

D2N2 Infrastructure Investment Board (IIB) Cover Sheet – May 2019

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| Meeting and Date | Infrastructure and Investment Board 30 th May 2019 | | |
| Subject | Vision University Update | | |
| Author | T Goshawk | Total no of sheets | 5 |

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| Papers are provided for: | Approval <input type="checkbox"/> | Discussion <input type="checkbox"/> | Information <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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Summary and Recommendation(s)

The Vision University project has remained as an amber risk project due to the missed output targets for learners. West Nottinghamshire College have made a number of organisational and personnel changes in leadership and have met with the LEP to discuss an output profile change and the ways forward for the project.

West Nottinghamshire College has provided the IIB with an update.

The Board are asked to approve a request to reprofile the learner outputs for the project subject to approval of a change to the overall LEP learners target for LGF:

| | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 | 20/21 | 21/22 | Total |
|------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Original Outputs | 394 | 561 | 589 | | | 1544 |
| Proposed outputs | | | 140 | 312 | 432 | 884 |

Background and Context

- 1.1 In September 2015, West Nottinghamshire College was awarded a grant of £2.6m for its Vision University Centre Project.
- 1.2 The rationale for the project and its aims was to create a centre for higher level learning serving the areas predominantly of Mansfield and Ashfield, areas which fall significantly behind national and regional areas in terms of the number of the population qualified to level 4 and above.
- 1.3 Research undertaken on the college's behalf by the University of Derby indicated that the need for a more highly skilled workforce for the local area was imperative, with a prediction that the area would need to grow the population of those qualified to level 4 and above by 46% by 2022.
- 1.4 This research along with information from local economic planning led to the creation of a business plan. Targets for growth within the business plan were ambitious and included a basket of qualifications at level 4 and above including higher and degree apprenticeships, access to higher education provision, short courses aimed at local employers and traditional full and part-time level 4 -6 degree programmes.
- 1.5 The intention was that the college would look to expand on its current higher education offering with a focus on health science, leadership and management as well as engineering (albeit with engineering delivery sitting outside the physical confines of the centre due to the specialist nature of the facilities needed).
- 1.6 Growth numbers were established against a baseline of 503 (traditional higher education students), however, the removal of the cap on HE numbers nationally meant that at roughly the same time the centre opened the HE market became increasingly competitive, this has affected FE colleges across the sector with many seeing a downturn in their HE numbers over the last three years. The college experienced a drop of 125 higher education students between the years 2016/17 and 2017/18 with numbers stabilising in 2018/19.
- 1.7 This decline in traditional higher education meant that the college has not met its projected growth targets as part of the original bid. The college still believes that there is a need and potential to develop higher education for the local area; this paper sets out a re-basing proposal for the college moving forwards.

Achievement against plan

- 2.1 As indicated in the background, the college set ambitious targets for growth attached to the university centre. A change to market conditions as a result of the cap removal, coupled with the college's slow progress in curriculum development for traditional HE has meant that it has fallen some way short of targets originally in the bid. The withdrawal of the nursing bursary has had an impact on the college's access to nursing programme, by far the largest course in the portfolio. Table 1 below outlines the current position against target.

| Category | Baseline | Target | Actual | Target | Actual | Target | Actual |
|------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| | | 2016/17 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2018/19 |
| Traditional HE | 503 | 590 | 424 | 690 | 378 | 715 | 387 |
| Higher Apps | 0 | 70 | 185 | 127 | 220 | 140 | 146* |
| Access to HE | 164 | 190 | 113 | 216 | 119 | 242 | 101 |
| Short programmes | 0 | 211 | 100 | 211 | 180 | 211 | 0* |
| Total | 667 | 1061 | 822 | 1244 | 699 | 1308 | 634 |

*to date

- 2.2 Whilst the college may have done better than planned in certain areas (higher apprenticeships), a decline and then levelling of traditional higher education numbers and access to HE numbers has meant that as at March 2019, the college had met only 48% of its target for the centre. In 2016/17 and 2017/18 the college worked in partnership with Nottingham Trent University to offer a series of two hour and full-day master class sessions. These sessions were funded through an ERDF project. In 2018/19 the college took the decision not to run with the programme, due to dwindling numbers and a lack of interest on behalf of local employers.

