

Provider Submission for TEF 2023

1.0 Provider Context

The Heart of Yorkshire Education Group (The Group) was formed on 1 March 2022 as a result of the merger of Selby College and Wakefield College. The Group consists of three campuses at Castleford, Selby and Wakefield.

At Wakefield Campus there is a dedicated higher education building, the Seacole Building, which was opened to students in 2017. When this building was completed, higher education provision which had traditionally been delivered at Castleford was transferred to the new facility, however, following student feedback from both current higher education students, and also potential progressors from our further education provision, from September 2022, some provision has now been transferred back to Castleford – namely Higher National Certificates in Engineering and Construction. This is being delivered in dedicated HE zones, and funding has been received from the Office for Students Capital Grant to undertake some additional works for higher education students at this site. At Selby, the higher education provision is delivered across the whole site, tending to be delivered within curriculum ‘zones’ and this was maintained for the 2022/23 academic year, being the first full academic year post-merger, but this is being looked at moving forward to offer higher education students across the Group an equitable experience. Again, the Group has received Office for Students Capital Grant funding to improve the higher education engineering facilities at Selby Campus and this will enable a dedicated higher education centre to be created within the Engineering building, offering students the opportunity to undertake more level 4 and 5 provision, and this will be complete in time for the launch of the Engineering Higher Technical Qualifications. Whilst we recognise that these new developments are not within the scope of TEF2023, we feel that it is important to reassure the panel that post-merger, we are working to ensure a consistency of academic experience to all of our higher education students, irrespective of study location, qualification type, or mode of attendance.

Our overall aim is to support students living in our region to access higher education and skills. As many of our students want to study and then work locally this contributes to reducing the higher-level skills shortages in our districts. Our ambition is to build on the progress we have already made in recent years, particularly in supporting more students from disadvantaged areas to participate and succeed in Higher Education. We also aspire to provide an environment where students at the Heart of Yorkshire Education Group can achieve their full potential. The three campuses deliver general further education and are based in West Yorkshire and North Yorkshire. The Group is part of three LEPs including the Leeds City Region, Hull and East Yorkshire and York and North Yorkshire, we also play a leading role alongside other local institutions in the development of the Yorkshire & Humber Institute of Technology, which is one of twelve of its kind across the country designed to increase higher-level technical skills for employers.

Across its three campuses, the Group serves approximately 10,000+ full-time students, with over 600 of these being Higher Education students and 1557 Apprentices. With a combined turnover of £36 million, the Group currently employs more than 930 teaching and support staff. We also work with several stakeholders including 68 partner schools and 1344 partner employers. These relationships clearly cement the Heart of Yorkshire Education Group firmly within the communities where we operate.

1.1 Vision, Mission and Values

The Group's vision is **“to be an outstanding first-choice education group, passionately serving our communities”**.

Our mission is **“our staff positively transform our students lives and the communities we serve putting them at the heart of everything we do.”**

Our values act as the moral compass for our organisation. They encapsulate the way we do things, how we behave and how we make decisions. The four key values we adhere to are:

- **Respect** – to clearly communicate with transparency and show kindness and passion for the things we do.
- **Inclusion** – create a safe environment where all can thrive, enabling creativity and individuality.
- **Ambition** – aspire for excellence and growth, looking for opportunities to innovate and develop.
- **Collaboration** – take individual and collective accountability, work together to seize opportunities to continuously improve.

1.2 Strategic Priorities and Objectives

In planning the strategic direction of the Heart of Yorkshire Education Group we have established five key strategic objectives. In working towards and ultimately achieving these, we will be able to excel and provide an outstanding experience for all of our stakeholders.

Strategic Objectives:

1. Develop a skills offer that is aligned to the needs of the areas we serve through partnership and collaboration.
2. Ensure our curriculum delivery is high quality, inclusive and ambitious and we provide an outstanding student experience.
3. Develop a high-performing culture and people who are effective and committed.
4. Ensure our finances are to facilitate investment in our resources and our offer.
5. Commit wholeheartedly to the development of sustainability within our communities.

1.3 Shape of the Provision

Higher Education is a very important part of the Group's overall offer, vitally allowing young people and adults to study high-quality HE locally to advance their qualifications and careers. The Group predominantly provides Higher Education qualifications to three main types of learners:

- 18-year olds who choose to access higher level study locally rather than following a more traditional university route (these learners usually access full-time provision);

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- Mature learners returning to vocationally-specific higher-level study to meet their own individual career aspirations (these learners usually access part-time twilight/evening provision);
- Employer-sponsored learners who are identified by their organisations for higher level training to meet specific industry/sector needs (these learners usually access day release provision).

The Group is committed to providing opportunities for widening participation and access to HE for learners who are unwilling or unable to access higher level study in a more traditional University setting, and those from disadvantaged and under-represented groups.

The Group's offer is almost entirely low/non-tariff, and this supports the College's values by ensuring that higher education is inclusive, particularly for learners with non-standard qualifications or mature applicants returning to study. Each group campus has differing diverse student communities which are broadly reflective of their own specific local area.

A key feature of the College's mission to ensure that learning is accessible, individualised and meets the needs of learners and employers, in the design of programmes. This includes flexibility in the choice of mode (full or part-time), and effective and efficient timetabling in the daytime, evening or day release, with a 'compressed' delivery model and/or e-learning allowing learners to fit their study around work/family commitments. Programmes are carefully structured, with many offered as one-year Certificates/Diplomas, to allow exit points, and consideration is given to timescales in part-time mode, for example, allowing completion of Level 5 within three, rather than four years. We also ensure that our student cohorts are intrinsic to our development of new programmes, with student consultation being a standard element of the development consent process (Business Case and Intent to Development a Higher Education Award 2019). In addition, where modifications are made during the lifespan of a programme, student bodies are consulted on these changes prior to submission.

1.4 Validating Partners/Awarding Bodies

The Heart of Yorkshire Group works with four validating partners/awarding bodies. This includes collaborative provision with Leeds Beckett University which is delivered at Wakefield College and covers our Early Year's provision. The Group also has successful long-standing partnerships with the University of Hull and the University of Huddersfield and has further developed a suite of Higher National qualifications and Higher Technical Qualifications via Pearson, to meet changing student and employer needs.

1.5 Curriculum Intent

In the recent white paper Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth (DfE 2021) there is formal clarification of the purpose and role of colleges, with focus on the provision of job-focused technical and higher technical education. Data compiled by the Association of Colleges (2022) indicates that Colleges are well placed to seize the opportunity to lead on higher technical education, noting that 82% of Higher National Certificates; 58% of Higher National Diplomas and 63% of Foundation Degrees were delivered by Further Education Colleges. This will require more

flexibility for example regarding modes of study, and a specific focus on associate professional and technical occupations and roles.

