Provider name: University of the West of England
UKPRN: 10007164

# 1    Provider context

The University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) is a vibrant, modern and future-focused university, locally embedded, with global reach. Our priority is to deliver an outstanding university experience which transforms futures, through innovative, practice-led, research-informed academic programmes that prepare our students for success in their chosen careers. A regional powerhouse, we make a major contribution to educating the workforce across the South-West of England and are proud of our leading role in shaping local decisions, improving lives, and boosting the economic and cultural vibrancy of the region and beyond. We are impact-focused: through our education, research, and knowledge exchange activities, we create jobs and opportunities – positively benefitting areas of deprivation, transforming local services and empowering people from all backgrounds to fulfil their potential[1]. We are proud of our consistently high graduate employment record, which underlines the effectiveness of our real-world focus.

Our subject portfolio responds to the priorities of the Bristol city-region, which is a leading European centre for aerospace and high-value manufacturing; a home to nationally significant, high-growth clusters of digital and creative industries; and a locus for next-generation, tech-enabled financial, legal and business services, health, education and cultural provision. We collaborate extensively with stakeholders and partners across high-growth companies, multinationals, public services and third-sector bodies to provide our students with relevant, current, inclusive curricula that are appropriate to the needs of their discipline and to evolving workforce requirements. Students study with staff who are experts in their field, and develop their skills using industry-standard facilities, equipment and technologies on campuses designed to foster learning, promote wellbeing and champion sustainability.

We are proud to be a partnership university, providing transformational experiences to diverse individuals and communities. Through our work with further education colleges across the West of England, we successfully extend our reach to those for whom a traditional full-time, campus-based higher education experience might otherwise be unachievable. This includes significant higher and degree apprenticeship provision: we are one of the largest providers of Level 6 and 7 apprenticeships in the South-West, delivering to almost 500 employers and over 2,500 apprentices (December 2022); and our recent positive Ofsted inspection (December 2022) gave us the opportunity to showcase the benefits of partnership working for the learner experience. Our role as the higher education anchor partner in the West of England Institute of Technology means that we are at the forefront of higher-level skills development and delivery.

We are ambitious for all our learners and a driving force for social mobility, equipping our graduates with the confidence and cultural and social capital to take their place as future leaders. Our student profile evidences our commitment to delivering these benefits to learners from diverse backgrounds, many from groups underrepresented in UK higher education:
▪ Around 35% of UK-domiciled undergraduate students who start with us each year have a family income of below £25,000 or are otherwise eligible for a bursary.
▪ 65% of our undergraduates meet at least one widening participation marker and a third of these are from LPN Q1 or Q2 (five percentage points above the sector average).
▪ 53% of our undergraduate students come from the South-West, which currently has one of the lowest higher education participation rates in England.
We also have a growing number of international students. In 2021/22, there were over 8,000 non-UK domiciled students, representing 154 countries, studying at our Bristol campuses, adding

further to the vibrancy of the educational experience, exposing students and staff to different cultures, priorities and ways of thinking, and enhancing our graduates' intercultural competence.

We provide a personalised educational experience that equips students to be active learners, preparing them to face the future as confident and aware citizens[2]. We remove barriers and enable all our students to thrive. This is reflected in the nature and quality of our learning environments, which are underpinned by targeted and purposeful academic and wider wellbeing support services. We play a leading role in the sector in the development of student mental health services. Our innovative approach to supporting care-experienced students, and those estranged from their family, has secured national recognition.

We are delighted that our students recognise our commitment to them, reporting high levels of overall student satisfaction that are above or at our benchmark for all target groups year-on-year. There are no material differences in student satisfaction between POLAR quintiles, and levels of satisfaction amongst students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds exceed those of the student body as a whole. We are proud to have supported our students through the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic effectively, including implementing new delivery and assessment methods, adapting academic and student support services, and addressing the differential impact of successive lockdowns on different groups of students, so that they could continue to engage with their studies (such as by addressing student digital poverty). The positive feedback from our students reflects the strength of our partnership with them, our commitment to listening to their needs and our collaborative approach to enhancing their experience.

That strong and enduring partnership has underpinned the development of this submission. Both the Students' Union President and Vice-President, Education have been members of the institutional steering group, and student representatives from across the institution have acted as critical readers, as well as being key members of teams that shaped and led many activities and initiatives highlighted throughout the document.

## 2 Student experience

We deliver outstanding practice-led education, fostering the development of ready and able graduates who are ambitious, collaborative, innovative, inclusive and enterprising. Students agree that our approach to learning, teaching and assessment supports them to develop skills and confidence: **our NSS full-time results for both Teaching and Assessment are significantly above benchmark across the four years included in the dataset** and this strong performance is evident for all demographics and course types. It is also reflected in our NSS part-time outcomes, with Teaching performance repeatedly above benchmark across demographic groups.

### 2.1 Academic experience

#### 2.1.1 Enhancement-focused, industry-informed curricula
Our programmes are designed to develop students' skills and confidence and to prepare them to pursue successful careers and fulfilling lives. Our **Enhancement Framework for Academic Programmes and Practice[3]** sets out our learning and teaching ethos and its practical application. Five strategic curriculum design principles – programmatic by design; practice-led and research-informed; scholarly and evidence-based; inclusive and sustainable; and graduate attribute enabling – underpin our provision, supporting programme teams to think holistically and creatively about the

educational experiences we offer. Curriculum development and review processes routinely involve academic, technical and professional staff, students, employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies to ensure the co-creation of outstanding, cutting-edge programmes.

The continuous and critical involvement of leading **industry experts** in programme design ensures alignment with current disciplinary and professional expectations, as well as future needs. Our programmes benefit from large-scale design involvement by organisations such as the NHS, Ministry of Defence, National Cyber Security Centre, Aardman Animations, Bottle Yard Film Studios, Airbus, AECOM, Rolls Royce, Bristol Zoo, ITV and the BBC, as well as extensive engagement with small businesses and individual practitioners working across the region. We work actively with **76 professional, statutory and regulatory bodies** (PSRBs). Over 70% of our undergraduates study on accredited programmes, meeting standards set by organisations ranging from industry-wide bodies such as the Nursing and Midwifery Council, Royal Aeronautical Society, Royal Institute of British Architects and Chartered Management Institute to specialist organisations such as the Royal Geographical Society, The Independent Game Developers' Association, the Global Association of Risk Professionals, ScreenSkills and the Digital Marketing Institute. Our approach ensures our students graduate with the skills and mindset to meet and exceed sector threshold standards for their chosen career; and that we have regular, professionally informed, external feedback and dialogue on the quality and relevance of our provision. Our PSRB accreditation reports over the past four years have consistently noted the strength of our relationships with industry, the high currency of academic staff expertise, the integration of real-world experiences and assessments to support the practical application of knowledge, the interdisciplinary nature of programmes and our high post-graduation employment[4].

Our ability to monitor the impact of our approach is enhanced by our innovative **Continuous Improvement Tool (CIT)[5]**. This web-based platform enables teams to maintain proactive, holistic oversight of their programmes through year-round engagement with performance data – including market insights, cohort outcomes (with demographic splits), student feedback, external examiner inputs and sector trends. Data are released as they become available, empowering teams to track the success of each programme in attracting students, meeting their expectations and enabling them to achieve good outcomes, and to capture and monitor enhancement actions in response. Data, reflections and actions are accessible to all staff, encouraging the sharing of good practice. CIT supports staff reflectivity and ensures that analyses of programme quality are proactive, embedded, nuanced and timely.

