

Approaches to evidence-gathering

My role in representing students.

I have studied at Barnsley College Higher Education for four years, I have represented the student body since my first year . During my first year of study, I was elected as my courses' representative. This meant I was involved in getting my peers opinions and issues across to course and department leaders. In 2020 I was elected as officer for the student union, which gave me the opportunity to join the board of governors becoming the Higher Education student governor – a position I still hold now.

. This has provided me with a lot of opportunities across the years. I have since been elected as the first female president of the Students' Union, all of my committee peers were all females; another first for the union. In 2022/23, I am again the officer for the Students' Union and remain the Higher Education student governor while learning how to teach in post-compulsory education and taking my own students enquiries further to benefit their educational experience.

During my time as the Higher Education governor, I have also spoken in front of the student body at graduation ceremonies, presented at academic conferences about my position as a peer academic support mentor and spoken to our awarding university, Leeds Trinity University, about mine and my peer's perspective on how well Barnsley College Higher Education has supported us both academically and personally.

Who else has been involved

During my data gathering I have worked closely with current students at Barnsley College Higher Education and peers who are either currently studying or graduated within the last 2 years. I also reached out to alumni through my social media platforms to speak to those about what they are doing after completing their education at Barnsley College Higher Education and how their courses have supported them in their transition through graduation and gaining their first graduate job or full-time job. The students that I have spoken to come from a range of courses and range of degree programmes so that the data collected has a greater amount of variety, therefore increasing the accuracy of my results.

Pre-existing evidence

New evidence has been gathered through informal conversations however, pre-existing evidence such as the National Student Survey results from the last four years and all students committee meeting minutes have been analysed and used within this process. All pre-existing data is taken from 2019 to the present year and alumni data from Barnsley College Higher Education students

has been used from the graduate outcomes survey released to alumni once they have finished the course they were on.

In the NSS students are asked 27 questions which cover the following headings (question numbers in brackets):

- The teaching on my course (1-4)
- Learning opportunities (5-7)
- Assessment and feedback (8-11)
- Academic support (12-14)
- Organisation and management (15-17)
- Learning resources (18-20)
- Learning community (21-22)
- Student voice (23-26)
- Overall satisfaction (27)

Barnsley College Higher Education also opted to supply “Would you recommend Barnsley College?” as an extra question in the 2020 survey. This question was utilised to instigate the discussion for student experience. There are also optional “free response” questions which students posted anonymous comments based on their experiences, these results weren’t published but have been utilised within this paper to contribute to the opinions from students.

Explain extra evidence gathering and how was it done

Extra evidence was gathered through information conversations with my peers and former course mates. As part of my own PGCE, I also teach higher education, so I was able to have informal conversations with my own students and students around Barnsley College Higher Education about their opinions and how they feel about their experience. These conversations were ‘off the record’ and meant that students’ confidentiality can be always kept. This also means that if students want to withdraw their information they can at any point because they are ‘off the record’ and students have no obligation to submit their information.

Details about students and courses.

The following courses are just some of the ones available at Barnsley College Higher Education:

- BA (Hons) Early Years
- BA (Hons) Music Technology and Production
- BA (Hons) Popular Music
- BSc (Hons) Construction and Project Management
- FdA Business
- FdA Games Design
- FdSc Animal Management
- FdA Coaching, Physical Education and Sport Development

- BA (Hons) Enterprise and Entrepreneurship
- FdA Acting for Touring Theatre
- FdEd Supporting Early Years
- FdEd Supporting Children and Families in Social Contexts
- FdSc Professional Practice in Health and Social Care
- FdSc Physical Activity, Health and Exercise
- HND General Engineering
- HND Public Services
- HND International Travel and Tourism Management

Within the period considered for this piece of work, over 800 students completed the National Student Survey and graduate outcome surveys, therefore making their data eligible to be included within my research. These students came from 18 courses from Barnsley College Higher Education. Students range from young students (18 – 25 years old) to mature students (over 26 years). These students who are asked also come from a range of different ethnic backgrounds, demographics, and life experiences – such as income levels and range of parental support.

