching and learning (**Ref 022**).

The College supports students who wish to progress to level 6 study. Bespoke level 6 events are held including welcome days, taster sessions and workshops. Staff endeavour to ensure that progressing students are fully aware of all the opportunities available to them, they understand the intellectual step in progressing from level 5 to level 6 and the support that will be available to them in college. Most students are supported with the initial stages of establishing level 6 dissertation topics prior to completing level 5 study. Similarly, there is a close relationship with local HEIs for those students who wish to progress to Honours level study at a partner university.

The approaches provided here are successful as illustrated by SCUC's TEF data. Progression of FT students is in line with its benchmark at 57.6%. 79.9% progression for PT students is above the benchmark of 76.5%. Progression data for apprentices is suppressed due to small sample sizes, however, the vast majority of apprentices stay with the employer who supported their apprenticeship.

The low response rate is partly due the coverage of the progression indicator, where students on courses not recognised for OfS funding (non-prescribed HE) are excluded. SCUC promotes the Graduate Outcomes (GO) survey to all HE students. It is of note, however, that a survey that is received after a period of time (15 months) that is nearly double the time an individual spent studying (approximately 8 months for a FT HNC), may be seen as being out of date or lacking in currency, from the individual's perspective. Nevertheless, The College is exploring strategies to enhance GO survey completion in the future.

3.2. Educational Gains

SO4. The provider clearly articulates the range educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions.

Educational gains for our learners are twofold: the tangible educational gain viewed in student outcomes where they achieve their qualifications and are able to progress to further study or employment; and the intangible education gain that our learners achieve in terms of their self-efficacy and their overall Personal Development. Both aspects equally contribute to the educational gain for learners to allow them to enter in the world of employability and succeed in it. The intangible educational gain is evidenced by NSS Scores highlighting Personal Development versus the sector overall.

	SCUC %	Sector %
B1 Personal Development	84	74
B1.1 The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.	85	72
B1.2 My communication skills have improved.	88	78
B1.3 As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.	77	71
B13.2 The course has stimulated my interest in the field of study	88	81
B13.3 The course has stimulated my enthusiasm for further learning.	75	70
B15.2 My institution offered activities and resources designed to prepare me for the next step in my career.	91	67
B15.3 The skills I have developed during my time in Higher Education will be useful for my future career.	100	83

An important step to becoming an HE student and enabling progression to employment or further study is accessibility to HE programmes. Unlike some universities, that set entry requirements to select the most academically able (and potentially most likely to achieve) students, SCUC sets entry requirements that indicate the minimum formal learning that a candidate can have achieved to demonstrate potential ability to achieve on their chosen HE programme; the highest for any SCUC course is 64 UCAS points. In line with its HE strategic objective of accessibility to all members of the local community, the College also accepts candidates with no formal entry requirements – see section SO5 below for a full breakdown of student qualifications on entry.

The College’s published 2019 transparency return confirms that 81% of applicants from EIMD (English indices of deprivation) quintiles 1 and 2 were offered a place on a full-time HE course commencing autumn 2018, compared to 77% for applicants from less disadvantaged postcodes (130).² Subsequent registrations resulted in a greater proportion (61%) of students from disadvantaged postcodes. The SCUC’s dataset provided by OfS to inform its 2020/21 to 2024/25 Access and Participation Plan indicated that SCUC is consistently above the sector average for admission of full-time (FT) HE students from POLAR4Q1 across the previous 5 years of data: SCUC: 15-19% compared to sector: 11-12%. The current [OfS APP dashboard](#) (March 2022) indicates that 43% of SCUC FT students and 36% PT students recruited in 2020/21 are from IMD quintiles 1 or 2 compared to a sector averages of 28.3% (FT) and 40% (PT).

