Provider name: Liverpool John Moores University
UKPRN: 10003957

PROVIDER CONTEXT

The LJMU Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission reflects our commitment to the transformative potential of education (SO1). We are proud to place the student experience as the core theme of our institutional strategy and this is reflected throughout the narrative in this submission. This submission has been led by our Pro-Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) and the TEF Working Group, with representation from staff and student groups, supported by our Board of Governors, Executive Leadership Team, Directorate and National Teaching Fellows. We worked closely with John Moores Students' Union (JMSU) as equal partners in the development of independent but complementary submissions to demonstrate how student engagement and partnership is at the heart of continuous improvement (SE7).

Our narrative is underpinned by our nationally recognised institutional commitment to widening access and social mobility. It encompasses the diversity of our undergraduate student body, including those on degree apprentice and sub-contracted partner programmes. Embedded links and references direct the reader to an evidence base of internal and external sources that demonstrate the outstanding impact our student experience offers.

Our founding institution, the Liverpool Mechanics' and Apprentices' Library, opened in 1823 with the mantra: 'knowledge is power'. It brought accessible education to workers, promoted intellectual skills alongside practical knowledge, and forged closer links between industry, technology, and education. Two centuries later, we remain true to our heritage and ethos. Education enhances the prospects of students and addresses the needs of our city and region. The Strategic Framework 2017 - 2022 expresses our mission as **a commitment to a transformative education that is founded on academic excellence.** We aim to deliver an outstanding academic experience, underpinned by robust pedagogy, delivered by exceptional teachers, and shaped by research and knowledge exchange that is ranked in the UK top 50 for Research Power.

The Strategic Framework prioritises **preparing students for employment and the region for graduate employees.** All programmes are designed to deliver high-quality graduates with the attributes and skills to contribute to the employment market. Many of these qualify students for practice directly or have professional accreditation. We also have an increasing number of students (over 1,200 in June 2022) on degree apprenticeship programmes that are delivered in partnership with employers. In parallel, we are working to expand graduate opportunities in a region with a low concentration of jobs compared to other regions in England.

We are involved in two major European Social Fund projects that aim to stimulate regional demand for graduates and nurture student enterprise. Throughout the TEF period, we ranked in the **top 20 UK universities** for graduate start-ups, demonstrating a high level of effectiveness in ensuring our students succeed in, and progress beyond their studies (SO1).

We embrace **our role as an agent of social mobility**. Our students are far from economically privileged. Over 40% come from the Liverpool City Region, which has two of the most deprived local authorities in England (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019) and around **a third of our undergraduate UK population is in IMD Q1**. We work to expand their horizons and

unlock their potential. Our success is demonstrated in an Institute for Fiscal Studies and Sutton Trust report that ranked our 'mobility rate' in the **top 5 UK institutions** outside London.

We engage in substantial outreach activity to raise aspiration and attainment that supports regional education outcomes below HE level. Our Student Outreach Team follow the Gatsby Benchmarks for good career guidance. In 2020/21, they engaged in 942 events reaching over 53,000 students. This has proven successful in tailoring support and transition, with 78% of 2022 enrolments from a school or college with an outreach relationship.

There is variable access to Level 3 study in the Mersey region, with no sixth form provision in the borough of Knowsley. We therefore offer highly effective and tailored support to students at their different starting points by offering Foundation Year entry and 'return to university' programmes for mature students to support access, progression, and success for high-potential students.

Local context **shapes our strategic intent**. There is huge potential in our students and our city, and it is our privilege to help realise both. This is even more strongly emphasised in our new university Strategy 2030 that articulates benefit to our students, employers, the region, and the economy. It has a sharper focus on (i) the convergence of education and location in high-quality workforce-facing provision, and (ii) the use of research and knowledge exchange to connect undergraduate provision with the cutting edge of the sectors into which our students graduate.

The pandemic context

Our geography and social diversity lent a particular inflection to the challenges of the pandemic. Our narrative reflects the impact of these measures with an above-sector dip in 2021 performance that was countered by very strong recovery in 2022. In autumn 2020, Liverpool was placed in the first tranche of Tier 3 restrictions (Liverpool City Council 2021). Consequently, we were unable to deliver any in-person teaching for many programmes throughout 2020/21. This contrasted with most universities who were able to offer hybrid models, allowing students to benefit from some on-campus university experience.

