



North Highland College UHI

Evaluation Report and Enhancement Plan 2017-18

**October
2018**



1. Context Statements – College and Regional

The North Highland College UHI Context

Each year, North Highland College UHI enrolls around 2,500 students across campuses on the northern Scottish mainland. With a population of around 60,000 people and forming a large part of the Highland Council area, the North Highland territory is based upon the parliamentary constituency of Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross. Whilst firmly and proudly imbued in Highland culture and heritage, the three sub-areas of Caithness, Sutherland and Easter/Mid Ross feature a number of geographical, economic and demographic contrasts. The remoteness and dispersed nature of the population in the North Highlands presents some significant logistical and organisational challenges for the College and its students. The College currently employs around 70 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Teaching staff, over 20 FTE Research staff and 68 FTE Support staff.

College management and development planning are set in the context of the Board of Management's Strategic plan 2018 – 20 which features the following vision for the College;

“The North Highland College will be an active and committed academic partner of the University of the Highlands and Islands, the United Kingdom's leading integrated university. We will be recognised for the quality of our students' experience and for their achievement. Our reputation will be built upon an innovative approach to tertiary learning and teaching and our distinctive research and curriculum, enriched by the people, natural environment and culture and heritage of the north Highlands. Whilst our primary focus will be on meeting the needs of our local area, we will also extend our reach regionally, nationally and internationally in areas of key strength and specialism.”

The College's main campus in Thurso is the administrative hub for our operations. The campus is the home to our Engineering, Technology & Energy Centre (ETEC) and the Centre for Energy & the Environment (CfEE). Also in Thurso is the Environmental Research Institute (ERI) which makes a major contribution to the scientific research capability of the University of the Highlands & Islands. Located nearby to the west of Thurso is the College's Centre for Rural Studies; the home for our Land based staff and students. The College has a Golf Education centre and a Hospitality & Tourism training campus in Dornoch. Our southernmost campuses are Tern House and the recently acquired Balcraggan House, both located in Alness, where we provide courses in the Performing Arts and Care & Education disciplines.

Overall, our biggest subject areas of provision are currently Agriculture & Land Use, Engineering & Construction, Health & Social Care and Food Technology & Catering.

In accordance with the terms of the Post 16 Education (Scotland) Act 2013, North Highland College UHI has been assigned to the Regional Strategic Body (RSB) for Further Education in the Highlands & Islands; the UHI Court. The College is a committed regional partner and NHC staff actively contribute to the development and implementation of collaborative arrangements for the planning and delivery of Further Education on a regional basis, delivering around 11% of the Highlands and Islands region's further education (FE) provision. At the strategic level, priorities have included the development, implementation and monitoring of successive Regional Outcome Agreements, regional funding models (college and student), regional curriculum planning with schools and other agencies and the regional response to key government priorities such as Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and the 15 -24 Learner Journey Review.



The College, one of 13 academic partners in the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), plays an active role in the University's development and the planning and delivery of its Higher Education provision. NHC staff provide leadership in a number of key elements of the University's curriculum and research portfolios with particular strengths in areas such as Environmental Science, Engineering, Land Based studies, Golf and the Creative Arts.

College staff continue to respond to the needs of the Highland and Islands identified employment growth opportunities for the region, particularly in Energy, Food & Drink and the Creative Industries. At a more local level, college staff engage with key employers through new and established fora to ensure our planning is sensitive to local labour market requirements and the opportunities for employer partnership working. Recent curriculum planning has been influenced by the need to create new opportunities to address particular skills gaps in the North Highland area. For example, key employers, such as Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd (DSRL) and NHS Highland have been keen to implement local solutions to develop and retain young people to address hard-to-fill vacancies. As a consequence the College has formed new strategic working groups with both employers to confirm needs and identify and implement joint solutions, e.g. joint promotion of careers within the NHS.

College managers are currently contributing to the production of the new skills investment plan for the Caithness and North Sutherland area. This has been commissioned by the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership (CNSRP) and is due to be finalised in January 2019. It is envisaged that the College will play a lead role in responding to the various needs identified in the plan.

The College currently operates in partnership with eleven secondary schools organised into three geographical clusters largely aligned with the Caithness, Sutherland and Ross & Cromarty area sub divisions. Along with colleagues from Inverness and West Highland Colleges, senior North Highland College UHI staff are working in partnership with Highland Council to design and deliver a coordinated strategy for a broad and relevant senior phase that ensures equity of provision and opportunity for the young people in the Highland Council catchment area. This strategy aims to better align our collective provision to the aspirations of young learners in the Highlands; broaden our offer to provide a range of opportunities and progression pathways; increase the accessibility to learning opportunities for young people across the region; and ensure that our young people understand their learning and career choices in order to make the most of the available offer.

College staff also play a lead role as part of a highly effective coalition of local agencies including the Chamber of Commerce, Highland Council, SDS and the Caithness & Sutherland DYW Regional Board in promoting and developing career and progression pathways for young people.

To support all the above initiatives, college staff are actively pursuing plans to enhance the college estate. This has included securing funding for the co-location of all our Dornoch activities on to a single site, the creation of additional facilities in Alness and our main campus redevelopment project in Thurso.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Donald Macbeath'.

Signature:

Donald Macbeath, Principal and Chief Executive, October 2018



The Highlands and Islands Regional Context

The University of the Highlands and Islands partnership is the main provider of post-compulsory education provision in the Highlands and Islands region, and delivers in excess of 113,168 further education fundable credits annually, as contracted through the Regional Outcome Agreement negotiated with the Scottish Funding Council. Regional activity targets comprise core and ESIF funded activity, the latter spanning the Highlands and Islands and Lowlands and Uplands regions (for Perth and Kinross). In addition, the region has developed an extensive apprenticeship offer that provides work-based learning pathways from Foundation Apprenticeships offered in the senior phase through to Graduate Apprenticeships funded through Skills Development Scotland, as well as working directly with employers to deliver bespoke training on a commercial basis.

For the past eight years, the region has routinely exceeded student activity targets and surpasses many sector benchmarks of performance. The region's student success rate for learners on full-time FE programmes in 2017-18 is 70.4%, against the latest published national benchmark of 65.3%. Full-time success rates are higher than the latest sector levels in 14 out of 17 Education Scotland subject areas. The success rates for learners on part-time FE programmes is also above latest published sector levels, at 81.7%.

In the context of this regional high performance, partner's evaluative reports and enhancement plans are written from an enhancement perspective, underpinned by ambition for each of our students and a regional commitment to offering parity of experience across the partnership.

As the Regional Strategic Body for further education, the university is accountable for the delivery of the Regional Outcome Agreement and supports the infrastructure through which a strategic approach to delivery of regional targets is achieved. During the past year, regionalisation of further education has matured and the partnership has begun to develop a strategic, collaborative approach to addressing the challenges the region faces. This work includes:

- Agreement to develop a single policy environment for further education;
- The harmonisation of approaches to quality enhancement;
- The development of regional strategies to raise levels of student attainment and to enhance work experience opportunities;
- Development of tertiary curriculum maps;
- The development of a Student Data Management Framework for Further Education.

The regional strategies reflect the intensification of the regional Outcome Agreement process and the relevant priorities for the Highlands and Islands region. The EREP for North Highland College UHI 2017-18 is set within this regional context, and reference is made throughout to the College's contribution to the regional strategies. A copy of the regional strategy to improve attainment is contained in Appendix 1.

Diane Rawlinson, Vice Principal Further Education UHI



2. Methodology

Education Scotland published a new quality framework for colleges in Scotland, *How good is our college? (HGIOC)* in December 2016. For academic year 2017-18, each college is required to produce an updated Evaluative Report and Enhancement plan (EREP), reporting on 7 quality indicators rather than the full range of 12. This report summarises where the college positions itself relative to four key principles – leadership and quality culture; delivery of learning and services to support learning, outcomes and impact; and capacity for improvement, with a grading being provided for the first three of these principles.

The college has drawn upon a wide range of evidence to produce this *Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan*. This includes the outcomes of its key quality assurance activities and strategies for improving learning and teaching, monitoring learner outcomes and promoting learner engagement; feedback from learners and other stakeholders; key performance indicators and published benchmarking data. The college has matched its evidence against the key themes within *HGIOC* and used this to answer the key challenge questions and identify areas of positive practice and significant areas for development. Actions to address the areas for development are specified separately within the enhancement plan and provide a focus for ongoing improvement. Following a revision to the quality arrangements for 2017-18, a new 3 year rolling enhancement plan has been developed for the period 2018/19-2020/21.

In 2017/18, the College Board of Management completed an internal self-evaluation and reviewed progress on the implementation of its quality improvement plan which was developed following an externally facilitated evaluation of its effectiveness (2016/17) in line with the *Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges (2016)*. This plan has been updated with new actions following the recent internal review and to reflect progress on existing actions.

The *course monitoring self-evaluation framework* and support department self-evaluation templates are used to assess the quality of provision and services within curriculum teams and support functions respectively, with the outcomes informing quality improvement plans and department operational plans.

Collectively, managers and team leaders, through the operational management committees, Student Services Group (SSG) and Assistant Directors' Group (ADG), evaluate processes and implement improvement actions within support and academic functions respectively. A review of the remit and membership of these committees and the formation of the new Joint Operations Group (JOG) has provided a platform to further develop the joint evaluation of services to support learning by students, support and teaching staff. This work of JOG is at an early stage and will be progressed in 2018/19.

The college has successfully established comprehensive arrangements for the peer review of teaching staff, which underpin the evaluation of learning and teaching across college. A number of observations are carried out each year and outcomes used to inform personal development planning and cross college CPD activities. Observation and professional discussion use the reflections of the reviewer, reviewee and learners in planning actions for improvement.

College learning and teaching priorities are articulated in a set of college enhancement themes which are embedded within key college quality improvement processes. These common themes provide a shared focus for improvement across course monitoring, peer



review and staff development activities. In 2017/18 a new enhancement theme, “Assessment and Feedback” was added, and was launched in August 2017 as the theme for the staff learning and teaching conference. A series of evaluation activities on this theme, including focus groups with staff and students, took place throughout the year, culminating in a series of recommendations in the theme evaluation report. These are currently being considered by curriculum managers with follow up activities being scheduled for 2018/19.

The college commitment to engaging the learner voice in the review and evaluation of college programmes and services is clearly articulated within the college’s *Learner Engagement Strategy*. Board and college staff work closely with student representatives to plan improvements to the learner experience and use feedback from a range of mechanisms to inform curriculum and support team self-evaluations and improvement planning. Elected learner representatives represent learner views at *Curriculum Team* meetings, *Learner Council* and on cross college committees. The North Highland College (NHC) Highlands and Islands Student Association (HISA) Depute President and another elected HISA representative actively engage in the full range of board and its subcommittee activities. *Learner Council* is a forum where senior staff, support managers and learner representatives meet regularly to discuss issues and exchange views on cross college matters. Feedback on college services and the broader learner experience is gathered through college surveys and used by support and curriculum teams to plan improvements. Learner representatives also provide feedback on their programmes direct to staff and through the completion of *Course Unit Evaluations (CUEs)*.

Increasingly, college staff are also working with schools, employers and other stakeholders to review and evaluate college provision and plan for improvement, e.g. employer representation at course team meetings, school/college liaison meetings, Caithness and Sutherland DYW regional group, awarding body quality assurance visits, UHI regional groups.