It is recognised that there is a national issue with unequal access of young people to Higher Education and the benefits that this can bring and that this is strongly related to the place in which the young people live and are growing up in. As of 2020 28.5% of the residents in Selby and Wakefield hold a higher education at SCQF 7 or above (of 40.6% Nationally) (EMSI 2022). In 2020 28.6% of the working age population in Wakefield had qualifications at NVQ4 or above, ranking the District in 58th place out of the 63 UK cities (Centre for Cities 2021). Many neighbourhoods in both Selby and Wakefield are in the lowest 2 quintiles (Q1 and Q2) for the participation of young people in Higher Education in England (Office for Students 2022). Over 52% of the Higher Education students at the Group are from Q1 and Q2 for each of the four years of the time series of TEF2023, and the growth in full-time student numbers between 2017-18 and 2020-21 can be attributed in part to engaging more students from underrepresented groups for example in this period the proportion of students at the Wakefield Campus from low-income backgrounds increased by 6% to 46%.

The combined EMSI (2022) data for Selby and Wakefield shows that the proportions of the workforce in elementary and process, plant and machine operative occupations are well above the national averages whilst the proportions in professional and associate professional and technical occupations are well below. Associate professional and technical is the top growing occupation sector, however, as well as having the third highest median wages (after professional and managers, directors and senior officials). The top posted occupations (an indicator of those vacancies which are hardest to fill) are professional and associate professional and technical, whilst elementary and process, plant and machine operative occupations are highlighted as the two areas most vulnerable to automation. The analysis also highlights the importance of the manufacturing and construction industries in Selby and Wakefield, with manufacturing being the top for gross value added and construction the third.

1.6 Provision and Student Profile

Table 1 provides a recent breakdown of student numbers on Higher Education undergraduate programmes across the Group. At Selby full-time numbers have risen steadily annually since 2019-20 and are currently at the highest level in 4 years. Full-time numbers at Wakefield were relatively stable from 2018-19 to 2020-21 prior a drop in 2021-22 which was investigated and found to be predominantly attributable to post-pandemic issues around some local sectors as well as individual student anxieties. At Wakefield part-time numbers have fallen over the 4 years whereas at Selby, part-time numbers have remained reasonably constant. The fall in part-time numbers at Wakefield is predominantly attributable to the timetabling approach, which enables students to attend for two full consecutive days on the full time mode of attendance. Many students elect to take this approach and conclude their studies overall in a shorter time period.

Table 1: Undergraduate student numbers per year (sourced from Size and Shape dashboard)

Type of Provision	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	4-year aggregate
Full time	510	570	520	520	2110
Part time	290	290	240	190	1020

Percentage	64% FT	66% FT	68% FT	73% FT	67% FT
Split	36% PT	34% PT	32% PT	27% PT	33% PT

Analysis of our four-year aggregate size and shape data provides the following full-time student profile for the Group:

- 50% of our students are on 2-year courses, with 99.7% of our full-time provision comprising Offs fundable programmes. Most students are studying in education & teaching (23.6%), performing arts (17.4%) or business (15.1%). 63.9% of the students are under 21 and 81.9% have no declared disability. Our student cohort is 88.8% white, 57.9% female and 55.8% are from IMD Quintiles 1 & 2 (with 1 being the highest at 32.8%). Most of our full-time students are not free school meals eligible. They are generally low or non-traditional tariff entrants with HE level qualifications on entry being the most common (23.9%). 62.4% were local to the address prior to study.

For our part-time students, the four-year aggregate size and shape data provides the following cohort profile:

- 72.6% of the students are on 2-year courses with 57.4% of the part-time provision comprising courses fundable by the Offs. The majority of our PT students are studying in education & training (32.1%), allied health (27.4%) engineering (17.9%) and business (17.4%). The majority are over 31 years of aged (46.3%) with 37.4% being between 21 and 30. 92.6% have no declared disability and 92.1% are white. 70% are female and 57.9% are within IMD Q3, 4 and 5. 76.7% are not eligible for free school meals and the majority entered with Access qualifications (33.7%) or HE level qualifications (31.6%). 58.4% were local to the address prior to study.

Table 2: Heart of Yorkshire Education Group current provision

Programme	Mode of delivery	Delivery Location
Higher National Certificates/Diplomas (Pearson)		
Business	Part-time and full-time	Selby
Travel and Tourism	Full-time	Wakefield
Computing – Higher Technical Qualification	Full-time	Selby Wakefield from September 2023
Construction – Civil Engineering	Part-time	Castleford
Construction – Construction	Part-time	Castleford
Construction – Building Services	Part-time	Castleford
Engineering – General Engineering	Full-time Part-time	Castleford Selby
Engineering – Mechanical Engineering	Part-time	Castleford

Engineering – Electronic and Electrical Engineering	Part-time and Full-time	Castleford
Art and Design	Full-time	Selby
Music – Artist Development	Full-time	Wakefield
Music – Production	Full-time	Wakefield
Performing Arts - Dance	Full-time	Wakefield
Performing Arts - Musical Theatre	Full-time	Wakefield
Performing Arts - Performance	Full-time	Wakefield
Foundation Degrees		
Young Children’s Learning & Development	Full-time & Part-time	Wakefield
Health & Well-being	Full-time	Wakefield Selby from September 2023
Applied Sports Performance	Full-time	Wakefield
Early Childhood Studies	Full-time	Selby
Learning Support	Full-time	Selby
Independent Games Development	Full-time	Wakefield
Public Services Management	Full-time	Wakefield, intent to deliver in Selby
Full Degrees		
BSc Sport Coaching and Exercise Science	Full-time	Selby
BA Criminology and Social Justice	Full-time	Selby
BA Criminology and Law	Full-time	Wakefield
BA Business & Management	Full-time	Wakefield
BSc Computer Science	Full-time	Wakefield
BA Actor Musician	Full-time	Wakefield
Top Up Degrees		
Arts Practice	Full-time	Selby
Leadership and Management	Full-time	Selby
Applied Computing	Full-time	Selby
Early Education and Care	Full-time	Selby
Applied Sports Performance	Full-time	Wakefield
Performance Industries	Full-time	Wakefield
Creative Industries	Full-time	Wakefield

Public Services Management	Full-time	Wakefield
Early Childhood Education & Care	Full-time and part-time	Wakefield
Education		
PGCE/Cert Ed	Part-time	Wakefield and Selby

The majority of our full-time provision is also available part-time however, most students elect to take the full-time route which is usually time-tabled over two full days. This timetabling model is a response to student need – many of our students have responsibilities outside of their studies, including families, jobs and caring commitments; they do not tend to follow the ‘traditional’ student profile.