Typically, SCUC recruitment of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students is above that of the sector average, and notably higher than that indicated by local population data. The OfS ‘Size and shape of provision’ aggregated data from 2017/18 to 2020/21 indicates that BAME students

² The 2019 Published transparency return is the most recent return including application data

make up 30.5% of SCUC's FT entrants, significantly higher than 15% for the local population (15%) but in line with sector from 30.4% (in 2017/18) – 31.4% in 2020/21³. PT BAME recruitment is more reflective of the local population at 16.3% but slightly below the sector average (18.2% - 19.2%); this is predominantly due to the curriculum offer in which Engineering students make up 42.8% of the PT student population, reflecting the ethnic make-up of the local (and national) industry.

SCUC routinely provides diagnostic screening of all new students to help identify any previously unknown conditions – the purpose of the screening is to inform staff and students of where additional help or support is likely to be beneficial and signpost that support to students directly. There is no penalty for students who do not take up support that is offered.

The College's first HE strategic aim is to respond to the needs of employers in the development of HE provision. The College's collaboration with employers and industry is detailed in Section 2. As set out in Tables 1 and 2, SCUC delivers a portfolio of higher and degree apprenticeships which more than tripled in terms of student numbers from 70 in 2017/18 to 250 in 2019/0. The pandemic resulted in reduced entrants in 2020/21 but apprentice numbers remain high at 190. Additionally, SCUC delivers vocational HE including HNCs, HNDs and Honours degrees. For each of these courses, the College consults with local and regional employer partners to ensure the programmes and the choice of units/modules within the programmes meet the needs of the relevant sectors.

SO5. The provider's approaches to supporting its students to achieve these gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points.

Recruiting students from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences is beneficial if students stay on course in order to succeed. The support provided for SCUC students, from before they join the College right through to graduation, results in above benchmark continuation rates for FT students: 84.7% compared to the benchmark of 83.0%. This high quality performance is above benchmark for all ages,

The continuation rate of FT black students is an anomaly in the data being below the benchmark at 70%. The current OfS APP dashboard (March 2022) shows a significant improvement in the continuation of FT Asian students from 70 in 2016/17 to 90% in 2019/20. Data for Black students is suppressed due to low numbers. Continuation of PT students is the only area of headline outcome data where the College performs below benchmark which has been evaluated in Section 2 (SO2). A wide range of approaches and processes are in place to support retention and achievement of all students.

All applicants are interviewed prior to offers being made – this process helps to ensure that candidates do have the potential to succeed on their chosen course and that the course is suitable for their educational and career aspirations. At this point some applicants may be directed to alternative provision such as an Access to HE Diploma, for example. SCUC has Access to HE programmes in Art and Design, Early Years Education and Health Science Professions. The College makes good use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) when considering the suitability of applicants with no or low-grade entry qualifications. The interview also provides an early opportunity for candidates to disclose and discuss any disabilities, learning difficulties or access/mobility issues for which support can be provided and/or reasonable adjustments made. Once accepted onto an HE course, students receive pre-course information and a comprehensive induction. In the 2022 Settling in Survey, 83% of students agreed with the statement 'I am satisfied with the enrolment and induction arrangements for my course.' 88% of students confirmed that they were 'satisfied with the help staff gave me in the first few weeks.'