A feature of our pandemic data is that approximately one-in-ten National Student Survey (NSS) respondents were from nursing or other health professional courses. These experienced a sharp, sector-wide decline in satisfaction. This is understandable given the students' experience of an NHS in crisis. It is of note that the only universities in the Northwest that did not witness significant underperformance in the 2021 NSS had few or no nursing students.

The **pandemic exposed high levels of digital poverty** amongst students (see page 13). **Outstanding support** was provided to staff, who pivoted online to scaffold the student experience (SE4). As a member of staff said in evaluation, '*The training, help, advice, and sometimes emotional support, provided by the Teaching and Learning Academy and IT Services during the last nine months has been outstanding.'* In addition, we worked with our Students' Union and external examiners to develop a No Detriment Framework. This facilitated the adaptation of assessment strategies, policies, and procedures to mitigate against disadvantage caused by pandemic restrictions, whilst maintaining the highest academic standards.

Governance and oversight of student experience and student outcomes

Our Board of Governors is ultimately responsible for the educational character, financial solvency, and strategic direction of the university. To ensure the student voice is heard at the highest level, two of the four Students' Union (JMSU) sabbatical officers are Board members. Academic Board is the principal body of the university, overseeing Strategy coordination, development, and supervision of the university's academic work. It provides assurance to the Vice-Chancellor and Board of Governors on the quality, standards, and continuous improvement of the outcomes of the student experience; again with two JMSU sabbatical officers as members (SE7).

In the TEF period, the key oversight committee for continuous improvement, experience, and outcomes was Education Committee chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) Education. It established and scrutinised core strategy and policy in this area. Decision-making was informed by sub-committees, including the Learning Environment Panel and Faculty Education Committees. There was student representation on Education Committee and all sub-committees. In February 2022, we broadened the remit of the PVC Education. The recalibrated role of PVC Student Experience brought a more expansive range of student experience matters into the purview of a revised Education and Student Experience Committee. This recognises the impact of the wider student experience on student success by better connecting a research informed curriculum, outstanding academic practice, support and guidance, and our Students' Union (SE3).

The provision of an outstanding learning experience is core to our ambition to provide transformative education for all students. Key institutional leadership is provided through the PVC Student Experience, Registrar and Chief Operating Officer, and Dean of the Teaching and Learning Academy. Critically, these individuals are **all National Teaching Fellows** (NTF) with internationally recognised impact on student outcomes and the teaching profession. At Faculty-level, local leadership is provided by Associate Deans Education, who are senior academics in a leadership role sitting on Faculty Management Teams. In addition, one of the Assistant Academic Registrars has a specific remit for the student voice and liaises closely with JMSU.

Academic Registry is the custodian of the Academic Framework, overseeing robust processes to support ongoing evaluation and enhancement. Academic leaders and individual tutors have access to a wide range of information through our Business Intelligence system. They reflect on this through Continuous Monitoring and Enhancement (CME). This operates at module, programme, and School level. The CME process informs improvement strategies set out in Enhancement and Development Plans that record the timely management and resolution of identified actions. Progress at programme-level is monitored by School Management Teams. School-level Enhancement and Development Plans are monitored by Faculty Management Teams and the PVC Student Experience.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE [SE1-7]

Our student experience is characterised by challenging and rewarding, carefully planned and up-to-date curricular, delivered by skilled and enthusiastic professionals (SE4). The Academic Framework and robust quality assurance measures ensure varied teaching styles and **learning experiences to inspire and challenge** (SE2) students' capacity. Learning is reflected through assessment strategies that stretch students and further enhance their understanding. Continuous monitoring

ensures standards are maintained or signals decisive action on the rare occasions when they are not.

Internal and external oversight in curriculum renewal processes ensures programmes meet the needs of students. Teams must provide evidence that they have worked in partnership with students, and **student voice is incorporated into validation** processes (SE7). We have articulated eight curriculum principles. These are that the curriculum: a) is inclusive, b) is active and blended, c) is developed in partnership, d) is research informed, e) includes subject-appropriate opportunities for careers, employability and enterprise development, f) follows the LJMU Academic Framework, g) uses assessment to support student development, and h) takes account of the learning environment, resources, and staffing. A comprehensive Curriculum Design Guide helps programme teams to plan, review and design their programmes.

