



NORTHERN
COLLEGE

Self-Assessment Report 2018-19

Begin. Discover. Succeed

Context

The Northern College mission is to provide outstanding adult residential and community education for the empowerment and transformation of individuals and communities

Established in 1978, The Northern College is a residential College dedicated to the education and training of adults who are seeking to return to learning and use the value of education to improve their life opportunities. It also offers training for those who are active in community and voluntary groups as well as in trade unions.

The Northern College delivers its teaching, learning and assessment in a grade 1 listed building, located just outside Barnsley in South Yorkshire, and offers residential accommodation and a Children's Centre to enable improved access and learning opportunities for many of its students.

Courses are available from entry level through to higher level studies and the structure of the curriculum enables and encourages progression. The College continually looks to develop new provision to meet local, regional and national demand alongside meeting its mission.

The College attracts students predominantly from the Yorkshire area, but also engages with students from across the country due to the range of provision and the residential offer.

51% of Northern Colleges students came from the Sheffield City Region area in 2018-19. SCR has some of the highest economic inactivity and unemployment rates across Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) areas and is the 7th most deprived LEP area.

SCR lags behind England, and to a lesser extent other comparator city-regions, on almost all headline productivity indicators. As an example, despite an increase in gross weekly pay in Barnsley, the gap between England and Barnsley has widened.

Northern College is focused on supporting SCR and Barnsley Council to achieve their key priorities through delivering on its mission. The College will continue to deliver provision that engages those adults previously feeling excluded from education with an inclusive and accessible offer, and will develop opportunities to retrain and up skill working people to access new jobs and promotional opportunities. Digital and essential employability skills will be key to the range of provision.

2018-19 Performance Data

Retention, Pass & Achievement

	Year	Leavers	Ret %	Pass %	Ach %	NAR 17/18	"+/-"
Whole College	2016/17	4095	98.5	97.9	96.4	87.9	8.5
	2017/18	4081	96.2	98.9	95.1	87	8.1
	2018/19	4025	97.8	98.8	96.5	=	9.5

NAR - National Achievement Rate

Participation – Equality & Diversity

18/19 Targets	Whole College			
	Target	16/17	17/18	18/19
% Males	45	41	42	39
% Females	55	59	58	61
% Enrols from Ethnic Minority Groups	20	15	16	18
% Enrols by students declaring LDD	30	44	47	54
% Enrols by students who are unemployed/unwaged	50	73	76	75
% Enrols by students with no qual above L1	50	59	64	57

GCSE Maths

Year	Overall Pass	Grade 4 or above - Northern College (Pass)	Grade 4 or above - National 19+ (Pass)	Minimum Threshold - All Grades
2016/17	100	64.7 (total 17, 11 Grd 4+)	42.8	75
2017/18	100	75 (total 12, 9 Grd 4+)	38.8	75
2018/19	92.9	57.1 (total 14, 8 Grd 4+)	N/A	N/A (75)

GCSE English

Year	Overall Pass	Grade 4 or above - Northern College (Pass)	Grade 4 or above - National 19+ (Pass)	Minimum Threshold - All Grades
2016/17	83.3	66.6 (total 6, 4 Grd 4+)	50.2	75
2017/18	100	58.3 (total 12, 7 Grd 4+)	48.2	75
2018/19	88.9	66.6 (total 9, 6 Grd 4+)	N/A	N/A (75)

Access to HE Achievement Rates

Year	Northern College	GFE & Tertiary Colleges 19+	Minimum Threshold
2016/17	84.2	79.6	70
2017/18	84.9	80.3	70
2018/19	88.3	N/A	N/A (70)

Leadership & Management

Strengths:

- Leaders ensure improvement is continuous and sustainable, through a rigorous self-assessment and quality improvement plan (QIP) process. This has led to an overall College retention rate of 98% and an achievement rate of 97%.
- A new leadership structure focused on student experience, outcomes and sustainability is driving forward outstanding education within the college.
- Highly effective course leadership ensures that teachers have the freedom to develop their own ideas in line with the College Mission. This leads to changes in practice and course structure which improve the curriculum delivered to students.
- Strong departmental leadership ensures student engagement is high. This is evidenced by high levels of retention and onward education and employment progression.
- In line with its mission, the College attracts a variety of students. Enrolments from BAME students increased 3% in 2018/19 and the College continues to offer provision from first steps engagement, through to Higher Education. Students achieve excellent results at all levels.
- Exemplary community engagement has enabled the college to continue to expand its community learning offer, providing 3,024 preparation for life and work learning opportunities through courses such as Free Thinking and Forest Confidence set in a unique residential environment.
- Leaders use ambitious whole College and area based performance indicators, to monitor progress with a focus on equality and diversity. As a result, students with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) achieve outstanding results in line with non LDD students.
- Robust staff performance monitoring ensures leaders remain well connected to the workload of their staff and that staff are supported to manage their workload.
- Governors have a clear vision for the College focused on innovation, diversification and promotion. Governors hold leaders to account for the quality of education through approving and overseeing the College SAR / QIP and through the College Quality Committee.
- Governors are clear about the College's legal duties and responsibilities, including any risks and ensure these are robustly fulfilled via a detailed governance framework, including a regularity self-assessment, overseen by a qualified clerk and company secretary.
- A well-established, developmental and holistic approach to improving teaching learning and assessment is utilised effectively to ensure that pedagogy develops consistently over time. As an example 95% or above of Diploma students rate the quality of the teaching and learning they receive highly.