1.7 Employer Engagement/Employability

The Heart of Yorkshire Group is focused on a strategic approach to curriculum development to maximise recruitment and opportunities and to address the demographic shortfall of residents with NVQ4, and that this is driven by the future demand for Higher Level / Technical Skills in the Selby and Wakefield districts, the Leeds City Region, North Yorkshire and East Yorkshire. With a clear vision our principles emphasise equality and inclusion through the development of programmes appealing to groups that are underrepresented in Higher Education. The Group are committed to provide programmes to enhance employability through clear entry points from levels 4, 5 and 6 into ‘graduate level’ / professional employment and providing resources to ensure that students have a first-rate experience giving them the skills that employers require.

All of our validated provision is designed in conjunction with employers – this is a requirement of our validating partners, but something that we were undertaking in any event, prior to us working with our current University partners. Our most recent validations were Criminology & Law and Computer Science at Wakefield (both during 2019/20) and Arts Practice at Selby (2020/21). Extracts from the relevant programme specification documents outline the valuable contribution that local employers were able to make to our programme design and therefore, to our students’ academic experience:

- BSc Computer Science: *The approach to this programme design allows for the incorporation of routes which meet the stated needs of local employers, for example data analysis, software engineering, AI, cyber security and network engineering. Of particular note is the concept of full stack development, a combination of front end and back end development, which is a skill set in demand locally. This has been confirmed by the employers that we have consulted prior to, and during, the programme design process who have had difficulty recruiting in this area. (Wakefield College 2020)*
- BA Criminology & Law: *The teaching team have strong links with West Yorkshire Police and current Public Service Management students regularly benefit from the input and support from a variety of guest speakers from the service. A number of individuals from West Yorkshire Police have agreed to continue supporting the college in the development of the .. programme and will act as consultants during the development process.*

The programme team have a number of close links with voluntary agencies such as the Citizens Advice Bureau and Victim Support in Wakefield. In the past these services have delivered information sessions relating to their volunteering opportunities and have delivered relevant input on issues such as victimisation and the criminal justice system. In particular, the programme team have begun working closely with Wakefield's Citizen Advice Bureau to arrange volunteering opportunities for future students who may be seeking legal experience as part of their 'Exploring Careers in Criminology and Law' module. Individuals have also agreed to act as consultants during the development of the programme. (Wakefield College 2020a)

1.8 Student Submission

All Level 4-6 higher education students at the Group were contacted by the University Centre Student Experience Co-ordinator via an email communication to ask for volunteers to be involved in the Group's student submission. This also included those students who completed their studies in 2021/22.

The Student Union is not an NUS Union but is open to all students across the FE and HE. The students were furnished with documentation from across the three campuses in order that their submission could more accurately represent views and perspectives from students across the entire Group. These documents included:

- Outcomes of our internal Skills and Employability Surveys (sent to current students and alumni) - both quantitative results and qualitative comments.
- NSS survey 2022 information accessed from the OFS website but printed out for ease of reference.
- Student Newsletters produced and circulated throughout the academic year by the University Centre Student Experience Co-ordinator
- Covid support - contextual information provided by higher education teaching staff to be checked against the students' own experiences
- Information on what is meant by Educational Gain (the information provided was produced by the University of Edinburgh in order that the students had access to source material completely independent of the Group). This was to assist them in framing any commentary they wished to make around their experiences.

The students were supported by the University Centre Student Experience Co-ordinator who acted as their single point of contact for meetings, sharing of documentation, queries and concerns. He made it explicit to the students that all evidence was there for information to be examined and not a guide as to what the Group wished them to document. They were also made aware that, other than corrections of errors, the submission they produced would be the one uploaded to the Office for Students.

1.9 Management Structure and Staffing

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The Heart of Yorkshire Education Group has re-structured its management of Higher Education, investing in a number of roles to support development and expansion. This includes a Group Director of Higher Education, reporting to the Group Executive Director of Curriculum & Quality. There is then a Group Head of Higher Education who reports to the Group Director. Underpinning the senior team is a central HE team comprising:

- University Centre Student Experience Coordinator (Group role),
- Higher Education Administrator x2,
- Higher Education Study Coach,
- Higher Education Outreach Officer (currently seconded to UniConnect)

All programmes have a designated Programme Leader with allocated remission to fulfil programme management duties. The majority of staff teach on Higher Education and Further Education programmes with some programmes utilising additional part-time specialist staff to enable the Group to provide particular professional expertise. Higher education teaching teams have been broadened in recent years with more staff involved in delivery across departments to ensure higher staff/student ratios and draw on a range of specialisms.

1.10 Optional Courses

The Group will not be including optional courses for consideration for TEF2023 and they will not be considered within this submission.

1.11 Merger Considerations

It should be noted that whilst the data indicators that we have been provided with are a result of merged data sets, as individual institutions until March 2022, neither Wakefield College nor Selby College have had access to the data in this merged format at any point, other than the 2021 NSS results (merged by OfS post-merger) and the 2022 NSS results (only ever produced in merged format). As such, the majority of the evidence which has had to be utilised for the production of this submission, is based upon individual College pre-merger returns and documentation and does not relate specifically to the merged data produced by the OfS for the TEF2023 submission.

1.12 Educational Gains

Rather than addressing the topic of Educational Gains under a specific heading, the specific strategies relating to academic development, personal development and work readiness are addressed and evaluated throughout the document. Educational Gains as a stand-alone topic is relatively new as a concept. However, all of the strategies we employ to broaden our students' educational experience (Section 2.2) have been in place for several years and as such are evaluated currently within our standard evaluation methodologies such as internal student surveys and MEQs. Having had initial discussions with student representatives within the Group, a suggestion has been made that specific Student Representative Focus Groups be established to formally discuss the parameters of educational gain, the strategies we currently employ, and the potential future developments.

2.0 Student Experience

The Group's NSS data demonstrates positive practice in all areas of student experience and whilst we are clearly very pleased receive such outcomes, we are also keen to recognise potential shortcomings in over-relying on the data. For example, top up and other one-year programmes are not included in the NSS, however 32.8% of our full-time students in 2020-21 were enrolled on this type of programme. In addition, we are a small provider with small student cohorts and as such, we rarely receive programme specific information and outcomes for our provision. To mitigate against this, we run an internal survey every year for all HE students, irrespective of mode of attendance or level of study. Response rates can be variable, and we are aware of the potential for survey fatigue but nevertheless the information we receive can still be usefully triangulated with other data sets to produce a more robust picture.