### 2.1.2 Interdisciplinary and practice-led
Our **programmatic focus** drives students' attainment, emphasising **interdisciplinary and practice-led** approaches that scaffold learning and enable students to apply their developing expertise in real-world contexts. Our **Enterprise Skills Competence Framework[6]** guides staff in embedding enterprise and entrepreneurship education within their programmes, developing students' ability to be agile and resilient in an increasingly complex and uncertain work environment. Extensive use of problem- and scenario-based learning methods develops students' understanding of threshold concepts and builds their cognitive skills; whilst extensive and embedded **simulation, augmented reality and immersive learning** experiences bring students from diverse programmes together to build and reinforce their understanding of the real-world applications of their skills and knowledge. Exemplars of this approach include:
- Our cutting-edge engineering curriculum positions students as Professional Engineers from the outset of their studies. Professionalism, team working, communication and enterprise skills are

embedded throughout the degree, supported twice yearly through immersive and scenario-based Project Weeks. During these, all students in each annual cohort (approx. 400) come together to investigate current local and global engineering challenges. Practice-led academic research, teaching, tools and techniques are used to understand the problems and derive suitable solutions. Each Project Week also includes an Engineering Employers Fair, where around 10 employers (different each time) from across the sector provide information for students on sector needs, existing roles and predicted future trends. Students develop a cross-sector network, consider suitable placements and mentoring schemes, and start to plan for graduate roles. Analysis of the impact of the 2021/22 Project Weeks on participants' career readiness identified a 9pp decrease in the proportion of students reaching their final year of study with no career plans, and 4pp decrease in the proportion with no work experience at all[7] (amongst Engineering students who responded to our annal career registration survey;          ).

- Our Philosophy provision focusses on the application of philosophical insights to contemporary issues such as big data and artificial intelligence; the drive towards clean growth; decarbonisation and climate adaptation; health and wellbeing; digital futures and creative technologies. Through practitioner-led teaching, live briefs, and work-based opportunities, students learn to apply philosophical knowledge meaningfully to real-world situations, producing public-facing blogs, exhibitions, podcasts, briefing papers and presentations. Students organise and lead public engagement events aimed at non-academic audiences, such as the 'Thought in Action' film series delivered in collaboration with Watershed, an internationally renowned centre for film, art and technology practice in Bristol.

- Students from across the University regularly practise their learning together through major incident simulation. In summer 2022, our most ambitious simulation to date was staged in partnership with Avon & Somerset Police, Avon Fire & Rescue Service and South Western Ambulance Service. The four-day exercise involved           students from paramedic science, adult nursing, physician associate, forensic science, media, law, filmmaking and drama programmes, with a mock public enquiry held in our Bristol Law School. This event provided a unique opportunity for students to experience interprofessional practice in action. Student and partner feedback on the value of the event has been very positive, with 16 external agencies requesting the opportunity to collaborate with UWE on future simulations[8].

Employers and professional practitioners also contribute to programme delivery through live briefs, enterprise initiatives, and student conferences. Many of our academic and technical staff are professionally active in their fields, ensuring continuous skill development, practice-relevant curricula and the transfer of cutting-edge research and knowledge to their students. This brings **authenticity and credibility** to students' learning experience, reinforcing their understanding of the professional landscape, which stands them in good stead to secure graduate employment, as our sustained performance (above market benchmark over the last three years) testifies. Our **industry informed** approach helps to create purposeful assessment strategies, with innovative, authentic, real-world assignments that prepare students for the world of work (such as personalised podcasts, websites, exhibitions, e-portfolios and simulation reflections) complementing more conventional assessment methods that support the development of written and oral academic skills (such as essays and presentations). Timed, unseen written examinations are now used only as an exception to meet specific PSRB requirements.

### 2.1.3 Embedded inclusivity and sustainability

The **inclusivity and accessibility** of programmes is critical to giving all our students the opportunity to achieve their full potential. These are key factors in curriculum design and review.

Our **Inclusive Curriculum and Practice Toolkit**[9] was co-created by a group of          staff from across academic, technical and professional services teams, alongside student representatives. It provides a series of guides, with case studies and advice on concrete actions and practices that underpin inclusive learning, teaching and assessment.  Themes explored include talking about race and racism, building intercultural understanding and skills in learning spaces, managing inclusive learning environments, inclusive group work, decolonising and diversifying reading lists, decolonising curricula, inclusive assessment and feedback, and effective engagement with equality, diversity and inclusivity data. The toolkit includes a **Framework for Inclusive Teaching** to help teams ensure modules are accessible, facilitate a sense of belonging, and equip all students to succeed. The ongoing development of inclusive learning and teaching is fostered through a proactive community of practice

Our programmes are distinguished by their strong focus on **sustainability**, the result of an ambitious and longstanding agenda for sustainability education, developed in partnership with our Students' Union, and significant cross-institutional investment. Alongside programmes directly focused on sustainability (such as BSc Environmental Management; FdSc Integrated Wildlife Conservation), we ensure sustainability is embedded across all our provision. Examples include:

- Sociology students, in our Sustainable Futures module, critically engage with the 'unsustainable', and case studies in sustainable futures, from the global to the urban local.
- Law students, in our International Human Rights Law module, gain a broad understanding of some of the controversies and challenges that arise from implementing law in this area.
- Engineering students, in our Sustainable Engineering for Global Challenges module, study major global issues and the potential for engineering-based solutions.
- Computer science students work with the University's IT Services on the carbon footprint of our systems, and web development students work with Bristol air quality data.
- Nursing students take a module exploring sustainability in healthcare and public health, including ecological deterioration and environmental threat, the inter-relationship between the health of populations and of the planet, and the interconnectivity of health inequalities.
- Architecture and the built environment students take a certified co-curricular short course exploring the environmental, social and economic aspects of zero-carbon buildings and their relation to wider sustainability, studying alongside practising professionals.
- Fashion textiles students consider the full lifecycle of their products, explore the fashion industry's role in creating more sustainable, ethical futures, and use industry deadstock and surplus through the British Fashion Council's 'Student Fabric Initiative'[10].

We are recognised nationally for our work to embed sustainability into our programmes, improve sustainability performance, and prepare future sustainability leaders. Achievements include an Advance HE Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence for sustainability education (September 2019) and projects winning or being highly commended in successive Green Gown awards by the Environmental Association of Universities and Colleges, including:

- 2022: Winner of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Sustainability award (with highly commended in the Student Research with Impact and Tomorrow's Employees categories), for our Green Skills initiative. This transformative programme addresses inequalities in the sustainability sector, providing access to jobs, training, and business opportunities to Black, Asian and minoritised young people (aged 18-28) and recent graduates living in Bristol, South Gloucestershire, North and North-East Somerset and Bath. UWE students and graduates are among those benefitting; across six cohorts to date, t

- 2021: Winner of the Tomorrow's Employees award (with highly commended in the Research with Impact, Next Generation Learning and Skills, and Sustainability Champion categories) for the way we map all our curricula against the UN Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring all students can engage with sustainable development as part of their programme and embrace their responsibility for a sustainable future as they progress in their chosen career[12].

We have also played a leading role in the advancement of Education for Sustainable Development practice for the sector[13].