Teaching [SE1, SE2]
We are committed to high quality teaching that is integrated with research and scholarship (SE1). Staff development, appraisal and reward has contributed to a culture of excellence. As of July 2022, **70% of academic staff had a recognised teaching qualification or AdvanceHE accreditation**. It is expected that all teaching staff engage in annual peer review of teaching, with the process operated through Faculty Associate Deans for Education (SE4). Metrics for *Teaching on my Course* are in line with the benchmark, with Education and Teaching, History and Archaeology and Mathematical Science showing outstanding results.

Nonetheless, our overall teaching metrics are lower than we know we could achieve. We are particularly aware that although part-time and apprentice students are not materially below benchmark, there is a relatively high proportion of statistical uncertainty that is below benchmark. Delivery patterns for these students mean that they can feel isolated from the wider student body and compare their experience unfavourably to that of their peers. To address this and offer outstanding quality academic support tailored to student need (SE5), we have built time into day-release students' schedules to enable them to access the broader campus experience.

Over the TEF period, we have introduced or revised a range of initiatives to improve teaching. This **strategic drive** includes the following actions:
1. Incentivising excellence and raising the status of teaching
Our Reader and Professor teaching route recognises academics who have made an **outstanding contribution to the development of student learning experiences**, with national or international impact. We also introduced criteria for academic career progression, with a distinct route for teaching. Prior to this, promotion often focused on management or research, meaning excellent teachers moved into less student-facing roles. The new route allows great teachers to further their careers (SE4) without moving away from their area of expertise. It maximises teaching talent in the university. There is also a Teaching and Learning Excellence Scheme to recognise colleagues' successes. We evaluated the effectiveness of this in 2020. Subsequent revisions ensure winners

receive greater recognition with an embedded model to share their expertise. For 2022, the awards have been renewed and tied to a new institutional coaching scheme for NTF and CATE nominations.

2. Learner analytics

During the pandemic, we used learning analytics to evidence that students were supported via synchronous and asynchronous methods, as well as to mobilise help when they appeared to disengage. For example, we were able to identify and provide equipment for students who were unable to access IT at the start of lockdown (SE6). Subsequently, we developed a Learner Analytics Framework encapsulating the ethical and pedagogical requirements for effective use of student data to enhance and continually improve student experience outcomes (SE7). A learner analytics dashboard and associated training help staff to make appropriate use of the data.

3. Evidence-informed planning

We have a combination of established processes and bespoke initiatives to assess and monitor programme performance. These use qualitative and quantitative data from internal and external sources, supported by academic and professional service input. A key feature is module evaluation (see student voice page 8). To support our Access and Participation Plan (APP), we introduced an interactive data dashboard in 2021. This provides up-to-date data so colleagues can track key metrics across multiple indicators, and monitor progress by Faculty, School, and individual programme (See student outcomes page 15).

4. Strategy renewal

In 2022, we revised our Learning and Teaching Strategy to reinforce best practice, and place educational gains at the core of our plans. Based on sector-wide evidence and developments, and a thorough consultation with students and staff, the new Strategy builds on the previous ambitions and introduces new foci such as education for sustainable development, inclusive curricula, and education for mental health and well-being. In addition, the revised Research and Knowledge Exchange Plan has a renewed focus on research-informed teaching (SE3).