³ OfS Equality, diversity and student characteristics data dashboard

While students come from a variety of backgrounds, the majority first join SCUC HE courses with academic potential but relatively low prior attainment. Excluding those who entered programmes with some HE qualifications, usually as a result of progressing from an HNC to a Foundation degree for example, 5.1% of FT students in 2020/21 entered SCUC HE programmes with A-levels grades of CDD or higher. 13.6% of students entered with lower A level grade profiles while the majority of students had BTEC awards of grades DDM or lower (43.4%) or other level 3 equivalent awards (29.8%) or no or unspecified qualifications (8.1%). Effective and well-designed opportunities for academic skills development is therefore carefully integrated into all higher-level courses. Degree and Foundation degree courses are validated by university partners, but where possible modules such as 'Professional and Academic Skills' or 'Developing Skills for Learning and Personal and Professional Development' form part of the curriculum. For Pearson Higher Nationals and other programmes where academic skills development is not included in bespoke credit-bearing units or modules, this is delivered through means such as preparation for assignments and within tutorials. All HE students have access to high quality study skills material on the VLE; the on-line study skills package that supplements the sessions delivered within programmes was chosen after careful trials and student feedback. with the students on franchised programmes also able to access Study Skills resources and sessions from, or at, the relevant partner university, There is also an extensive selection of study skills and study support materials in the Learning Zones, Library and in the course handbooks: all of which is regularly evaluated and reviewed in student focus groups, annual monitoring reports and Programme Quality Committees to ensure maximum effectiveness, particularly for students new to HE. Programme leaders can also book group sessions to focus on topics such as plagiarism, referencing, research skills and essay construction. Similarly, individuals or small groups of students can book this type of focused session with a member of the Student Services team if they want additional help or support.

SCUC's whole college approach to widening participation (WP) led to its inclusion as a case study in a research piece commissioned by the Office for Fair Access.⁴ The final report noted that SCUC's "WP work takes place at each phase of the student journey, but as a small institution WP is genuinely undertaken by 'everyone' with no dedicated WP roles."

The College recognises student achievements with an annual student awards ceremony that allows staff to nominate students. Representatives from sponsor companies join students, College Governors and staff in an annual celebration to commend students on their achievements. Typically, these awards are agreed by programme teams and are given to students that have exceeded their potential and/or overcome personal situations.

SO6. The provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and demonstrates its students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains.

SCUC is highly effective in meeting its aims for students and local/regional employers in the recruitment of young and mature students from a wide variety of backgrounds and typically with very low previous educational attainment. The College performs consistently well in retaining students once recruited and developing students' individual academic, personal and employability skills to achieve their chosen qualification and progress to further study or employment. A notable measure of this success is the achievement of students and SCUC consistently performs above its benchmarks for FT, PT and apprenticeship completion. As discussed above (SO2), 81.8% of FT students successfully complete their qualifications compared to the benchmark of 79.2%. 80.7% of PT students successfully complete their qualifications, significantly above the benchmark of 78.2% and completion of apprentices is 72.5%, also significantly above the benchmark of 64.9%.

An anomaly in the data is Completion for FT Engineering students which is well below the College benchmark for this subject.

Where possible, College staff have worked with affected students to find alternative employment, but this does not always result in a (sponsored) return to studies.

Published transparency information for 2020/21 confirms that 70% of SCUC graduating students from EIMD (English indices of deprivation) 2019 quintiles 1 or 2 achieved a first degree at grade 2:1 or above, compared to 85% for students from less disadvantaged postcodes. As is detailed (in SO5) above, SCUC accepts students onto degree programmes with 64 UCAS points or less, which is achievable with only 2 A levels, and some with no formal qualifications.

The above first degree attainment data represents the outcomes of 30 students; a further 110 students completed and achieved 'other UG awards' in 2020/21. The College provides excellent support all students to achieve their qualification aims and is proud of the results in terms of educational gain that is provided in Table 4.

Table 4: Distance travelled of qualifying HE students 2021/22

Prior attainment	Student Numbers	Good Grades*	Percentage
Certificate at level 3	27		29.6%
GCE and VCE A/AS level	49	23	46.9%
Diploma at level 3	173	88	50.9%
BTEC Diploma & Certificates	46	28	60.9%
Qualifications at level 2			45.5%
			49.7%

* Good grades are Honours degrees classifications of 1st and 2:1 and Higher Nationals achieved at Merit of Distinction.

For SCUC undergraduates completing all HE programmes (prescribed and non-prescribed) in 2022, 47.3% achieved a good outcome (Distinction, Merit, 1st or 2:1). This outcome should be considered alongside entry qualifications; as detailed (in SO5) above, SCUC accepts students onto degree programmes with 64 UCAS points or less, which is achievable with only 2 A levels, and some with no formal qualifications.