Outcomes from college quality activities are monitored closely by senior managers, the college’s Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee and the Board’s Learning, Teaching and Research committee and collective feedback from evaluation activities is used by the executive Planning and Resources Group to inform college strategic and operational planning.

The college has historically used previous Education Scotland quality frameworks to underpin its quality improvement strategies and self-evaluation activities; however, this new model represents significant change and will take time to become fully embedded within current college processes.



3. Outcome Agreement National Measures

Data sources:

- 2014-15 to 2016-17: Scottish Funding Council
- 2017-18: Internal data from the Highlands and Islands region and FES online

Note - In line with SFC reporting guidelines, proportions have not been calculated for cohorts of fewer than 25 students.

Relevant SFC Outcome Measure	North Highland College UHI: Year				H&I	Scotland
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2016-17	2016-17
1(a) The volume of Credits delivered						
The volume of Credits delivered (core)	See Note 1	12050	11909	12418		1,699,760
Core Credits target (college)	See Note 1	12400 See Note 2	11864	12400		1,691,359
% towards core Credits target (college)	See Note 1	97.2%	100.4%	100.1%		100.5%
The volume of Credits delivered (ESF)	0	0	495	155		62,272
The volume of Credits delivered (core + ESF)	12250	12050	12404	12573		1,762,032
The proportion of Credits delivered to full-time learners						
Proportion of Credits delivered to full-time learners	56.8%	54.1%	58.1%	55.8%		73.3%
1(b) Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 16-19 and 20-24						
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 16-19	54.8%	53.6%	56.7%	53.3%		46.6%
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners aged 20-24	15.0%	14.8%	13.3%	13.4%		21.5%
Proportion of Credits delivered to full-time learners aged 16-19	67.8%	66.9%	67.3%	61.5%		51.6%
Proportion of Credits delivered to full-time learners aged 20-24	20.3%	19.7%	16.5%	15.9%		22.7%
1(c) Proportion of Credits delivered to learners in the most deprived 10% postcode areas						
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners in the most deprived 10% postcode areas	6.0%	6.2%	6.0%	4.5%		17.2%



1(d) Proportion of Credits relating to learners from different protected characteristic groups and care leavers	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2017-18	2016-17
Gender -						
Proportion of Credits delivered to Male learners	43.3%	41.3%	45.3%	49.7%		48.6%
Proportion of Credits delivered to Female learners	56.7%	58.4%	54.7%	50.0%		51.3%
Proportion of Credits delivered to Other learners	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.3%		0.08%
Ethnicity -						
Proportion of Credits delivered to BME learners	0.7%	1.5%	0.9%	0.4%		6.4%
Disability -						
Proportion of Credits delivered to students with a known disability	17.8%	19.5%	20.8%	21.8%		17.1%
Care Experience -						
Proportion of Credits delivered to students with Care Experience	0.3%	0.5%	2.3%	0.6%		1.57%
2(b) Proportion of Credits delivered to senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2017-18	2016-17
Proportion of Credits delivered to senior phase age pupils studying vocational qualifications delivered by colleges	0.8%	2.1%	5.2%	3.8%		1.4%
2(c) Proportion of Credits delivered to learners at S3 and above as part of 'school-college' provision	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2017-18	2016-17
The proportion of Credits delivered to learners at S3 and above as part of 'school-college' provision	10.4%	15.6%	17.0%	16.5%		5.0%
3. Proportion of Credits delivered to learners enrolled on STEM courses	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2017-18	2016-17
Proportion of Credits delivered to learners enrolled on STEM courses	26.2%	23.1%	30.7%	34.1%		24.8%
4(a) Proportion of enrolled students successfully achieving a recognised qualification	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2017-18	2016-17



The percentage of FT FE enrolled students achieving a recognised qualification	73.8%	73.1%	71.4%	71.8%		65.3%
The percentage of PT FE enrolled students achieving a recognised qualification	72.3%	74.6%	68.9%	71.2%		77.1%
The percentage of MD10 FT FE enrolled students achieving a recognised qualification	-	-	-	72.4%		62.0%
The percentage of MD10 PT FE enrolled students achieving a recognised qualification	59.4%	63.0%	-	52.3%		73.8%
The percentage of Disabled FT FE enrolled students achieving a recognised qualification	67.1%	65.1%	67.7%	67.0%		64.3%
The percentage of Disabled PT FE enrolled students achieving a recognised qualification	69.0%	73.4%	69.6%	65.0%		71.5%
The percentage of BME FT FE enrolled students achieving a recognised qualification	-	-	-	-		66.4%
The percentage of BME PT FE enrolled students achieving a recognised qualification	84.4%	-	-	-		78.8%
The percentage of Price Group 5 FT FE enrolled students achieving a recognised qualification	86.8%	86.1%	-	67.0%		76.7%
The percentage of Price Group 5 PT FE enrolled students achieving a recognised qualification	-	-	-	-		78.0%
4(c) Proportion of senior phase age pupils successfully completing a vocational qualification delivered by colleges	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2017-18	2016-17
The percentage of Senior Phase FT FE enrolled students achieving a recognised qualification	-	-	58.3%	83.0%		56.8%
The percentage of Senior Phase PT FE enrolled students achieving a recognised qualification	48.1%	61.0%	76.5%	68.0%		63.1%
4(d) Proportion of enrolled Care Experienced students successfully achieving a recognised qualification	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2017-18	2016-17
The percentage of CE FT FE enrolled students achieving a recognised qualification	50.0%	100.0%	50.0%	53.0%		52.5%



The percentage of FT FE enrolled students aged 16-19 achieving a recognised qualification	73.1%	74.6%	66.2%	71.0%		62.4%
6. The number and proportion of full-time learners with substantial 'work placement experience' as part of their programme of study	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2017-18	2016-17
Total number of full-time learners	393	401	437	428		86,793
Number of full-time learners with substantial 'work placement experience' as part of their programme of study	-	113	136	Tbc³		15,932
Proportion of full-time learners with substantial 'work placement experience' as part of their programme of study	-	28.2%	31.1%	Tbc³		18.4%
8. The number and proportion of full-time college qualifiers in work, training and/or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2017-18	2016-17
The number of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training and/or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	254	213	-	Tbc³		42489
The proportion of full-time FE college qualifiers in work, training and/or further study 3-6 months after qualifying	92.0%	91.0%	-	Tbc³		95.0%
9. The percentage of students overall, satisfied with their college experience (SSES survey)	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2017-18	2016-17
Full-time FE	n/a	100.0%	94.3%	92.0%		84.5%
Part-time FE	n/a	100.0%	81.3%	100.0%		88.8%
Distance/ flexible FE	n/a	100.0%	-	-		-

Note 1: Credits targets introduced in 2015-16

Note 2: The College challenged the target of 12400 and worked to a target of 11864, which it met.

Note 3: Data not available at time of writing



4. Outcomes and Impact

How good are we at ensuring the best outcomes for all our learners?

Quality Indicator 3.1 - Wellbeing, equality and inclusion

Areas of positive practice

- College staff have developed a range of strategies in response to equalities legislation and SFC requirements and is currently compliant with legislation. The college *Access and Inclusion Strategy*, *Corporate Parenting Plan* and *Gender Action Plan* provide a focus for college staff to develop their practice and make improvements in this area. In 2017/18, early progress in the implementation of these plans has been effective in securing small improvements in outcomes for carers, care experienced and SIMD10 learners and raising staff awareness of these government priorities e.g. Who Cares Scotland development session at all staff conference. The college will build on this success and continue to implement and monitor the effectiveness of these plans.
- During 2017/18, college staff worked with UHI partners to develop a regional strategy to improve outcomes for care experienced and SIMD10 learners, and to create a regional British Sign Language plan and a single regional policy for student support to facilitate equity of experience for learners. This has resulted in the sharing of good practice and the development of supportive staff peer relationships across the region. Local implementation of the regional attainment strategy will now be discussed and progressed through the Joint Operations Group.
- Support for Learners staff engage well with learners in the development of personal learning support plans for learners with additional learning needs and provide appropriate pastoral support for most learners who experience barriers to learning, such as care experienced learners and those learners with mental health issues. Learners value this service and have identified the positive impact this has had on their learning.
- College staff recognise the significant increase in learners with health and wellbeing issues, such as mental health and drug and alcohol abuse and the negative effect this has on their learning and how this increase in demand for services is putting a strain on current resources. The support for learners team, some of whom are trained in Mental Health First Aid, provide effective pastoral support and work closely with local NHS Mental Health team and Drug and Alcohol Abuse forum in this respect. A few learners do not disclose these issues early enough to enable effective intervention. College staff contributed to the evaluation of mental health services across the UHI partnership and await the outcome.
- In 2017/18, a joint support/teaching group reviewed processes for the early identification of learners at risk. Attendance reporting systems were not effective in providing timely and user friendly information to monitor attendance. Work was progressed to improve attendance reporting by running a successful pilot for online attendance recording which is now being rolled out across college during 2018/19. In the interim, curriculum team triage meetings were introduced throughout the year, with the first meeting prior to programmes commencing. Support and teaching teams discussed learners at risk and closely monitored learner progress throughout the year, resulting in early interventions, which have been effective in improving retention rates and outcomes for some learner groups. For example, the course PI for the Access to Engineering programme improved by nearly 20%. In parallel, work is being progressed regionally to develop regional dashboards and use of data analytics to support early identification of learners at risk and college staff have visited other colleges to learn about new models of learning support e.g. use of learning development workers. Further review is required to consolidate and develop



college systems to identify and support individuals and a few learner groups experiencing barriers to learning in order to sustain continued improvement in learner outcomes, including those of SIMD10 and care experienced learners.

- The newly formed Joint Operations Group will take forward monitoring the impact of college interventions to address inequality for learner groups through analysis of cross college equality performance indicators relating to enrolment, retention and attainment. An early action has been the creation of a group to develop guidance for staff and students on the appropriate use of social media to support learning and better educate students about online safety and the consequences of inappropriate use on their learning and that of their peers.
- College progress in mainstreaming equality is assessed and detailed within the equalities mainstreaming report. Progress on college responses to equalities legislation is reported to the senior management team and appropriate Board subcommittees.
- Curriculum teams systematically analyse course specific equalities data as part of course monitoring processes and plan activities to encourage engagement with college programmes from underrepresented learner groups. For example, the college delivered the Bloodhound Rocket Car challenge with schools across the North Highlands and Islands to promote STEM related careers and actively encouraged female pupil participation. One of the college's female groups went on to win the competition nationally.
- In most programmes, teaching staff plan and provide opportunities for learners in class to explore equality and diversity matters where appropriate within programme or unit delivery. This has helped learners improve their understanding of challenges affecting different groups.
- Awareness of equalities issues and relevant specialist support are promoted well to learners at induction, during the *Freshers' Fayre* and throughout the academic year within the cross-college *Links 2 Life* initiative. This year, in acknowledgement of the increasing life challenge learners face, Freshers' Fayre had a strong theme of health and wellbeing, supported well by a wide range of local agencies. The event, which was well received by learners, promoted a wide range of support services available locally and in college, e.g. LGBT, mental health, online safety, drug and alcohol abuse, building resilience, staying safe, college support, HISA. A college group has also been set up to promote the college values of support, collaboration, openness, respect and excellence and these were highlighted as part of induction activities. Collectively these initiatives have helped the development of a culture of inclusion.
- College staff work well with specialist agencies and schools to share information and support vulnerable and disadvantaged learners make an effective transition to college learning environments, e.g. transition visits, part time learning opportunities for school pupils with complex learning needs. However, school and college staff have identified that pupils who experience barriers to learning would benefit from college experiences much earlier than S4 to aid transition to further education and support career choices. Consequently, college staff are developing a multi-agency approach, including SDS and the local DYW group, to address this and have created closer links with specialist agencies dealing with care experienced learners and young carers.
- The college makes good use of SIMD data and close collaboration with schools and specialist agencies to identify gaps in the curriculum and develop programmes and/or opportunities to meet specific learner needs, e.g. the development of an SCQF level 3 programme in Construction and Engineering for school-based learners, Personal Empowerment Programme in Invergordon. Dedicated additional support is in place on most full-time programmes at SCQF levels 1 to 4 to assist teaching staff support at risk learners.