Feedback from our students suggests our approach to teaching enhancement is working. After a challenging pandemic, our **data bounced back strongly in 2021**. Module evaluation[1] for semester 1, 2022 shows this trend continues, with **improvement in all Schools***.
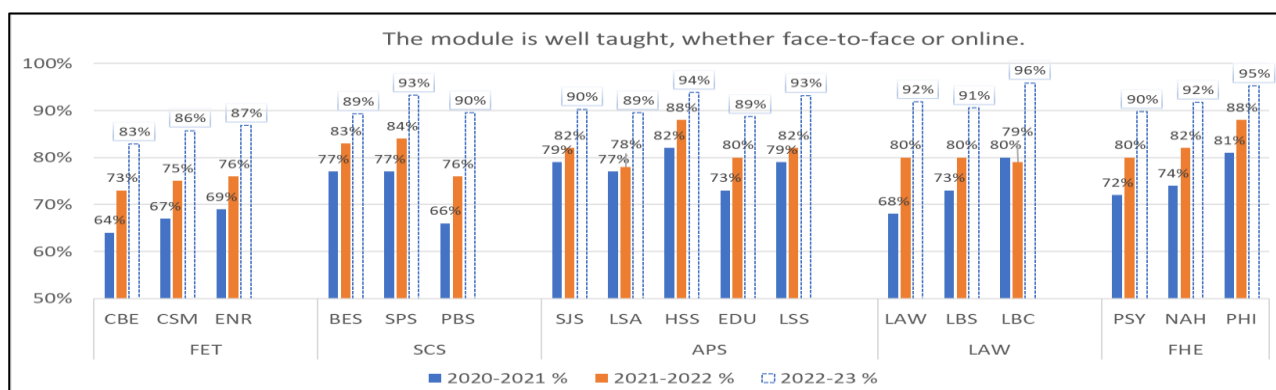
*The 2022/23 scale has been adapted to reflect the NSS 4-point scale, so direct comparison should be avoided. However, the observed trend suggests a strong trajectory across all schools.

[1] Combined module evaluation results at subject level represent a useful evidence base, as the data includes student feedback from all levels of study. Subject level module evaluation results were calculated by combining scores for programmes included in the subject composition. Data sits on our institutional systems and is available on request.

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Enhancing subject-specific teaching practice

Subject areas below benchmark improved their teaching performance towards the end of the TEF period (SE1). Module evaluation data between 2020/21 and 2021/22 showed an uplift in response to *'The module is well taught whether face-to-face or online'*. Architecture, Building and Planning increased by 8%, General, Applied, and Forensic Sciences by 17.8%, Apprentice Nursing by 15.1%, Sport and Exercise Sciences by 2.5% and Computing by 2.7%. Performing Arts is the exception, although their 2022-23 Semester 1 data shows considerable improvement (+18%).

Improvements are attributed to programme teams' in-depth understanding of underperformance and implementation of targeted interventions. These are monitored through CME. Key to this success has been teams' commitment to **listen and respond to students' perceptions** of their course. Highly effective and tailored changes to the support of students' learning, progression and attainment have made a real impact (SE1). The development of practical skills was often a feature. In ***General, Applied, and Forensic Sciences***, for example, students wanted more practical sessions to develop their laboratory skills and confidence. Likewise, in ***Architecture, Building and Planning,*** the team responded to students' requests with interventions such as subsidised extracurricular field trips, local and international site visits, and industry-specific guest lecturers.

Student feedback in ***Law*** prompted a wholesale review of teaching delivery. The team recognised that module delivery was inconsistent and introduced a fixed delivery pattern, with skills-based modules having more contact hours in small group settings. A high proportion of Law students in IMD Q1 & Q2 (51%) said they needed help to balance studies and paid work. Block delivery facilitated attendance and engagement. Finally, as students often struggled to get work experience, engagement with the Legal Advice Centre was fixed into the curriculum from 2021-22. ***Sport and Exercise Sciences*** worked with students to develop curriculum coherency across their portfolio of seven undergraduate programmes. Revisions include an explicit spiral curriculum around core disciplines: research methods, physiology, and psychology, with a professional practice strand at each level, culminating in a final year placement.

Peer review of teaching has also proven valuable in raising standards. ***Performing Arts*** developed existing university requirements into a peer exchange scheme. This moves from the standard of peer review in staff dyads towards a whole team approach that encourages greater debate around teaching and learning across the team.

Many programme areas that underperformed were particularly vulnerable to the impact of the pandemic due to significant elements of practical or placement activity. In ***Apprentice Nursing and Midwifery***, for example, NHS pandemic workforce management resulted in students twice being redeployed to their workplace and pausing their studies. There was a further break at the start of 2022 due to NHS staff shortages. Such disruption has suppressed students' view of a programme that scored 100% for teaching in 2019. Returning to normal delivery has generally been welcomed by students. This was not the case for ***Computer Science and Mathematics*** where many students appeared to be reluctant to return to campus, with effects on their sense of connection and belonging. In response the team has scheduled collaborative tasks throughout the programme. These have facilitated greater engagement and garnered very positive feedback from students.

