

Cornwall College TEF Submission 2023 Provider Submission

1. Provider Context

The Cornwall College Group (TCCG or Group) has been on a remarkable journey over the last four years. New senior leadership and governance, and a laser focus on the student experience has been transformative. Our current Principal and CE took over in October 2019 against the backdrop of sustained and substantial financial pressures, which negatively impacted the stability of the Group. Since then, TCCG has gone from strength to strength and is achieving excellence for every student. Under the Principal's leadership, our senior leadership team was restructured, ensuring a consistently high-quality of academic education and student experience across all provision, including Higher Education (HE). From the outset the message has been clear: we will be relentless in our focus on student-centred provision. Our core values were completely redefined, with 'Learner First' taking precedence.

Our *Strategic Plan* outlined a clear and achievable pathway to excellence. Crucially, this depended upon putting our students first, acting with integrity and taking ownership. We share these values with our student body; they are interwoven into the very fabric of who we are and what we deliver. This was recognised by Ofsted in our inspection in 2022 where we achieved 'Good' gradings across the board; a remarkable turnaround that received national recognition.

TCCG operates from 10 campuses throughout Cornwall and Devon, with 11% of students studying a diverse range of HE level courses. 50% of HE students originate from the local area, whilst the other 50% are drawn from across the United Kingdom. In 2018, TCCG was granted Foundation Degree awarding powers. This gave us full control of elements of our HE delivery.

TCCG's history is entwined with place. It is inextricably linked to the opportunities and challenges emerging from the communities we serve. Cornwall is a peninsula, bordered by Devon, with 697 km of coastline. It has a population of 561,350 (Cornwall Council, 2015), which is one of the lowest densities in England (1.5 persons per hectare, *ibid*). 44% percent of the population in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are 'rural residents' (England's average = 11%, *ibid*). In terms of distance, there are 108 miles (more than two hours of travel time) between our furthestmost campuses in the West (Camborne) and the East (Bicton).

Cornwall is a county of contrast. Its remoteness, rurality and coastline provide a rich and beautiful environment for communities and visitors alike. Yet these features bring challenges. Areas of affluence juxtapose those with high levels of deprivation. For example, 13% of the population live in one of the 20% most 'deprived' communities in England (Cornwall Council, 2015) as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Moreover, POLAR4 (Participation of Local Areas) highlights low participation across the region when compared to more densely populated communities in the UK.

It is worth noting TCCG's own geographical context: six of the 17 neighbourhoods (Lower Super Output Areas) with the highest levels of deprivation in Cornwall are found in Camborne and Redruth (Cornwall Council Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019). Two further neighbourhoods – Newquay and St Austell – also feature in the top 17 most deprived areas. Both encompass substantial TCCG campuses with dedicated HE provision (Newquay University Centre, and Eden Project Learning). National measures frequently miss rural deprivation masked by a dispersed

population. Our fee structure is set to encourage the widest possible participation, from the broadest spectrum of individuals in our community.

Whilst we are geographically large, we are in fact a small HE provider. However, our breadth of provision means we continue to offer one of the broadest ranges of specialist HE in an area associated with low participation.

While the HE experience has clear differences to that of FE, our HE students benefit from the fact we are a successful FE provider. Known as *The Career College*, our mission is providing 'exceptional education and training for every learner to improve their career prospects', where intent is based on employer engagement to support the design of our provision. Our employer advisory boards ensure local, regional and national skills needs are addressed through market-led curriculum and skills planning. Industry endorsement of key curriculum documentation, our curriculum and skills plan and staff development support validates our 'Career College' ethos.

We are about supportive class sizes in industry-aligned spaces, rather than packed lecture halls. We are not replicating a traditional HEI on a small scale. We are delivering high-quality provision that produces graduates who will have a positive impact on our climate and community. We are passionate about developing graduates with a clear line of sight to their chosen career, who gain the knowledge and skills required to be an asset to their future employers, industry and those around them. Indeed, our governors are active participants in making positive change within the Group. Governors act beyond the boardroom to increase their understanding of the student body and their experiences, provide greater visibility of the governing body across the Group, increase their understanding of strategic priorities.

Our ethos was noted by Ofsted, when it reported 'leaders are passionate about the power of education to change lives and benefit the wider community', adding, 'Governors, senior leaders and managers have worked relentlessly to establish the College as an influential partner in the region. They work productively with local and regional stakeholders to offer a curriculum which meets the needs of learners, the community, and local stakeholders' (Ofsted, 2022).

Through our strong links with industry, employer advisory boards and research, our curriculum is ambitious and dynamic with clear purpose. Membership of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) Board and Chamber of Commerce ensures that opportunities are aligned with employer and industry needs. We are very much at the forefront of the delivery of high-quality, industry-led provision to the land-based sector. We ensure practical and industry skills that are required now and in the future are met. Macro factors, such as the need for greater food security, the climate crisis and the need to take advantage of a post-Brexit world, create unprecedented levels of change and opportunity. TCCG collaborates with DEFRA, other agencies and leading participants in the research and development of new sustainable agricultural methods; enabling students to experience new agricultural and land management technologies.

TCCG is different to and distinct from other traditional HEIs because we deliver HE in FE. Our ethos as *The Career College* is embedded into our culture and is reflected in every aspect of what we do. We are very proud of this. In fact, our most recent Ofsted inspection highlights our strengths. Commentary about our facilities, which are accessible for our HE provision states:

Students and apprentices benefit from learning in a wide range of high-quality practical teaching facilities, such as workshops, studios and commercial units. Learners [...] are

motivated by working in learning environments that match industry standards. (Ofsted, 2022).

This is central to our approach in all levels of education. We are not competing with traditional HEIs. We are committed to providing a niche provision, offering educational opportunities where otherwise there would be none, in highly-specialised professional and technical HE qualifications.

We used a range of internal and external sources to provide a clear picture of HE student experiences and outcomes between 2018 and 2022 across TCCG, to add additional context to the TEF data dashboard. Our methodology included gathering information from student-facing surveys and committees such as the Induction Survey and individual Programme Committee Meetings (PCMs). We also utilised examples of feedback from external examiners and from our industry partners via Professional Advisory Groups and validation events to measure the impact of our approaches. These qualitative datasets were then reviewed in relation to the quantitative data on the ILR, and through our Power BI tool, which aided in identifying trends in student enrolments, satisfaction and performance across courses and campuses. These were reviewed by the TEF working group, which consisted of staff from a range of areas across the College.

The TCCG Higher Education Student Governor represents the views of all HE students across all campuses, in formal and informal forums. She brings the student voice to board level. We shared the TEF Indicator dashboard and relevant internal data with her, which she then shared in wider student consultation with elected student representatives from each campus. This enabled students to have their own independent input into the creation of the document for the student submission. The student body were able to provide an accurate picture of student experiences of Higher Education across TCCG.

Our HE offer is strategic and specifically designed with industry need in mind. There is immediate need to develop skilled counsellors locally in order to support the wellbeing of the community. The establishment of the Cornwall Counselling Institute directly addresses this problem. Moreover, our counselling courses are the only courses of this type in the region with BACP (British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy) accreditation, underscoring our commitment to professional and technical HE, which the CEO of the Dreadnaught Centre, clearly values:

'We are confident that Cornwall Counselling Institute (CCI) students will be ready to 'hit the ground running' [...] such is the standard of the student's training, we now employ many CCI graduates as counsellors, some of whom have risen to senior managerial positions within the organisation' (2022).

Degree programmes at Eden Project Learning and Newquay University Centre see students actively working on a range of scientific, conservation and ecology projects designed to address global issues. Students work alongside botanists and horticulturalists at Eden Project or with zoologists and marine specialists at Newquay Zoo and Bluereef Aquarium. Central to their mission is the provision of real, hands-on experiential learning at a time of climate emergency. The Golf Education Partnership allows students to combine study with work in enviable locations, including St Mellion Estate and East Sussex National in the UK, Amendoeria in Portugal and Isla Canela in Spain. Students studying on our Agricultural, Veterinary Nursing, Animal Science or Equine degrees learn on working farms, veterinary surgeries and countryside projects influencing animal welfare, food production, sustainable farming and energy needs. Our HE provision produces work-ready graduates, who are well-equipped to solve local and global challenges.