Areas for development

- Review suitability of school- college provision at SCQF level 3 and 4, as part of the broader access review to address access and inclusion issues experienced by a few individuals and groups experiencing barriers to learning. (1)
- There is a need to reflect on the effectiveness and resourcing of current support arrangements, particularly in the functions of student funding and pastoral and learning support, to ensure services continue to meet demands and changing learner needs. (2)
- Further review is required to consolidate and develop college systems to identify, monitor and support individuals and a few learner groups who experience barriers to learning in order to sustain continued improvement in learner outcomes, including those of SIMD10 and care experienced learners. For example, a few learners do not always declare mental health issues and other barriers to their learning early enough and despite subsequent staff interventions, learners are unable to sustain their learning. There is also a reluctance for a few learner groups to access the support services available. (3)



Quality Indicator 3.2 - Equity, attainment and achievement for all learners

Table 1: Full-time and Part-time success and withdrawal rates over time

	North Highland College UHI				H&I	Scotland
	14/15	15/16	16/17	17/18	16/17	16/17
All students						
Full time	%	%	%	%	%	%
Completed Successful	73.8	73.1	71.4	71.8	67.5	65.3
Completed Partial	11.2	8.7	7.7	11.4	10.5	9.6
Further Withdrawal	10.2	12.3	15.4	11.1	22.0	25.1
Early Withdrawal	4.8	5.9	5.5	5.7		
Part time						
Completed Successful	71.9	74.6	68.9	71.2	85.0	77.1
Completed Partial	13.8	13.9	13.2	15.3	8.4	12.9
Further Withdrawal	7.1	5.6	9.3	7.2	6.6	10.0
Early Withdrawal	7.2	5.9	8.7	6.0		

Table 2: Full-time FE success rates over time by learner group¹

	North Highland College UHI					Scotland
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18		2016-17
Learner Group	% Success	% Success	% Success	Total enrolled	% Success	% Success
All Learners	73.8%	73.1%	71.4%	404	71.8%	65.3%
Under 16	-	-	-	<25	-	52.2%
16-19	73.1%	74.6%	66.2%	248	71%	62.4%
20-24	75.9%	74.6%	80.0%	67	73%	65.4%
25 and over	72.9%	64.4%	85.1%	76	76%	71.9%
Male	69.5%	70.0%	72.5%	237	72%	65.4%
Female	78.2%	75.8%	70.2%	172	73%	65.2%
SIMD10	64.5%	56.7%	71.9%	25	60%	62.0%
Disabled	67.1%	65.1%	67.7%	102	67%	64.3%
BME	-	-	-	<25	-	66.4%
Carer/Care experienced	-	-	-	<25	-	52.5%
Price Group 5	86.8%	86.1%	66.7%	30	67%	76.7%

¹ Table 2 and Table 3 exclude enrolments on programmes that fall out-with SFC performance indicator (PI) guidance parameters, such as those on programmes that do not lead to recognised qualifications. In Tables, 1, 2 and 3 **GREEN** indicates PI better than sector average, **RED** poorer than sector average. **Green** text indicates numbers **<25**.



Table 3: Part-time FE success rates over time by learner group

	North Highland College UHI					Scotland
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18		2016-17
Learner Group	% Success	% Success	% Success	Total enrolled	% Success	% Success
All Learners	71.9%	74.6%	68.9%	1049	71.2%	77.1%
Under 16	77.7%	77.0%	67.8%	364	68%	73.7%
16-19	67.8%	66.2%	67.4%	432	61%	69.9%
20-24	72.4%	73.9%	74.2%	98	71%	79.9%
25 and over	75.1%	85.2%	70.2%	243	67%	81.3%
Male	71.8%	74.7%	74.8%	426	66%	80.1%
Female	72.5%	74.2%	64.8%	709	65%	74.0%
SIMD10	59.4%	63.0%	-	41	54%	73.8%
Disabled	69.0%	73.4%	69.6%	220	65%	75.1%
BME	84.4%	-	-	<25	-	78.8%
Carer/Care experienced	-	-	-	<25	-	64.3%
Price Group 5	-	-	-	<25	-	78.0%

Table 4: The following table presents trend and benchmarking data by key groups in accordance with SFC published categories where students are studying on courses of length 160 hours or more.

	North Highland College UHI					H&I	Scotland
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18		2016-17	2016-17
Learner Group	% Success	% Success	% Success	Total enrolled	% Success	% Success	% Success
All FT Learners	73.8%	73.1%	71.4%	404	71.8%	67.5%	65.3%
All PT Learners	71.9%	74.6%	68.9%	1049	71.2%	85.0%	77.1%
% by Age Group of students completed successfully (on courses 160 hours or more)							
Under 18	70.0%	68.4%	66.3%	732	66.8%	67.4%	61.9%
18-20 year olds	74.1	73.9%	70.7%	249	70.7%	71.1%	70.3%
21-24 year olds	69.7	74.0%	74.4%	94	83.0%	71.1%	71.5%
25-40 year olds	68.6	75.2%	70.1%	158	71.5%	75.0%	72.7%
41 and over	86.4	87.5%	82.3%	85	81.2%	80.4%	74.1%



% by Gender of students completed successfully (on courses 160 hours or more)							
Female	74.2	73.9%	66.7%	744	68.7%	68.8%	66.3%
Male	68.1	69.5%	73.1%	571	72.3%	73.2%	69.6%
% of students completed successfully (on courses 160 hours or more)							
10% most deprived datazone areas	-	57.6%	58.8%	52	67.3%	63.1%	66.1%
Ethnic minority	66.7%	-	-	<25	-	65.4%	71.3%
Disability	67.8	68.2%	68.1%	224	65.2%	68.6%	66.5%
Care Experienced	-	-	-	<25	-	52.1%	57.2%
Carer	-	-	64.9%	30	76.7%	-	Not known

Categories in **GREEN** text – number of students in this category are less than 25.

Areas of positive practice

Note that PI analysis is based on draft 17/18 FES data benchmarked against published 2016/17 KPIs and unless otherwise stated for specific learner groups is based on programmes 160 hours or more.

- The college has successfully delivered its core and ESIF credits target for 2017/18.
- Whilst withdrawal rates for learners on full-time FE programmes have fluctuated over the last three years they have improved by just over 4 percentage points over the last year and at 16.8% remain just over 8 percentage points better than sector average of 25%. The introduction of triage meetings between curriculum and support teams has been effective in supporting this improvement, particularly in reducing further withdrawal rates. Early withdrawal rates remain on par with last year.
- At 71.8% in 2017/18, the number of learners on full-time FE programmes who successfully completed their programme is 6.5 percentage points better than sector average of 65.3% and shows a slight improvement from last year.
- The number of learners on part-time FE programmes who successfully completed their programme (71.2%) has seen a further improvement from last year.
- Learner outcomes on full-time programmes in Engineering, Land based, Hairdressing, Beauty and Complementary Therapies and Hospitality and Training are between 7 and 24 percentage points better than the sector average and amongst the highest in the sector. Delivery models which combine theory and development of practical skills in work placements or well-resourced realistic working environments are a key contributory factor to learner success and the development of employability skills.
- Outcomes for learners across most age groups sit at or above sector average. Attainment rates for the 21-24 age group have improved by 8 percentage points and now sit nearly 12 percentage points better than sector average.



- Attainment of both male and female students sits above sector average, with a slight increase in female attainment over the last year. The gap in attainment across genders for full time learners is minimal and better than those of part time learners.
- Almost all (94%) students with a confirmed destination progress in to work, apprenticeships or further study, a 3% improvement on last year. The number of college students who progress in to work (40.2%) is one of the highest in the sector and sits 20 percentage points higher than sector average. Curriculum delivery models which focus on the development of essential skills and provide significant work experience either through work placement or realistic working environments contribute to this success.
- The college showed further growth in the number of modern apprenticeships that it supports, rising to 139 modern apprenticeships either new or continuing in 2017/18 and had to request an increase in places due to employer demand. Numbers will increase to 151 in 2018/19. This is attributed to the college working in partnership with the local DYW regional board and SDS to promote the value of work based learning through the development of marketing materials, schools careers events and development of close working relationships with employers.
- The college successfully delivered its first cohort of Foundation Apprenticeships in both Social Services & Healthcare and Social Services Children & Young People, offering a the option of a 2 year or fast track delivery model, negotiated with SDS. Despite a good number of applications, the number of starts was disappointing at 8 from a bid total of 20. Challenges remain in the marketing of the qualification due to its perceived value compared to traditional academic qualifications, particularly with parents. Of the 8 who started 5 were successful (63%) on the fast track route, 1 failed and 2 withdrew early. In 2018/19 we have already seen an improvement in applications as the FA's are becoming incorporated into school/college partnerships and this year we have 12 students fully engaged on the programme with 7 undertaking the shorter (one year duration) and 5 undertaking the full two year offer.
- The proportion of credits delivered to learners enrolled on STEM courses has grown by 10% over the last 3 years and exceeds the sector average by 10%, reflecting the success of the college's strategy to work in partnership with key employers to support current and emerging opportunities to provide training to meet the needs of the engineering and renewable energy sector in the North Highland area. The highest proportion of this delivery is engineering (82%) and construction based (13%).
- Almost all learners on full-time programmes develop skills for employment by undertaking significant work experience in industry or operating within realistic work environments in college and this is contributory to full-time success rates.
- Almost all learners on full time programmes develop a range of essential and enterprise skills through planned learning activities and enterprise projects in class and participation in the cross-college *Links to Life* events.
- Most learners attain well in the core skills of *communication, information technology, problem solving* and *working with others*. In most programmes, development of skills is based around a contextualised delivery model, often centred around enterprise projects, which motivates learners and develops wider essential skills.
- Student satisfaction rates from the SSES for full-time and part-time remain high at 92% and 100% respectively, however, response rates remain low (16% for full-time and 8% for part-time) despite showing a slight improvement this year.
- The proportion of college credits delivered to learners at S3 and above as part of school –college provision remains significantly above sector average at 16.5%, despite a slight drop in enrolments from the previous year. College staff have worked closely with school guidance staff to better educate them about learning pathways so they can support pupils in career and learning choices and the college staff have an improved presence at careers events and parent's evenings. In most schools there is an improvement in their engagement and understanding of DYW.



Despite this, applications and enrolments for school- college provision are decreasing and there is a concern that falling school rolls, the local authority decision to close schools early on a Friday and local authority budgetary constraints will impact the college's ability to sustain these levels of engagement.