For example, on our 2018-19 internal HE Survey (Wakefield) when asked to rate the statement 'The Teaching on My Course is good' 96% of the respondents agreed this was the case, clearly aligning with the positive NSS outcomes we also received in that year (85% overall satisfaction with teaching on the course at Wakefield).

An area which we have been keen to explore in my depth relates to Learning Resources, as this can produce some lower results for us on the NSS than in other areas. The use of our internal survey data enabled us to feel reassured that students across all levels of study were satisfied with the resources provided, as demonstrated by the following examples:

- 2018-19 statement to be rated 'The libraries have good resources' – 89% agreed, 'I can use the libraries when I need to' – 97%; 'I can rely on computers in College to work well' – 80%

2.1 Teaching & Assessment

Our NSS results data consistently demonstrates a high level of student satisfaction with our teaching with significant improvements being noted in the 2021 and 2022 data when related to the benchmark data. Our assessment outcomes are also of a very high standard following a similar pattern to teaching and learning when observed as part of the time series data.

The HE Teaching and Learning Strategy was updated in 2020 and the new version was presented to all HE teaching staff as part of the annual HE Conference (Wakefield College 2020b). This strategy pre-dated the merger and so staff at Selby campus were not part of this activity. The Strategy is, alongside the Group's more general Teaching and Learning Strategy, being updated to reflect the merger, however, major changes are not anticipated to be necessary and the existing documentation remains in force until the update is complete. The broad principles of the strategy are:

- *gradually enabling students to become more autonomous between levels 4 and 6;*
- *providing stimulating, engaging and academically challenging learning, assessment and research activities;*
- *encouraging students to apply their learning to new contexts and problems, including contemporary examples from the discipline and in simulated work environments;*
- *ensuring that students' skills and knowledge are developed at the appropriate level with opportunities to exceed this where appropriate;*

- *encouraging collaborative work within groups and across disciplines;*
- *recognising that students are practitioners who are still learning and harnessing this to promote mastery.*

As part of our work towards meeting these principles, the Group has a robust programme of teaching and learning observations as part of our strategy towards maintaining the quality of teaching and this is differentiated between FE and HE practice. Historically, the Selby campus utilised one methodology across campus, however, post-merger, the differentiated approach has been implemented across the Group. HE teaching staff are assessed on levelness (in line with FHEQ guidance), the inclusion of appropriate, and up-to-date research and source material, assessment techniques and HE ethos and culture. HE observations are a discursive process with lecturers being encouraged to choose a session for observation and to provide a rationale for that choice, for example, they may be trying out a new teaching approach which they would like feedback upon. Observers will often work in pairs with a member of the Senior Leadership Team being accompanied by a current member of the HE teaching staff. This ensures a balanced and current approach to the observation process as members of the SLT may no longer be involved in regular teaching practice. All higher education staff are provided with an overview of the process, which is reviewed each academic year. This is circulated at the start of the observation process each year along with all of the other documentation that observers will be using so that the process is as open and transparent as possible.

As is often the case in HE in FE settings, creating a research environment can be difficult, however, in July 2020 the Wakefield College site launched a new research and scholarship approach at the online July HE conference, Unfortunately, due to the ongoing pandemic restrictions the implementation was paused as it was felt that staff would be more suitably engaged in supporting the students through ongoing lockdown periods and the impacts these were having on their learning experience. As the merger process began shortly after the lockdowns ended, it was decided that the research and scholarship approach would be paused until the merger was completed and revisited, and potentially reworked, from a Group perspective. However, staff were still encouraged to undertake CPD activities (where these were available under pandemic restrictions), staff continued with external examiner applications and tenures, and, where applicable, publication of papers etc.

2.2 Resources, support and student engagement

Research and Scholarship

As noted in 2.1 above, the Group's research and scholarship approach encourages staff to engage in external CPD as well as internally provided activities. The Group Director of Higher Education holds a central higher education budget, within which is a ring-fenced figure supporting HE specific CPD activity. This can range from post-graduate study, additional sector qualification, or paying for 'time' to cover sessions so that staff can attend sector for work-based activities. It also covers the costs of running the annual HE Conference in July each year. In recent years we have invited participants from other local colleges to attend, had external guest speakers and have also utilised it as a forum for staff to develop their own scholarship, encouraging them to present short workshops or sessions around good practice identified as part of the observation process, or by their Head of

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Curriculum. In Covid lockdown, the July 2019 conference was cancelled, however, in 2020 we ran again online, with a full face to face day being reintroduced in July 2021 with colleagues from all three of our sites now being able to participate following the merger. Within the time series covered by TEF2023, some of the topics covered within the Conference have been Academic Integrity (July 2021), the use of Microsoft Teams and Higher and Degree Apprenticeships (July 2019), Assessment Feedback and High Order Questioning (July 2018), and more recently Authentic Assessment and Links Between Industry Engagement & Positive Employment Destinations (July 2022).

In addition to the ring-fenced amount, the budget also sends an additional amount to our central HR and Learning Development team in order to facilitate HE staff being able to attend conferences, seminars etcetera by assisting with travel, accommodation and conference fees where it is felt that attendance will positively enhance the staff member's role and responsibilities.

Academic Rigour

The College is a signatory to the QAA Academic Charter, having signed up as Wakefield College in March 2020; that commitment now having transferred to the Group. This forms an integral part of our drive towards academic rigour and sets a clear example to our staff and students in terms of our expectations. Turnitin has been utilised as a standard submission method for many years and is used across the Group. This enables identification of potential instances of academic misconduct

In 2019/20 the University Centre's Referencing Guide was launched, which all students receive in hard copy and can also access electronically through the Library+ services. This was created in response to external examiner feedback in previous academic years about the consistency of approach to referencing and citations across programmes of study. The Referencing Guide is updated every year in consultation with staff, so that the advice and guidance provided to students is as current as is possible and covers anticipated developments in access to appropriate source material. Copies are also provided to all higher education teaching staff, the Higher Education Study Coach and the High Performance Adviser team who are central to the observation and support process. From 2022/23 the Guide was also provided to Selby Campus students and staff and to Access to Higher Education students, many of whom progress onto the higher education programmes at their relevant campus.