## 2.2 Resources, support and student engagement

### 2.2.1 Excellence in academic practice

Outstanding **academic practice** is at the core of our students' success. We invest significantly in the development of our academic and technical teaching staff at all career stages, fostering a culture of mutual support and best practice-sharing, underpinned by an evidence-informed approach to practice. Professional development and career progression opportunities are embedded within processes across the University, from appointment onwards:

- An **Initial Needs Analysis** with new academic staff at all career stages encourages a focus on continuous professional development and signposts appropriate opportunities.
- Academic staff new to teaching enrol on our Level 7 **PGCert in Academic Professional Practice (PGCAPP)**. For the past three years, this has been delivered as an Academic Professional Apprenticeship with UWE as employer-provider. All apprentices reaching End Point Assessment to date have completed successfully with 58% achieving Distinction (this requires evidence of potential impact on students and colleagues). Staff involved in the programme's design and delivery, or mentoring colleague-apprentices, also benefit from the cross-disciplinary contact and new perspectives on pedagogy this brings.
- Since October 2020, we have run an **Introduction to Teaching & Learning (ITL)** workshop series and a connected series of sessions on **Improvisation Skills for Teaching (IST)**. Aimed at associate lecturers, postgraduate researchers and technicians involved in teaching, ITL explores topics such as inclusivity, and enables networking and sharing of good practice. There have been 665 workshop attendances to date, with 85% of participants rating the sessions 'extremely' or 'very' useful. IST is a pioneering element of the ITL programme run in collaboration with the Bristol Improv Theatre, focused on creating an open, safe and connected environment for learners. Launched in April 2021, it has had 415 workshop attendances to date. 90% of participants in evaluations to date have rated the sessions 'extremely' or 'very' useful, and also reported improved student engagement as a result.
- Our **Programme and Module Leaders' Development programme (PMLD)** runs for new Programme or Module Leaders and for more experienced staff seeking to further enhance their practice. experts drawn from across the University deliver workshops on topics such as inclusive practice, academic leadership, assessment, and working effectively with programme data. Launched in 2019, PMLD is very effective in supporting staff. 82% of respondents in the most recent evaluation covering 2021 and 2022, said the workshops were 'extremely' or 'very' useful and that PMLD supports and develops their academic practice, helps them navigate their role with clarity and confidence, and offers a space to share and learn from each other as part of a wider community of practice[14].

As one of the founding signatories to the **Technician Commitment** in 2018, we have cross-institutional principles that govern how we recruit and retain technical staff, ensure equality of recognition, and provide clear opportunities for career progression and development. As a practice-led institution, we recognise and value the integral role technical staff play in student learning and success. This includes direct involvement in course delivery, and collaboration in the development of techniques and practice innovations. Technical staff also provide expert advice and guidance to staff and students on safe, effective and appropriate use of technologies, equipment and materials. We have invested significantly in CPD and wider development for technicians; we are a Partner Affiliate of the National Technical Development Centre and actively support our technicians to become Fellows of Advance HE (currently 15 hold Associate Fellowship and six full Fellowship). Both Academic Board and the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee have technician members, and technicians also play a vital role in programme validation and external accreditation events.

**Curiosity, enquiry and evidence-informed approaches** are vital for effective enhancement of teaching and learning. We run an annual round of pedagogic project funding to support innovation, and participate actively in externally funded pedagogic initiatives. Most recently (2021/22), UWE staff were part of two QAA Collaborative Projects (leading one), addressing the development of assessment design attributes for use across the higher education sector[15] and inclusive assessment language[16]. Cross-University events provide regular opportunities for sharing best practice and celebrating excellence. These include, annually, our **Festival of Learning**, apprenticeship education development conference, Student Experience awards (led by the Students' Union), Staff Excellence awards, and NSS and PTES best practice events. Additionally, a range of active and embedded communities of practice bring staff together around key themes of shared interest such as Inclusive Curriculum, Apprenticeships, Higher Education Pedagogic Research and Academic Literacy.

Our staff achieve **external recognition** for their teaching expertise. In the past four years, 68 staff have been awarded Senior Fellow status via our **Advance HE accredited scheme** for sustained impact, the co-ordination of teaching and learning practices, and support for colleagues. We have also pioneered a new route to Fellowship aligned to the UKCGE's Good Supervisory Practice recognition scheme, demonstrating sector leadership in this area. In total          staff currently hold HEA fellowships (January 2023):          Associate Fellows (AFHEA),          Fellows (FHEA), Senior Fellows (SFHEA) and     Principal Fellows (PFHEA). Over the last four years, colleagues have also won          **National Teaching Fellowships** and          **Collaborative Awards for Teaching Excellence** (CATE) (for our approach to sustainability education, our Team Entrepreneurship programme and our multi-professional Independent Prescribing provision).

Our **academic promotions scheme** enables staff to focus on their strengths across three domains: learning and teaching, research, and knowledge exchange. Appropriate levels of Advance HE Fellowship are aligned to our promotion processes for academic staff, where excellence in teaching and learning provides a clear pathway through to full professorship.

*2.2.2 Fostering student success*
Our students benefit from outstanding **support for learning**, appropriate to their level of study, tailored to their individual needs and mindful of the close interplay between academic success and physical and mental wellbeing. **The effectiveness of our approach is evident in our very strong NSS Academic Support performance: during the past four years we have been above or in**

**line with our benchmark overall, for all modes and levels of study, and for all course types, across both UWE- and partner-delivered provision.** We are particularly pleased to be materially above benchmark for full-time students across all demographic groups and for all black and minority ethnic students.

**Starting Block**, our whole-University induction programme, supports students to transition successfully into and through their higher education journey. Launched initially in 2020/21 as support during the COVID-19 pandemic, Starting Block prepares students for success by ensuring they begin each year of study well. It offers a series of activities which help students understand the requirements of their level/programme, the range of support available, and what it means to be a member of the UWE Bristol community. Students are encouraged to explore and practise the Five Secrets to Success[17]: 'discover your student self, engage with your course, grow your confidence, visualise your future and connect with others'. Quantitative and qualitative feedback show that students engage positively and find the programme useful: over 70% of students who participated in an evaluation after Starting Block September 2022          rated it four or five out of five. Respondents particularly valued feeling well informed about their programme and key university systems and software, being introduced to fellow students and meeting friendly and approachable staff. In response to previous student feedback, from 2022/23 Starting Block includes a module on our Speak Up initiative, co-developed by staff and students to tackle inappropriate behaviours and create inclusive environments. Almost 7,000 students have engaged with the module to date, with 90% students in a recent evaluation survey (          , October 2022) reporting that the course had helped them to understand the University's values and enhance their understanding of discrimination, racism, and other forms of inappropriate behaviour[18].

Our approach to **academic skills** development and support is well-established and highly effective. Students receive extensive guidance and advice on the practices and behaviours that underpin successful academic study, such as effective reading, writing, referencing, research, time-management, use of digital technologies, resilience and self-care. Our model embeds academic skills development into programmes and assessments, driving inclusion and helping students understand how these skills relate to their discipline and future career. Close working between programme teams and skilled professionals in our Library Services underpins the success of this model, producing engaging and academic-level-appropriate timetabled sessions. The effectiveness of provision for cohorts across both generic and discipline/ profession-specific themes is tracked, guided by a Levels of Embeddedness Maturity Model[19]. 92% of programmes now include embedded academic skills.

In-class academic skills support is complemented by a wide range of co- and extracurricular workshops and personalised provision. This includes English language support both for native speakers and speakers of other languages; mathematics, computing and statistics skills development; and targeted support for specific disciplines under our 'Espresso' model of informal drop-in support sessions with academic staff. For example:
▪ Over 500 extracurricular library workshops have been run since 2019, reaching a total of 4,000 students. Resources are also available as online workbooks for independent self-study. Students also have access to 24/7 'live chat' support, with staff trained to provide a learner-centred, coaching-style response. Student engagement via the chat function has averaged 200-2,000 queries per day since its introduction in 2019, depending on the time of year.

- Students are often referred from chat to more complex one-to-one coaching and support, with 547 appointments taken up since 2019.
- Our Espresso Science sessions are open to any student who wishes to improve their laboratory skills. Providing opportunities for students to practise core skills that have a significant bearing on academic performance in a safe space has contributed to the reduction of rates in applied sciences from 10.3% in 2017/18 to 4.9% in 2020/21.
- Students in accounting, economics and finance can access group and one-to-one sessions to improve and practise the skills being delivered in modules, with a particular focus on building confidence in quantitative aspects of their programmes. The provision was developed in response to student feedback and mapping of student performance with threshold concepts by the programme team. Student performance and progression has improved, with non-continuation at Level 4 dropping from 7.7%-5.5% in BA Accounting and Finance, 7.1% to 4.2% in BA Management and Economics, and 12.5% to 7.7% in BA Economics over the period since 2018/19.
- Students in art and design learn technical skills alongside their academic studies. Some of these are core to the subject and taught as an integral part of the course, while students can choose to learn others aligning to their individual needs and interests. Student project coordinators support students in shaping their individual learning journeys and formally book students onto technical skills sessions and workshops (2021-22 saw 6,177 bookings).