Areas for development

- Rates of successful completion are low on a few full time programmes at SCQF level 4 and 5. For some programmes, issues with curriculum design have been identified as a contributory factor and for a few learners, support mechanisms are not fully effective to sustain their learning. (4)
- Rates of successful completion are low on a number of part time FE programmes and the number of learners on part-time FE programmes (71.2%) who successfully completed their programme, remains nearly 6 percentage points below the sector average of 77.1%. (5)
- Attainment rates for part-time learners in the 16-19 category, many of whom attend school-college link courses are 9 percentage points lower than the sector average and full-time learners in college in the same age group. Further analysis of part time success rates overall, for senior phase learners, SIMD10, learners with a disability and care experienced learners is required to confirm common contributory factors across the lower success rates in these categories. (6)
- Withdrawal rates on part time FE programmes have fluctuated over the past 3 years and despite an improvement of 5 percentage points from last year, remain 3 percentage points higher than the sector average of 10%. (7)
- Success rates for students who declared a disability have dropped by 3 percentage points and now sit just below sector average and that of other college students. This is accounted for by a drop in attainment for some part time learners declaring a disability. (8)
- Although there have been improvements in outcomes for learners residing within the 10% most deprived data zones (SIMD 10), carers, those who come from a care experienced background and or minority ethnic group, further action is required to sustain improvement for these learner groups. The number of college learners from a care experienced background and a minority ethnic group are small. (9)
- At peak times, delays in processing funding applications are a source of learner dissatisfaction and for a few learners, can affect their ability to fully engage with their programme and sustain their learning. (10)



5. Delivery of learning and services to support learning

How good is the quality of the provision and services we deliver?

Quality Indicator 2.2 – Curriculum

Areas of positive practice

- College managers take good account of local and regional needs and labour market information in developing and designing its curriculum offer to meet stakeholder needs. This links well to its strategic plan and key government drivers such as *Developing the Young Workforce*. In 2017/18 the college successfully bid for funding to set up a business development unit to enhance its work with employers to improve and develop the curriculum and achieve business growth.
- Across the college, curriculum teams provide a wide range of relevant full time and part time FE programmes, which is responsive to the needs of employers, local communities and diverse groups of learners.
- College managers and curriculum teams work effectively with local employers and other stakeholders to identify and plan new or revised programmes of study in response to industry and learner needs. In 2017/18, the college introduced a new access programme in the Easter Ross area, to support learners, who have traditionally found it difficult to engage, to develop their career management skills and transition in to employment.
- Recent strategic curriculum planning has been influenced by the need to create new opportunities to address particular skills gaps in the North Highland area. For example, key employers, such as Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd (DSRL) and NHS Highland have been keen to implement local solutions to develop and retain young people to address hard-to-fill vacancies, such as the introduction of the new Access to Nursing programme in 2017/18.
- College programmes span almost all SCQF levels. Curriculum teams have developed clear curriculum progression pathways and in most cases these provide learners with appropriate entry/exit points to meet their individual needs. In most cases, curriculum teams ensure effective programme design leads to good articulation to higher level programmes within the *University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)* and other HEIs. Work has begun to review college provision, including school-college courses, at SCQF level 3 & 4 to address identified gaps in entry/exit points for a few learner groups, identified through annual course and PI review.
- In many programmes, such as the extensive Equine flexible learning provision, curriculum teams offer flexible blended delivery models, thereby encouraging greater levels of independent study and/or improving access to learning opportunities for learners living in remote geographical areas.
- A comprehensive culture of research led teaching, which is having a positive influence on curriculum design and delivery; and sharing of practice, is being developed through innovative projects led by the college Environmental Research Institute and other teaching staff research activities. For example, gamekeeping students worked with ERI research staff to gather samples regarding a deer management project, ERI staff are using up to date research in the content and delivery of MSC programmes in renewable energy, outputs from staff dissertations in engineering, equine and peer review are informing programme content and the development of a regional peer review process.
- Most staff undertake appropriate CPD opportunities to maintain an up-to-date knowledge of industry and workplace practice, e.g. vet nursing staff work in practices during the summer break, construction staff are involved in the FUTUREquipped



project to develop knowledge to deliver innovative learning resources in smart housing, working with staff from across the sector in Health, Care and ICT.

- The college works closely with school partners to review its curriculum in response to the *Developing Young Workforce* recommendations and identify further opportunities for work based learning. This provides senior phase learners with clear vocational pathways which bring forward their readiness to progress into further learning or employment. In some subject areas, *Skills for Work* programmes have been replaced by work based SVQs and in 2017/18, the college offered foundation apprenticeships for the first time in *Social Services and Healthcare*.
- College staff have worked well with most schools to promote the benefits of vocational study to pupils and parents and effect changes to timetables that provide pupils with better access to college programmes. Senior staff from the college, schools and council are working to overcome equality of access for some learners across the region due to transport issues and financial constraints. In some cases this has been overcome by programmes being delivered by curriculum staff in school. Work is currently being progressed through the Highland Council School College strategy group to develop more online learning opportunities to improve access to learning opportunities across the region.
- Curriculum teams work closely with employers in a number of sectors to support the effective delivery and growth of modern apprentices (2017/18 – 139), foundation apprenticeships (2017/18 - 8) and other college provision. The college has developed a strategic partnership with the *Nigg Skills Academy* to deliver engineering provision in the Easter Ross area, which has contributed to the increase in STEM related credits delivered by the college.
- Curriculum teams are clear on the rationale for new/revised programme development and consider how skills for learning, life and work are embedded and delivered within programmes at an early stage through robust programme approval processes.
- In almost all programmes, curriculum teams have effectively designed their programme to provide meaningful opportunities for learners to develop skills for employment through a range of appropriate learning activities such as industry visits, guest speakers and enterprise projects. Almost all full time programmes embed significant work experience in industry or realistic work environments in college, providing learners with appropriate learning environments to develop skills for employment, in line with the DYW work placement standard. As an example, the life and work skills learners run a small café in college, care students undertake placement 2 days a week in schools, nurseries and care homes throughout the year
- Within most college programmes, curriculum teams have improved the planning and delivery of college enhancement themes, e.g. equality and diversity, use of ICT, learner engagement, essential skills and sustainability, due to the focus on these themes within course monitoring activities.
- Full time learners within most programmes make effective use of well-established learner feedback mechanisms to influence the development of the curriculum, e.g. changes made in 2017/18 to programme content in the Employability Programme in Construction and Access to Construction and Engineering courses.

Areas for development

- Curriculum design across college access programmes (SCQF level 3&4) is not currently meeting the needs of a few learner groups or providing appropriate progression pathways to SCQF level 5 programmes in some subject disciplines. The college should complete the comprehensive review of this provision which began in 2017/18. (11)
- Whilst good practice in the development of career management skills is embedded in some college programmes, this is not consistently planned and delivered within all



college programmes and learner satisfaction with the assistance available for CV writing and interview skills across college is low. During 2017/18, cross college workshops in CV writing and mock interviews were well received however further work is required by curriculum teams to embed these skills in curriculum planning and delivery in line the Career Management Skills framework. (12)

- The college should consider a strategy to further shift the balance of ownership for curriculum planning and review from college managers to curriculum teams. Recent restructuring of the academic sections and creation of additional leadership posts for learning and teaching will assist this, but it will take time to address this shift in culture. (13)



Quality Indicator 2.3 - Learning, teaching and assessment

The primary evidence base for this QI has come from the analysis of peer review observations and learner input from peer review and other quality enhancement processes, including staff and learner focus groups on the new college enhancement theme – assessment and feedback. This confirms the following areas of positive practice:-

Areas of positive practice

- In observed lessons, almost all learners are motivated, engage well with their learning and are enthusiastic about developing new skills that they recognise will lead to further study or employment.
- Most learners are engaged in enhancing their own learning through learner centred activities such as peer learning, independent research and group activities and use these experiences well to share learning, affirm progress and promote individual improvement.
- Relationships between staff and learners are very positive and respectful, creating a supportive and productive learning environment.
- Almost all learners use a wide range of resources effectively and confidently to enhance and support their learning. In practical classes, learners use equipment safely and competently to develop relevant skills for the workplace. Most students feel sufficiently prepared for using the technologies within their course, albeit a few learners are reluctant to embrace technology and some require encouragement to engage in interactive and engaging learning activities.
- Most learners agree they are able to influence learning on their course and have the opportunity to discuss their progress with staff.
- Most staff are enthusiastic and use their subject and professional knowledge and skills well to enhance the learning experience and contextualise learning activities to promote learner understanding and skills for employment. Staff articulate well the professional standards expected in the workplace to learners.
- Most staff plan lessons well and use a wide range of effective and engaging learning and teaching approaches to promote learning and meet individual learning needs.
- Most staff use questioning strategies effectively to enhance the learning experience and promote further learning. This continues to be an area of improving practice as a consequence of teaching peer review activity.
- Most staff plan ongoing and end of unit assessment effectively with most learners being aware of the nature and timing of assessment activities.
- Most staff offer flexibility in assessment based on individual learning needs, such as negotiation of timing of assessment and type of assessment evidence, where possible within awarding body constraints. Suitable arrangements are in place to assist learners with additional support needs with assessment. An increase in demand for these services and additional awarding body requirements is putting pressure on current resource.
- Most staff provide learners with helpful verbal feedback and feedforward, within lessons and individual progress interviews. This helps learners inform their future learning and affirms individual achievement.
- In almost all subject areas, learners develop skills for employment and their understanding of the standards and skills expected in the workplace, through appropriate work placement, for example in health and social care and gamekeeping or realistic working environments, for example in hospitality when running the college Café services and commercial salons in hairdressing and beauty. This is enhanced further through use of guest speakers and industry visits.



- The college places a strong emphasis on the importance of developing essential skills and an entrepreneurial mind-set. Learners in almost all college programmes develop these skills through a variety of planned learning activities, volunteering and the cross college *Links 2 Life* initiative. For example, college business students mentored primary pupils in a “Dragon’s Den” competition for local primary schools and worked with local employers to judge the school enterprise competition entries. In some cases, development of these essential skills is enhanced by learners working together across programme levels and subject areas, for example music, film and health and social care students’ collaboration to stage the T in the Car park event in Alness. However, further work is required by staff to embed learners’ understanding of transferable essential skills within lessons.
- Embedding college enhancement themes (e.g. learner engagement in the classroom, essential skills, equality and diversity, sustainability, assessment and feedback) within key college processes, including course monitoring, peer review and staff development activities has facilitated enhanced individual and team ownership for evaluation of learning and teaching practice and planning for improvement, which has resulted in positive changes to learning and teaching practice.