Leadership & Management

Strengths (cont):

- Equality and diversity policies are clearly articulated and well embedded. In 2018-19 awareness of equality and diversity was heightened across the College through training on unconscious bias and the introduction of a College Equality & Diversity calendar.
- The College safeguarding culture is effective. Staff are clear about roles and responsibilities in relation to supporting students including in the area of extremism. Students know who to contact if an issue arises. Safer recruitment practices are embedded as part of initial staff safeguarding training.

Areas for Improvement:

- A College wide approach to continuing professional development (CPD) arising from the QIP will ensure professional development remains focused. Where whole College developments such as digital skills and planning for progression are required, impact will be achieved swiftly.
- Improved staff engagement with the College QIP will be achieved through a revision to the planning cycle. This will ensure improvements have a swift impact on learning across the College.
- The approach to teacher Personal Development Plans will be revised to ensure they are developmental and practice led thus ensuring individual teacher performance progress is rapid.
- Implementation of the review into process to formally capture progression and destination will ensure purposeful progression is clearly articulated for all College provision and all courses prepare people successfully for their intended destinations.

Quality of Education

INTENT: Curriculum design /Coverage / How appropriate

Strengths:

- Leaders construct a curriculum based on strong understanding of local, regional and national adult skills needs. As a result, a growth in innovative, bespoke provision designed with Voluntary Sector partners and on behalf of employer partners took place in 2018-19.
- The English and Maths curriculum provides a foundation for the College and is sequenced to ensure a wide, innovative and challenging curriculum enables students to achieve from Entry Level to Level 2. This is evidenced by a 42% growth in functional skills provision over 3 years.
- The College mission is firmly understood by all staff. This is translated into teaching through the rigorous embedding of core skills (English, Maths, Digital and Employability). This ensures students have the basic skills required for purposeful progression.
- Leaders, continue to drive forward an ambitious curriculum which has seen the development of new curriculum including a Level 3 IT User Skills, Pre Access Health Professionals and Family Learning. Programmes are designed in partnership with progression partners and in response to student feedback thus ensuring behaviours for learning, and progression requirements are course design features.
- Detailed Recognising, and Recording Progress and Achievement (RARPA) processes, cross-checked at moderation and via College observations of teaching, learning and assessment (OTLA) ensure strong progress relative to starting point.

Areas for Improvement:

- Aspects of the short course curriculum will be reviewed to ensure they enable students to take advantage of emerging local and regional skills priorities.
- Focused recruitment activity will continue to increase recruitment from underrepresented student groups with a specific focus on the recruitment of male students.

Quality of Education

IMPLEMENTATION: Delivery / Teaching (pedagogy) / Assessment of learning

Strengths:

- The quality of teaching and support activities are excellent across the College. Students on all types of programmes achieve outstanding results. Achievement by sector subject area is ahead of national rates in every area. For Languages, Literature and Culture achievement is 14% above and in Business Administration and Law achievement is 10% above.
- Curriculum builds incrementally based on prior knowledge. Students' progress from non-accredited through to Degree level provision as part of bespoke progression routes.
- Short courses and community provision are designed to be adaptable and responsive to community need. As a result, the College has delivered new courses which have enabled access to education for key target groups. This includes women who have suffered domestic violence and families who are part of the troubled families programme.
- Teachers with extensive up to date knowledge support those teaching outside of their main subject area through coaching, buddying and peer observation. This ensures retention and achievement rates remain high across the College.
- External quality assurance from awarding bodies demonstrate that the presentation of information and skills are systematically checked through highly effective internal quality assurance and monitoring processes, thus leading to high student achievement.
- High quality and systematic teacher feedback challenges students to excel. This is particularly evident in the achievement rates of Access to Higher Education students for whom achievement rates have risen 4% and are now 8% above national average.
- The use of subject specific and general vocabulary is acquired and effectively used by students thus preparing them for further study and employment. Vocabulary is assessed formally on a range of programmes.
- Critical thinking skills are taught well and support long-term content gain. This results in 92% of Access students progressing to higher-level study.
- The College is a focused, residential, learning environment. Use of the library, quiet study areas and the College online learning platform is high. This supplements guided teaching and leads to outstanding quality in assignment based work.

