



# Quality Enhancement Review of Neath Port Talbot College trading as NPTC Group of Colleges

## Outcome Report

June 2022

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*This report is published in both English and Welsh.*

## About the Quality Enhancement Review method

The QAA website explains the method for [Quality Enhancement Review \(QER\)](#) and has links to the QER handbook and other informative documents.<sup>1</sup> For 2021-22, the scope of QERs focused on quality assurance in line with the changes made by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) to external quality assurance requirements in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, QAA published an addendum to accompany the QER handbook which explains the adaptations to the method delivery. For 2021-22, providers have the opportunity to engage with QAA separately on quality enhancement. You can also find more information about the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#).<sup>2</sup>

### About this review

This is the Outcome Report of the QER conducted by QAA at Neath Port Talbot College trading as NPTC Group of Colleges. The review visit took place online between 27 and 29 June 2022. The review was conducted by a team of three reviewers:

- Ms Tessa Counsell
- Dr Osian Rees
- Dr Bradley Woolridge (student reviewer).

QAA reviews are evidence-based processes. Review judgements result from the documents review teams see, the meetings they hold, and drawing upon their experience as peer reviewers and student reviewers.

In this report, and based on the information presented, the QER team makes judgements on:

- the requirements of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) Part 1 for internal quality assurance
- the relevant baseline regulatory requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

It is possible for the overarching judgement to be expressed in three levels which indicate whether the provider 'meets these requirements', 'meets them with conditions', or 'does not meet requirements'. More detail on these categories is provided in the QER Handbook.

The overarching judgement for this report can be found on page 3, followed by any commendations, affirmations and recommendations.

A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review.<sup>3</sup>

The Technical Report sets out the team's findings under each heading in the QER method.

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<sup>1</sup> About QER: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/quality-enhancement-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/quality-enhancement-review)

<sup>2</sup> About QAA: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us)

<sup>3</sup> Technical Report: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Neath-Port-Talbot-College](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Neath-Port-Talbot-College)

## About NPTC Group of Colleges

NPTC Group of Colleges has been in operation since August 2013, when the merger occurred between Neath Port Talbot College and Coleg Powys. The higher education provision is delivered at five sites: Afan College, Brecon Beacons College, Llandarcy Academy of Sport, Neath College and Newtown College. NPTC Group of Colleges delivers both further education and higher education (HE) programmes. HE programmes lead to a range of qualifications: Certificate in Higher Education; Higher National Certificate; Diploma of Higher Education; Higher National Diploma; Foundation Degree; Professional Certificate in Education in Post Compulsory Education and Training; Bachelor degrees with honours top-up provision; Bachelor degrees with honours, including Degree Apprenticeships; and Professional Graduate Certificate in Education in Post Compulsory Education and Training.

NPTC Group of Colleges' mission statement is 'Inspiring Learning, Enriching Lives, Delivering Success', and this is delivered through a Strategic Plan. In addition, NPTC Group of Colleges has a Higher Education Strategy. This sets out four strategic aims and is supported by a HE Operational Plan, monitored by the Senior Management Team and the Board of Governors.

NPTC Group of Colleges is led by a Senior Management Team who report to the Board of Governors. The Senior Management Team is made up of senior post-holders and Assistant Principals who work across NPTC Group of Colleges.

Approximately 550 higher education students are studying across a range of programmes which are delivered as either franchised or validated provision. The higher education students account for about 7% of the student population; and, of the 550, 35% of the students study part-time. The HE students are studying across nine of the 12 academic schools, with the majority studying at Afan College and based in the School of Health, Social and Childcare.

NPTC Group of Colleges works with four degree-awarding partners: University of South Wales, University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Wrexham Glyndŵr University, and Pearson.

In the last QAA review in 2016, NPTC Group of Colleges achieved judgements of 'meets UK expectations' in relation to 'the quality of student learning opportunities' and 'the quality of information about learning opportunities'. It received a judgement of 'requires improvement' in relation to 'enhancement of student learning opportunities', and, following its action planning, was successful in having the judgement amended to 'meets UK expectations' in 2017. Since this time, NPTC Group of Colleges has continued to develop its work with regard to the area of good practice, the two affirmations and the 12 recommendations.