Programme Induction & Access to Services

Prior to the commencement of the programme all new students undertake an induction programme which includes a full induction to the relevant campus, its facilities and the programme. The induction covers relevant information to the Group, the relevant awarding body/validating partner and also programme specific materials such as timetables and course structure. Students will also have the opportunity to meet their peers and participate in team-based activities with the Programme Leader to gain a sense of programme identity. Students are also introduced to the VLE (currently Moodle at Wakefield and Castleford and Google Classroom at Selby) and are navigated through the sites along with other online materials available relating to their studies such as the electronic reading lists. For day release students, such as those on Engineering and Construction programmes, induction tends to be a slightly more elongated process due to the limited time the students are able to attend site, but the same topics are covered.

As standard, all students are provided with a Student Handbook, and a handbook for each module which between them provide each student with clear assessment details and guidelines, along with information and guidance around accessing services, expectations, complaints procedures, processes and procedures for additional consideration and extensions and some information relating to their awarding body/validating partner.

All students have access to the following as required:

- Library+ services;
- E-resources (e.g. Westlaw);
- Additional learning support as required; and
- Counselling and welfare services (including financial guidance)

As standard, students benefit from 1:1 and group tutorials as part of their programme of study. For example, on the BSc Sport Coaching programme at Selby students receive a formal tutorial each half term for which they receive a pre-tutorial form to gather information in advance of the meeting, and to ensure that the session is focussed on their needs at that point in their studies. On the FdA Learning Support, also at Selby, students can elect to attend their 1:1 sessions online or face to face, depending on which fits better with their personal circumstances as the sessions are not formally timetabled. From 2019-2021 (there were no level 6 students in 2018), the pass rate for the Sport programme was 100%, and a similar pattern could be seen on Learning Support, with a pass rate of 100% from 2018-2020.

Day release students studying Engineering at Castleford are also encouraged to utilise online methods for 1:1s, enabling them to access support around their working life. This ensures they are not just reliant on lecture input and assistance once a week when they are on site. As an illustration of the effectiveness of this approach, the data for 2019/20 academic year of the 43 students enrolled in that year:

- All 14 first years continued into their second year
- Of the 29 completers, 44.8% (13) received a distinction grade, 27.5% (8) received a merit grade, and 13.7% (4) received a pass grade. A further 4 withdrew from their studies.

'September School'

'September School' was introduced in 2019/20 with the aim of ensuring that skills for learning were embedded in the curriculum from the very beginning of every programme. The events included sessions on core skills such as note taking, essay and report writing, Harvard Referencing, Presentation Skills and time management. Students were also given the opportunity to meet people studying on other programmes across the University Centre as the event mixed different curriculum areas.

Unfortunately due to the Covid lockdown restrictions that were imposed, the planned September School for 2020/21 was unable to take place in person. It was transferred online and students were invited to a number of virtually delivered sessions across the week, culminating in a number of Q&A sessions at the end of the week where they were able to ask questions about any aspect of their upcoming studies, ranging from concerns about finance, academic support, how to find the library and general anxieties about what might happen if another lockdown occurred, whether it was safe to be on site etcetera. As there were still general levels of anxiety within the students body around mixing with large groups of people, the same online format was utilised in 2021/22, however, it was not as effective as previously and numbers of attending students were limited.

Moving forward, we will be returning to a face-to-face approach with delivery occurring at all three sites, but we will retain some online elements, as we found the most successful online activity to be the Q&A sessions and students engaged well with this.

All resources remain online for students to access throughout their studies so that they can be utilised as reference tools as issues arise.

In more recent internal HE Student Surveys we have amended the questions to include a number relating to the September School activities. In addition, we amended the ratings to a star-based approach. In 2020-21 when asked to rate the Q&A sessions 70% of the respondents awarded 4-5 stars and 73% of the respondents rated the plagiarism resources at 4-5 stars. However, only 61% rated the Study Skills resources 4-5 stars, so additional work will be undertaken, in collaboration with students, to ensure these resources are more effective moving forward (Wakefield College 2021).

Careers and Employability

The services available to our higher education students include access to employability and careers advice via the University Centre Student Experience Co-ordinator, who is a qualified career's advisor. This role was originally allocated to higher education students at Wakefield Campus, but the service now covers all three sites.

The careers services currently provided to students are predominantly aimed at final year students and recent graduates. Presentations on additional employability skills and postgraduate opportunities are provided to finalists, and graduate opportunities and updates are provided to recent alumni through online newsletters and emails that include both current job offers and current LMI information provided by Prospects. In addition, local employment agencies and businesses have been invited in to provide CV and mock interview workshops. 1-1 sessions are also available to students who require research and IAG on particular employment pathways.

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Currently we also undertake an annual careers and employability survey of both final year and alumni students to ascertain the effectiveness of the support on offer and to highlight areas of improvement. Future developments under discussion are to develop these surveys in line with the 'Careers Registration Survey' model developed by the 'Careers Group' to begin tracking student perceptions of careers and employability from year 1 through to their final year to better gauge the learning gains associated with improved readiness for employability.

In addition to these services, we also work in partnership with a number of external groups to provide additional resources to students and alumni for example, the Graduate Skills Project (Gradskills) which has been set up to upskill and assist West Yorkshire Region graduates into graduate employment across the region. The Go Higher West Yorkshire Partnership, will work in partnership on the delivery and project engagement of graduates and employers. The project is funded by West Yorkshire Combined Authority through the Adult Skills Funding. Post-Covid, the Group has been able to offer the Gradskills programme of events to students and alumni which most recently included 3 x 8-hour online sessions - Navigate 'Digital Marketing for Graduates' (June 2022) and 'Getting in to Policing as a Graduate' which consisted of 2x4-hour F2F sessions in August 2022. Event for the 22/23 academic year have already commenced with, for example, a session in October entitled 'Career Confidence for Graduates' - Building confidence and resilience for graduate employment', consisting of 3 x 3-hour online sessions.

We also work with Business & IP Centre Leeds (British Library) who provide access to a large collection of specialist business information, for start-ups and entrepreneurs. Presentations and workshops are provided for students at the BIPC centre in Wakefield. They offer access to market research and statistical databases that are not available on campus to our students, such as, 'Complete Business Reference Advisor (COBRA)', 'Mintel', 'IBISWorld', 'Statista' and 'Emerging markets, research data and news' (EMIS). Not only do these sessions provide opportunities around future careers but also help students to develop confidence in their research skills for their dissertations.

The Skills for Growth Team from the Leeds Enterprise Partnership have provided support for both students and staff at the university centre, by connect local employers looking for graduates e.g Xalient - software solutions, and also providing talks and workshops and possible internship opportunities. At the Annual HE Conference in July 2022, in conjunction with BIPC, they delivered self-employment and entrepreneur workshops which staff were able to attend and update their skills and understanding to better provide up-to-date IAG to their student cohorts.