> *'Teaching approaches encourage collaboration. This is an excellent technique to inspire students to enhance their teamworking skills whilst also giving an incentive for students to attend sessions and learn face-to-face.'* (Level 6 student representative)

Assessment and feedback [SE1]

Assessment and feedback are central to students' learning. Our approach supports rigorous and accessible assessment that stretches students to drive their development, attainment, and progression (SO3). Consistency, transparency, and equity is mandated in university policy (See link) and monitored through mark verification, external examination, and boards of examiners. Our NSS **results for assessment and feedback have always been strong** (with the exception of the pandemic year). Scores for clarity of marking criteria and timeliness of feedback have been above the sector average in three of four TEF years in the NSS. TEF results are materially in line with our benchmark, but we would argue that this belies a much stronger picture.

External Examiner comments indicate excellent practice across LJMU. Faculties have been widely commended for the diversity of assessment that caters to individual learning styles, assessing a range of knowledge, linking to 'real-world' problems and supporting employability (SE3).

> *'An excellent mixture of assessment types across the programme, allows for students who have different learning styles to have the opportunity to excel as well as allowing students to have an excellent understanding of applying theory from both an academic and applied perspective.'* (External Examiner - Business)
>
> *'The use of real-world case studies and datasets is excellent for the students, particularly for employability.'* (External Examiner - Computing and Mathematics).

Examiners also **complement strong NSS data on the value of feedback**, highlighting that Feedback is constructive and developmental,

> *'Tutors had taken the time to add comments on how the students can improve in an encouraging manner rather than just stating what they had got wrong within the assessment, which was rich and will have been useful for their reflection and improvement.'* (External Examiner Forensic Science).
>
> *'Excellent quality of feedback offered to students based around feedback and the award of marks for individual marking criteria. This makes it clear to students where they have achieved well and where they have been less successful.'* (External Examiner Adult Nursing)

The quality of feedback was noted in the Degree Apprentice Ofsted Monitoring Report, which stated *'Apprentices benefit from constructive and developmental feedback which allows them to develop their academic skills and achieve higher grades'.*

Improving assessment and feedback in specific subject areas

Only two subject areas were below benchmark**. Dialogue with students** in *Performing Arts* exposed their lack of understanding of the rigour of the marking process. They did not always trust the process and felt personally judged, with occasional perceptions of 'subjectivity' and 'favouritism'. Marking and moderation processes are now clearly explained through cohort meetings and on the VLE. As a result, module evaluation data shows students' confidence in assessment rising from 75.95% in 2021/22 to 82.64% in 2022/23.

Additional **staff development** in *Sport and Exercise Sciences* addressed a range of assessment issues. It emphasised student-centred, formative feedback to help students meet expected standards (SE1). Activity included consultancy to support the design of authentic assessment and provision of feedback. This was complemented through Assessment and Feedback development days. In 2021-22 module evaluation, confidence with assessment improved by 4.2% from the previous year, with 20.4% uplift in Sport Development and 11% in Sport and Nutrition for Health.

Student Voice [SE7]

We work hard to ensure students make an active contribution to their learning. This is reflected in NSS **data on the student voice, which was above the sector** throughout the TEF period. The exception was the pandemic year for reasons outlined earlier. **Significant bounce-back in 2022** saw scores 3.1% above benchmark for full-time students. We are especially proud of our part-time student response. This group were above the benchmark for student voice in three of four TEF years and 11.4% higher in 2022 (SE7). Since 2020, the voice of black students has been noticeably above the sector average, demonstrating a 3.9% difference between indicator and benchmark value.

Student engagement and representation

Student voice informs decision-making at all levels, from institutional strategy development to local initiatives that meet the needs of specific cohorts. As part of continual enhancement, we also use learning from student complaints and appeals to revise governance policies and processes. One example is the Reasonable Adjustments in Student Governance Procedures where regular revisions are made to ensure students can access and engage effectively with our processes.
Other methods we use are as follows:

1. Student representation

Student cohorts have at least one representative to speak for them at programme Boards of Study. The representative system is managed through JMSU, who provide comprehensive training, supported by our Diversity and Inclusion Team and the Teaching and Learning Academy. This helps student representatives to feel connected to the wider student body, and confident to speak out. JMSU tell us that there has been a year-on-year increase in representation activity.