Our well-established **Peer Assisted Learning** (PAL) scheme provides support *for* students *by* students, through in-programme and extracurricular activities that build academic skills and resilience, and support engagement in formal learning, with particular focus on Foundation and Year 1 undergraduate students. PAL has operated at UWE Bristol for around 20 years and has been commended repeatedly by PSRBs. Staff and students present regularly at regional and international conferences for peer learning and peer support, on topics ranging from peer mentoring of widening participation students to how PAL has supported student wellbeing during and post-pandemic. In lockdown, PAL pivoted quickly and effectively to online provision. Evaluation of PAL delivery during the first lockdown (March-May 2020) found it helped strengthen students' feelings of belonging to the University, and that this was especially important to students who were in isolation. PAL leaders were also able to identify students showing signs of anxiety and provide peer support and signposting to specialist services[20].

Over the past four years,     students have worked as PAL leaders, mentored by     senior PAL leaders (also students). In 2021/22, 2,295 academic PAL sessions were facilitated by     PAL leaders across 61 PAL schemes, reaching 180 programmes at Foundation and Year 1. PAL leaders reflect the diversity of our student body: in 2021/22, 37% were mature students; 68% had a disability, 30% were of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic heritage and 23% were overseas students. The annual PAL impact report is used to review and continuously improve the scheme, analysing attendance and engagement data, and participant feedback. Qualitative feedback describes deepening learning, the development of study skills, and improvements in academic confidence, understanding of assessment requirements and criteria, time-management, self-organisation, and willingness to seek help. PAL leaders also report significant benefits for themselves: in 2021/22, 95% agreed their own skills and capabilities had grown through involvement with the scheme, with     respondents reporting they are now confident in mentoring and supporting others, 88% saying PAL helped them feel more connected to the University, and 95% agreeing they felt they made a positive impact on students' performance[21].

## 2.2.3 Personalised support for learning

Our tailored provision for students in need of more **specialist learning support, mentoring and adjustments to programme delivery** underpins our commitment to ensuring programmes are inclusive by design. Around 23% of our UK-domiciled full-time undergraduate students disclose a disability to us. Our focus on inclusive curriculum design has led to the most common reasonable adjustments required by disabled students becoming standard expectations across all teaching. For example, for learning events, all students can access materials 48 hours in advance via our Blackboard virtual learning environment, have permission to record and can access recordings made centrally. We also recognise the importance of a personalised approach. Currently around 3,000 students have bespoke reasonable adjustments (RAs) to their learning and/or assessment in place. We provide comprehensive guidance and training for academic staff to ensure they can deliver RAs and respond to impact statements appropriately, and we review the effectiveness of this approach routinely throughout the year. We are proactive in encouraging students to disclose disabilities, signposting to our Disability Service continuously.

We are proud of the effectiveness of our **disability and learning support services**. Outcomes for students with a reported disability in our full-time student population are in line with our benchmark and there are minimal gaps compared to outcomes for non-disabled students. This corresponds with Access and Participation datasets which show no significant gaps for disabled students in non-continuation or awarding gaps, and with Graduate Outcomes data which show disabled students achieve positive outcomes at the same rates as non-disabled students. We are also pleased to see consistently high levels of satisfaction amongst students with a reported disability in our full-time student population.

We are particularly proud of the quality and impact of our work to enable **neurodivergent students, students with challenges to mental health and other disabled students** to develop capability and independence. Our comprehensive, flexible approach combines regular programmes, workshops, drop-ins and individual sessions. Skilled specialists in accessible learning coach students to explore their learning strengths, needs and challenges, and facilitate personalised learning experiences through effective use of strategies and technologies. Since 2018 we have delivered around 2,300 screening appointments for specific learning differences and provided signs of autism and diagnostic assessments to              students. Through this provision, we help students to understand their strengths and challenges, identify likely signs of learning difference/neurodivergence and, in some instances, receive a formal a diagnosis. We also provide one-to-one specialist study skills support and mentoring focused on developing independent learning strategies, to all our learners eligible for funded support and, increasingly, to students not eligible for such aid (EU/International, short-course students and those without a formal diagnosis). The volume of support provided in this way has reduced over the past four years, as a result of our push to embed academic skills for learning in programmes but remains an important element of our offer: since 2018 we have delivered over 11,500 hours of specialist study skills support to        students, and nearly 10,000 hours of specialist mentoring

We have made significant contributions to the sector's approach to student mental health in the past five years, leading projects on behalf of UUK (to develop, trial and evaluate its Step Change Framework)[22], and the Office for Students (to develop student mental health partnerships with the NHS)[23]. Our own **whole-University approach to mental health[24]** embeds student wellbeing within teaching and assessment, and supports students during periods of transition or new

challenge, such as placements. We ensure all staff have a good understanding of mental health through mandatory training, and via a university-wide risk matrix that guides staff in supporting students and referring them for appropriate specialist support.

We provide practical support to navigate University and wider life, designed to meet the diverse needs of our student body and ensure students are well-placed to engage positively with learning:

- Students can access information, advice and guidance at any time via our **24/7 Customer First** service delivery model. We recognise the power of early intervention to prevent worries from escalating. This is particularly valuable for learners whose opportunities to access support during daytime hours may be limited, such as apprentices, students on placement and those juggling study with work or caring responsibilities. Effective triage has also reduced pressure on our clinical support services, prioritising more effectively those in need of specialist support.

- We understand how students' effective engagement with their studies can be negatively impacted by financial hardship. This has particular significance for our student body, given the high proportion of students from low-income backgrounds. Our approach to developing our students' **personal finance skills** received a Whole Institution Award from financial education organisation Blackbullion in 2019. We provide bursaries to                 students from low-income backgrounds and have a range of additional schemes, including hardship funds, short-term loans and guarantee schemes.

- During the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, we established our **digital capability** scheme providing financial assistance for students to access IT equipment to enable access to online teaching, learning and assessment.  In the following three years, we made 5,587 awards to the value of nearly £2.5m, enabling our students to engage effectively with their studies, including whilst access to on-campus facilities was restricted.

- We are extremely proud of **UWE Cares**, our sector-leading, University-wide inclusive support programme for our growing population of students without family back-up. The provision has been recognised as exemplary in the sector four years running by Stand Alone, the national charity supporting estranged students in higher education. UWE Cares is for UK-domiciled undergraduate students who are care leavers/ care-experienced, estranged from their families, student-carers or Sanctuary Scholars. Through a whole-University collaborative approach, increased levels of pastoral and financial support are provided to remove barriers to success, with demonstrable positive impacts on experience and outcomes. Numbers engaging with UWE Cares have grown from 29 in 2015/16 to 355 in 2021/22. The non-continuation rate for participants is consistently around 3%, against a UWE Bristol average for full-time undergraduates of 10.7%, and good honours rates are in line with the University average. Participant feedback is consistently positive; our most recent award from Stand Alone, was achieved thanks to a nomination by current students accessing the service.

- Our **Centre for Music (CfM)** received the University Alliance Star Award in 2022 for its contribution to sustaining the student community during the pandemic. CfM provides a university-wide creativity hub where annually over 1,800 students from over 140 programmes collaborate on recreational and wellbeing activity. Participants in CfM activities report an improved sense of belonging and better study/life balance as a result. Access to almost all music facilities, teaching and groups is free, removing barriers to participation, with individual bursaries for one-to-one tuition for care-leavers and students on low incomes[25].