Rebasing and re-evaluating

- 3.1 In 2017/18 (for entry in September 2018), the college joined the UCAS admissions system for the first time. This has enabled a greater 'reach' of the college's provision but has also enabled the college to gain access to local data around applications and eventual study at higher level. This has enabled the college to focus on opportunities for growth based on local demand. This market intelligence coupled with employer demand will lead the development of higher education within the college.
- 3.2 The lack of student accommodation with no plans to develop halls of residence mean that the college's market for its university centre will remain within a travel to study area of approximately 1 hour. However UCAS data would indicate that 43% of local young people choose to study at a university (excluding the college) within a one hour drive time of their home.
- 3.2 It is clear from experience, that market penetration in terms of brand awareness has been a challenge for the college. Greater partnership working with university partners could add value to the college's marketing efforts and mean that numbers for traditionally based higher education are consolidated and grown as a result.
- 3.3 In developing the college's HE offer the college will need to build on its clear strengths in vocational curriculum with a clear focus on labour market needs in terms of curriculum offer. A focus for development therefore in terms of traditional HE curriculum development will be within the following areas:

- Law – Foundation Degree with automatic progression to University Law School
 - Criminal Psychology/Forensic Psychology providing a pathway of progression from a BTEC in forensic science.
 - BSc in Engineering providing progression for students currently studying on HND qualifications delivered both as a full-time programme and as a degree apprenticeship.
 - Leadership development and management – a re-working of the college’s current business management programme with the development of degree level apprenticeships and full-cost programmes to meet employer demand.
- 3.4 Within higher apprenticeships the college sees further potential to develop a level 4+ offer within Engineering, health care, leadership and management, IT and digital technologies, teacher training, as well as professionally based apprenticeship programmes (AAT, CIPD and CIPS). This grows on the college’s current higher apprenticeships offer and enables it to expand dependent on employer and economic need.
- 3.5 The college has reviewed its short course offering to employers within the local area and in May will launch a series of sector based seminars for employers. The college is working with the local district councils’ regeneration teams to act as host for a number of seminar and master class sessions aimed at local employers. The university centre is very much seen as the hub for such activity.
- 3.6 The college has started discussions with one of its university partners into the development of a higher level offering in health care for the local area. Whilst still very much in the early stages of development, this could have significant potential for growth particularly in clinical expertise such a nursing, nursing associate, midwifery and physiotherapy.
- 3.7 Based on the above potential, the college believes that there remains potential to increase higher level provision within the local area. A slightly more realistic view of growth potential to 2021/22 is shown in table 2 below. Modest growth in traditional HE has been assumed for the year 2019/20 to take account of the lead time needed in the validation of such programmes through partner universities. Growth in access to HE programmes similarly has been assumed primarily from 2020 onwards once progression routes locally have been established.

Table 2

| Category | Baseline 2018/19 | Target 2019/20 | Target 2020/21 | Target 2021/22 |
|------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Traditional HE | 387 | 397 | 447 | 507 |
| Higher Apps | 170* | 220 | 250 | 250 |
| Access to HE | 128 | 128 | 150 | 160 |
| Short programmes | 0 | 80 | 150 | 200 |
| Total | 685 | 825 | 997 | 1,117 |

*projected

- 3.8 The targets set for growth, we believe are realistic. As no targets were set for the centre beyond 2018/19, the targets set out in table 2 above assume that the centre will have achieved originally envisioned targets (albeit with a different mix of provision) by 2021/22.

- 3.9 The college has made minimal assumptions about growth in health and social care programmes at this moment in time as discussions are still very much in their infancy. However, it is our belief that these programmes have significant potential for growth, not least with direct links with the local hospital trust and could add significantly more numbers (yet to be quantified) to the projections above.