Areas for development

- Whilst the majority of staff make use of digital technologies to support learning activities, recent research undertaken by a member of staff studying TQFE and outcomes of evaluation activities, such as limited use of digital assessment techniques, have confirmed a need to support teaching staff in the development of a broader range of emerging digital technologies to support and enhance purposeful learning and assessment, which is in line with the college and UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy. (14)
- Analysis of peer review activity and feedback from assessment focus groups confirms that, within curriculum teams, the quality of written feedback/feedforward learners received from a few teaching staff is variable. The college should prioritise implementation of actions to address areas for development identified in the evaluation of the assessment and feedback enhancement theme. (15)



Quality Indicator 2.4 - Services to support learning

Areas of positive practice

- The Student Services Group (SSG) worked collaboratively and effectively to develop initiatives to encourage learners to prepare earlier for their college experience and support them to apply for funding earlier. This included a Next Steps event, keep warm communications during the summer, the development of “Coming to College” guides and targeted funding clinics. There has been an increase in student applying for funding earlier, however it is still a challenge for learners to provide the required supporting documentation for applications, which can delay the processing of their funding.
- College management committee structures were reviewed and revised arrangements implemented late in 2017/18 to facilitate improved collaboration and joint ownership for learner outcomes across curriculum and support teams. The most significant of these changes is the creation of the *Joint Operations Group (JOG)*, consisting of curriculum and support managers, who will focus on the stages of the learner journey, the joint evaluation of services to support learning (including review of KPIs) and development and monitoring of quality enhancement objectives.
- Potential learners are supported well with clear and accurate information about programmes and college life prior to commencing study. The college makes good use of web-based materials, the college prospectus, promotional videos, school visits, careers’ events and college information days to promote programmes and college services. Work is currently underway to improve the accessibility of the college website.
- Improvements to the prospectus design make it easy for potential learners to access comprehensive course information, clear curriculum pathway diagrams, student success stories and relevant information on student funding. This supports them well in making informed career choices and promotes success stories in curriculum areas where gender imbalances exist.
- In most subject areas, current learners are supported well by curriculum and admissions staff when considering progression opportunities and career pathways.
- The college has developed an extensive area on its website dedicated to schools and the senior phase programme. This provides comprehensive information to school pupils, parents/guardians and teachers about the vocational courses available in the senior phase and learning pathways available through further study at college.
- Services to support learners with pastoral or additional academic support needs are well promoted to learners prior to and during induction and are equitable across all college campuses.
- Arrangements for identifying learners who require additional support for learning are effective in supporting most learners to achieve. Learners benefit from the early identification of individual support needs, gathered from course applications or through external agency referral, and are able to discuss and agree support arrangements with the *Support for Learners* team prior to starting their programme. Not all learners use this opportunity and some are reluctant to declare specific needs at an early stage and this can have a negative impact on their learning. Most learners are satisfied with the support they receive and recognise the impact the support has had on their learning.
- Learners on almost all programmes have good access to guidance opportunities to reflect on and discuss their progress, either formally or informally, with staff. *Personal Academic Tutors (PATs)* are responsible for providing this ongoing information, guidance and support to learners, with specialist pastoral support provided by the *Support for Learners* team. These arrangements are effective in supporting most learners to achieve a positive destination, however, the lack of



suitable attendance reports has limited staff's ability to identify a few learners at risk of drop out and implement early interventions. In 2017/18, online attendance recording and use of CELCAT timetabling system for attendance reporting has been developed and will be rolled out in 2018/19.

- College staff and student association representatives jointly plan an interactive and engaging induction programme that provides a helpful and welcoming introduction to college life and equips learners with valuable information to support them with their studies. This is complemented by a newly revised, learner centred area on the college website which supports learners well throughout their study and promotes additional opportunities for them to develop essential skills through volunteering and other quality improvement activities.
- The *Links 2 Life* initiative uses dedicated time, on a monthly basis, to create a calendar of valuable events which supports learners in the further development of enterprise, employability, career management and essential skills, as well as raising awareness of specific health and wellbeing issues. This was enhanced in 2017/18 by the introduction of monthly themes, timed to coincide with the appropriate stage in the learner journey, such as "Your next steps" event to promote progression opportunities and early consideration of funding and support requirements. This did result in an increase in earlier funding applications.
- The *Quality and Learner Engagement* coordinator has worked extensively with the student population and the local *HISA NHC Depute* to promote the learner voice and encourage learners to work in partnership with college staff to improve their learning experience through a variety of feedback mechanisms. Examples of changes that were made following 2017/18 feedback include the introduction of card payments in the café and commercial salons, improvement of transport services to the Centre for Rural Studies, changes to programme content, negotiation of assessment deadlines.
- The college commitment to engaging the learner voice in the review and evaluation of college programmes and services is strong and clearly articulated within the college's *Learner Engagement Strategy*. The *Learner Council* is an effective forum for senior staff, support managers and learner representatives to discuss issues and exchange views. Actions for improvement are agreed and their progress monitored. Feedback on college services and the broader learner experience is gathered through college surveys and used effectively by support and curriculum teams to make improvements to learners' early college experiences. Outcomes from these activities are disseminated to learners on social media and via posters to convey to learners that their feedback has been reviewed and acted upon.

Areas for development

- Current information and systems to support learner funding applications are not yet fully effective as some learners struggle to provide the required supporting documentation to support their application, resulting in delays in processing funding. (16)
- The college should continue to implement revised arrangements for monitoring the attendance and progress of learners to facilitate earlier identification of learners at risk of drop out and delivery of timely interventions. (17)



6. Leadership and quality culture

How good is our leadership and approach to improvement?

Quality Indicator 1.1 - Governance and leadership of change

Areas of positive practice

- In 2016/17, the Board of Management, supported by the Senior Management Team (SMT), undertook an externally facilitated evaluation of its effectiveness in line with the *Code of Good Governance for Scotland's Colleges (2016)*. The subsequent quality improvement plan has been updated to reflect the outcomes of a further internal self-evaluation during 2017/18 and the good progress made in implementing this plan during the year. As processes for self-evaluation of Board subcommittees and the appraisal and development of individual Board members were developed during 2017/18, the Board of Management will continue its work to fully embed these within Board business.
- The Board of Management and Senior Management Team have worked collaboratively and in consultation with staff, students and stakeholders to develop the college's new Strategic Plan 2018-20. The new plan and updated mission, vision and values take good account of local as well as regional and national government priorities through close alignment to the UHI Strategic Plan 2015-20 and the outcomes within the *Highlands and Islands Regional Outcome Agreement (ROA)*. In 2017/18, key performance indicators, in common with the UHI Strategic Plan, have now been agreed within the college strategic plan and provide a clear platform for benchmarking college performance within the broader regional context.
- The Board of Management have set new challenging targets/actions for 2018/19 based on the first review of progress against its strategic plan objectives and the outcomes of internal self-evaluation in 2017/18.
- The Board of Management, collectively and through a solid subcommittee structure, work closely with the Senior Management Team to deliver strong and effective financial and risk management, within a culture of openness and "no surprises" environment.
- The Board of Management has a strong focus on educational quality and inclusiveness of learning, which is reflected in its strategic aims, mission and vision. The Board's *Learning, Teaching and Research Committee (LTR)* effectively monitors key performance indicators relating to learning, teaching and research against regional and national benchmarks and the effectiveness of the college's arrangements for improving the quality of the student experience through the review of regular reports from the senior team. This provides good levels of assurance, prompting specific action plans or review of risk where necessary.
- The Board of Management strongly supports and engages well with the Highlands and Islands Student Association (HISA). The student voice is effected by 2 students serving as full board members, who actively engage in the full range of board and its subcommittee activities. This includes the North Highland College (NHC) HISA Depute President. Student views and contributions are valued by all Board and SMT members, creating a strong culture of student/college partnership working. The NHC Depute President reports to LTR as a standing item and provides updates to the Board on progress with the regional *Student Partnership Agreement*. In 2017/18, a local NHC/HISA *Student Partnership Agreement*, was implemented with key objectives to work with college staff to improve student engagement with surveys and enhance student social spaces.
- The Chair of the Board of Management effectively represents the college's interests at the Further Education Regional Board (FERB), the primary regional decision



making body for FE and during 2017/18 led the regional group driving options for greater integration across the UHI partnership.

- The Board of Management continues to work proactively towards the Scottish Government gender representation objective of 50/50 by 2022. Ongoing review of recruitment processes has been effective in improving female representation, which currently sits at 45%. Recruitment for new board members is currently in progress.
- The Director of Estates and Finance has led the development of the 2017-21 college Carbon Management Plan. Implementation to date has resulted in a significant reduction in college carbon emissions; of 37.8% on the college estate and 55% through management of college transport and travel, demonstrating good progress towards a government target of 45% reduction by 2020.
- Senior managers are currently contributing to the production of the new skills investment plan for the Caithness and North Sutherland area, which will inform ongoing strategic planning and curriculum development. This has been commissioned by the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership (CNSRP) and is due to be finalised in January 2019. The college will play a lead role in responding to the various needs identified in the plan.
- Senior staff also play a lead role as part of a highly effective coalition of local agencies including the Chamber of Commerce, Highland Council, SDS and the Caithness & Sutherland DYW Regional Board in promoting and developing career and progression pathways for young people.
- Senior staff have formed new strategic working groups with key employers, such as the NHS and Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd, to confirm training needs and identify and implement joint solutions for their workforce planning and development, e.g. foundation apprenticeships in health and social care, joint promotion of careers within the NHS.
- In 2017/18, the Director of Enterprise and Innovation has led the development of initiatives which have increased opportunities for full and part time learners across the North Highland area. This includes the expansion of modern apprenticeships and foundation apprenticeships covering the disciplines of health and social care, engineering, gamekeeping, business administration, IT, hairdressing and professional cookery; the extension of the college's partnership with Nigg Skills Academy which improves access to full time engineering/fabrication and welding training in the Easter Ross area and securing funding to set up a business development unit dedicated to supporting business growth and key income streams for the college.
- The Director of Enterprise and Innovation has been proactive in promoting the Flexible Workforce Development Fund, but it has been difficult to progress as the college has a very small number of employers within its catchment area who are eligible to draw down from the fund. During 2017/18, the college worked with one employer in the Easter Ross area to apply for funding, resulting in employees from the company successfully completing an introduction into Engineering programme. For 18/19, the college will extend the courses it can offer and has worked very closely with a large employer in Caithness to plan delivery of a range of business and management courses to enhance the calibre of their workforce.
- Along with colleagues from Inverness and West Highland Colleges, senior North Highland College UHI staff are working in partnership with Highland Council to design and deliver a coordinated strategy for a broad and relevant senior phase to meet the objectives of Developing the Young Workforce and ensures equity of provision and opportunity for the young people in the Highland Council catchment area. This strategy aims to better align our collective provision to the aspirations of young learners in the Highlands; broaden our offer to provide a range of opportunities and progression pathways; increase the accessibility to learning opportunities for



young people across the region; and ensure that our young people understand their learning and career choices in order to make the most of the available offer.