- We support students to play a positive role in shaping their own wellbeing, and ensuring they are ready to learn, through initiatives such as Feel Good, MOVE, and Living Well. **Feel Good** is a year-round campaign providing students with practical support for healthy eating, as well as

opportunities to try new physical activities, make friends and learn new skills for managing stress. The programme is enhanced at key times such as the start of the year and during major assessment periods. Our **MOVE** programme, free to all students, offers over 70 sport and exercise classes per week. **Living Well** is a targeted social prescribing programme working with multiple student support services across the University and Students' Union (such the CfM, UWE Sport, UWE Grounds, UWE Catering and Student Volunteering). These provide holistic wellbeing opportunities and peer-support links for          students per academic year. Living Well consistently demonstrates significant improvements in student wellbeing measures and sense of belonging at UWE.

### 2.2.4 Outstanding learning environments

Our programmes are delivered in **authentic, physical and virtual learning spaces** that bring our practice-oriented curriculum to life. We have invested **over £300m over the past five years** in our physical and digital infrastructure, to provide the highest quality teaching and study environments, and ensure students have access to cutting-edge, industry-standard equipment and facilities. Our learning and teaching environments include:

- Our Bristol Business School, which won the Pupil/Student Experience Award at the 2018 Education Estates Awards, recognising investment that placed students at the heart of the design. The building houses outstanding teaching and learning facilities, including our Law court facilities and simulation trading rooms.

- Our flagship Engineering Building, completed in 2020, which won both the RIBA South West Award and the RIBA South West Project Architect of the Year Award in 2022 for its novel pedagogical and philosophical approach, broadening access to engineering and promoting inclusivity and intelligent design, with a strong sustainable performance. It also won Project of the Year and Social Infrastructure Project of the Year at the 2021 British Construction Industry Awards; the judges praised the way the facility is used to inspire young people into a future in engineering through engagement with schools, professionals, apprentices, and work experience opportunities. As part of the University's drive to embrace and celebrate neurodiversity, the building also includes individual study spaces designed to support students with sensory issues, including features such as white noise bubble tubes and adjustable, muted lighting. The building also incorporates a digital gallery equipped with 'technologies of tomorrow', including a virtual and augmented reality cave, and driving and flight simulators[26].

- The new Design Studio at our City centre Campus, part of our significant investment in our creative industries facilities, offers students high quality and industry standard flexible workshop space, dedicated collaborative learning spaces, and a fabrication centre featuring cutting-edge digital technologies and robotics alongside more traditional making approaches. The facilities have further strengthened our links with creative partners in the region through collaborative curriculum and technical support. For example, each year internationally renowned creative arts hub, Spike Island, where our fine art provision is based, funds several fellowships to promising graduates through an open call to final year students. Each Fellow is offered studio space with mentoring and additional funding for a 12 month period. These opportunities aim to support and encourage young artists in Bristol as they begin to develop their professional practice.

- Our state-of-the-art simulation facilities, which include excellent crime scene provision in accordance with our accreditation from the Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences (who have commended our provision). A simulation apartment, bed-sit, commercial space and specially modified two-bedroom house enable forensic science students to learn interactively through complex, expertly created, immersive crime scenes that reflect real-world conditions. The use

- of these facilities by regional police forces to train and assess crime scene investigators and other officers confirms their realism and the value of the learning environment. These spaces also allow realistic patient assessment and extraction scenarios to be generated for our paramedic students.
- Our Envirotron greenhouse, which has been designed to transform learning, research and partnerships in the areas of biodiversity, conservation, environmental change, and food security. Using LED lighting, the Envirotron enables student researchers to experiment with a wide range of simulated conditions and is integral to several degree courses across applied sciences. The findings from ongoing projects inform the curricula and provide students with an inside advantage on research that will have local, national, and global implications.

Across all our campuses we provide excellent, **modern library facilities** with flexible group, collaborative and individual study spaces, many open 24/7 all year round. Our library resources are well used and highly regarded by students; we are delighted that we consistently perform above our benchmark across all demographic groups in NSS questions addressing Learning Resources. Library staff delivered 630 one-to-one appointments with students in 2021/22, alongside over 300 workshops. Student feedback confirms sessions were appropriate in terms of level and timeliness for learning, with 95% of respondents to post-workshop evaluations reporting increased confidence following participation. Since 2015, we have applied a digital-first policy to the development of our collections to maximise the accessibility of our materials. Our students currently have access to over one million e-books, alongside a wide range of databases, online journals and audio-visual resources. The benefits of this approach were clear during the COVID-19 lockdowns, as successive NSS results confirm.

We also invest in our campuses as an extension of the learning environment, informed by our Wellcome Trust funded research, which found that young people have lower risk of anxiety and depression when they access green spaces due to the restorative qualities of these spaces, and the opportunities they provide for social interaction, physical activity and mindfulness[27]. Our wellbeing-focused Community Garden, overseen by the Students' Union Green Team, has recently been complemented by a new Walled Garden, providing quiet contemplative space. The University has also invested in two PhDs to examine the impact of our campus green spaces on anxiety and depression in our students, and how their use of green spaces impact on pro-environmental behaviours related to tackling the climate and ecological emergencies.

### *2.2.5 Meaningful student partnership*
We work successfully with our students at all levels of decision-making and provide extensive opportunities for students to feedback on and contribute to the ongoing development of their programmes and wider University experiences. We perform materially above benchmark for Student Voice metrics across almost all modes of study and disciplines. We are above or in line with benchmark for most demographic groups, demonstrating that staff value students' views on their course, and students are clear how their feedback has been addressed. We are also working with our Students' Union to further enhance our representation ecosystem in light of our changing student body, with a particular focus currently on exploring how best to capture and address the distinctive voice of apprentices as work-based learners.

Our strong and valued partnership with our Students' Union is key to delivering effective student representation. Our well-established **Principles of Academic Representation** were co-created – and are regularly reviewed – with the Students' Union and set out our mutual expectations for

effective engagement with the student voice at module and programme level, as well as across the University community as a whole[28]. Students are represented throughout our **committee structure** through to Academic Board and the Board of Governors[29]. Student members meet regularly with Committee Chairs and Secretaries ahead of meetings to ensure they are confident in raising issues that matter to them, enabling them to provide input t that leads to enhancement of practice and addresses issues of concern.

We have **over 1,000 student representatives** in any given year, covering every programme and each level of study. Student reps are core members of **Programme Management Committees**, which form an integral part of our academic governance structure. These student-staff committees consider programme performance data and drive our evidence-based approach to enhancement. They also draw upon wider discussions from **Student Rep-Staff Forums**, which provide opportunities for programme teams and students to explore issues, co-create solutions and build strong learning communities. Some changes are relatively straightforward – for example a concern raised initially in a single programme led to extensions to engineering and technology building opening hours to support students with caring responsibilities or work commitments to access specialist and study facilities. Other changes are more involved – such as commissioning work to decolonise the environmental science and the wildlife ecology and conservation science curricula, including co-creating new reading lists and a checklist for modules to inform future development.

Students are actively involved in **curriculum, programme and strategy design**, and review processes. For example:
- Students were part of the project team leading the engineering curriculum redesign that informed the award-winning building referenced above. They also helped shape the immersive Project Weeks (also mentioned above), influenced the use of problem-based learning across the programme, and were instrumental in redefining the viva element of the dissertation as a mid-module, quasi-formative assessment through which they could receive 'feedforward' to improve their work. These changes have been evaluated very positively by students and have led to improved student outcomes, with a 4pp uplift in average viva marks following implementation of the pre-submission viva model.
- Students have played a key role in informing action to address award gaps between different demographic groups. This includes co-creation and co-delivery of a 'Decolonising the Library' project, focused on diversifying reading lists and sharing experiences about race and racism, as well as acting as curriculum consultants, reviewing module specifications to identify features that, for some students, might present barriers to success. For example, pilot work across business and law during 2021/22 identified a need to design out the potential for cliques in group work and to strengthen staff confidence to engage with the decolonisation of curricula.
- Student-researchers contribute to cross-University projects and initiatives, including co-creating and supporting evaluation of our annual Feel Good, Equity and UWE Cares programmes, and inform enhancement projects that have driven changes to teaching, assessment and student support. For example, a student-led research project in 2019/20 found that mature students generally had positive experiences of support services and often took up tailored and one-to-one support from academics but found it harder to integrate with wider student communities. As a result, Starting Block activities were changed to support the attendance of students with additional caring responsibilities, marketing images have been diversified to include visibly more mature students, and the Students' Union now hosts mature student meet ups.