Quality of Education

IMPLEMENTATION: Delivery / Teaching (pedagogy) / Assessment of learning

Areas for Improvement:

- In 2018/19, 54% of College students declared a LDD. In order to ensure outcomes for all students remain high and students are stretched and challenged appropriately the College will review planning for the utilisation of learning support staff.
- Although achievement rates for all Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups are above national rates, in a small number of instances achievement rates are below the College average. These areas will be reviewed to ensure parity of achievement rates across all groups.
- A focus on good practice sharing between teachers, looking specifically at areas identified through Quality Assurance processes will be used to encourage and enable innovative teaching.

Quality of Education

IMPACT: Attainment / Progress / Knowledge and Skills development / Destinations

Strengths:

- Teaching challenges students and enables them to excel as evidenced by outstanding levels of achievement across the College. The quality assurance of non-accredited courses mimics that of accredited provision, ensuring students' progress and achieve equally well across the College.
- Many short courses take place over 3 days and are by necessity, intensive and demanding, ensuring progress from starting point is rapid. Student and OTLA feedback demonstrates progress and pace are key outstanding features of the College experience.
- The College achieves excellent outcomes for students from disadvantaged groups. 75% of students at College are unemployed and 57% have no qualifications above Level 1 when they commence study.
- Student work is of a consistently high standard across the College. Students with LDD achieve within 1% point of the non LDD-cohort at 96%.
- Achievement rates at Grade 4 or above on English and Maths GCSE are 18% above the national average. This ensures students are prepared for progression to further study and have the core skills required for good employment.
- Innovative development of highly successful courses, for students experiencing barriers to learning has widened participation amongst underrepresented student groups. Access to education has been widened for victims of modern slavery, those who have experienced domestic abuse and those recovering from addiction.
- Highly effective use of RARPA as evidenced at moderation is used to plan, monitor and record achievement of students on non-accredited courses leading to excellent outcomes for students.

Areas for Improvement

- Focus will be given to purposeful progression for short course students ensuring that all students are taking incremental steps forward within their education.
- By rolling out internal target tracking systems students and teachers will have improved visibility of the progress required and the steps required to achieve learning goals thus improving rates of progress.

Behaviour and Attitudes

Attitudes to learning / Behaviour / Employability / Attendance & Punctuality / Respect

Strengths:

- An environment of respect, valuing difference and no tolerance of bullying and harassment is evident through high levels of student satisfaction with the College experience and excellent student attendance and retention.
- OTLA and student feedback evidences that all staff at College contribute to creating a purposeful and engaging 24 /7 learning environment. This ensures exceptional behaviour and positive attitudes are seen across the College.
- A unique setting ensures both residential and non-residential students benefit from an enabling and focused learning environment where 98% of students feel supported to develop their personal, social and employability skills.
- The residential College environment supports students from a variety of backgrounds to develop their attitudes to learning together including through the Colleges extra curricula programme.
- The development of resilience is a key feature of the College character development framework (CHANGE) which enables students to develop their wider life skills. 99% of students reported an increased resilience to study more independently and the development of the skills required to make the changes in their lives as a result of their College experience.
- First steps community provision encourages students back into learning through the development of confidence and resilience. 99% of students report improved confidence as a result of their College experience.

Areas for Improvement:

- Scrutiny of attendance and punctuality will be improved through the implementation of a new electronic recording system. This will ensure any patterns of low attendance are dealt with swiftly.
- A new College skills for progression framework will ensure all students can demonstrate the character and employability skills needed for purposeful progression.

Personal Development

Enrichment / Fundamental British Values / Careers guidance / Health and wellbeing / Citizenship / Equality & diversity /Preparation for next steps

Strengths:

- Personal Development is exceptional. The diversity of the College curriculum coupled with the inclusive, safe and tranquil residential environment enables students to develop a wide range of experiences, in line with their talents and interests.
- The Colleges extensive extracurricular programme is a key strength identified by student feedback. It is well attended and covers opportunities for the development of social interests, further study, physical activity, student voice and social action.
- A wide and varied range of extra curricular activities ensure students feel part of the College community and develop the skills which support their continued progress.
- The College Student Equality and Diversity Forum and Student Council ensure students actively influence the work of the College. In response to this work further training for staff across the College in the PREVENT agenda and drug and alcohol abuse awareness took place in 2018-19 and has allowed potential issues to be highlighted and students supported as a result.
- The College CHANGE framework ensures a focus on the development of character skills. High levels of students' report improvements in confidence, motivation, independence, health and wellbeing as a result of their time at College.
- 98% of short course students indicate that the College has supported them to prepare for their next steps and over 94% of Diploma students indicate they are motivated to progress further in learning as a result of their studies.
- Prevent, safeguarding and British values are all firmly embedded into induction. OTLA confirms that discussion and debate are a key feature of course provision and are utilised to reinforce messages about the importance of active citizenship in a diverse, modern Britain.

Areas for Improvement:

- Parity of IAG offer across the College will be improved through the implementation of a centralised IAG service.
- Course planning for Prevent and British values will be strengthened across the College to ensure best practice ensures an outstanding education to all in this area.