- In 2017/18, senior staff successfully secured funding to pursue plans to enhance the college estate to support the expansion of curriculum initiatives and improve access to high quality, inspiring, inclusive and supportive learning environments across its campuses and enable innovative delivery of an extensive range pedagogical models, in line with the aspirations of the college and UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy. Consequently, additional facilities were created in AIness and work will commence in 2019 on co-locating all our Dornoch activities on to a single site. Staff have worked closely with local government agencies, and the Science Skills Academy (SSA) to secure the location of the first Newton room STEM learning centre in Scotland on the college main campus in Thurso. It is hoped the centre will help encourage school pupils to consider careers in the Highlands where there are considerable skills gaps, like biosciences, renewable energy, technology, engineering and digital skills and encourage more females to take up careers in this area.
- The Senior Management Team effectively represent the college's interests and help shape regional strategy and policy across a wide range of regional planning, resourcing and quality enhancement fora; working collaboratively with other partners to work towards the achievement of the objectives within the *Regional Outcome Agreement*. For example, the Principal leads the UHI Partnership Planning forum and led a review of the FE regional funding model, the Director of Enterprise and Innovation is a core member of the regional Work Based learning Hub. The Director of Learning and Teaching is an active participant in the group leading various work streams looking at harmonising quality assurance and enhancement arrangements across the region, including self-evaluation processes (course and support areas), data and PI reporting, development of learning and teaching related strategies, evaluation of learning and teaching (peer review), capturing and sharing best practice in L&T and approaches to student engagement, including student surveys. Consequently, these developments have superseded planned work to review and change local college arrangements.
- In 2017/18, college staff at all levels have worked extensively with colleagues across the UHI partnership to shape strategy and policy to support the achievement of Further Education Regional Outcome Agreement targets in key areas of 'intensification', such as improving regional attainment overall, across subject areas, for young learners, young carers, care experienced learners and those from SIMD10 areas, with the Director of Learning and Teaching leading the SIMD10 group. Also, a number of NHC staff are contributing to various work streams within the Single Policy Environment project for FE, led by Diane Rawlinson, Vice Principal FE (UHI). This work aims to reduce duplication of effort, streamline working practice and bring a greater level of consistency to our FE learners' student experience, for example in admissions, student funding and learner support. New work streams will continue in 2018/19.
- During 2017/18, the senior management team completed a major review of college academic departments and resourced additional promoted lecturer posts to strengthen formal structures for the leadership of learning and teaching; support future succession planning and further distribution of leadership for the curriculum. As yet, it is too early to assess the impact of these revised structures.
- In 2017/18, the senior team invested in leadership development for support managers and new team leaders, which will continue in 2018/19. This included well received sessions on various management topics including performance management and individual coaching sessions on operational planning.



Areas for development

- Whilst initial progress in leadership development has been positive, the senior team recognise the need for further investment in this area for newly promoted curriculum staff and the further development of support managers and team leaders to build and strengthen leadership capacity for the future. (18)



Quality Indicator 1.4 - Leadership of evaluation leading to improvement

Areas of positive practice

- The college has a strong culture of quality improvement and enhancement permeating all levels of operation and values the importance of the learner voice in developing an ethos of student/college partnership working.
- Curriculum departments were restructured in 2017/18 and additional promoted lecturer positions were created to strengthen formal structures for the leadership of learning and teaching, support effective succession planning and facilitate a shift in the balance of ownership to curriculum teams. It is too early to assess the effect of this change in empowering curriculum teams to take greater responsibility for the planning and review of provision.
- College management committee structures were reviewed and revised arrangements implemented late in 2017/18 to facilitate improved collaboration and joint ownership for learner outcomes across curriculum and support teams. The most significant of these changes is the creation of the *Joint Operations Group (JOG)*, consisting of curriculum and support managers, who will focus on the stages of the learner journey, the joint evaluation of services to support learning (including review of KPIs) and development and monitoring of quality enhancement objectives. It is too early to assess the impact of this change in enhancing the learner experience and improving outcomes for learners and further work is required to embed the use of corporate PI data to support these evaluation activities.
- Towards the end of 2017/18, members of the Joint Operations Group participated in staff development sessions on alternative self-evaluation tools including driver diagrams and q-cards. Sessions were well received and have supported initial JOG activities to jointly evaluate services to support learning and enhance learner engagement in evaluation activities.
- In 2017/18, college staff have worked extensively with colleagues across the UHI partnership to evaluate regional and local performance indicators and develop a regional strategy to enhance learner attainment overall and for specific learner groups such as care experienced learners and those from SIMD10 areas. Following a review of college KPIs for specific learner groups, the introduction, locally, of early “triage” meetings between teaching and support staff has been effective in improving outcomes for learners on some programmes.
- Key academic and organisational strategies collectively provide an appropriate framework to support continuous organisational improvement. Going forward these will be reviewed as a consequence of the various work streams looking at harmonising quality assurance and enhancement arrangements across the region. This includes arrangements for support and curriculum self-evaluation and a coordinated approach to student surveys.
- The college commitment to engaging the learner voice in the review and evaluation of college programmes and cross college services is strong and clearly articulated within the college’s *Learner Engagement Strategy*.
- The monthly *Learner Council* is an effective forum for senior staff, support managers and learner representatives to discuss issues and exchange views on cross college matters. Actions for improvement are agreed and their progress monitored.
- During 2017/18, the operation of *Learner Council* has been reviewed and revised for 2018/19 to facilitate improved learner engagement with cross college enhancement themes and the evaluation of services to support learning. The first event in 2018/19 was well received and focussed on the early learning experience.
- Feedback on college services and the broader learner experience is gathered through college surveys and used effectively by most support and curriculum teams to make improvements to learners’ early college experiences. Outcomes from these



activities are disseminated to learners on social media and via posters to convey to learners that their feedback has been reviewed and acted upon.

- Most fulltime courses elect 2 learner representatives to represent learner views at *Curriculum Team* meetings and *Learner Council*. Representatives are supported well in their roles through local training and encouragement from the *Quality and Learner Engagement* coordinator and the local *HISA NHC Depute President*.
- Most learner representatives actively engage in course team meetings and the completion of *Course Unit Evaluations (CUEs)* to provide useful feedback that informs course improvement plans, however, this level of engagement is not consistent across programme teams.
- Most curriculum teams are effective in making improvements to their programmes through analysis of key performance indicators relating to enrolment, retention and attainment, feedback from learners and evaluation of performance against college enhancement themes. However, use of sector and cross college benchmark data in this process is limited at this level.
- The *Director of Learning and Teaching* and *Assistant Directors* effectively monitor and evaluate programme and cross college PIs and have supportive and constructive dialogues with programme leaders and curriculum teams to reflect on annual programme performance and confirm targets for improvement. One outcome of this activity is the current review of college access provision at SCQF level 3 & 4.
- In 2017/18, following review of student survey outcomes and assessment of college development priorities in line with the college and UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement strategy, the *Director of Learning and Teaching* and *Assistant Directors* introduced a new college enhancement theme, "Assessment and Feedback" which was the focus of the staff learning and teaching conference in August 2017. A series of evaluation activities on this theme, including focus groups with staff and students, took place throughout the year, culminating in a series of recommendations in the theme evaluation report. These are currently being considered by curriculum managers with follow up activities being scheduled for 2018/19.
- Evaluation of learning and teaching is supported by peer review and certificated professional development processes for teaching staff. Profession discussion following peer observation effectively triangulates reflections from the reviewer, reviewee and learners in evaluating observations and planning for improvement. There are numerous examples of changes to learning and teaching practice as a consequence of this activity.
- There is evidence of improvement in programme PIs as a consequence of effective quality monitoring processes. Outcomes for learners on FT programmes and across a number of subject areas have remained above sector average. The number of learners on part-time FE programmes who successfully completed their programme has seen further improvement over the last year, as a result of the college implementing interventions to reduce withdrawal rates, albeit overall they remain below national sector performance.
- College school liaison staff have worked closely with colleagues from Inverness and West Highland Colleges, school and local authority staff to evaluate school college provision and implement improvements to the coordination and operation of the senior phase programme. This includes a more coordinated approach to presenting curriculum offering to schools, improvement to pupil tracking systems and identification of pupils with additional learning needs.
- An additional member of teaching staff developed capacity of the peer review team in 2017/18. The peer review team have made improvements to the resources and support provided to staff when developing actions for improvement in practice identified from classroom observation and are currently working with colleagues across the UHI partnership to develop a regional approach to classroom observation.



Areas for development

- In 2017/18, strategies to develop more consistent practice in self-evaluation activities have been developed at regional and local level to address the quality of self-evaluation documentation, SMART action planning and use of cross college and national performance indicators to benchmark performance, plan for and monitor improvement. For example, staff development in the use of alternative self-evaluation tools has been well received by managers. Further work is required to implement these strategies and consolidate practice at operational level within and across curriculum and support teams to support improved evaluation of the curriculum, services to support learning and the engagement of learners in these activities. (19)
- Although in 2017/18, there has been a slight improvement in survey response rates, the number of learner responses in surveys is low in comparison to the total number of college learners and does not sufficiently reflect feedback from learners across different modes and types of study. This is despite interventions and corresponding improvements to response rates as a consequence of work by our HISA Depute and Learner Engagement Coordinator, such as HISA introducing prize incentives and promotion of the impact of learner feedback. (20)
- There is a need to review the reasons for inconsistency in learner representative engagement within a few programme teams. (21)
- Further work is required to consolidate work to assist some teaching staff to draw upon the full range of resources available to support the enhancement of their individual teaching practice and set targets for improvement. (22)



7. Capacity for Improvement

The College possesses a number of key strengths upon which measures to improve the College's standing are devised and implemented. Foremost amongst these is the spirit of partnership-working which underpins our planning and operations. This is particularly evident in the positive and productive relationships between the Board and the management team and also the wider college staff with students and stakeholders. There is a strong corporate quality culture evident around these relationships. As an example, the college has developed a joint strategic working group with NHS Highland to strengthen the strategic planning and working relationship between both organisations as the NHS responds to the challenges of delivering health and social care services within the Caithness & Sutherland area.

The College has benefitted from the stability of its position as a committed academic partner of the UHI for a number of years. The College brand is well established and respected in the North Highland communities. Leadership arrangements overall are stable with all senior post holders experienced in their current roles. During 2017/18, the senior management team completed a major review of college academic departments in light of:-

- the need to ensure that the college is suitably organised to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges and to bring new and fresh leadership perspectives to areas of the curriculum
- the ongoing development of unified tertiary (HE & FE) regional curriculum in the context of the UHI being the Regional Strategic Body for FE in the Highlands & Islands, in addition to its well-established responsibility for the HE delivered by its Academic Partner
- the need to create some new opportunities for staff career progression and support effective succession planning
- the need to plan for the implementation of new arrangements for lecturing staff as a consequence of the outcomes of National Bargaining.

Consequently, from November 2017, the college reduced the number of academic departments from four to three and recently recruited four additional promoted lecturer positions, across the remaining departments, to enable further distribution of curriculum leadership across the college. These positions strengthen formal structures for the leadership of learning and teaching and it is hoped will facilitate a further shift in the balance of ownership for curriculum downwards to curriculum teams. As yet, it is too early to assess the impact of these revised structures.

In parallel, the remit and membership of key college management committees was reviewed and refreshed. A new management group, the Joint Operations Group (JOG), was formed with a key focus on enhancing the learner journey. This review provides the opportunity to strengthen relationships between students, support and teaching staff and better facilitate the joint evaluation and enhancement of services to support learning.

The College has faced a significant and ongoing financial challenge over the past few years. Whilst we have delivered break-even or close to break-even outcomes on our annual accounts, this has required the tightest of financial controls and the use of significant cost reduction measures.

The requirement for the College to comply with the outcomes of National Bargaining has created a number of challenges which have accounted for a significant amount of



managerial resource. In recent times, the College's Board has been committed to employing staff on flexible terms and conditions consistent with meeting the needs of local employers as our primary customers. These were very progressive moves by the College at the time, undoubtedly in accordance with the "workforce of the future" agenda. The fact that the contractual arrangements established by the College were thus "atypical" has presented particular challenges in the move to harmonise the pay, terms and conditions of NHC staff with the rest of the sector through National Bargaining. Also, the slow progress in implementing the national job evaluation scheme has had an impact on support staff morale. It is considered that progressing this in our local context is likely to account for significant staff time and resources in the college. Collectively these challenges will continue to have an impact on the College's capacity to improve other priorities. .