- Students co-created our Speak Up active-bystander project and campaign, which helps students to recognise and challenge racism, sexual misconduct and other forms of discrimination and harassment. A number of approaches have been trialled in recent years including induction workshops for 5,000 students in 2018, workshops for sports club leaders and embedding the Union Black anti-racism training. The active-bystander approach is now embedded in the Starting Block community module.

During the COVID-19 pandemic we worked extensively with students to understand their needs and concerns, explore how the University could best respond to pandemic-related disruption and assess the effectiveness of action taken. Central to our approach was the establishment of a **Student Consultation Panel**, designed with students, and operated jointly with the Students' Union. Panel membership was open to all students, with particular effort made to attract students from under-represented groups. Over the first full year of operation (September 2020-August 2021), panel members participated in discrete engagement and decision-making opportunities to influence how teaching and assessment practices were adapted in light of the pandemic. These included surveys, workshops, discussion forums, focus groups, interviews, user-experience testing, critical reading, and student-led social media takeovers. Participants also assessed the clarity and effectiveness of student communications and tested a range of digital learning tools. Due to its positive impact, the Panel has now been adopted as an ongoing feature of our student engagement ecosystem. During 2021/22, participants contributed to further discrete activities, including multiple workstreams exploring which aspects of changes implemented during the pandemic students would like retained, plus inputs to enhance student-facing services, shape UWE's digital education approach, redesign the campus and improve student understanding of key policies and processes[30].

The Panel is overseen by our **Students' Union-University Partnership Board**, which is co-chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and Students' Union President. This is a forum where Sabbatical Officers and senior University staff identify areas of shared interest and co-create solutions and enhancements. The Board also takes forward several partnership projects each year, which are co-sponsored by a Sabbatical Officer and senior University representative. The aim is to build common understandings of particular challenges, issues or opportunities that impact upon the student experience, by bringing together different perspectives, voices and expertise to co-design practicable solutions. Recent examples include working together to improve student assessment feedback experiences and a focus on the experiences and challenges facing male, LGBTQ+ and Black Asian and Minority Ethnic students to identify areas of improvement within the University's existing student wellbeing support offer. For 2022/23, the Board has agreed to focus its partnership on the development of a Student Futures Manifesto, addressing the six core themes identified in the final report of the Student Futures Commission for successful student futures and setting out joint action between the University and students to tackle the challenges for students arising from the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic[31].

## 3   Student Outcomes

We are committed to delivering positive outcomes for all our students through a personalised approach that recognises their individual starting points, circumstances, strengths and aspirations. **Our positive metrics demonstrate that our practice-oriented curricula deliver good outcomes for students from all backgrounds**, validating our belief that everyone with the potential to succeed in higher education should have that opportunity, regardless of their

background or life experiences. Our strong graduate outcomes data, which are above benchmark for both full- and part-time undergraduates, are reinforced through our strong longitudinal educational outcomes (LEO) performance: seven of our flagship subject areas (covering 40% of our graduates and including business, architecture and computing) achieve above the sector median average for salaries after five years, according to the most recent data release[32]. Qualification Achievement Rates for our higher and degree apprentices also consistently exceed national benchmarks, at 69.9% for the most recent published data (2020/21) against a sector average of 57.7%[33].

## 3.1  Continuation, completion and progression

Our **continuation** rates have been consistently strong across the past four years. As an institution committed to widening participation in higher education and removing barriers to success for underrepresented groups, we are encouraged that there have been no significant gaps in continuation rates by demographic group over the past four years. We are particularly pleased to have delivered above benchmark continuation rates amongst students previously eligible for free school meals and for our Black, Asian and Mixed ethnicity students. We are also delighted to see strong continuation rates amongst students undertaking degrees with an integrated Foundation year. Our continuation rates are testament to our success in supporting students to transition into and through their higher education journey, and to manage study and wider life effectively. We note the impact of, for example:

- Targeted work to improve the proportion of Foundation year students successfully progressing from Level 3 to Level 4 (our current Foundation student non-continuation rate has fallen to just 14% against a sector average of 21%[34]) by strengthening alignment between Foundation (Level 3) and Year 1 (Level 4); and by placing greater focus on Foundation year students' academic skills and confidence building. Our internal analysis indicates there is no difference between the degree outcomes of Foundation year students, who typically enter higher education with lower prior attainment, and those joining degree programmes at Level 4[35].
- Significant investment in preparing students for higher education study through our annual Five Secrets of Success campaign which targets incoming students[36], and our Starting Block programme for all new and returning students, ensuring students are better informed of the behaviours and practices that will support academic success, and are aware of the support available to them before they reach crisis point.

We are pleased to confirm that our below benchmark performance for continuation (and also for completion) amongst part-time students is the result of a historic administrative issue and does not raise material concerns about our ability to deliver positive outcomes for these learners. Part-time students are a very small proportion of our undergraduate population (7% of entrants), and most of our part-time learners (over three-quarters) participate in our Continuing Professional Development (CPD) offer. Historically, for internal administrative purposes, CPD learners were registered on a programme even if they intended to study only one module. As a result, when these learners completed their module(s), they were recorded as withdrawing, despite achieving their intended study aim. We flagged this issue in our TEF Year 2 submission in 2017 and have since taken steps to reflect these students' completions in our HESA return. However, due to the long-term nature of the datasets, this legacy performance is still feeding through the system.

We acknowledge that our full-time **completion** rates are marginally below benchmark during the timeframe in scope but are confident that action already in progress will close the gap for current

and future intakes. Our significant success in reducing rates of non-continuation to well below the sector average informs our approach; and we are applying learning from our focus on continuation to retention across the whole student lifecycle. Our analysis of full-time non-completion data over the period indicates that 26% of non-completing students in the sample were required to withdraw due to academic failure, with a further 24% self-selecting to withdraw without taking opportunities to resit or retake failed modules. We are confident that a combination of changes underway, including offering a positive and supportive resit experience, together with targeted interventions to identify and work with students at risk of academic failure at an earlier stage, will reduce the number who do not complete their studies. We are monitoring closely the impact of cross-institutional work to improve retention beyond Level 4.

Key to this is our **MyEngagement** learner analytics tool, piloted with Foundation and Year 1 (Level 3 and 4) students in 2018/19. In light of the positive impact on continuation rates for the pilot group, this was rolled out across the University from 2019/20. MyEngagement serves two core purposes. Firstly, it enables us to give students proactive support to develop the study behaviours associated with good academic and career outcomes. Students can track their engagement with learning and academic activities via their personal MyEngagement dashboard, providing an excellent basis for discussions with Academic Personal Tutors and Success Coaches. Secondly, through early identification, it enables us to offer proactive, personalised and timely support to students at risk of academic underachievement, failure or withdrawal for non-engagement. Changes in engagement patterns are tracked, and students are automatically contacted (with signposting to support services) if their engagement falls below the expected level. Those for whom levels of engagement continues to be of concern pass through an escalation process that alerts programme teams and key support services, who can make structured, personalised interventions. Variation between programmes is continuously reviewed and resources targeted effectively. Improvements in completion rates for the most recent year of data provided indicate that the greater attention being paid to retention beyond Level 4 is starting to have an impact. Evaluation of the impact of the approach is also adjusted to take account of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a practice-led, employability-focused institution, we pay close attention to the outcomes of our graduates as a mission-critical measure of success. Our **progression** rates are consistently strong across all demographic groups, underlining the effectiveness of our practice-led approach, the opportunities we give students to develop their understanding of the fields in which they aspire to work, and our extensive careers and employability provision. We are particularly pleased to note good outcomes for students from all underrepresented groups as evidence of our positive contribution to social mobility.