Having worked in partnership with the University of Plymouth since 1978 and, as a founding member of the innovative *Combined Universities in Cornwall*, we are committed to serving our local communities. This means providing exceptional HE opportunities that address local need and attract people who may not otherwise have been able to access HE. Such endeavour has seen us expand our network since the previous TEF exercise to other partners, including Falmouth University, Plymouth Marjon University (Marjon), Bath Spa University and Cardiff Metropolitan University. This enables us to provide the richest experience for our students by working with institutions that hold specialisms that enhance outcomes and opportunities. For example, working with Cardiff Metropolitan allows us to bring highly regarded sports provision into the area and similarly the partnership with Marjon for our highly-specialist golf provision. Marjon's specialisms in teaching, business and sport, makes them the perfect partner as we blend sports science and business with innovative pedagogical approaches that create sought after work-ready graduates.

Widening participation and unlocking opportunities for all is central to our agenda. Indeed, our *Higher Education Strategy* (2022) references the transformative nature of our work in HE. We pledge to 'unlock the potential of each and every HE student, so that they can make a difference to the lives of others whilst positively impacting their own' (Cornwall College, 2022). This is evident in the OfS data regarding deprivation quintiles (IMD). The OfS size and shape of provision data dashboard indicates that approximately half of our students are from quintiles one and two, whilst our own records indicate that around one-third of HE students across the scope of this submission were mature students. Widening participation is a pivotal and necessary aspect of our provision.

While our intent is clear, we know it is critical we deliver for our students. We are proud of our gold standard consistent provision, while recognising areas for improvement.

2. Student Experience

The education and wellbeing of students is at the heart of what we do. We are committed to providing an excellent student experience for all who engage with our HE provision. Our passion for high-quality academic provision and student experience shines from within our leaders, managers, academic and support staff. Our senior leadership team is accountable for student experience and has created clear communication and reporting mechanisms in relation to HE with a specific focus on Outcomes for Student, Teaching Learning and Assessment, Student Journey and Student Wellbeing.

TCCG recognises the importance of high-quality teaching and learning experiences. Such experiences inspire our students, enhance engagement, drive self-improvement and bolster employability. So, whilst we acknowledge historical TEF data associated with student experience has its challenges, we can assure that leadership from the most senior staff in the organisation ensures that HE, and all its facets, are prioritised in terms of quality, resources and leadership.

The Career College

As *The Career College*, industry is integrated into our HE pedagogy. From inception through design, validation and teaching, our approach is industry-focussed. We utilise fully the environment and our natural surroundings, as well as our specialised campuses. As such, we provide a distinctly applied teaching and learning experience, encouraging contextualised debates and interventions into both practical and theoretical ways of thinking. Our environment helps to provide a direct link between education, industry and employers. It allows us to offer a range of industry-

linked workshops and talks from highly-specialist subject experts, which complement our own staff specialities at regular intervals.

Our industry-focused approach to curriculum design and delivery is replicated across our entire HE provision. Newquay University Centre is inextricably linked with Newquay Zoo. Taught sessions and research projects take place in the zoo itself, providing an immersive environment for students who experience the realities of study and employment in their sector. Newquay Zoo staff deliver lectures and tutor students' independent research projects to further enhance the specialist delivery by TCCG staff. Student feedback suggests staff are passionate about their subject area and explain complicated content well to them. Like their peers on other courses, they cite the challenging nature of study at this level, but that all staff – academic and support - help them to succeed (FdSc Animal Husbandry and Welfare, PCM Meeting).

Students on Agriculture programmes experience our state-of-the-art Future Farm facility. They work with experts to learn industry-leading methods – integrating science and technology – which are revolutionising dairy farming. Students on our Animal Husbandry and Welfare provision and Equitation Studies comment on the interactivity of HE teaching. In particular, the use of the mechanical horse enables students to improve their riding. Whilst this is above and beyond the course requirements, it is crucial to the welfare of horses, which is something the equine industry is focused on addressing. Furthermore, students from the FdSc Animal Husbandry & Welfare course (PCM meeting, Spring 2021) say staff have high expectations of all students and challenge them to contribute to each session. All 12 BA (Hons) Counselling Studies students stated that they enjoy what they are learning, with sessions delivered in an engaging and personable manner (PCM meeting, Autumn 2022). FdSc Sport Health & Fitness students stated that the teaching was of a high standard in their Spring PCM (2021). Some of the participants on the FdA Children & Family Studies course are already employers in the local community. In their autumn 2022 PCM meeting, they commented that they can apply knowledge gained from the course immediately into their current practice. It is evident our HE provision is having a direct and immediate positive impact in the communities we serve thanks to excellence and innovation in curriculum design.

Our strong industry links provide opportunities for students to connect, engage, work alongside and be inspired by the key figures within industry. Surf Science students at Newquay are taught Computer Aided Design who is not only the director of Skindog Surfboards, but is also currently ranked 5th in the World Surf League longboard tour. The students also design their own surfboard and spend a week in the Skindog factory making their board. They take surfboard design from inception through to completion under the guidance of a world-renowned pro surfer. Our FdSc Veterinary Nursing students benefit from engagement with industry and employers such as K9Massage Therapy, Stage 1 Hydrotherapy, Rosemullion Vets and Acuvets. All FdSc Veterinary students engage with this programme to widen their horizons, giving them insight into the opportunities available to them once qualified. Moreover, they benefit from up-to-date specialist knowledge from practicing vets and practitioners. Students have also gained insight from trips to our local stakeholders including Gweek Seal Sanctuary, RSPCA, Woodland Valley Farm, Hawksland Hydrotherapy Centre, Porth Reservoir, Newlyn Fish Market & IFCA, Marine Biological Association in Plymouth and Paignton Zoo.

Working with UK Ministry of Defence Army Recruitment Southwest office, BA (Hons) Games Design for Industry students created a recruitment board game. The board game is utilised in Army Recruitment offices and is designed to encourage fitness training, the development of interview

skills and demonstrate tactical thinking ability. Students also created a VR driving simulator for Ministry of Defence Army Recruitment Centre Derriford to be used with new recruits giving experience of the different vehicles used within the forces. Cross-curriculum projects play a central developmental role within our HE provision, encouraging real partnership working. BA (Hons) Games Design for Industry students in conjunction with Newquay University Centre and Newquay Zoo produced a Cusuco National Park simulator for the Honduras annual trip. The simulator records reptile and amphibian species and numbers, equipping students with the necessary skills to identify species, prevent encounters with venomous and dangerous insects and animals whilst demonstrating how to effectively record data.

As *The Career College*, we pride ourselves on producing 'work-ready' graduates. This is achieved through innovative curriculum design that puts real world problems at the heart of delivery. This is particularly true at Levels 5 and 6 where, for example, students re-imagine a walled garden space in the Lost Gardens of Heligan, conduct sustainability audits for horticultural organisations and charities, inspect irrigation water samples from commercial nurseries for pathogen, and deliver leaf decomposition studies in Eden Project's tropical biome to develop new understanding on Technosols. This experiential approach to teaching is supported by fieldtrips both in the UK and abroad (Portugal, Borneo, Honduras, Puerto Rico). Eden students enjoyed a virtual fieldtrip to South Africa hosted by Extraordinary Lecturer at Stellenbosch University. Surf Science students surf in Northern Spain and Southern France on the annual Basque fieldtrip. Additionally, HE students across our courses enjoyed presentations from speakers associated with the National Lobster Hatchery, the RSPCA, Mole Valley, the Local Enterprise Partnership, Cornwall Chamber of Commerce and the British Antarctic Survey, to name but a few.

Our successes have enabled us to make significant investment that will continue to greatly benefit our students. We are thankful to the Department for Education for their recent and substantial investment in our St Austell and Camborne campuses, which will continue to revolutionise the student experience and, consequently, impact positively the communities we serve.

We have made key investments across the Group for our HE students. Key targeted investment at the Camborne campus in September 2021 benefited over 40 BA (Hons) Art & Design Practice students with the creation of the only specialist ceramics space in Cornwall, which includes a 'throwing room', studio space and firing room. Ceramicist 'alumni in residence' work within the space each year, helping to provide professional guidance, tutorial support and aspiration raising skills demonstrations. A new 3D room includes all manner of professional tools and machinery. Access to this specialist equipment enables skills development and creativity otherwise inaccessible to many students given the deprived local social demographic.