In the academic year 2020/21, 31% of students were ages 21 or above; 59% of the Higher Education cohort was female; 23% of students declared to Barnsley College Higher Education that they has a disability or identified that they had learning support needs; 11% of students studied on a part-time basis; and 6% were from an ethnic minority background. All students above have been approached and are included within the data and help form the basis of the paper and the final opinions.

Any optional courses

Barnsley College Higher Education also offers higher level apprenticeships, people studying these were also approached for information conversations based on their experiences and alumni of apprenticeships were approach to provide information on their current work situation and to find out how Barnsley College Higher Education had helped them get into the workplace. Apprenticeships at Barnsley College Higher Education included professions such as health care, engineering, mechanics, and business.

How worked with college and support

During the writing process of this paper, Barnsley College Higher Education have supported me so that my own studies don't decline due to writing the paper. This has been from Senior Leadership Teams and from tutors on my course. This help enabled me to write the paper without feeling undue pressure outside of this work, whilst also allowing me to complete my studies over the year.

Barnsley College Higher Education have also provided me with all the National Student Survey and Graduate outcome surveys from the last 4 years therefore making the evidence gathering process easier on myself and allowing me to have rich, in-depth data from students.

How maintained the independence of students

Any students and alumni mentioned within this report will have pseudonyms attached to their names to keep students name confidential. This is so students and alumni can remain anonymous and have their data protected. Students and alumni courses may be mentioned to provide depth to the report; however, any personal information will be withheld. Students also have the right to withdraw their information before the submission deadline should they wish; all are made aware of this when conversations are taking place.

Finally, I can confirm that staff at Barnsley College Higher Education have not unduly influenced my research and my final paper. All work is solely by myself, .

Student Experience

Academic experiences and assessment

How well teaching, feedback and assessment practices support students' learning, progression, and attainment

When reviewing the National Student Survey results, 86.9% of students enjoyed the teaching on their course and thought that the quality of teaching enabled them to achieve the grades they required to get the career they need. After speaking to students around the Old Mill Lane campus they were happy that Barnsley College Higher Education, with one student saying the college provided a "high-quality standard of teaching which enabled me to achieve a First Class Honours".

One of the students FdA Coaching, Physical Education and Sports Development expressed her view of the teaching as "beneficial and a breath of fresh air after a disappointing experience at a different institution. Teachers at Barnsley College Higher Education welcomed me and my horrible experiences and helped my fall back in love with education and start focusing on my development and degree."

A pleasing 84.1% of students agreed that Barnsley College Higher Education provides learning opportunities and plenty of opportunities for them to develop in their personal, professional, and academic careers. Students described these experiences as "unique, inspiring, innovative and life changing". When asked what Barnsley College Higher Education provides them they describe trips such as "university visits, education trips to museums and landmarks, and well-being visits to the seaside and Alton Towers". One student had the opportunity to go and visit the late Her Majesty the Queen while she was lying in state and pay their respects to her in September 2022. This is

something that enhanced her cultural development and provided her with a once in a lifetime opportunity which she described as “wonderful, emotional and spiritual”.

Overall, 87.6% of students feel that they have positive benefits from the assessment methods set by tutors and the feedback provided by their tutors. When speaking to Level 5 students on FdSc Animal Management they said that “the feedback provided from tutors took their grade from a 2:1 to a First-Class.” They felt that the feedback was “beneficial and easily utilisable for all assessment across the course” The feedback tutors provide is “rich, in-depth, personal and easily applicable to the course” for all students and this makes students feel confident in their tutor’s ability to support them across their modules.

One student on BA (hons) Sport, Physical Education and Health expressed that “without the learning styles, teaching methods, development opportunities and feedback provided by tutors, wouldn’t have achieved the grades possible to achieve my dream career. It’s the opportunities provided to me by Barnsley College Higher Education that got me to where I am today and made me the young adult I am”. This student is one example from multiple who suggested the same across a range of subjects, such as FdA Business, BA (Hons) Early Years and FdEd Supporting Children and Families in Social Contexts.