We are very proud of the contribution our graduates make to the city-region and beyond, both as members of the regional workforce, and through founding new businesses. Around 40% of our graduates remain in the South-West after completing their studies (GOS, 2019/20). We monitor the impact of our embedded enterprise skills provision and extracurricular enterprise support through the Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCIS), tracking the proportion of **graduate start-ups** with a clear link to UWE Bristol enterprise education. Over the period 2018/19 to 2020/21 (the most recent years for which comparative data are available), we ranked first for the number of employees in the South-West, second for active businesses, and in the top three for turnover. Similarly, across the University Alliance group of institutions of a similar

profile and mission, we ranked consistently first for the number of employees, and in the top five and top three for active businesses and turnover respectively[37].

## 3.2 Educational Gains

We are committed to enabling all our students to achieve their full potential academically and personally, leaving as ambitious, collaborative, innovative, inclusive and enterprising graduates of their chosen discipline, who go on to lead fulfilling lives and make a positive difference to society. Our Career Development Framework[38] draws upon the 'DOTS' (decisions, opportunities, transitions, self) model and 'possible selves' theory (which encourages individuals to explore who they see themselves becoming in the future). Through a personalised approach, we scaffold and guide our students' personal and professional development, delivering a range of curricular, extracurricular and self-directed activities through which students get to know themselves, understand their options, prepare and apply. Our approach focuses on motivating and inspiring each student to explore their own interests, life ambitions, strengths and values, to understand what will be required of them to enter and progress in their chosen field, and to take positive action to develop their capabilities and confidence to pursue these goals.

### 3.2.1 Career ready, enterprising, entrepreneurial graduates

We strongly encourage and support students to engage with **career planning** from the outset, using a **career registration system** embedded in our annual registration process to prompt students to assess their own career-readiness. By asking students to reflect on the extent to which they are clear about their ambitions and plans, and confident in achieving them, we gather rich data with which to evaluate and shape our curricular and extracurricular careers offer, tailoring our activities to the needs of different programmes, cohorts, levels of study, and individual students. Specialist careers consultants work closely with programme teams to embed career management and personal development skills within the curriculum, supporting students to make connections between their programme and post-study options, define their personal goals and take practical steps towards achieving them.

**Embedding career thinking within assessments** ensures that all students are prompted to reflect and develop according to their personal and professional interests and goals, with clear impacts on graduate outcomes. For example, business and management complete a portfolio that draws together their learning and experiences from across the programme, reflecting upon what they have learned about their own approach to teamworking, their personal resilience and self-awareness, and how this might impact on their personal and professional development. Similarly, geography students take a professionalism module in which they assessed on their ability to articulate their own professionalism and academic growth through a 15 minute interview designed to help them prepare for common questions that will come up in a real job interview. Recent Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) results have shown an improvement in geography subject areas, indicating that this module has been a success.

Despite career registration not currently being mandatory, levels of participation are excellent: over the past five years we have achieved engagement rates of over 70% per year amongst Year 1 students, around 60% in Year 2 and 55% in Year 3. Analysis of our career registration data (when cross-referenced with 2017/2018 GOS outcomes), shows that students who enter their final year knowing what they want to do after graduation have a 20% greater chance of securing professional-level roles, than students who do not have a plan. As a result, we now pay particular

attention to final year students, deploying a combination of targeted individual and group-based interventions to steer students towards more structured and purposeful consideration of their options, aspirations and pathways to success. This offer includes careers coaching, as well as diverse workshop opportunities and access to our cloud-based career resources (to which our graduates retain lifetime access)[39]. Of the students who engaged with the support in 2021/22, 53% moved from 'having no plan' into 'making applications' or 'securing' a professional-level role. We are continuing to develop our career registration approach. For example, from 2024, we will be building a further data collection point into our graduation ceremony registration process, enabling us to capture 'exit' data that we can use to further enhance targeted support for graduates. Developing a richer dataset year-on-year enables us to design and deliver an ever more nuanced offer for all students, personalise our support for individual students more effectively, and provide tailored pathways for students who face additional barriers to accessing the labour market.

Critical to ensuring our students are prepared for successful futures is our ability to provide meaningful opportunities for them to deepen and develop their self-awareness, self-motivation and self-confidence. Building on our strong links to, and partnerships with, employers across the region and beyond, we offer a wide range of opportunities for students to develop their employability skills, build networks and gain competitive advantage in the employment market. Our offer is designed to be inclusive and accessible, reflecting the needs and personal circumstances of our diverse student population. In addition to our extensive suite of professional programmes in health and education for which placement learning is a regulatory requirement, we offer:

- **Credit-bearing placements** across our undergraduate portfolio, underpinned by extensive support to ensure students gain maximum benefit. Each year, around 20% of students on eligible programmes undertake yearlong 'sandwich' placements. To ensure inclusivity, we offer employability bursaries to students from low-income backgrounds, for whom participation might otherwise be challenging, for example due to a need to relocate for a period of time. 227 students took up bursaries to access placement learning (or internships) in 2021/22.
- We recognise that yearlong placements, which extend the duration and associated cost of a programme of study, are not suitable for all students and programmes. We have invested significantly to increase the availability of shorter in-programme placement learning opportunities, including **micro-placements**, where students work for a short period with a local employer and then contextualise their learning in a reflective assessment, and **consultancy projects**, where local organisations host students to work on a problem, allowing them to apply their academic studies in a real-world environment. Both models enable students to develop networks and build commercial awareness and confidence in their professional interactions.
- We are particularly proud of the innovative ways in which our practice-led approach enables us to integrate degree shows into student assessment across a wide range of programmes including the creative industries, architecture, product design, engineering and social sciences. This not only showcases and celebrates students' outputs, but also builds their confidence and networks, ensuring their work reaches a wide audience of potential employers. Our pivot online in response to the pandemic has been particularly effective: since it was launched in 2020, our web-based **Showcase platform**, co-created with our student community and with Rhombus, a leading Bristol-based design studio founded by UWE Bristol Graphic Design alumni, has received more than 30,000 visitors worldwide, viewing the work of over 800 students from across art, design, animation, fashion, performance, photography and filmmaking[40].
- We offer extensive **extracurricular opportunities** that develop students' confidence and help them gain career-related insights, develop work- and life-skills, and build social and cultural

capital. We fund more than 200 eight-week paid summer **internships** within our academic schools, research centres and professional services, or with local employers. Student feedback consistently indicates that over 90% of interns agree the experience has increased their confidence, helped them build a network of contacts, provided opportunities to enhance and apply knowledge and skills, and broadened their awareness of career options[41]. We lead and participate in a range of external internship schemes, focused particularly on improving the employment outcomes of students from under-represented ethnicities. These include the **West of England Strive Internship** scheme, developed in partnership with Hargreaves Lansdowne, which won the Institute of Student Employers' Outstanding University Partnership with an Employer and/or Supplier Award in 2022, and the award-winning Green Skills initiative highlighted in 2.1.3 above.

- We provide and support a wide range of volunteering opportunities, enjoying very strong partnerships with local and international charities, public and third sector organisations. Through volunteering, our students develop their sense of citizenship and connection to the wider world, build confidence, gain employability insights and develop transferable skills. For example, our **Professional Creative Volunteering** scheme enables creative industries students to share their skills with local charities and gain valuable experience of freelancing, which they can then use as a springboard to work with other organisations. Our **pro bono Law Clinic** enables our Law students, working in partnership with local advocacy organisations and supported by professional mentors from legal practices, to provide legal advice on family, employment, consumer and commercial law issues, support parents at SEND tribunals and mediations, and represent clients at benefits appeals tribunals. Students also volunteer overseas through our international partnerships such as with Project Zulu[42], which supports education and lifelong learning in South Africa and was shortlisted for a Guardian University Award in 2019, and the DAIGO Partnership delivered jointly with Kori Youth Charity and Daughters of Africa that brings together young people from Gambia and UWE Bristol to create diverse inclusive, sustainable, grassroots projects across Gambia[43].