BA (Hons) Games Design for Industry students have benefited from the purchase of the 'Substance Suite' software, major PC software upgrades including gaming specific hardware, virtual reality 'Oculus Dev Kit 3', 'Oculus Quest 2' and 'Logitech Virtual Reality' driving hardware. The industry-standard software and hardware ensures students develop skills that are directly transferable to employment on graduation. HNC Engineering students have a new 'Soldamatic VR' welding suite as part of the immersive training offer. The VR units develop industry coding compliant skills, meeting the current national skills shortage in this sector. Similarly, we continue to utilise OfS funds to transform educational experiences for our HE students. We've used these funds to invest in our campuses and on specialised equipment, which industry-focused and authentic degree-level learning necessitates.

High-quality Academic Provision

Our quality monitoring is standardised and rigorous across the Group. We collect data on the quality of teaching, which includes student perceptions through module evaluations, internal monitoring through lesson observations and external reporting. PCMs for every HE course take place twice a year. They are formally recorded by staff from HE Operations and feed into our quality systems. Feedback is acted on swiftly and effectively, and the impact is measured through the quality cycle. Additionally, all HE students attend weekly group tutorials with their tutor, who is usually the programme manager. They also have the option to engage with the cross-college programme of personal development. Therefore, all students are given the opportunity to discuss the successes and challenges they may encounter in their learning. We are committed to our principal core value: learner first. Our senior leadership team are Ofsted inspectors. This is important, because it underlines TCCG's commitment to teaching excellence and putting students first. These leaders actively apply principles acquired through the training and practise of inspecting to all provision, including HE, because the principles are very much about student progress over time and embedded in long-term learning.

In addition to the student-driven data collection methods outlined above, we conduct Annual Programme Monitoring via Module Reports, Self-Assessment Reports (SARs) and External Examiner Reports. These provide a formal forum for acting on student feedback, as well as performance linked to the quality of education generally, and the quality of teaching more specifically. Feedback is reviewed weekly at the College Operation Group meeting, and

strategically at HE Academic Board. This gives senior managers and leaders an opportunity to scrutinise the data and share best practice. These are supported by the HE quality cycle, which provides a reference point for key activities designed to ensure teaching excellence across our HE delivery.

Academic staff across the Group are supported by our quality assurance procedures. Our Teaching, Learning and Assessment team – known as Team TLA – provide weekly breakfast and lunchtime forums, which share pedagogical best practice and guidance with all academic and teaching support staff. Team TLA lead on our robust lesson observation process, in which all HE staff receive at least one observation per academic year. Action points for improvements and future targets feed formally into Performance Management Reviews. We are going further by encouraging HE staff to engage with the Advance HE fellowship scheme. We boast excellent educators delivering outstanding sessions. Such accreditation for staff will assist in adding even greater credence to the work we do.

This robust and embedded quality cycle of programme reviews provides very effective systems for tracking and monitoring students' progress. Leaders and managers have access to reliable management information and make excellent use of data to identify performance trends and to tackle any issues. Sophisticated use of management information means leaders hold curriculum managers to account for student achievement, and ensure concerns are dealt with promptly. Processes, such as PCMs for all courses, enable governors, senior leaders and curriculum to meet quarterly to monitor the progress of all students and identify actions for improvement.

Curriculum Intent forms are posted clearly onto the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) at the start of modules, as well as in Student Handbooks. This is supported by a Skills Pyramid for each degree programme, so students can identify where and how their journey to employment can be mapped via specific modules of learning. Students may view Schemes of Work to keep track of the direction of individual modules as they progress across the year. The purpose of each taught session is clearly displayed on whiteboards so students are aware of what they will learn, why it is important and how it links to assessment. These measures are standard practice across all campuses, monitored through lesson observations, learning walks and Team TLA support. They are designed so that students receive an education that is varied, meaningful and, above all else, consistently high-quality.

Data derived from the TEF indicators also highlight excellence in an already high-performing sector. Courses that sit under the Sociology, Social Policy and Anthropology rubric, for example, are 49.4% materially above benchmark. Similarly, Business and Management is 46.6% materially above the sector benchmark. Sport & Exercise Sciences and Creative Arts & Design are 37.7% and 35.2% materially above benchmark respectively.

Our overall indicator for teaching is 47.7% broadly in line with benchmark within a high-performing sector. We would argue that our overall score has been adversely impacted by the respondents for Education & Teaching, Veterinary Sciences (which we no longer offer at HE) and Agriculture, Food & Related Studies. Combined, these courses represent one-third of the contribution to our overall benchmark, and yet they do not represent the largest areas of our provision. Interestingly, recent feedback from Level 6 elected student representatives on the BSc Agriculture programme (who have been engaged in this course during the scope of this submission) challenges the TEF indicator data. Rather than being dissatisfied with the quality of teaching during their three years of study, in reflecting the views of their peers, students said, 'the course is challenging, but a good

level of challenging' and that 'the support has been phenomenal from the course team' (BSc (Hons) Agriculture, PCM meeting, Autumn 2022). Additionally, when reviewing the views of elected student representatives on PCM meetings in Education and Teaching during Spring 2019, qualitative comments made reference to 'good mentoring', the 'amazing support and teaching', and that students were 'very happy with their teachers, the content of the modules, and the support they were receiving from all staff'.

We would argue strongly that whilst our focus on professional and technical HE provision is our biggest strength, it was also our biggest challenge in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. As outlined above, our curriculum design is industry-focused, experiential and often 'in the field.' This is absolutely the right approach to produce graduates who are work-ready.

Covid brought about fundamental changes in the way that we worked. From the outset our communication strategy ensured a consistency of approach and confidence in very challenging times. Alongside this, a continued and relentless focus on improvement ensured that Quality of Education remained the highest priority. Leaders and managers updated delivery plans for 2020/21 and adapted the curriculum to ensure that priority was given to the completion of practical lessons and activities, because the theory components could be delivered online.

Our intent was not only the need to provide outstanding education, but also to work with our students to grow their confidence, build resilience and prepare them fully for the world of work, ensuring they have the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to make a meaningful contribution to modern Britain.

We were in a strong position to move our delivery online in response to any form of local or national lockdown. Nonetheless, the restrictions placed on us all during the pandemic meant that many of our students could not access the type or amount of work-based education they came to us for. Students across our HE provision lost much of the practical and experiential learning they were expecting. This is true of work experience placements too. Whilst we were one of the first educational institutions to return to on-campus learning, unfortunately, many of our industry partners did not return to the workplace. For almost two years, our delivery model was interrupted. Moreover, academic staff had to drastically alter their planned pedagogical methods to purely online delivery, using new software. Little wonder, then, that some of our NSS respondents voiced their disgruntlement at questions such as, 'the course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt', 'the course is well organised and running smoothly', and 'overall I am satisfied with the quality of the course.' The good news is that we are operating normally again, as are our industry partners. We are already seeing significant improvements in our own robust and rigorous quality checks.

Our People

To drive excellence in teaching we have a comprehensive People Strategy to support and develop our staff. Our aim is to be known as a highly desirable and inclusive employer through valuing, developing and recognising our staff. Since October 2019, all teaching staff have been required to achieve a teaching qualification within three years of commencing employment. During the first-year, staff undertake the Award in Education and Training (AET), which is delivered by our Initial Teacher Training team with support from Team TLA. In their second year of employment staff are enrolled on the Diploma in Education and Training or PGCE. TCCG funds these qualifications for all teaching staff and gives remission from teaching for the first three years to support

achievement. In addition to receiving their teaching qualification all new staff are given a coach from Team TLA to support them.

Beyond higher level study, staff are research active and take opportunity to undertake development in their own sector to ensure contemporary teaching content. In Art and Design lecturers have been funded to complete Master studies in Contemporary Art and Photography Critical Thinking. Funding has also enabled staff to be immersed in their specialism so beyond their study they continue to explore their breadth and depth of subject knowledge. Staff are also engaged in quality assurance as External Examiners across the country. We encourage this as a form of development and staff feedback key learning from these experiences.

We have a wide range of Continuing Professional Development opportunities available to staff, ranging from inhouse Group Development Days to funded higher qualifications. Staff can apply for financial support from the Research and Scholarly Activity dedicated fund on a yearly basis to support their own areas of subject interest and those as required by the curriculum. We also have our Back to Industry Day, where all staff arrange a placement in an external company or organisation to update their knowledge and understanding within their area of specialism.