The University Centre Student Experience Co-ordinator is also a member of The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Service and undertook 'Work-Related Learning in Higher Education' training in 2021/22. This comprised of a 3-day workshop to support Programme Leaders who have elements of WRL in their subjects, to assist them in developing students' understanding on how their experience fits into theories of learning and career development.

Higher Education Study Coach

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The Higher Education Study Coach provides advice and support to individual learners and facilitate liaison with central college services and external agencies. The Higher Education Study Coach is part of the Higher Education Student Support Team and is based in the Seacole Building at the Wakefield Campus. They are a member of the Access to HE and HE Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee and the Higher Education Teaching Learning and Excellence Group, as well as University of Hull's Mental Health Forum. Learning support is identified in different ways, for example, through an application to study at the College made either via UCAS or through a direct application form. For internal applicants it is likely that this need will have been identified prior to application with the permission of the individual, through close work with the FE Additional Learning Support (ALS) team and a result of the student's previous study with the college. The HE Study Coach is notified of specific needs via e-mail or through their ongoing work with the relevant curriculum area. The FE ALS team will also contribute to transitional work with level 3 or A Level students who are progressing on to HE programmes. The HE Study Coach also works closely with external agencies such as Social Services, Counsellors and Key Workers to ensure the process is as holistic as possible.

Once a student with specific needs is identified, the HE Study Coach will make contact, either via e-mail or in person, to start discussing support requirements. Once this contact has been established, a meeting takes place to begin the familiarisation process. Where possible the Programme Leader for the HE programme, or another member of the curriculum team, will be in attendance, again for familiarisation and so that the team can begin to anticipate any reasonable adjustments that will need to be made for the student at interview, enrolment and during study. The HE Study Coach and the programme team then work closely together to ensure these adjustments are in place, for example, room changes, specific equipment or examination arrangements. The majority of the work will be carried out in conjunction with the Programme Leader, either formally via training or informally via e-mails or conversations. During Covid this was adapted to include weekly Teams meetings with curriculum tutors and students. These were also increased during times of higher anxiety to provide students with greater structure and support.

Contact with the incoming student is maintained prior to enrolment to offer assistance with any application for further support such as the DSA and to act as a liaison, if necessary, between the student and the curriculum area, again with the permission of the individual. This helps in anticipating any potential issues that may arise and, if required, to deal with them in a timely manner, so that any potential impact for the student is minimised as much as possible. It also means that any support needed is implemented for the start of study and can be constantly reviewed and altered as appropriate, again minimising any impact to study.

After the start of the academic year, it may be that some previously unidentified students require support. After consultation with the student, curriculum areas will contact the HE Study Coach via e-mail or in person so that support meetings with the student can be organised. The type of support has varied from pastoral care to study skills such as writing, planning, organisation and referencing. This support is provided on an individual basis or can be adapted to be facilitated to groups. For example, the HE Study Coach has been into study skills sessions across all levels of study, across a variety of programmes. These sessions have focussed on academic writing, time management, organisational skills and referencing. The HE Study Coach also provides planning frameworks to help with time management and meeting deadlines, including the use of assistive technology and

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software such as Dragon, Brain in Hand and Mind View. These result from specific requests by students which are related to barriers that they may be facing at an individual level. Any support provided by the HE Study Coach is tailored to individual need / diagnosis in line with DSA recommendations, course outlines, awarding body regulations and relevant examination guidelines.

The HE Study Coach works with students to help with goal setting and actions such as prioritising tasks and time-management, help with change and transition and if necessary, help with social and personal interactions. This includes helping students to familiarise themselves with new environments or procedures. They can also help with goal setting, prioritising academic tasks and time-management in relation to academic work. This can lead into developing reading, writing and study specific techniques. The HE Study Coach also has a specific focus on the Disabled Students Allowance and supporting students to apply for and access this support. During the period of scope, the number of students in receipt of this support has increased year on year to an average of 24 students per academic year at Wakefield Campus alone.

The effectiveness and impact of the work of the HE Study Coach is demonstrable in the pass rates and continuation figures for the period of scope. This has been made possible through a collaborative and holistic approach to supporting not only students with identified need, but also any student who may require pastoral or academic support. It is also only possible by always implementing a student-centred approach. These strategies are arguably the most important for supporting students towards their best possible outcomes.

Student Support

The HE Student Support Coordinator is the first point of contact for students both pre- and throughout the student journey from induction onwards. They have a student facing role at the support desk, that is available 5 days a week without appointment, for any non-academic related support, including student wellbeing issues and signposting to other College services and an out of hours contact for urgent student issues. One of the main aspects of the role is student financial support, providing advice, guidance, and assistance with SFE applications, contacting the SFE to deal with protracted issues, such as evidence for compelling personal reasons; the coordinator is also a member of National Association of Student Money Advisers (NAMSA). The HE Student Support Coordinator is also the first point of contact for hardship and bursaries advice, accommodation issues and all other student related matters that arise. The role also provides an opportunity for students to engage in general informal conversations about anything related to being a student or life in general, which helps both students and the HE support staff to cultivate a sense of belonging to a supportive educational community.

Some of the positive impacts of the student support work undertaken by the HE Student Support Coordinator are provided below:

- Whilst the College does not have its own accommodation services, we have worked with a local estate agency and private landlords to find suitable accommodation for students, who have moved to the district or needed to move out of their previous accommodation due to personal circumstances.

Extensions, Mitigating Circumstances and Suspension of Studies

Higher Education students will, at times during their studies, face personal difficulties and, in collaboration with our awarding bodies and validating partners, the Group is able to offer a suite of support strategies to try and mitigate against these difficult times. As expected, there has been a sharp increase in student applications for mitigating circumstances since Covid-19. Unfortunately, even with the support of these strategies, some students are still unable to complete their programme of studies, but for the majority of our students, they go on to submit the appropriate work and progress onto their next level of study or complete their programme.

Taking into consideration that 2021/22 students on the second or third year of study had potentially been adversely affected by the impacts of the pandemic restrictions in the previous years of their studies, arguably the foundation years which enable them to build toward the more autonomous requirements of their final year, these outcomes are positive.

2.3 Student Voice

Student voice activity is a key part of the strategy to develop outstanding higher education provision at the Heart of Yorkshire Education Group in accordance with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education. It enables students to raise issues to be addressed and areas for improvement, as well as identifying good practice to be continued and enhanced. Opportunities for student voice activity continues to be enhanced in line with best practice for student engagement cited in the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

The Quality and Standards meetings held at HE level always have a position for a student representative. This was the case at both Selby and Wakefield prior to the merger, and the new merged committee retains that role. In addition, all HE programmes have at least one student representative who works not only with the programme leader and wider programme team, but also with the HE Outreach Officer who co-ordinates the Staff Student Consultative Committee meetings each year. Some of these student representatives go on to become Student Ambassadors, representing the University Centre at external and internal events, and at least two of the students engaged in the preparation of the TEF2023 Student Submission engage in such a role.