- Our students gain valuable experience and insight through **voluntary work with local schools**, supporting reading development and subject-based projects. These operate through our impactful Future Quest[44] partnership, which works with schools in areas of low higher education progression; as well as via initiatives such as DETI Inspire[45], which works with primary and secondary school pupils in less advantaged areas across the West of England to spark interest in engineering and wider STEM careers; and Boosting Reading at Primary[46], our one-to-one tutoring programme delivered by our students, which in 2021/22 raised the reading ages of over 200 pupils across 30 schools.

- We also **employ students** in part-time developmental roles across the institution, for example as ambassadors and content creators supporting our marketing activities, as student life assistants developing student communities in our residential accommodation, or as student-researchers supporting enhancement initiatives. These roles provide students with experience-rich exposure to the wide range of careers available within a higher education setting, as well as providing the University with valuable insights into student life at UWE Bristol.

We celebrate **enterprise** as a core institutional value and seek to foster an **enterprising mindset** in all our graduates. Students and recent graduates who wish to explore and develop their entrepreneurship further have access to a comprehensive range of support, including:

- **Student Ventures,** which supports students to get new businesses off the ground, with access to physical space, funding and guidance to test and develop ideas. Numbers engaging with the scheme increased markedly over the last four years, from          2018/19 to          2021/22.
- **Launch Space**, which offers business incubation and acceleration for high-tech, innovative graduate-led start-ups, providing access to communal workspaces, networking and developmental support, located within one of only four University Enterprise Zones. Launch Space provides free support over six months for          graduate start-ups          with tailored one-to-one support, workshops, networking and mentorship.
- **The Foundry**, our well-established intrapreneurship space, which helps students to transition successfully into working in the Creative Technologies sector, with some of them emerging as business start-ups and companies. Undergraduate students access paid internships and contractual work in addition to their studies, through which they strengthen their professional portfolio, practise team working and develop leadership skills. The Foundry also operates as a regional digital event space, hosting a high-profile calendar of technology outreach and engagement events across cyber-security, computer science, creative technologies and STEM subjects, designed to widen participation around coding and digital skills.

Exemplars of our enterprise ecosystem include a graduate from our award-winning Team Entrepreneurship programme (recognised by Advance HE as sector-leading in applied learning and value creation), who was supported through Student Ventures, to establish a vertical farming system using aeroponic technology on our Frenchay campus - the first of its kind[47]. This graduate has contributed to our programmes through mentorship and support for emerging ideas, creating a cycle of entrepreneurialism. A further example is health tech innovation graduate start-up, Indus Fusion, which began life through a Launch Space programme, went on to secure £75,000 funding from Innovate UK in 2020 to develop an automated vaccine preparation service and is now working with a multinational pharmaceutical firm[48].

### 3.2.2 Removing barriers through personalisation

Our personalised approach seeks to ensure all students have the right support, encouragement and challenge to benefit from the opportunities we provide for self-actualisation. All our students have a designated **Academic Personal Tutor (APT),** to provide a personalised link to their programme of study, working with them to review progress, identify goals, and signpost relevant opportunities for academic and wider development. Where possible, students retain the same APT for their whole period of study to enable a consistent, holistic approach to their development and enable students and APTs to develop a strong rapport. Following a successful pilot across 12 programmes in 2021/22, we are now complementing the APT system with a team of specialist **Success Coaches** who provide more targeted support, helping students to identify their academic and personal strengths and overcome any obstacles to realising their potential.
respondents          to a survey of students involved in the pilot found working with a Success Coach beneficial and would recommend engagement to their friends, with respondents particularly noting that coaches have supported them to develop action plans, manage stress, access specialist University services, engage with their studies and consider/ prepare for future careers[49]. Learning from the pilot is informing the development of a university-wide coaching framework that will help all staff make effective and appropriate use of coaching-style conversations to develop students' self-efficacy and resilience. Ongoing development of the framework is enriched by practice across our apprenticeship provision, where similar roles are used effectively to provide personalised, developmental guidance to apprentices as they work towards achievement of the knowledge, skills and behaviours defined in their Apprenticeship Standard.

We deliver targeted provision to particular student groups who we know (from our own analysis and wider sector data) may face additional barriers to success. Our **Equity Programme**, co-created with students, exemplifies our approach to educational gain. In 2019, the programme won both the Guardian University Award for retention, support and student outcomes and the Diversity in Education Award at the Bristol Diversity Awards[50]. Equity aims to increase Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students' sense of belonging to the University community and supports them to develop a leadership identity. The programme combines an extracurricular module with coaching, employer mentoring and a series of workshops, webinars and external speakers. It challenges and supports participants to feel confident to know and be themselves, develop their interpersonal and practical skills and build a personal and social network. It is aimed at UK-domiciled students, although many of the events are open more widely. For our 2021/22 module run, 72% of participants who took part in both pre- and post-module self-assessment activities reported feeling more confident to be themselves at university, with 85% feeling they fitted in at UWE after the module (22pp increase on pre-module score), and 91% expressing confidence in their ability to achieve their goals after the module (16pp increase). Students engaged in employer mentoring partnerships with volunteers from 25 employers from across industry, the professions and healthcare; participants reported benefits relating to career planning and self-confidence as well as practical guidance, for example on job applications[51]. Equity is open to students at any point in their studies; to date it has been accessed most by students in their final year. Action is being taken to increase engagement by students earlier in their studies; this will strengthen their sense of belonging sooner and maximise benefits for their outcomes.

Building on our existing approach to wellbeing as the bedrock of academic success, we are midway through a two-year project to explore and evaluate the development of **mental fitness** in curricular and co-curricular activities, with a view to further supporting students' readiness to learn and boosting student outcomes. Mental fitness develops students' thinking skills to support the self-efficacy required to meet the normal, daily challenges of higher education. The project is assessing whether and how the mental fitness approach, and an associated app called Fika (already in use across further education), can be embedded within a higher education context to improve student outcomes through greater self-reliance, self-worth and the quality of in-programme peer support. Our pilot is testing whether this approach helps students prepare for placement, enriches PAL provision and academic skills workshops, and benefits Success Coaching.

We are also currently running a pilot with an online cognitive assessment and learning profiling/ intervention tool, **Cognassist**, to help identify hidden learning needs, further personalise support, and further strengthen student outcomes. The tool generates detailed individualised reports of each learner's strengths and weaknesses and areas for further intervention/ support. It is already used across further education, with a particular focus on apprentices; our pilot is testing its relevance to higher education, focusing initially on our policing and civil engineering apprenticeships, where current screening arrangements identify high numbers of learners with previously undiagnosed specific learning difficulties. If effective, it will have a transformational impact on early identification of students with additional needs, enabling more rapid delivery of personalised support, as well as providing rich data to inform our ongoing development of inclusive learning, teaching and assessment practices.

## 4    Conclusion

Through our industry informed, sustainability-focused academic programmes, our distinctive, interdisciplinary, practice-led learning and teaching, and our outstanding learning environments and resources, we deliver an educational experience that our students cherish. As our metrics exemplify, students of all backgrounds thrive and flourish at UWE Bristol. We inspire, nurture, support and challenge all our students to make the most of their time at university and to achieve their full potential. Our students grow and develop academically and as people, graduating ready and able to join the workforce as global citizens, to drive economic, social and cultural prosperity, to shape the health and sustainability of our communities, and to create solutions to global challenges. We are rightly proud of our students' achievement and outcomes, and we know where we need to focus our efforts to continue to transform futures. We are confident in our journey and in our ability to flex, develop and adapt our innovative programmes and our excellent academic and wider support services. We are committed to our students and driven to deliver for them. We are extremely proud of our track record for teaching excellence, evidenced through high levels of student satisfaction and in the outcomes our graduates secure.

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