Staff are also involved in setting the strategic direction of TCCG and in reviewing their practice and setting their operational plan for the following year. We set aside a Review and Improvement Day (RAID) each year to give teams the chance to look at what they did well and what they would improve. Student feedback and questionnaires are used to help inform RAID as well as a comprehensive data set of student outcomes.

We celebrate staff success and each year hold the Star Awards. Group Award winner for the academic year 2021-2022 for Leadership of Learning, Debs Williams, won the award for her inspirational work in setting up the Cornwall Counselling Institute. One nomination for Debs said:

Since I joined the Counselling Department in June this year, I have been so touched by Debs's phenomenal ability to cultivate a team that emanates warmth, compassion and nurturing. Debs provides a leadership style that both challenges and inspires in equal measure. I don't think many people can say they LOVE coming to work.

Teaching and Learning, Assessment and Feedback

Our strategies are robust. External examiner feedback provides evidence on how we compare to other HE providers. For example:

The curriculum-based learning opportunities for students to connect with professional practice provided by staff are some of the best that I have seen across all ten HEIs in which I have been involved as either a staff member or external examiner. The learning environment is also one of the most supportive environments I have observed. It is clear from every student I have spoken with that they hugely value the efforts made by staff to create this environment. Staff deserve very high commendation for achieving this consistently through what have undoubtedly been some extremely challenging changes in recent years. (External Examiner Report, BSc (Hons) Applied Zoology & Conservation, 2021).

This is not a one-off account of external examiner feedback. Other reports highlight the quality of feedback: 'I was impressed by the quality of feedback and the support approach to feedback.'

(External Examiner Report, BSc (Hons) Horticulture, 2020/2021). They pertain to adjustments made during the pandemic: 'the adjustment to assessments as a consequence of COVID-19 were fair and inclusive.' To our commitment to employability: 'urge the team to keep the strong relations with employability' (External Examiner Report, FdSc Horticulture, 2020/2021). Also, to the uniqueness of our degree programmes: 'topics often reflect Eden values – this gives the programmes a degree of uniqueness' (External Examiner Report, HNC/D Garden Landscape Design, 2019/2020). Our recent BA (Hons) International Golf Management provides indication of a continuation of excellent external feedback. The examiner commented in their 2021/2022 report:

As always, I am impressed by the quality assurance processes you uphold and the standard of education you deliver. You seem to be both incredibly strong at delivering practical subjects in conjunction with theoretical content of your modules offering balance and content that is grounded in theory whilst remaining practical in application. I would like to congratulate the team on your continued outstanding support of the students, your teaching and assessment. I have no doubt that you get this feedback a lot, but I would urge you to never take it lightly. I for one do not take it for granted that every student gets the opportunities your students get, and I know how much effort that takes.

It is clear to see we offer excellence across our HE provision, which is applauded by our external examiners who are senior leaders from a range of traditional universities.

We provide a bespoke mix of staffing, including academics, support staff and experienced industry experts actively contributing to sessions. Our campuses serve industry, providing a unique and vibrant feeling to those sites. For example, The Rural Business School is at the forefront of agricultural research and research. Students on our agriculture, horticulture and countryside provision benefit from the expertise of the high performing team at Future Farm. Our Newquay campus is situated adjacent to Newquay Zoo and near the Bluereef Aquarium. Cornwall Fibre Hub and Headforwards software development company are situated on the Camborne campus and support the BSc Computing Technologies degree with live briefs, work placements and guest speakers. Our proximity to industry provides strong credibility and relevance for our students. It ensures teaching staff can consistently engage their expertise to support high-quality subject delivery, and ongoing experiential episodes for all our students. We are committed to industry-focused learning. This is a clear demonstration of excellence.

The internal data tools linked to PowerBI, and the strategic and operational groups that engage with them, are used to track trends and general performance in completion rates across our courses. These are compared to sector norms regionally and nationally. As well as uncompromising ambition for our students, our leadership team puts the same emphasis on staff to keep us relevant in a competitive space. Recently, we have developed an innovative approach in 'packaging' our HE courses. For example, in recognition of the pressures that adult students face in balancing work, family and study, flexible timetabling and creative curriculum models have enabled many of our students to engage in degree-level studies. Our flexibility has facilitated students in a variety of ways: assisting re-entry to education at degree-level; ensuring access to support; being available at variable days and times; fitting-in successful study around busy lives. We are committed to putting the student first.

Our HE courses are designed to address industry need and to produce work-ready graduates. In line with this ethos, we operate a multi-modal assessment strategy that includes authentic assessment across our HE programmes. Our approach permits embedded links to industry, adds value to the experiential nature of the learning experience and positively promotes student motivation and educational gain. Our use of authentic, industry-focused assessment is a key feature of our HE offer. It links closely to our overarching philosophy of developing employability via technical and professional skills.

There are many examples of where our use of authentic, industry-focused assessment has been adopted and well-received by students. Students studying the Conservation Genetics module are supporting the work of Cornwall Reptile and Amphibian Group (CRAG) to complete genetic sequencing of a population of European adder (*Vipera berus*) in Cornwall. This is the first time the genetic diversity of the species has been assessed in Cornwall, and the results are being fed into a wider national assessment on the genetic status and conservation of adders in the UK. As this work expands to additional sites around Cornwall, it will provide valuable information about habitat connectivity and gene-flow that can be used to inform management strategies by landowners and conservation organisations, such as the Cornwall Wildlife Trust. The exam for the Global Conservation Issues module is modelled on the Earthshot Prize. Students replicate submissions for this prize by providing solutions to nature restoration, cleaner air, reviving oceans or reducing waste. Similarly, where students have requested a more manageable timetable of assessment, staff have listened to those views and acted. For example, students on HNC Engineering (14 Level 4 students, and 19 Level 5 students) commented in their 2019/2020 autumn PCM meeting that assignments are well-presented and explained by lecturers who make it easy to understand and enjoyable to learn. All HE programmes now provide an assessment schedule at the outset of the course, so students can plan their time and workload accordingly.

From viewing the NSS results, our performance here relates primarily to Q10: 'feedback on my work has been timely.' Returning to our focus on 'student first', timely student feedback has been prioritised and driven through leaders and managers as referenced before.

Resourcing our Provision

We have already demonstrated our strategic focus on professional and technical learning, and how this sets us apart from traditional HEIs. Our curriculum design centres around experiential learning and producing work-ready graduates. Consequently, our campuses are different to many other university centres. Whilst the library is an asset for our students to access physical and digital resources, it is not the hub of academic activity for our HE students. Instead, their applied learning

and research takes place in our multi-million-pound agricultural research facility Future Farm, in Fistral's Surf School, in Eden Project's biomes, on research boats off the Cornish coast, at the top UK golf course and training facilities at the St Mellion Estate, in our laboratories or in our incredible equine arenas. Our HE students benefit from world-class learning resources, which fully prepare them for practical application in their respective industries. NSS Q.18 and Q.19 do not translate well to experiential and pragmatic pedagogy. We suggest, therefore, that the TEF indicators relating to learning resources are not reflective of our students' actual experience of HE at TCCG.

On our Operational Yacht Science programme at Falmouth Marine School and the UK Sailing Association headquarters, students experience short, intense periods of study before embarking on work onboard superyachts. This method of studying combines asynchronous and synchronous distance learning with their onboard duties very much replicating the structure of a career in this sector. Similarly, our Counselling students receive a flexible and dynamic timetable that fulfils the academic content alongside the needs of the clients they serve. The Golf Education Partnership plans the curriculum around the seasonal drivers of golf, with the programme split between delivery in the UK and Portugal. Given the nature of our specialist provision, we have worked to understand and offset external factors that enable all students to succeed in their academic study. Moreover, we design curriculum that develops wider skills acquisition and experience in line with the realities of their chosen career pathway.

In March 2022, Wiltshire Search and Rescue, for example, provided Search Management and Technical Water Rescue training to staff and students on the Rescue and Emergency Management degree. This included an intense practical residential rescue week based on Dartmoor, wherein students and staff conducted current industry search and rescue techniques in hostile environments. One student commented, 'we quite literally were rescuing each other whilst flowing down rivers!'