North Highland College UHI fully embraces the challenge of providing a comprehensive further and higher education service relevant to the needs of the communities in one of the remoter parts of the country. As an assigned and incorporated college, we also recognise the planning and resourcing parameters within which we have to operate particularly as we reconcile the expectations of us as an academic partner of Scotland's youngest University with the financial and organisational consequences of National Bargaining for the College sector.



8. Grades

Key principle	Grade
Outcomes and Impact: How good are we at ensuring the best possible outcomes for all our learners? · 3.1 Wellbeing, equality and inclusion · 3.2 Equity, attainment and achievement for all learners	Very good
Leadership and quality culture: How good is our leadership and approach to improvement? · 1.1 Governance and leadership of change · 1.4 Evaluation leading to improvement	Very good
Delivery of learning and services to support learning: How good is the quality of our provision and services we deliver? · 2.2 Curriculum · 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment · 2.4 Services to support learning	Very good



Appendix 1

University of the Highlands and Islands Regional Strategy for Enhancement of Further Education Attainment

Context Statement

This strategy aims to drive improvement in levels of attainment in further education across the UHI partnership. It has been developed in response to a regional and national focus on a need for equity in access to post-compulsory education opportunities, improved attainment for all and improved life chances for disadvantaged groups.

The Scottish Government has made education and improved educational outcomes a key priority and central measure of success, highlighting the links between these and economic development, social challenge and to issues of equity, fairness and morality. In this context, the National Improvement Framework for Scottish Education² heralds a step change for schools, empowering school leaders but also establishing mechanisms for greater collaboration in both raising attainment overall and closing the attainment gap that persists between mainstream students and those with protected characteristics.

In the April 2018 Ministerial Letter of Guidance to the Chair of the Scottish Funding Council³, The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science established the expectation that the 'intensification' of ambition within colleges' and universities' outcome agreements would continue providing a 'clearer line of sight between Scottish Government investment and the delivery of desired outcomes'. Within this communication, the Minister specifies the need for colleges and universities to focus on equity, responding to the recommendation of the commission on widening access and addressing the needs of disadvantaged groups.

In line with this Government agenda, the Scottish Funding Council employs a range of national measures to assess progress at a regional and national level. UHI's performance against these further education national measures is strong overall. The region, for instance, exceeds national benchmarks for attainment, such as successful completion rates for further education full-time and part-time students. This overall, regional level of success however masks local variation in performance.

The region has a track record of success in recruiting students from disadvantaged groups, such as care experienced young people. However, national performance measures highlight the attainment gap between disadvantaged groups and mainstream students and regionally, students residing in the 10% most deprived postcode (SIMD 10) zones as well as care experienced young people, tend to be less successful than mainstream students, with an attainment gap that is greater than the national average.

The University of the Highlands and Islands partnership has committed to work collaboratively to enhance attainment in further education, drawing on the strengths of each academic partner to inform practice across the region.

² 2018 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan, Scottish Government, <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/12/2207/2>

³ 2018 Scottish Funding Council – Letter of Guidance 2018-19
file:///C:/Users/EO04dr/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/IE/2EG7BOKE/SFC_letter_of_guidance_2018-19.pdf



This strategy has three key aims:

- To improve student attainment rates overall, in academic partner colleges and in specific subject areas where student success is below the regional and national benchmarks;
- To improve student attainment rates for care experienced young people;
- To improve student attainment rates for students residing in SIMD10 post code zones.

Strategic Aim One

To raise attainment for students on full-time further education programmes to a minimum of 70% overall, with attainment at academic partner and subject level exceeding national benchmarks and demonstrating continued improvement thereafter.

Objectives

1a. To implement a regional annual quality review process of key quality performance indicators including:

- National and regional attainment benchmarks and priorities
- Subject/programme overall and partial attainment rates
- Retention, early withdrawal and withdrawal rates
- Attainment rates for specific learner groups
- Student satisfaction
-

1b. To analyse available trend data over a rolling period of three years to identify subject areas and programmes for development, focussing on subject areas with the greatest percentage of overall enrolments (and therefore credits) and/or priority industry sectors, and within these categories:

- Subject areas with attainment below 70% or subject benchmark
- Programmes with attainment below 70% or subject benchmark

1c. To provide targeted regional and local support and intervention to effect impactful action planning to raise attainment through:

- Identification and transfer of good practice from within and beyond the region
- Deployment of regional skills and expertise (including Associate Assessors, Quality Managers, Curriculum Managers, Delivery Teams)
- Development of agreed frameworks for improvement
- Local and regional monitoring of progress against agreed milestones

Strategic Aim Two

To reduce the attainment gap between care-experienced students and the overall student body to improve the life-chances of this disadvantaged group.

Objectives

2a. To create a learning environment in which care experienced young people can thrive by:

- Ensuring that all staff within the partnership understand their responsibilities in supporting care-experienced young people
- Engaging staff in development opportunities that build on the mandatory corporate parenting training
- Developing effective relationships between all academic partners and statutory and non-statutory bodies that provide support for young people in care and care leavers



- Establishing accessible referral services for care experienced learners

2b. To provide effective support to help care-experienced young people to transition onto the right course at the right level at the right time by:

- Working with external agencies and partner organisations to encourage pre-entry declaration of care-experienced status
- Effectively publicising the support each academic partner provides to care-experienced young people
- Providing clear and informative information regarding course content and progression routes, student financial support and other support services available
- Identifying a designated member of staff to act as a key point of contact and advocate for care experienced students during the period of transition and beyond

2c. To enable care experienced students to succeed by:

- Providing repeated opportunities to confidentially declare care experienced status at:
 - Application
 - Enrolment
 - Induction
 - On-course guidance meetings
- Providing appropriate and necessary flexibility in arrangements for learning, teaching and assessment
- Monitoring the attendance and progress of care experienced students, providing additional intervention and support as required
- Working with care experienced students to support progression to further study and/or relevant employment and career development

Strategic Aim Three

To reduce the attainment gap for students residing in SIMD 10 post-code zones to improve the life-chances of this disadvantaged group.

Objectives

3a. To improve marketing of courses to schools and communities residing within SIMD 10 post-code zones by:

- Providing experiences for young people in early secondary years that develop an insight into post-compulsory education opportunities and an appetite to engage
- Working with community groups to remove real and perceived barriers to further and higher education opportunities
- Working with relevant school staff to raise awareness of locally available routes through further and higher education to rewarding careers
- Working with parents of young people in SIMD 10 post-code zones to develop further and higher education aspirations

3b. To improve transitions for young people from SIMD10 post-code zones, increasing conversion from application to enrolment and reducing early withdrawal rates by:

- Providing opportunities to blur the boundaries between school and further/higher education
- Providing taster experiences that give greater insight into course content, delivery methodology and the reality of future jobs and careers
- To provide early on-course support to address any unexpected academic or pastoral difficulties
- To simplify student support funding information and application processes



3c. To reduce withdrawal rates and enhance attainment rates for student residing in SIMD 10 post-code zones by:

- Providing opportunities to experience post course progression routes through work experience and interaction with more advanced classes
- Providing mentoring support from successful students who have overcome similar challenges
- Providing accessible and flexible support services
- Employing intervention actions informed by student engagement monitoring processes

Measuring Success

The impact of this strategy will be measured regionally and locally, making use of established structures and reporting mechanisms to do so. SMCT will provide regional oversight of strategy implementation, set annual targets and strategically deploy agreed regional resources. Outcomes will be reported in the form of Regional Outcome Agreement Progress Reports to Partnership Council and FERB.

Locally, each academic partner will ensure that regionally-set targets are incorporated into local reporting, including but not restricted to the partner's Evaluative Report and Action Plan produced annually.

Regional Planning and Monitoring

The Quality forum will monitor regional actions and outcomes and will produce an annual report analysing performance indicator trend data. The analysis will identify subjects and programmes to be prioritised for improvement action planning. This annual report will provide recommendations to SMCT.

Subsequent to SMCT approval, development teams for each identified subject area will be formed, chaired by either a senior manager or quality manager from the partnership. These groups will include staff (e.g. programme leaders, lecturers and support staff) who will work with the Chair of the group to develop an improvement action plan.

Improvement planning in general will also be informed by a programme of cross curricula CPD events and the harmonisation of FE quality arrangements, including peer review, evaluation of learning and teaching, professional discussion opportunities, production of good practice registers and materials accessible by all partners and deployment of Associate Assessors as 'critical friends'.

Progress reports against agreed milestones will be developed by regional development teams on a quarterly basis to be considered by the Quality Forum and SMCT.

Enhancement Plan 2018/19-2020/21 – North Highland College UHI

Section 1 – Actions for Improvement

Note – Names of individual staff/groups responsible for planned actions within the published document are not identified, but are available in the plan for internal use.

The initial enhancement plan for 2017/18 was based on a one year action plan for improvement, however, many actions, in reality were longer term and had unrealistic completion dates set. Evaluation of progress against actions and the requirement to extend the plan to a 3 year timeframe has facilitated the college's ability to timeline actions more realistically and evaluate the plan going forward.

In the 2017/18 plan, actions 1, 2, 3, 4a-b, 5a-b, 9a, 10a-b and 14a-c were completed; 4c-d, 5c, 6-8, 9b-c, 12-13, 14d and 16-18 although progressed are being carried forward to this new plan; actions 4e-g, 10c, 11, 15 and 19 have been superseded or are no longer relevant. Progress against actions in the 2017/18 plan is documented within the body of the evaluative report.

The college is currently considering the suitability of this new 3 year plan as the college operational plan.