The College maintains a strong focus on not only ensuring students are successful in their programme of study and in progressing on to further HE programmes, but also in securing employment in the field to which they aspire. The largely professional and technical nature of the College's HE portfolio means that there are ample opportunities for work-based and work-related learning to be embedded within teaching, learning and support and thus enhance employability.

A significant number of students are already in employment or undertake work placements as part of their programmes, so are able to directly relate theory and practice. Employers are engaged in the selection, design and approval of HE programmes and Programme Managers and Module/Unit Leaders maintain strong employer links at all times, thus providing students with opportunities for guest speakers, visits and networking. Students are further supported in preparing for work through dedicated professional practice Modules/Units and/or by engagement with the College's Progression and Employability Team.

As noted above, the College has an extensive Management Information System which enables staff to record, monitor and make timely interventions in relation to student attendance, retention, progress, achievement and success. However, it is at an early stage in developing metrics to assess 'value added' or 'learning gain'. Metrics have been developed to assess value added between GCSE

and A Level study, which are to be extended to BTEC Extended National Diploma learners and subsequently will be applied to HE students. In the interim, a quantitative indication of the learning gain experienced by the majority of HE students may be gained from consideration of entry.

4. Reference List

Reference	Title and Location
001	SCUC Strategic Plan 2021 – 24 (Available at https://www.solihull.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/strategic-plan.pdf)
002	Higher Education Strategy 2019 (Available at https://www.solihull.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Higher-Education-Strategy-2019.pdf)
003	SCUC Ofsted Report March 2022 (Available at https://www.solihull.ac.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2022/05/10196521-Solihull-College-University-Centre-130481-Final-PDF-2.pdf)
004	Higher Education Committee Structure (Held on HE Quality Site)
005	Governors Briefing Presentation November 21 (Held on Governors SharePoint Site and Board Effects)
006	Quality & Standards Board Agenda December 20 (Held on HE Strategy Committee SharePoint Site)
007	SCUC Induction Presentation September 22, Slide 7 (Held on HE Quality Site and Course Moodle pages)
008	Snapshot of HE Dashboard 15 th January 23 (Dashboard available on SCUC Intranet)
009	SCUC HE TLASS December 2019 (Available at https://www.solihull.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/higher-education-tlas-strategy_v8.pdf)
010a	BSc Assessment Plans 22 – 23 (Held on Course Moodle Sites)
010b	FdSc Year 1 Assessment Plans 22 – 23 (Held on Course Moodle Sites)
010c	FdSc Year 2 Assessment Plans 22 – 23 (Held on Course Moodle Sites)
011a	Employer Engagement Animal Behaviour September – Nov 22 (Held on HE Quality Site)
011b	Employer reflections taken from Exit Reviews 20-21 (Held on HE Quality Site)
012	APR Animal Behaviour and Welfare June 21 (Held on the HE Quality SharePoint Site)
013	Aspiring Leaders Training Programme September 22 (Held on the Quality SharePoint Site, All Staff emails)
014	OBU Quinquennial Review Evidence of Employer Engagement, April 2022, Page 5-8 (Held on HE Quality Site)
015	Public Info HE Courses January 22 (Held on HE School Quality Site)
016a	Guidance notes for student reps PQB December 2021-2022 (Held on HE School Quality Site)
016b	PQB December Pro Forma 21-22 (Held on HE School Quality Site)
017	Higher Education Conference Agenda June 2021 (Held on the Quality SharePoint Site)
018	Evaluation of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy 22-23, Page 4 (Held on Staff Intranet)
019	External Examiner (EE) Comments Extracts 21-22 (Held on HE School Quality Site)
020	Digital Learning Strategy Aims and Objectives 2019-22 (Held with Learning Technologies)
021	BMP Developing Self and Others Handbook 22-23 (Held on Course Moodle Site)
022	College Awards, Screen Shots from College Website (Available from https://www.solihull.ac.uk/news-and-events/)