Moreover, world leading horticulturalists and designers from the Eden Project offer their expertise in the Garden Landscape and Design and Horticulture degrees at Eden Project Learning. Taught and practical sessions regularly occur in and around the world-renowned biomes. Additionally, Eden students benefit from a research-informed approach to teaching, which includes active participation in the ReCon Soils Project and the Edge Foundation. Data, materials and experience from the ReCon Soils Project has been used to support first year Soil Science students researching the components of Technosols (as used at Eden) and assessing active microbial biomass by the fluorescein diacetate hydrolysis assay (refined for this research project). This is used to determine the importance of microbes in soil aggregate stability, as well as to assess soil microbial activity during the assessed practical assignment.

Newquay University Centre has a rich history of international fieldtrips, providing students with an immersive experience of different environments and cultures. For example, Sabah, Borneo where students stay in a remote field station in a wildlife sanctuary in the rainforest, where wild orangutan, Borneo elephant and saltwater crocodiles roam. Research projects are conducted resulting in longitudinal data sets produced by students. One of our members of staff came to work for us from running an 'Operation Wallacea' field centre in central America. We organise an annual trip to Honduras taking in one week of cloud forest research, and one week diving on coral reefs. Students are able to qualify as PADI divers during this week, providing a valuable industry recognised additional qualification. These are just a few examples of how our industry partnerships

support high-quality, experiential learning, uses the world around us and our natural environment as an extended classroom, and as a consequence, enhances student experience.

Such projects mesh academic inquiry and HE learning with active research into real-world issues. Additionally, industry leaders directly influence learning through guest lectures, associate teaching and via their role as critical partners in curriculum design. Significant links include Kew Gardens, The National Trust, the Royal Cornwall Museum, the Environment Agency, NHS CIDER (Cornwall Intellectual Disability Equitable Research) Project, Collins Aero Space, AntiMatter Games, Pall Engineering, Pendennis, Kier Group, Leach Pottery, Royal Cornwall Museum, The Royal Horticultural Society, the International Surf Therapy Organisation and the Wildlife Trust.

Students value our approach to curriculum design and recognise the impact on their study and their wider appreciation of their specialist subject areas. Course representatives highlight their peers' immense satisfaction with being involved in industry-informed learning. Furthermore, in PCMs they praise the careful balance between taught sessions, project-based and research-informed learning and guest lecturers to enhance their subject knowledge. For example, in Spring PCM meetings in 2021, HND Games Design for Industry students (nine enrolments) highlighted the good amount of client work within the programme. For FdSc Rescue & Emergency Management (13 enrolments) students referred to a feeling of expression in an academic safe space, with interesting modules led by staff with in-depth subject knowledge. In BSc (Hons) Equitation Science (eight enrolments), students commented on the wide range of information and amazing teaching staff. This highlights the broad scope of satisfaction in this approach, across different offerings, in different subjects, across different campuses.

Evidence gathered from our internal surveys and through the PCM process does not support the TEF indicator data. For example, in the 2020 Induction Survey 91.1% of HE students said that using our IT network and software helped their studies. Let's not forget this was during the height of the pandemic where learning only took place online. Moreover, as Figure 1 page 15 shows, the following year 88.2% of HE students agreed or strongly agreed that they have access to resources they need to be successful on their course. Results from this year's survey are higher at 91.5% agreeing or strongly agreeing, and with a much higher response rate (approximately 50%). PCM feedback echoes this positivity around our learning resources. Twelve students on the BA Counselling Studies programme stated in their autumn meeting that 'the learning resources are great, and there is a lot online the students can use.' Whilst a further 12 students on the FdSc Marine Biology course said 'the research papers are vast, and the learning centre staff are really helpful if students need it. There is a lot on offer which is great!'

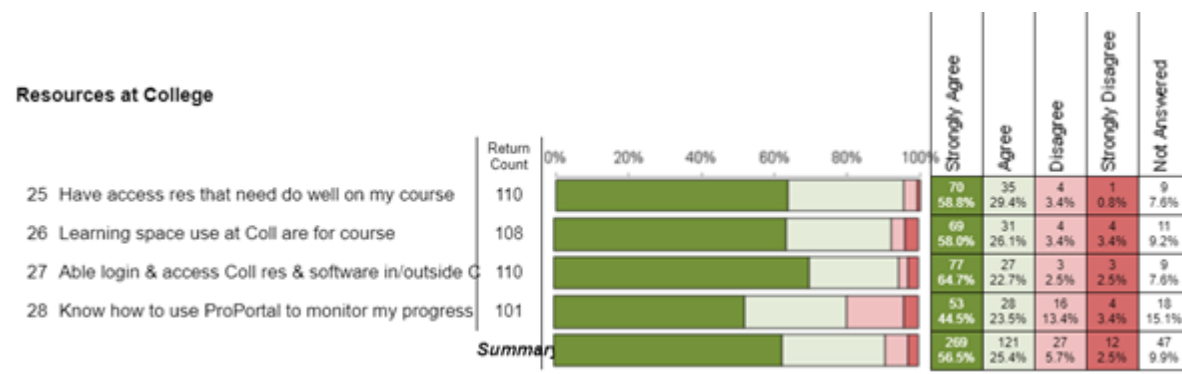


Figure 1. Higher Education student results of Student Induction November 2021

TCCG students benefit greatly from our partnerships with other degree awarding institutions and validating bodies. They have unfettered access to partner institutions' electronic collections, as well as full membership to those university libraries, thereby making an incredible array of scholarly and academic resources available to our students. Now we too have Foundation Degree awarding powers, we have made significant investment in our own e-resources. From this, the EBSCO Discovery Tool, accessible via our online library service and Moodle pages, is comparable to many larger HEIs. We are committed to growing our stock of high-quality resources because we know our students value and use them to fully realise their potential while studying with us.

Academic Support

Students cite the support from staff as one of the beneficial factors of their course. As part of our commitment to our HE students, we offer a range of services to provide excellent academic support. We recognise some students attend with recent academic experience, whilst others are adults returning to education and require a different level of support. All provision across all campuses have access to a range of staff and bespoke services, which are designed to provide students with an excellent level of wrap around academic and pastoral care.

'I would wholly recommend Newquay Campus as they encourage and help students develop and feel safe when they are there.' (Induction Survey 2021, BSc (Hons) Applied Zoology Level 6)

Our academic staff offer regular tutorial support, both in subject groups, and individually through one-to-one sessions with a personal tutor/study programme manager. Our class sizes allow us to be agile and responsive to student needs, and an 'open door policy' means that our academics are regularly on hand to ensure that students are protected and remain on track.

Each of our campuses has a dedicated Student Experience Team, who can help students in all areas to support their success. This ranges from access to library and support resources, academic support, support for mental health and financial support. Study Support Officers (SSOs) operate from our Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) and provide study skills workshops and one-to-one academic guidance across TCCG. Their roles are entirely tailored to students' individual needs, as well as providing more generic support. They work closely with curriculum teams to ensure that the resources and support meets their academic needs of the chosen areas of study. Students with additional learning needs can access further support from our team of in-house HE specialist learning support tutors. Often this is in addition to mentors accessed through DSA funding. HE students who may be experiencing mental ill health, or who have Autism, ADHD, dyspraxia and so on, are able to receive one-to-one mentoring from our Mental Health Mentor, free of charge for the duration of their course.

A specialist HE Careers Advisor provides independent guidance to students who want to explore progression opportunities beyond their study. Each campus has a dedicated Student Experience Manager who provides pastoral and wellbeing support and works as the safeguarding single point of contact. Student Experience Managers, working alongside Engagement and Progression Officers (EPOs), are a direct link between academic staff and the wider college support team. They coordinate relevant and appropriate support to students in a swift and efficient manner. Indeed, results from our own internal HE survey from the final year in scope for this submission, completed by approximately 50% of all HE students, indicated that 97% of HE students felt safe in college and feel safe online. Additionally, 93% said they know who they can speak to if they have any concerns

about safety or wellbeing. Our robust use of centralised and shared software ensures that we maintain accurate records of our interactions with students and maintain communication with all relevant staff to ensure that the student support is in place as required. TCCG's core values engender collective responsibility for the safety, welfare and success of our students. Our processes are consistently applied across the Group.

Staff across all campuses have undertaken Mental Health First Aid training (10% in total), as well as Student Experience staff completing the ASIST Suicide Prevention training. In recognition of the increasing number of students reporting higher levels of mental ill health in Higher Education settings across the UK, our HE students can access free counselling. This is provided by our in-house *Penhaligon Counselling Agency*, part of the Cornwall Counselling Institute. Counsellors support a range of issues, from coping with short-term stress and workload, to more serious concerns around harm to themselves or others. This service provides students with access to a qualified mental health professional during times of need, and can be delivered face-to-face, over the phone or via Microsoft Teams. We ensure support is accessible and inclusive. Students are also encouraged to form their own peer support groups. For example, the establishment of LGBTQ+ and neurodivergent groups have been set up on all campuses, with staff facilitating these in response to feedback from students at Newquay University Centre and Eden Project Learning.