Students also engage in other feedback opportunities such as Module Evaluation Questionnaires, and the internal HE Student Survey (paragraph 2.0). Concrete examples of positive action in response to student feedback include the move of the whole of the Engineering and Construction provision to Castleford Campus (noted in section 1.0) and also timetable adjustments in the Business School for lessons to commence at 9.30am to facilitate students having to undertake the 'school run'. In Selby, students have asked for a higher education common room and our Estates department are working with the higher education team to locate a suitable space and to provide study resources/computers etc. for their utilisation. The uploading of all recommended reading that is available as e-book onto the relevant VLE module page was also in response to student feedback about the ease of remote access to source material when not on campus, something particularly important to the nature of student that we have within the Group .

The Principal meets informally with students throughout the academic year, allowing her the opportunity to listen directly to students, and ensure any concerns are addressed promptly and effectively.

2.4 Impact and effectiveness of Covid strategies on Student Experience

The College aligned with all Government guidelines and requirements for higher education provision in terms of student attendance on site and moves to online teaching and assessment. For the whole of the pandemic both Selby and Wakefield were operating as individual Colleges and so approaches were not necessarily uniform.

Both Wakefield and Selby maintained, as far as was possible, a full timetable in both lockdown periods, with students accessing their sessions via the Teams or Google Classroom systems. Clearly the response to the first lockdown (March 2020) was not able to be as well prepared for as the second lockdown commencing in December 2020 when we had more notice of the date that online learning would commence, and when we had more experience of what was effective in terms of the tools available to us and our students.

The following are overviews of programme strategies and responses :

- Computing Provision, Selby - During the pandemic all our HE provision went straight online, and no lessons were missed. No assessment was changed at HE level and we submitted all work as expected to both Pearson and Hull. During Lockdown 2 we did arrange some specialist time during lockdowns when students actually came to college to carry out practical work which was manned by two staff.

This enabled us to cover essential skills required to pass the course and to offer foundation learning for their next steps. We were also able to set up a clever workaround system where students could remote in to an exact PC in the building so they could log in and work on the PC they normally would use during the actual lesson time they had. All our HE students engaged perfectly with the process and no one was adversely affected in the long run.. We provided laptops to HE students who had difficulty accessing their own devices at home.

- Applied Sports Performance Provision, Wakefield - Usual timetable was adhered to and students transferred directly from face to face to online. Students' learning was supported in through online lectures and seminars. Slides and specific recordings were made available on both Microsoft Teams and Moodle. The programme team were praised by external verifiers regarding the use of innovative digital teaching and learning strategies, online assessments and e-feedback mechanisms. Students were also supported on a one-to-one basis (online) through advice and feedback hours and personal tutor meetings (Microsoft Teams). The students were closely monitored with regard to their individual progress using software including Promonitor. The teaching and learning strategy description for each module reflected further the application and engagement in the virtual learning environment and e-learning practices. Module learning outcomes for level 6 needed to be modified as they were unviable under an e-learning environment. The External Examiner provided feedback to the team regarding the modifications "Again, due to covid the nature of the assessment, which was practically focused, was altered to an assessment on Position stands

and an Infographic. Both assessments allowed students to be assessed against the module learning outcomes. Assessing students on a Position Stand is an original approach which I felt was particularly successful; students had to become an expert on their chosen topic, to be able to progress to writing a Position stand. The students are given an array of opportunities across both semesters to undertake different assessment methods. Of particular note, was the Applied Physiology module where students were asked to produce a Position Stand on selected topics. This is a novel assessment approach which encourages students to become experts in their field and then communicate this in an appropriate format.”

Many other positive comments were received from External Examiners relating to conduct during Covid, for example such as this one received for the FdA Public Services:

- ‘Taking into account the current situation of Covid 19 that has impacted the year, the team have been exemplary in providing opportunities to enhance the learning of students. A lot has been learnt about teaching and assessment methods and this should be taken forward in future years’.

Comments such as those exemplified above, led to the Group’s work on Authentic Assessment launched at the HE Conference 2022 (paragraph 2.2). This explores the opportunities for programme teams to design and create assessment methodologies, often in conjunction with sector employers, which more accurately represent tasks, and activities an employee will be asked to engage with in the workplace. The Group Director of Higher Education co-delivered a breakout session on Authentic Assessment with AdvanceHE at the AoC HE in FE Conference on 9 March 2022 and followed this up internally in July 2022. The conference workshop in July led to programme teams across the whole Group revisiting their programme specifications in preparedness for the programme of full revalidation currently being undertaken by one of our University partners.

3.0 Student Outcomes

3.1 Continuation

Our full-time continuation data overall sits broadly in line with benchmark, at 98.9%. When considering the outliers in the split data, students on a first degree predominantly sit materially above benchmark at 81.6%, as do students from black ethnicity (83.6%), those in ABCS Q1 (76.3%) and those studying in the Creative Arts subject area (98.9%), however, from a materiality perspective, all of these have relatively low denominators within their split section and so are not necessarily statistically significant.

A similar picture can be established for splits sitting materially below benchmark, namely Disability reported (90.6%), ABCS quintile 4/5 (87.9%) and Computing (92.3%) where the denominators indicate limited statistical significance.

For our part time students, the overall data also sits broadly in line with benchmark (85.8%) with outliers materially above benchmark being in Time Series 3 (19/20), ABCS Quintile 2/3 (85.1%) and students in the Health and Social Care sector (98.9%). There are limited outliers materially below benchmark, just one in Architecture, Building and Planning at 98%, however, again, for both sets of

outliers, the statistical significance of all relevant splits is very limited when the denominators are examined.

As a Group we strongly believe that our student support mechanisms, as outlined in section 2.1, are a direct contributor to our strong continuation data, particularly in those split categories such as Quintile 1 students, who would traditionally demonstrate outcomes which are less positive. Whilst the outliers in the OfS provided data are not materially significant from a statistical perspective, this does not mean that they are not actionable. For example, our part-time provision in Construction (Architecture, Building and Planning sector) has been fully reviewed. As noted in section 1.0 above, the provision was moved back to our Castleford Campus from September 2022 following student feedback relating to ease of access and easier transition from level 3. In addition, from September 2023 the provision will be delivered as a higher technical qualification in order to ensure that it is relevant within the sector.