How well course content and delivery engages students in their learning and stretches students to develop their knowledge and skills

Course content and the delivery of that content is what makes lessons at Barnsley College Higher Education unique. Overall, 86.3% of students feel that the course they are on is intellectually stimulating and 92.4% felt that the course they are on are challenging them to achieve their best work. One student based at the Church Street campus described her experience in the lessons as “innovating” and “engaging”. She described her content on BA (Hons) Popular Music expressed that her “course was very engaging, and the delivery helped me achieve first on most of my assessments. If it wasn’t for my tutors and how they deliver the session then I wouldn’t have achieved the grades I have and wouldn’t have been in the position I am today”. Within her course she undertakes a range of theory, practical and interactive sessions to enhance her learning and she feels these are “what make the experience at Barnsley College Higher Education so unique. The tutors really understand what students need and change content that isn’t working for certain students”.

Students on FdA Acting for Touring Theatre felt that during the COVID-19 pandemic learning was “enhanced, innovated and developed beyond ways imaginable”. Students across multiple courses felt the same. One student describe the COVID-19 pandemic as “the best thing to happen to education”. The change in delivery enhanced education and stretch and challenged students to learn different methods of learning. Students continuing their studies onto top up programmes can see the

benefit COVID-19 has had on the college and delivery from teaching staff. Students often describe the lessons as a “breath of fresh air” and that “COVID-19 has made the course content more interchangeable and student lead than previously experiences”.

One student who is doing their apprenticeship in engineering express how important classroom-based lessons and the flexibility of the content is to them. When speaking, they said “the classroom sessions have really helped enhance my knowledge and skills which I take to the job. Over the last year I struggled a little and my tutors were able to support me and change me content slightly so I could work at my own pace. They do this whilst stretching my ability to achieve to my highest potential. I couldn’t be more thankful to them for helping me so much with my studies”.

How far research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement contribute to the student academic experience

Students on all courses are given the opportunity to gain professional practice and employer engagement experience within their studies to help them get the experience they need for future careers. For example, students on FdA Coaching, Physical Education and Sports Development often get opportunities to get placement in primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, gyms and coaching within football teams. These experiences to students are “beneficial and life-changing” as one student who has placement every week in a local school describes them. This student understands the importance of getting placement and has explained that “placement within my school has enhanced my assessments and helped me achieve higher grades. If I wasn’t on placement my assessments wouldn’t have as rich and in-depth data as they do now”.

Students who study on FdSc Professional Practice, Health and Social Care are routinely on placements in hospitals such as Barnsley Hospital, Rotherham Hospital and the Sheffield Hospitals. In a recent course committee meeting, students on their second year voiced the importance of these placement to the first year students. One described them to “add valuable industry experience that embeds a high-quality of learning and experience”.

Students always have the opportunity to complete their studies while holding scholarships. One student on FdA Coaching, Physical Education and Health is a semi-professional footballer who also studies at Barnsley College Higher Education. When speaking to him he commended the support he has gotten from his tutors and says that “without their support I wouldn’t be able to continue my football career while studying. Their support is the reason I have stuck with education while on my busy timetable”.

Tutors and staff at Barnsley College are always researching into their subject specialism and finding new ways to teach the curriculum while staying relevant. The most recent development is the enhancement of technology and how it can be used in all lessons across a range of curriculums.

Students across all campuses have noticed how much stronger the lessons have become since technology has become a more prominent feature. A couple of students described their lessons as “innovative and mesmerising” through the lessons taught by their tutors.

Resource, support & student engagement

How well the uni / college supports safe professional development and academic practice

From the most recent course committee meetings, students felt that staff members support their professional development and academic practice through their tutorial sessions. Students within Criminology, Communities, and Criminal Justice are aware of the ‘open door policy’ provided to them by their tutors and know that they can speak to them at any point. Students across the board felt that their assessments and feedback supported their academic practice. Overall, 82.2% of students felt that the assessment and feedback methods were beneficial and supportive of their academic goals and feedback promoted a positive academic practice.