New for this year, we have partnered with Studiosity, providing an extra layer of academic support. As mentioned previously, around one-third of our HE cohort are mature students. We recognise this can mean juggling a series of competing demands, including family commitments, parenting and care responsibilities, or employment. Additionally, we have students who chose to commute long distances for their 'contact' days. This is hugely beneficial to students who require flexibility in their education.

Students have access to a range of HE-specific bursaries aiding those from low-income backgrounds and areas of low participation, and countering finance as a barrier to participation. We also offer emergency hardship funds for all HE students, in addition to an accommodation bursary. The accommodation bursary recognises the need to support students during a volatile and uncertain housing market in a cost-of-living crisis. Our Offsite Accommodation Officer's work with local landlords is crucial in lieu of bespoke halls of residence.

To further this point, students studying at our Duchy Stoke, Camborne and Newquay campuses reported through the PCM process that the support they receive is excellent. In their autumn 2021 meeting, eight BSc (Hons) Equitation Science students at Duchy Stoke felt that the teaching staff were amazing and responded to emails well. Also in autumn 2021, 4 BSc (Hons) Computing Technologies students expressed great satisfaction with the programme team who they felt to be enormously supportive and would go 'above and beyond'. In their 2019-2020 spring PCM meeting, 20 Year 1, and 20 Year 5 FdSc Marine Science students agreed that any issues are often sorted straight away, and that tutorials are regularly used to highlight any support needs that students have both in relation to their academic studies, as well as more of a pastoral nature. They also stated that the campus is safe and that support is easily accessible.

Student Voice

We are not afraid to hear the student voice; we demand more of it. It is important to us that the student voice is unfiltered. We encourage our students to be critical and to be honest. It is only by

listening to, and ensuring we understand our students, that we can enact change for the better. This is what we have done and are continuing to do.

Within the first year of the Principal's arrival at TCCG, the Director of Student Experience altered the structure of the annual Student Induction Survey. By November 2020, it was possible to separate out the HE responses from those of our FE, 19+ and Apprentices. This was an important step in identifying the needs of our HE students and being able to take action to make improvements. You can see from the results of the November 2021 Induction survey in Figure 2 below that there has been an increase in positive feedback from students about their overall satisfaction.

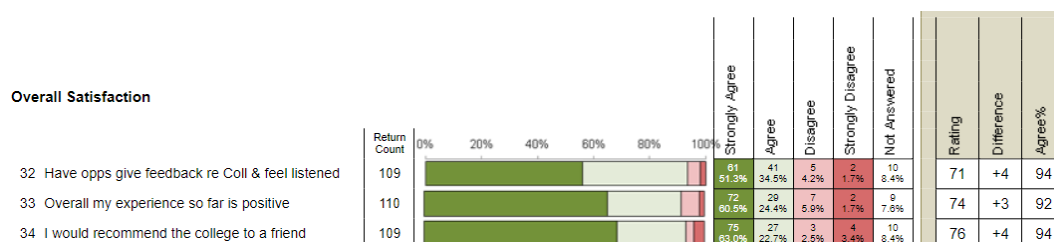


Figure 2. Higher Education student results of Student Induction November 2021

It is clear we have made significant progress in addressing the perceived lack of opportunity for students to give feedback, based on the extent to which we value their feedback and on how we act on their feedback as it appears in the TEF indicator dashboard. You'll notice that our internal data regarding student voice is substantially more positive than the NSS responses indicate, with 86% of HE students who agree or strongly agree that they have opportunities to give feedback and, crucially, feel listened to.

The CCSU and students on campus directly input into the clubs and activities aimed specifically at the HE student body and their needs. Students may have home and carer priorities that a traditional HE student may not, and this is reflected in the 'in-college' activities requested. Examples of clubs are often related to mental wellbeing and being part of a campus community and include craft clubs, sea swimming sessions and local social events.

We have made further, substantive improvements to the HE student voice with an HE Student Governor who sits on the TCCG Governing Board and HE Committee. They are actively involved in challenging and shaping TCCG's strategic direction. PCMs provide students with the opportunity to shape their academic curriculum and its related experiences via peer-chosen course representatives. All course representatives receive appropriate training for this role. These formal feedback sessions are supplemented by 'Learner Voice' activities on each campus, which go beyond curriculum feedback and encompass the entire student experience. Students have used these forums to change policies and practice that impact upon all HE students. This has included, but is not limited to:

- menu choices in campus cafes and restaurants, and free fruit
- the sustainability of materials used in both classrooms and social spaces
- the social spaces themselves, through updated decor and furniture
- the timing of teaching activities
- opening times, and access to laboratories and libraries
- forming peer support groups (LGBTQ+ and neurodivergent for example)

We recognise individual students also need opportunities to provide feedback outside of any formal mechanisms we already provide. We therefore advocate an 'open door' policy for academic, pastoral and wider support staff. This ensures students can express their views at regular and easily accessible moments across the academic year. Suggestion boxes on every campus allow for anonymous feedback too, and we respond to this via 'You Said, We Did' notices on every campus. We are proud of how we have transformed Student Voice at TCCG, and we are continually assessing how we can further improve this vital component of our student experience.

We are absolutely committed to excellence of the student experience in HE. The strategic and operational policies and procedures outlined above provide evidence of our approach to this, together with a continuously supportive and student-centred philosophy to everything that we do.

We have given a clear rationale for any mitigations in the TEF indicators. Furthermore, we have provided evidence from our internal data that suggests an alternative and more positive reality of the student experience at TCCG. We have undergone a sea change, implemented new policies and procedures and continue to share good practice across the Group. These measures have impacted positively on student experience. As we move onto the student outcomes section of this submission, it is clear our student outcomes are truly excellent, particularly for continuation and completion of studies.

3. Student Outcomes

As *The Career College*, our HE programmes are designed with technical and professional learning at their core. With a distinct focus on employability and producing work-ready graduates, we have developed policies and procedures that support our students holistically, which are applied across the Group. As the data shows, students who enrol onto our degree-level courses typically stay with us through to successful completion. We acknowledge that for many students the decision to embark on HE study is a difficult one. This is particularly true for those who may experience perceived or actual barriers linked to the demographics of lower participation in HE. For that reason, we are proud of our statistics linked to continuation and completion as per Figure 3 on page 19.

Continuation

The TEF indicators highlight that we are operating significantly above benchmark in an already high performing sector for continuation. This showcases our unwavering ability to support our students through their programme of HE learning, and our uncompromising ambition for all our students to be successful on their course.

Cornwall College (Full-time)

Overall indicator (Full-time)

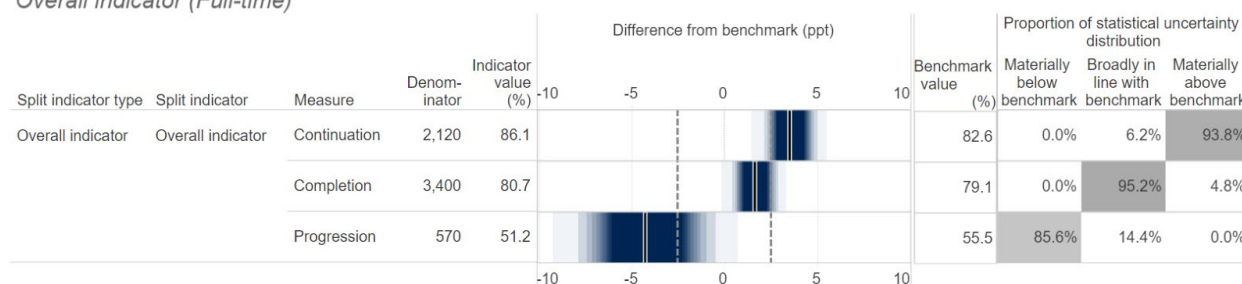


Figure 3. TEF Overall Indicator (full-time)

Where we excel is in supporting our students throughout their HE journeys. We've already highlighted in the Provider Context section above that around half of our HE students are drawn from quintiles one and two, and roughly a third are mature students. Our student body is, therefore, largely comprised of people who historically are less like to participate in HE. This comes with its own challenges. What our continuation data shows is that we have established an approach to HE that works for the communities we serve. Despite the obstacles our students may face – balancing education with employment, family commitments, parenting and care responsibilities – they continue with us through to completion. We are operating at 93.8% above sector benchmarks for full time students, and 99.4% above sector benchmarks for part-time students, when viewing our overall indicator for continuation. This is a clear level of excellence in a high performing and competitive sector.