Growth assumptions

Higher Education – Foundation Degree, HNDs, HNCs, Honours Degrees

- 4.1 Predictions for growth in 2019/20 are modest and based primarily on the college's current offering. A slight increase in student numbers in 2018/19 will produce a slightly bigger year 2 cohort with slight increases predicted in engineering (+2) based on current application numbers.
- 4.2 In 2020/21 growth is predicated on the introduction of a foundation degree in Law, BSc in Engineering and a rebadged criminal justice programme to form a new foundation degree in criminal psychology. Minimum cohort numbers of 10 have been assumed for growth within year with other growth areas targeted in health and social care (existing programmes) and engineering.
- 4.3 2021/22 assumes a year 2 cohort for the above programmes (with the exception of the BSc top-up) and modest growth across other curriculum areas as a result of a building reputation and the potential for closer partnership working, including joint branding with university partners. Increases in the college's 16-18 year olds cohort will have started to work their way through to 18 year olds and internal progression opportunities by this stage.

Higher Apprenticeships

- 4.4 Growth assumptions across the three years have been assumed to be across two main areas at this moment in time – leadership development (level 4 – 6) with the introduction of a degree level apprenticeship validated by a partner university alongside a growing offer within digital industries and IT. The college has significant potential to grow its higher level offer for the D2N2 market in line with its stated strategic objective to bring employer facing provision closer to the local area.
- 4.5 Discussions have been held with various employers within the local area with a definite appetite for the development of bespoke leadership programmes for a certain sector (for example healthcare, local government, and engineering). This could create potential for a niche area of the college's curriculum and as such the potential currently within the plan may well be understated. When considering 'carry in' learners as part of overall targets actual growth in new starts is very modest indeed.
- 4.6 Similarly there is growing demand for digital specialist apprenticeships particularly in the areas of data analysts, cyber securities experts and developers. The product developed by the college is good and is gaining traction locally in terms of reputation. Intelligence through sales is that potential may well be understated in plans at present but a prudent assessment of potential has been taken in this area.

Access to HE

- 4.7 A steady state has been assumed for the year 2019/20 with growth in 2020 onwards targeted at new curriculum developments within higher education (particularly law and

health care). No growth has been assumed at this time in clinical health care occupations particularly nursing although it is likely that a local offer for nursing will significantly increase numbers on the college's established access to nursing programme.

Short programmes

- 4.8 It would be the college's intention to re-launch a series of employer focussed seminars and workshops in 2019/20. We have assumed modest numbers across an 8 programme seminar series in 2019/20 (10 attendees on each) with the intention that as the college's reputation grows within the local area this will be expanded and numbers and popularity will grow. It would be the college's intention to work with organisations such as District Councils, D2N2 growth hub, chamber and Mansfield and Ashfield 2020 to ensure that efforts are not duplicated.

Risks

- 5.1 There are a number of key risks that have been taken into consideration:
- That the college does not receive approval for new courses. The college has had initial discussions with partner universities regarding its plans for new programmes which have been positively received. However, approval will depend on the detail behind curriculum planning, it would be our intention to submit for initial planning approval (approval in principle) in the early part of 2019/20 to give sufficient time to make changes should these be necessary.
 - That funding for higher level and degree apprenticeships particularly in leadership and management is removed – there has been some interest in management degree apprenticeships with the indication that these types of programmes may be reviewed. It is our understanding that this will focus on level 6 and above and as such growth assumed at this level has been minimal. The college's current product (level 5 CMI accredited programmes) is receiving positive feedback from employers.
 - Universities move into the local area with their own centre for higher education – clearly this would pose a significant risk to the college's ability to develop its HE offering and would mean a need to review the viability of HE at the college for the future. Indications from universities at this time is that they are keen to work with us in partnership, the details of which remain to be detailed.

Contact and further action

- 6.1 This paper is intended to enable further discussion around the university centre and its potential in the medium to longer term. Further details and discussion can be held with Vice Principal, Louise Knott, 01623, 413553, louise.knott@wnc.ac.uk