The good practice relating to support for students has continued and NPTC Group of Colleges identifies that new appointments, such as a Wellbeing Officer and a HE Study Coach, have made a positive impact, along with responsive support provided during COVID-19.

The affirmations, which were focused upon work in developing learner information for tutors and in developing student representation systems, have been embedded. NPTC Group of Colleges now uses OnTrack to provide the relevant data to staff; and the recruitment, training and clear expectations of the Student Representative role have been developed.

The recommendations in relation to the enhancement of student learning opportunities have continued to be developed. Specifically, NPTC Group of Colleges reports that staff records in the HR dashboard show continuing professional development (CPD) carried out and staff CPD is reported at the Higher Education Quality and Enhancement Management Group

(HEQEMG). HE staff attend bespoke CPD sessions, including those delivered by awarding partners. Moderation processes are covered as part of CPD sessions; and external examiners report positively on internal moderation processes. Additional course costs are updated yearly and set out in the HE Student Fees document. Accuracy of all published information is the responsibility of the newly created post of Assistant Principal (Student Recruitment). Timelines and sign-off procedures have been improved and University partners review and sign off programme handbooks. The strategic aims set out in the Curriculum 2019-23 Strategy focus upon closer working with employers from the point of course development onwards. NPTC Group of Colleges also runs an Employer Engagement Strategy to further build relationships with employers. A summary of external examiner reports is now presented to HEQEMG. A range of processes and documentation are in place to support students and employers undertaking work placements. Courses that include work-based learning take account of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales at the development and approval stage. The HEQEMG was set up in order to enhance the oversight of awarding bodies' programme monitoring and review reports. A range of materials are available to tutors in order to train elected student representatives. The indication of the partner responsible for delivery in external examiner reports is an area NPTC Group of Colleges is keen to further develop and the HE Manager is part of a working group seeking to address this. Enhancement initiatives are identified from student and staff feedback and data, and two to three projects are agreed based on a review of the proposals submitted to HEQEMG for approval.

## Judgements about NPTC Group of Colleges

Based on the information presented, the review team judges that:

- NPTC Group of Colleges **meets** the requirements of the ESG Part 1 for internal quality assurance.
- NPTC Group of Colleges **meets** the relevant baseline regulatory requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

This is a positive judgement, which means the provider has robust arrangements for securing academic standards, managing academic quality and for enhancing the quality of the student experience.

## Commendations

The QER has identified several commendations, which are summarised below.

- The review team commends the institution's commitment to student engagement and the student voice, enabling students to contribute to the overall quality of provision.
- The review team commends the institution's expansion of the HE staff team to recognise the distinctiveness of the HE provision and to create a HE community in order to enhance the student experience.
- The review team commends the numerous steps taken to ensure continuity in teaching, learning, student support and well-being during the pandemic.
- The review team commends the institution's commitment to providing tailored support to students to meet their academic and pastoral needs so as to enable them to achieve their potential.

- The review team commends the development and effective use of digital technology across NPTC Group of Colleges, within a supportive environment, enabling the ongoing enhancement of teaching and learning.
- The review team commends NPTC Group of Colleges' commitment to encouraging all HE staff to pursue professional development in relation to teaching, learning and student support at HE level in order to benefit the individual and the student body.

## **Affirmations**

The QER has identified several affirmations, which are summarised below.

- The review team affirms the development of the Quality Assurance Handbook in order to centralise the policies and procedures relevant to quality assurance in an accessible manner.
- The review team affirms the steps being taken to map quality processes to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education in order to ensure practices are continually reviewed and monitored to ensure ongoing alignment with sector expectations.
- The review team affirms the progress being made in the effective collection and use of HE data in order to inform decision making and evaluation.

## **Recommendations**

The QER makes no recommendations.

## Further information

A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review. The Technical Report sets out the team's findings under each heading in the QER method.

This review and its findings relate to the provider as a whole and do not supply information about individual programmes of study or subjects. For further information about those, contact the provider or [visit its website](#).

Further information about QAA and QER can be found on the [QAA website](#).

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