We recognise that there is an inextricable link between disengagement in academic sessions and continuation rates on courses. Indeed, we agree with Dickinson (2022) who cited an action research project from Solutionpath, which found early intervention improves engagement. We developed a Groupwide philosophy - 'Challenge 90' - targeting 90% rates for attendance, continuation and successful completion of studies. Staff are tasked with re-engaging students in an early, supportive and empathetic manner. At a wider strategic level, the College Operations Group uses RAG ratings on Power BI to drill down into our internal data, which is constantly updated, to support actions and strategies with curriculum areas based on these wider philosophical considerations. This has significantly contributed to our excellence in this area. Not only do we understand our data, but we also scrutinise the meaning of it in relation to student experiences and outcomes. High continuation rates across all areas of full-time provision are indicative of excellence. Our curriculum teams deliver challenging, but highly relevant HE courses enhanced by our holistic approach to student support.

The niche style of our provision enables academic and support staff to truly know their students. TCCG adopts a student first approach at all levels of study. As mentioned in the Student Voice section above, we want honest feedback from our students. This helps us understand challenges students may be facing and take positive steps to address them. We are agile in our ability to support both micro and macro pressures students face. We have clear and accessible layers of communication with students on expectations of learning, and specific policies to help them when things might feel overwhelming. For example, our Extenuating Circumstances policy is created by our HE Operations team, in association with university partners. This policy is 'owned' by Student Experience Managers and academic staff on each campus, to provide clear information to students and help ease assessment burden if it is necessary and appropriate to do so. Our use of the ProSolution software also enables us to both safeguard and direct relevant support to the students most in need or at risk of disengagement. Our direct and consistent approach to supporting students is, arguably, one of our key areas of excellence.

It is also important to note that students also regularly attend sessions if they find them engaging, and therefore hold value in terms of their learning and future employability. Our academic staff are supported to improve their teaching quality via Team TLA sessions, alongside more staff involvement with the Advance HE fellowship scheme, linked to the UK Professional Standards Framework. Teaching staff are then, continually reflecting on and improving the quality of taught sessions. Cross-Group sharing of best practice and the latest in pedagogical innovations helps staff in bringing new and fresh modes of delivery to life in a supportive manner. Moreover, the recent development of a Quality Cycle, specific to HE courses, ensures essential tasks are

actioned at key points across academic year. We utilise qualitative and quantitative information gathering that provide an additional picture of students' engagement and success in their studies.

Such approaches to supporting, tracking, and understanding our continuation rates is supported by the outstanding overall indicator on the TEF data dashboard. The data remains positive when viewing the split-level indicators. Our positive, early interventions and supportive approaches adopted with Level 4 students in particular have had impact on our students, with these performing 100% above the sector benchmark. Continuation rates do not discriminate between mode of study (part-time vs full-time) students of different ages, which provides evidence of our personable, targeted and individual support that we provide to students. The subject-level split indicators offer further evidence of our staff engaging with our internal policies for student engagement, with a number performing exceptionally above the sector benchmarks. We are proud of our students' achievements, and we utilise data forensically so we can maintain excellence and improve by understanding the fine detail.

Completion

Our positive data with regards to student outcomes continues with our performance for successful completion of studies. The TEF data dashboard indicates we are operating 95.2% in line with benchmarks in an already high performing and competitive sector. Given the applied and vocational nature of many of our programmes, our completion rates were not adversely affected by the impact of COVID. In fact, completion rates for full-time delivery are particularly strong. For full-time students, by far our largest cohort, we are consistently high-performing across all demographic groups, with exceptional performance for Level 4 students. As discussed above, we have re-developed our policies, procedures and sharing of best practice. We have showcased our flexible approach to delivery, particularly during the pandemic, and we have continued to perform well in this aspect of the TEF indicator data. Whilst we acknowledge student perception as gauged through the NSS could be more positive, the fact is we deliver high-quality education, and this is evidenced in our continuation and completion data.

At an operational level, our 'student first' approach to HE study ensures all students can fulfil their potential. We understand who our students are and their entry points when they join our programmes of study. Each student has an 'individual learning plan' (ILP) which is bespoke to them and highlights to us any additional learning needs.

Progression

We are proud of our continuation and completion of studies for all HE students, which has positively contributed to our wider work in strong student outcomes. We note our progression statistics are below benchmark for both full-time and part-time students. Here, the local context is crucially important. We have referred to our demographic profile within the Provider Context section above. The South West of England, and specifically Cornwall, suffers from a general lack of investment and a significantly lower proportion of high paid employment in relation to more densely populated areas of the UK. This contention is supported by the UK Commission for Employment & Skills, who provided a summary of the Cornwall & Isles of Scilly area based on a focus of Working Futures, the Employer Skills Survey, and the Employer Perspectives Survey (UKCES, 2012). They found that Cornwall & the Isles of Scilly's Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area is somewhat over-represented, relative to the UK, in the accommodation and food sectors and in agriculture. It added that this LEP area is under-represented in finance and insurance, and

in professional and support services. Perhaps most pertinently, they also found that this LEP area has a lower representation in higher skilled occupations compared to the rest of the UK (UKCES, 2012). There are fewer opportunities for 'graduate jobs' in Cornwall and the South West region.

The 2019-20 Graduate Outcomes Survey demonstrates the importance of FE Colleges offering HE provision in the South West region. In England, only 8% of all graduates went on to work in the South West. Whereas 64% of all graduates domiciled in the South West went on to work in the region. This increases to 89% for graduates of FE Colleges who were domiciled in the region, suggesting that local providers are essential to the regional graduate jobs market (HESA, 2022).

Institutions with a widening participation agenda, like TCCG, face on-going challenges operating within such an economically challenging part of the country. It is also important to note the high percentage of foundation degrees (and 'other undergraduate') courses we offer, often to mature students. The significance of this type of provision, involving the development of technical and practical 'skills' as opposed to 'managerial' or high paying graduate employment, should not be under-stated. It should be noted that our progression data for students over the age of 31 is 64.5% materially above benchmark. This is an indication of our positive impact around career change for people living in our local communities. The split-level indicators would also suggest that students from deprivation quintiles 1 and 2 have better progression rates than students from other quintiles. This is positive in terms of our widening participation agenda. Moreover, it is evidence of our excellence in adding value, or distance travelled, for many underrepresented individuals.

There are opportunities on the horizon that we already exploiting. The UKCES report indicated there is an expected employment growth in health and social work and professional services in Cornwall over the coming years. We have planned for this through our Counselling provision, and our Cornwall Counselling Institute. The Institute serves the local community with skilled and knowledgeable graduates who go into employment with the NHS, or through private practice. Additionally, the proportion of jobs held by people with a Level 4 qualification or above is projected to increase from 36% to 46% (UKCES, 2012). Our local offer, designed to address industry need, ensures that such projections become a reality. Plus, the setting up of Professional Advisory Groups across all campuses, helps to forge even greater links between degree-level courses and higher apprenticeships with relevant industries. We are *The Career College*.

We are increasing our use of Cert HE qualifications within the validation of foundation degrees. This enables more students to choose to engage in HE in a flexible way, particularly when used with part-time options. The Cert HE can therefore be used as a 'next step' into further study with us, one of our university partners or relevant local employment. Our relationships with our university partners continue to go from strength to strength. We are aligning and sequencing many of our new foundation degrees directly to appropriate Level 6 and Level 7 options. We are also revamping our Postgraduate Teacher Education offer as a way of providing a positive exit route for many of our degree-level graduates, but to also play our part in addressing a national shortage of trained, high-quality teachers.

Our ground-breaking MSc in Land and Ecological Restoration has seen graduates obtaining a range of job roles including two Research Project Manager/Officers at Eden Project Learning; two Restoration Managers (Savills and Brackenhurst Botanic Garden); two secured employed with Natural England; one with Project Seagrass; one secured a role on the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group; one the RSPB; one Dartmoor National Park; and two PhD candidates (Liverpool John Moores and Stirling Universities). Whilst out of the scope of this submission, we have

included this information to indicate the extent to which our HE and postgraduate provision is developing despite the economic, demographic and sociological challenges highlighted.