In addition, as we are a small provider, we are fortunate enough to be aware of the circumstances of each of our students. This is further enforced by regular meetings between Heads of Curriculum and either the Director of Higher Education or the Head of Higher Education to discuss at risk students. This enables timely referral to the HE Student Support Team to be enacted and students can be encouraged to consider mitigating circumstances or suspension of studies applications if appropriate. Additionally, consideration of student data is a standard agenda item on the Access to HE and HE Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee (Wakefield 2022) (this is the newly formed committee post-merger, but a version of this meeting existed at both sites prior to merger). This means where data sets can be analysed robustly and with a level of granularity around each student which perhaps a larger provider would not be able to undertake. Conversely, smaller cohort sizes means that small numbers of non-continuing students can disproportionately impact on reported percentages.

3.2 Completion

Our full-time completion data, overall, sits broadly in line with benchmark at 96%. As with continuation data there are some outliers, both above and below benchmark. Again, the materiality of some of these groups, based on denominator figures is uncertain and there is limited statistical significance attached.

Considering those outliers which sit materially below benchmark, there are only three splits which fall within this, being Allied Health students (11% of the denominator population), ABCS quintiles 4 or 5 (8% of the denominator population) and those with a reported disability at just under 8% of the denominator population).

Based on the time series data figures, whilst there was a significant dip in completion levels in time series year 2 (only 33.5% broadly in line and 66.3% materially below), these have stabilised in time series years 3 and 4 to levels almost identical to time series year 1.

In terms of positive outliers, i.e. those sitting materially above benchmark, seven splits fall within this and a number of these groups do have some statistical significance. For example, our Asian student population is 84.3% materially above bench, but does only represent 2% of the denominator population. First degree students sit at 96.6% materially above bench, but only represent 9.5% of

the denominator population. However, 81.4% of our ABCS Quintile 1 students sit materially above benchmark; this represents 33% of the denominator population for the split. As this is a split where the lower end of the quintiles (i.e. 1 or 2) are those students with characteristics which would normally have lower outcomes across the population, this is a positive outcome for completion rates and clearly suggests that our support mechanisms (as outlined under 2.0) are successful in terms of empowering students with low anticipated outcomes to exceed those expectations.

Our other undergraduate level 4 split also demonstrates outcomes materially above benchmark, representing 25% of the denominator population (210/850). These students sit at 78% above benchmark. These are students who, on a single level programme, would not be able to contribute to our student experience data via the NSS, but who are clearly benefiting from a robust and effective academic experience in order to produce completion data of this level.

Our part time completion data overall sits at 74.2% materially above benchmark, with 25.8% sitting broadly in line with benchmark. The notable outlier is for the subject area Allied Health which represents just 9% of the denominator population and sits at 99.8% materially below bench. The statistical significance of this outcome to the overall data set is limited in its materiality, however, we are aware that several of our health programmes, both full and part time, were adversely impacted by the pandemic, with students finding the situation overwhelming and the anxiety created by this did lead to withdrawals and suspensions on mental health grounds. We would hope to see that as the sector begins to settle in the post-pandemic era, the completion data will improve.

Again, a similar reflection exists as for our continuation data, in that with smaller cohort sizes, a small change in numbers can lead to a large and potentially mis-representative change in percentage outcomes.

3.3 Progression

The full-time denominator population for progression at the Group is 410, whereas for the other aspects of Student Outcomes, the population is significantly larger (continuation 1060 and completion 920). The part time denominator population for the Group progression data is 140, whereas again, the population is significantly larger for the other aspects (continuation 650 and completion 1000). As such the statistical uncertainty of such a small population is increased although less so for full time than part time.

The response rate for the Graduate Outcomes survey is 49% for full time students and 45.5% for part time students, whereas the HESA target (HESA n.d.) is 60% for both full time and part time modes of attendance.

Our data spread for our full-time students is 88% materially below benchmark with some splits showing a reasonably even spread between materially below, broadly at, and materially above benchmark (for example students with a disability at 36.3%, 38.9% and 24.8% respectively) however, as would be expected with the overall figure at such a level, many of the splits sit within the materially below benchmark grouping.

The data spread for our part time students is reasonably evenly split between broadly meets benchmark (41.1%) and materially below benchmark (52.9%). There are some outliers in the

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materially above benchmark data set, for example 67% of students under 21 sit within this category (representing just under 27% of the denominator population), as do 74.6% of those over 31 years of age (again representing just under 27% of the denominator population). However, 97.5% of those aged between 21 and 30 are materially below bench (just under 47% of the denominator population).

There have been some significant, and well-documented issues with the effectiveness of the Graduate Outcomes survey (HEPI 2020) and there are additional issues for College based higher education. The Association of Colleges have been lobbying for over two years now to try and bring about changes that produce a data set which is robust for all types of higher education provider. One of the key issues that ensues in a HE in FE institution is the prevalence of the 2+1 delivery approach, where a student completes a level 4/5 programme such as a foundation degree or higher national diploma and the progresses on to a level 6 top up programmes (what UniversitiesUK refer to as one-year interim-study) (UniversitiesUK 2022). As the Graduate Outcomes survey is conducted 15 months after the completion of a programme, a student who completed a foundation degree would be surveyed 15 months after that completed, but potentially only 3 months after completing their top up – this is not equitable when compared to a student who completes their level 6 course on a traditional three year programme and is surveyed 15 months after completion – they have had a full 15 months to secure a graduate role, and potentially progress, a highly unlikely outcome for the first category of students. To put this into perspective within the Group in 2019/20 24% of our enrolled student population was on a top up programme, all of whom were internally progressing students. The UniversitiesUK findings of December 2022 were that:

‘courses with high numbers of graduates on one-year interim study are likely to have inflated unemployment and non-highly skilled employment figures’.

The conduct of the Graduate Outcomes survey is completely outside of the control of the Group and to try and mitigate against the potential difficulties noted here, an internal survey of alumni was implemented in September 2021 as a pilot, with the second evolution being circulated in November/December 2022. Data derived from the September 2021 survey (Wakefield College only as it was pre-merger) in answer to the question ‘Is your current job role or further study related to the course you studied whilst at the University Centre?’ showed that 53% of the respondents had succeeded in securing a new job role as a result of their studies and a further 17% had received a promotion, totalling 70% with positive outcomes as a direct result of their studies at the Group. As there are currently narrow data sets from this internal survey, we recognise its limitations, however, anticipate that over time this will provide an appropriate counter-balance to the limitations of the Graduate Outcomes data sets.

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