Students on FdA Business explained that “tutors provide us with vocal feedback as well as written feedback to ensure we understand what they are asking from us, what strengths they are giving us and what we need to do to improve next time”. Another student spoke about how they feel safe talking to their tutor as sometimes they struggle during academic work. This student said “my tutors support me in way I couldn’t have even imagined. After every assessment feedback my tutors arrange a 10-minute 1 to 1 with me to go through this feedback further and help me increase my grades on my next assessments. Without this I don’t think I would have achieved the grades I Did on my second year”.

How supportive the learning environment is, and how far students can access the academic support they need

Barnsley College Higher Education takes pride in its close-knit community of students and tutors due to the size of the institution. This statement is supported from by the NSS survey as 77.2% of students feel part of a community between themselves and staff members and 84.8% of students feel that they have the right opportunities to work with other students as part of their course. When speaking to students in BSc Criminology, Communities and Criminal Justice they expressed that they “feel part of a bigger team” and that “the course and my peers feel like my second family”.

Students who receive academic support from their tutors and the study skills programme at Barnsley College Higher Education typically achieve higher grades than those who do not utilise the support given to them by their tutors. When surveyed, 83.6% of students agreed that the academic support on their course was outstanding which is 4% higher than the national average at 79.4%. This is lower than the previous year, however cohorts in this survey experiences the technological development during COVID-19 and this is reflected in the result.

In the most recent National Student Survey, 84.3% of students agreed that the academic support provided to them was beneficial; students could easily identify where and who to speak to if they needed academic support. Overall, 80.3% of students suggested that they have been able to contact staff when they need to, 86.3% of students said that they have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to their course and 86.3% of students said that feedback and academic support from their tutors was available and good advice was available to them as and when they needed to make study choices on their course.

How well physical and virtual learning resources support teaching and learning

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Barnsley College Higher Education had to transform into a technological college to continue learning while at home. Students were supported to start using Microsoft Teams for live lessons and this allowed them to continue their studies. Technology is still being used in all lessons; Tutors use multiple virtual learning resources such as: padlet, kahoot, quizlet, Nearpod and Microsoft forms.

Overall, 81.1% of students felt that the learning resources they used were beneficial to their studies and helped them progress to the next level. One student on the FdA Esport Education: Coaching, Health and Wellbeing described the virtual learning resources as “inspirational” and “innovating to the learning experience”. This student had only used technology to play computer games prior to starting their studies at Barnsley College Higher Education. This student now describe the number of resources they use in lessons and how they have taken these into their own workplace when training their colleagues, they said “I now use kahoot at work to train colleagues how to make cocktails and what ingredients they should use. Without Barnsley College Higher Education I would have been teaching this on pen and paper and now I can take sustainable resources into the workplace.”

Students on practical courses have opportunities to take part in physical learning resources as well as virtual. For example, students at Honeywell Sports Campus have the chance to use state of the art gyms, massage suites and fitness studios to add activity into their lessons. According to the most recent National Student Survey, 90% of students within sports courses felt that the course they are on provided them with the opportunity to explore ideas or concepts in-depth and to a different standard than other institutions. A student on FdSc Physical Activity, Health and Exercise described a session they did in the massage suites as “life-changing”. This lesson gave them the inspiration to become qualified in sports massage and now runs their own business. This student expresses that “without the help of my tutors and Barnsley College Higher Education, I wouldn’t have found the inspiration and motivation to become a business owner and self-employed by the age of 21. It is through the lessons that I found my inspiration”. They have also found support from the cross-college enterprise team on how to become a self-employed entrepreneur.

How well the uni / college engaged with its students leading to improvement to experience and outcomes of its students.