It is important to note many of our students make a positive impact through their involvement with local research groups, community action groups and charities. Such work is evidence of excellence in terms of utilising their education beyond the bounds of any job title or salary. For example, as part of our Student of the Year Award nominations, linked to our most recent graduation ceremony, it's clear many of our students are actively contributing to the advancement of knowledge and making a positive contribution to their local communities. The nominations included students who are chairing, are ambassadors for, are leading research groups or who are active committee members in local Royal Association of British Dairy Farmer's Groups, veterinary practices, local environmental and species swards and the Cornwall Reptile & Amphibian Group. It's worth noting that other local HEI providers are struggling to do well in this regard too.

Moreover, our HE students make important and original contributions to knowledge via publications and public engagement. For example, a student on the BA(Hons) Art & Design Practice degree was runner up in the SAA Artist of the Year Aware in 2021 and received Highly Commended for the same award in 2022. Both illustrations are now published on the SAA website. A graduate from the BSc Applied Marine Zoology course is published in the *Journal of Fish Biology*. A graduate of the BSc Applied Zoology degree has articles published in *Ocean Science Journal*. Whilst a graduate from the FdSc Horticulture programme has several publications appearing in relevant ecological restoration specialist journals. We are clearly producing excellent graduates in specialist fields of expertise who are making an impact in their respective fields. We would argue that our progression data is very strong when put into the local context.

TCCG prides itself on delivering a holistic curriculum that includes high-quality technical and professional programmes. This develops students' resilience, confidence and independence in addition to delivering industry relevant knowledge and skills. This is engineered in line with student career choices, to ensure they develop the skills required to carry out a professional role and be successful in wider society. The Student Experience Team, alongside curriculum teams, are well focused in supporting the holistic development and progress for all students who require additional support and guidance to be successful. This means that students are well prepared for the next stage of education, employment or training. They gain qualifications and have met the standards to go on to destinations that meet their interests and aspirations and the goal of their course of study.

Model of Educational Gain through Employability and Skills at Cornwall College

Our model for measuring educational gain utilises a 'Theory of Change' approach to track longitudinal student progress on the development of their work-based skills and employability, through a project-based learning philosophy. It indicates how a mixed method approach to student activity, and the subsequent data we collect, influences Group-wide policy and practice through drivers for change. This best fits our dedication towards giving students every opportunity to move positively into graduate employment and provide relevance and value to their degree, commensurate to our overarching strategic approach via a focus on skills and employability (Cornwall College *Strategic Plan*, 2022-2025; Higher Education Strategy: Unlocking the Potential, 2022-2027).

The model focuses on a range of strategic and operational activities to engender the positive development of skills and employability gain. Its *intent* is to encourage the development of rounded

individuals who can positively contribute to society via the *implementation* of activities that they may participate in whilst undertaking degree-level study at the College. As such, it seeks to signpost students to a range of value-added activities across the group, which include subject-specific industry recognised qualifications, to engagement in College-offerings such as mental health first aid and accounting and budgeting. The model advocates for the *implementation* of both numerical data (e.g., entry qualification vs exit qualification), but also qualitative data in order to provide crucial context and deeper intelligence on the gains that students make in this area, and the links to enhanced employability. It therefore references specific activities that aid with measuring the distance travelled by each student and the *impact* of key skills beyond the curriculum, and how these can be monitored/evaluated.

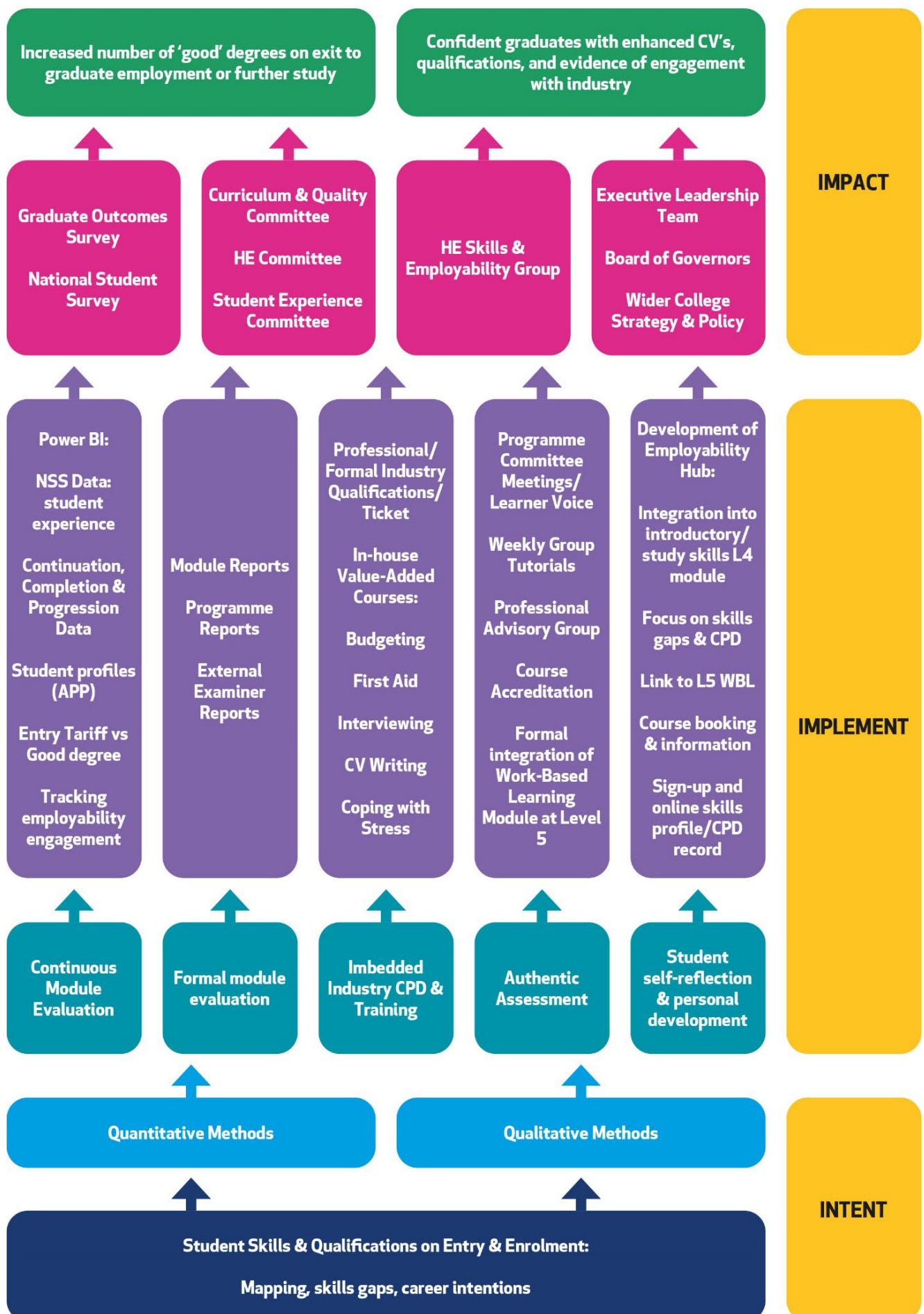
Summary

TCCG has transformed over the last four years, driven by the need to improve and impact positively on the communities and students we serve. Governors, leaders and managers are passionate about HE and its place in FE and as part of TCCG. A clear strategic vision – The Career College – alongside a renewed quality cycle and infrastructure improvements have been rigorously applied across the Group. Data from NSS reports and our own internal monitoring processes have been addressed. Systemic changes have been implemented to ensure our students experience high-quality academic provision and are encouraged to fulfil their full potential.

Our HE provision is purposeful and strategic, focused on technical and professional HE qualifications. We recognise that some of the historic TEF indicator data is not where it could be. We have already taken action to remedy this, and we have travelled a long way in a short time.

It feels unjust to be judged on the performance of what was essentially a different Group; the consequences of which we would carry forwards for the next four years. Rather, we want to showcase where we are now. We are an HE in FE provider, who is proud to say that we are the gold standard for producing work-ready graduates.

Model of Educational Gain through Employability and Skills at The Cornwall College Group



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