Leadership and quality culture

Ref in Report	QI	Area for development in Evaluation report	Planned actions	Target for completion		
				2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
18	1.1	Whilst initial progress in leadership development has been positive, the senior team recognise the need for further investment in this area for newly promoted curriculum staff and the further development of support managers and team leaders to build and strengthen leadership capacity for the future.	a) Identify development needs of promoted curriculum staff b) Develop staff development programme for promoted curriculum staff, support managers and team leaders c) Plan and implement staff development programme annually	Jan 19 Feb 19	Sept 19 Oct 19	Sept 20 Oct 20
				Sept 18- Jun 19	Nov 19- Jun 20	Nov20- Jun 21
19	1.4	In 2017/18, strategies to develop more consistent practice in self-evaluation activities have been developed at regional and local level to address the quality of self-evaluation documentation, SMART action planning and use of cross college and national performance indicators to benchmark performance, plan for and monitor improvement. For example, staff development in the use of alternative self-evaluation tools has been well received by managers. Further work is required to implement these strategies and	a) Develop college implementation plan of strategies to support improvement in self-evaluation across curriculum and support teams. b) Implement plan c) Review progress and impact of the plan annually and update implementation plan	Feb 19		
				Mar-Jun 19 Jul-Aug 19	Sept-Jun 20 Jul-Aug 20	Sept-Jun 21 Jul-Aug 21

		consolidate practice at operational level within and across curriculum and support teams to support improved evaluation of the curriculum, services to support learning and the engagement of learners in these activities.				
20 & 21	1.4	<p>Although in 2017/18, there has been a slight improvement in survey response rates, the number of learner responses in surveys is low in comparison to the total number of college learners and does not sufficiently reflect feedback from learners across different modes and types of study. This is despite interventions and corresponding improvements to response rates as a consequence of work by our HISA Depute and Learner Engagement Coordinator, such as HISA introducing prize incentives and promotion of the impact of learner feedback.</p> <p>There is a need to review the reasons for inconsistency in learner representative engagement within a few programme teams.</p>	<p>a) Analyse responses from learner surveys to identify areas to target improvement</p> <p>b) Consult with learner groups to identify reasons for lack of response</p> <p>c) Develop a plan of activities to capture the learner voice from underrepresented groups and improve response rates</p> <p>d) Implement devised plan</p> <p>e) Review progress and impact of the plan annually and update implementation plan</p> <p>a) Consult with learners and curriculum teams to identify reasons for inconsistency in learner engagement in programmes with within programmes</p> <p>b) Pilot online activities to support part time and distance learning students to provide feedback</p> <p>c) Develop plan to tackle lack of representation in conjunction with learners and curriculum teams</p> <p>d) Implement plan</p> <p>e) Review progress and impact of plan annually and update implementation plan</p>	<p>Dec 18</p> <p>Jan 19</p> <p>Jan 19</p> <p>Feb 19</p> <p>Feb 19</p> <p>Jan-Jun 19</p> <p>Jun 19</p>	<p>Oct 19- Apr 20</p> <p>Aug 19</p> <p>Sept 19</p> <p>Dec 19</p>	<p>Oct20- Apr 21</p> <p>Aug 20</p> <p>Sept 20</p> <p>Dec 20</p>
22	1.4	Further work is required to consolidate work to assist some teaching staff to draw upon the full range of resources available to support the enhancement of their individual teaching practice and set targets for improvement.	<p>a) Peer review team and ADG to discuss and develop a strategy to support teaching staff in developing action plans from peer review and within annual appraisal</p> <p>b) Implement strategy</p> <p>c) Monitor effectiveness of strategy and update annually</p>	<p>Jun 19</p>	<p>Sept 19- Jun 20</p> <p>Jun 20</p>	<p>Sept 20- Jun 21</p> <p>Jun 21</p>

Delivery of learning and services to support learning

Ref in Report	QI	Area for development in Evaluation report	Planned actions	Target for completion		
				2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
11	2.2	Curriculum design across college access programmes (SCQF level 3&4) is not currently meeting the needs of a few learner groups or providing appropriate progression pathways to SCQF level 5 programmes in some subject disciplines. The college should complete the comprehensive review of this provision which began in 2017/18. (11)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Carry out a thorough evaluation of the curriculum design and effectiveness of specific support arrangements for access programmes (SCQF level 3 & 4) to gather a clearer understanding why current programmes don't meet needs of all learners. This to include consultation with schools and agencies and a review of support requirements required, progression pathways and entry and exit points b) Identify proposals for new programmes across college campuses and develop required approval documentation c) Revised programme proposals to be presented to Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee for approval d) Implement phased delivery of new programmes as required 	Mar 19 Apr 19 Apr 19 Sept 19	Sept 20	
12	2.2	Whilst good practice in the development of career management skills is embedded in some college programmes, this is not consistently planned and delivered within all college programmes and learner satisfaction with the assistance available for CV writing and interview skills across college is low. During 2017/18, cross college workshops in CV writing and mock interviews were well received however further work is required by curriculum teams to embed these skills in curriculum planning and delivery in line the Career Management Skills framework. (12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Develop strategy to support curriculum teams to embed career management planning within full time college programmes b) Implement strategy c) Review impact of strategy and update implementation plan annually d) Develop strategy for the development of cross college activities to support learner to develop career management skills e) Implement strategy f) Review impact of strategy and update implementation plan annually 	Jan 19 Feb-Jun 19 Jun 19	Sept 19 Oct 19- Jun 20 Jun 20 Oct 19- Jun 20 Jun 20	Oct 20- Jun 21 Jun 21 Oct 20- Jun 21 Jun 21
13	2.2	The college should consider a strategy to further shift the balance of ownership for curriculum planning and review from college managers to curriculum teams. Recent restructuring of the academic sections and creation of additional leadership posts for learning and teaching will assist this, but it will take time to address this shift in culture. (13)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Discuss issue with ADG group and promoted curriculum staff b) Develop strategy c) Implement strategy d) Review impact of strategy and update implementation plan annually 	Jun 19	Sept 19 Oct 19- Jun 20 Jul 20	Sept 20- Jun 21 Jul 21
14	2.3	Whilst the majority of staff make use of digital technologies to support learning activities, recent research undertaken by a member of staff studying TQFE and outcomes of evaluation activities, such as	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Devise curriculum staff survey to assess specific digital skills development needs b) Design prioritised programme of development activities to address identified skills gaps 	Jan 19 Feb 19		

		limited use of digital assessment techniques, have confirmed a need to support teaching staff in the development of a broader range of emerging digital technologies to support and enhance purposeful learning and assessment, which is in line with the college and UHI Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy.	c) Plan and implement schedule of development activities	Mar 19- Jun 19	Sept 19- Jun 20	Sept 20- Jun 21
15	2.3	Analysis of peer review activity and feedback from assessment focus groups confirms that, within curriculum teams, the quality of written feedback/feedforward learners received from a few teaching staff is variable. The college should prioritise implementation of actions to address areas for development identified in the evaluation of the assessment and feedback enhancement theme.	a) Review evaluation of assessment and feedback theme b) Confirm recommendations to progress c) Implement recommendations	Dec 18 Jan 19 Feb 19 – Jun 19	Sept 19- Jun 20	
16	2.4	Current information and systems to support learner funding applications are not yet fully effective as some learners struggle to provide the required supporting documentation to support their application, resulting in delays in processing funding.	a) Carry out a thorough review of current information and systems to support learner funding applications and identify challenges of current system from staff perspective b) Consult with learners to identify challenges of using current system and understanding of support documentation c) Develop strategy to facilitate improvement in this area	Mar 19 Mar 19 Apr 19		
17	2.4	The college should continue to implement revised arrangements for monitoring the attendance and progress of learners to facilitate earlier identification of learners at risk of drop out and delivery of timely interventions.	a) Implement CELCAT online attendance system across college b) Further roll out of triage meetings across FT programmes c) Review effectiveness of current arrangements for monitoring attendance and progress with JOG members d) Develop revised strategy to identify and support learners at risk e) Implement strategy f) Review impact of strategy and update implementation plan annually	Sept 18 Sept 18- Jun 19 Mar 19 Jun 19 Jul 19	Aug 19 – Jun 20 Jun 20	Aug 20- Jun 21 Jun 21

Outcomes and impact

Ref in Report	QI	Area for development in Evaluation report	Planned actions	Target for completion		
				2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
1	3.1	Review suitability of school- college provision at SCQF level 3 and 4, as part of the broader access review to address access and inclusion issues experienced by a few individuals and groups experiencing barriers to learning.	Combined with action 11 in 2.2 above			
2, 3	3.1	<p>There is a need to reflect on the effectiveness and resourcing of current support arrangements, particularly in the functions of student funding and pastoral and learning support, to ensure services continue to meet demands and changing learner needs.</p> <p>Further review is required to consolidate and develop college systems to identify, monitor and support individuals and a few learner groups who experience barriers to learning in order to sustain continued improvement in learner outcomes, including those of SIMD10 and care experienced learners. For example, a few learners do not always declare mental health issues and other barriers to their learning early enough and despite subsequent staff interventions, learners are unable to sustain their learning. There is also a reluctance for a few learner groups to access the support services available.</p>	<p>a) Carry out a comprehensive review of support arrangements within college to include:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A review of student funding systems - A review of pastoral support - A review of learner support systems - Consideration of support arrangements for specific learner groups <p>b) Identify actions for improvement</p> <p>c) Implement improvement strategy</p>	<p>Feb 19 Apr 19 Apr 19</p> <p>Jun 19</p>	<p>Aug 19- Jun 20</p>	<p>Aug 20- Jun 21</p>
4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	3.2	<p>Rates of successful completion are low on a few full time programmes at SCQF level 4 and 5. For some programmes, issues with curriculum design have been identified as a contributory factor and for a few learners, support mechanisms are not fully effective to sustain their learning.</p> <p>Rates of successful completion are low on a number of part time FE programmes and the number of learners on part-time FE programmes (71.2%) who successfully completed their programme, remains</p>	<p>Consider implementation of regional strategy to improve attainment at local level</p> <p>a) Carry out detailed trend analysis of withdrawal rates and attainment data to identify if there are any common themes affecting outcome success across programmes or specific learner groups</p> <p>b) Analyse criteria for programme success on all programmes with low success rates</p> <p>c) Discuss reasons for poor attainment with specific curriculum teams and agree prioritised action plans for improvement.</p>	<p>Jan 19</p> <p>Feb 19</p> <p>Apr 19</p> <p>May 19</p>	<p>Sept 19</p> <p>Oct 19</p>	<p>Sept 20</p> <p>Oct 20</p>

		<p>nearly 6 percentage points below the sector average of 77.1%.</p> <p>Attainment rates for part-time learners in the 16-19 category, many of whom attend school-college link courses are 9 percentage points lower than the sector average and full-time learners in college in the same age group. Further analysis of part time success rates overall, for senior phase learners, SIMD10, learners with a disability and care experienced learners is required to confirm common contributory factors across the lower success rates in these categories.</p> <p>Withdrawal rates on part time FE programmes have fluctuated over the past 3 years and despite an improvement of 5 percentage points from last year, remain 3 percentage points higher than the sector average of 10%.</p> <p>Success rates for students who declared a disability have dropped by 3 percentage points and now sit just below sector average and that of other college students. This is accounted for by a drop in attainment for some part time learners declaring a disability.</p> <p>Although there have been improvements in outcomes for learners residing within the 10% most deprived data zones (SIMD 10), carers, those who come from a care experienced background and or minority ethnic group, further action is required to sustain improvement for these learner groups. The number of college learners from a care experienced background and a minority ethnic group are small.</p>	<p>d) Analyse which programmes learners from SIMD 10 are enrolled on and identify if there are common themes</p> <p>e) Review support arrangements for learners who are carers or come from a care experienced background – combined in action 2,3 in 3.1 above</p> <p>f) Implement improvement actions and monitor impact on PIs</p>	<p>Mar 19</p> <p>Aug 19</p>	<p>Aug 20</p>	<p>Aug 21</p>
10	3.2	<p>At peak times, delays in processing funding applications are a source of learner dissatisfaction and for a few learners, can affect their ability to fully engage with their programme and sustain their learning.</p>	<p>Combined with actions for 2, 3 in 3.1 above</p>			

Section 2 – Arrangements for Monitoring Progress on Actions for Improvement

Responsibility for implementing and monitoring progress on actions for improvement will fall in the first instance to the identified owner(s) of the action, but be overseen by the Director of Learning and Teaching. All managers/team leaders and student representatives will be responsible for ensuring they and their peers engage with and implement actions corresponding to their curriculum or service.

Progress on specific actions for improvement will be discussed and reviewed by relevant key college committees with responsibility for collective action with overall progress monitored by the college's *Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee* and *the Joint Operations Group (JOG)*. Overarching monitoring of progress across the enhancement plan will be reported by the Director of Learning and Teaching to the college *Planning and Resource Group* and the Board's *Learning, Teaching and Research* committee.