Course committee meetings are used by all departments to find the opinions of students and develop the curriculum and to enhance the experience and outcomes of students. One example of where this has been done positively was in Sport. In course committee meetings students on BA (Hons) Sport, Physical Education and Health said that “the CIIS module needs to be more engaging and takes too long to complete”. From this tutor explained that the unit is “robust and can be very technical”. From this meeting the course was changed so that sessions could boost engagement and be more exciting and innovative. This has showed a positive impact for students as 70% of students achieved a 2:1 in this module, with 40% achieving a first class. Students on the course said that “the change in the module made the overall experience of the module better and more effective in practice. It was nice to see our tutors listen to us and take on board our feedback within the module”.

Student outcomes

Overall, 92% of students at Barnsley College Higher Education completed their degree and were awarded at least a Third Class Honours. 89% of degree students achieved a 2:2 or higher and 53% were awarded a First Class Degree. Barnsley College Higher Education achieved an overall student satisfaction score of 84% in the latest survey, which is 8% above the national average upon publication.

Positive Outcomes

How well the uni supports it's students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies

From the recent partnership review conducted by Leeds Trinity University, Barnsley College Higher Education was commended for their support to students to help them secure career opportunities and commend their strong commitment to graduates and their process. Students who graduated from BSc (Hons) Construction and Project Management described Barnsley College Higher Education as “inspirational and transformative”. They described the support from ex-tutors as “ongoing. Tutors are always dropping in to say ‘hello’ and see how we are doing and what they can do to help us in the future”.

How good students rate of continuation and completion are

For the previous academic year, 86% of students continued onto further study at Barnsley College Higher Education with 71% of students achieving a high grade (First, Upper Second, Distinction, Merit). When speaking to a student who continued from a foundation programme to a bachelor's programme they stated that “it was the easiest decision I have ever made. The support from Barnsley College Higher Education is outstanding and I wouldn't have achieved the grade I did at a different institution. All of my peers agreed and that's why we all stayed on”.

How good students' rates of progression to skilled employment, further study or other positive outcomes are

Overall, students at Barnsley College Higher Education move onto postgraduate degrees, employment, or teacher education. 25 respondents achieved a first-class honours degree and 64% stated that they were employed on a full-time basis with 5 students being involved within teacher education. One graduate who moved onto teacher education described the progression as a "fitted career plan which enhanced their development and progression into organisations". Out of the total 60 graduates, 35 went into other undergraduate positions which enhanced their development. 45% of these were employed on a full-time basis, 45% of students who graduated said that they had undertaken further study since graduation. One graduate, from the BA (hons) Sport, Physical Education and Health, who moved onto postgraduate study described the positive experience of Barnsley College Higher Education as the "reason they carried on into postgraduate study". The student stated that "without Barnsley College Higher Education I wouldn't have progressed to doing my master's in Health Psychology".

Educational gains

What educational gains the uni intends its students to achieve and how relevant these are to its students

Barnsley College Higher Education's approach to educational gains is about how the university transforms lives of students. For example, one way in which this is done is through assessment design that focusses on the skills needed to get students into the world of work. Some examples of these across the different curriculums is, Sport where presentations are utilised to develop confidence within future teacher, Animal Management assessments are based on working in visitor attraction such as Wigfield Farm to develop their communication with guests and Childcare who are typically employed within the sector to get hands on experience. One student in sport described these as "beneficial" and "the reason I was able to get a job post-education".

How far the uni evaluates and demonstrated the gains made by its students

For students who succeed outside of education the university has posters around the different buildings and shout outs via social media channels. For example, within sport they had a student who played and coached for Great Britain which got put out in the local newspaper, The Barnsley Chronicle. In the previous academic year, Barnsley College Higher Education student won the AOC Higher Education Student of the year. This individual was brought back into university after finishing and met with the board of governors who congratulated [redacted] award and had discussion with [redacted] future plans. Barnsley College Higher Education used this as a motivational strategy to show students that no matter your background, where you come from or what you are studying, you can achieve greatness and have your life transformed while studying at university.