2. Module Evaluation

Module evaluation is characterised by immediacy and proximity to student experience. Students evaluate each module at the end of teaching. Results are available on Canvas the day after evaluation closes. We use a set of core questions, updated periodically to reflect institutional priorities. With the shift to online learning, questions were revised to reflect online delivery and access to digital resources. Module leaders can add up to five optional questions. **Student-generated questions** were developed via a large-scale institutional research project in 2019-20. This was facilitated by student-researchers to prompt open, cross-level and cross-disciplinary discussion about module experiences (Zaitseva and Law, 2022). Module leaders are encouraged to include at least one item from the student question bank in their optional questions.

3. Academic cohort surveys.

We run specific surveys for each study level. Final year students complete the NSS. Results feed into quality assurance processes and planning, notably annual programme NSS action plans. Until 2020, students in Levels 4 and 5 took the UK Engagement Survey (UKES). This was replaced with two new surveys created in collaboration with JMSU. The LJMU Course Experience Survey was developed in 2020-21 for all non-final year students. It reflected post-pandemic issues including

access to IT, inclusion, learning community and employability. Results influenced increased access to virtual labs in the Faculty of Science; 're-induction' into campus for second year students, and enhanced staff development on accessibility of Canvas courses. This contributed to enhanced NSS scores for course-specific and IT resources by 14% in 2022.

To better understand the needs of first years with respect to transition, social aspects of university life and mental health, we developed a 1st Year Experience Survey for 2021-22. Several actions have been implemented to improve experiences and outcomes, with a particular focus on supporting students domiciled in Northern Ireland (NI). They reported low confidence with assignments (28.6% c.f. 20% LJMU average), and high levels of homesickness, leading to thoughts of withdrawing (27% c.f. 15.4% LJMU average - See First Year Experience Report, p. 6 & 12). Peer-support is now provided via the JMSU NI Society and an APP working group was created focused on NI students' success (SE7).

Outcomes of cohort and module surveys are scrutinised in the committee system, with students involved in discussions and devising action plans. To appreciate the experience of specific student groups, key demographic variables are pre-recorded for all internal surveys (SE7). This means we can target analysis. In response to the 1st Year Experience Survey feedback from degree apprentices, for example, more effective enrolment and access to university systems was implemented, alongside earlier access to study skills sessions (SE5).

4. Informal and semi-formal mechanisms

In addition to the above, we recognise the importance of semi-formal and informal approaches to accessing the student voice and encourage colleagues to make the effort to always listen to their students. To facilitate early, informal, and open feedback on student experience via a **dialogue-based approach**, we have a mid-semester Student Voice week. A range of approaches are used to solicit feedback and close feedback loops. Course reps are actively involved in these. We have also seen growth in student demand and engagement in 'Town Hall' type events where all students are invited to meet with academic and/or professional services staff to explore a range of issues.

Student voice during the pandemic

To capture the students' pandemic experiences, we utilised additional methods of communication. These encouraged further dialogue and provided a space where students could freely share their views. A series of pulse surveys about the experience of online learning were conducted from Semester 1 (2020-21). Surveys followed an iterative process where questions were shaped by responses to previous questions. Around 5000 students engaged. Findings helped us to understand how best to engage students in online learning, the importance of peer-interaction, and how students perceive the sense of community in a virtual world. Outcomes were used to shape recommendations to improve online teaching (SE5, SE7).

Student voice in curriculum enhancement

We pay students to work on curriculum initiatives through our Curriculum Enhancement Internship Scheme. This facilitates students' engagement in enhancement and renewal, whilst rewarding their time and views. Staff bid for funding in a competitive process. To qualify, projects must demonstrate partnership between students and staff and clearly articulate the benefits of having students work on the project (SE7). We have invested £0.25m in these over the TEF period, with 85 projects

employing 239 students. Outcomes are disseminated on the [website](#) and at institutional events. In 2020, the scheme was revised so applications reflected strategic priorities. The focus that year was on diverse and inclusive curricular, with projects on decolonising the curriculum and supporting students with learning differences. In 2021, we emphasised the importance of place and community, be that within the university or externally.

The scheme has expanded the reach of interventions. The [Wellbeing Journal](#) is a notable example. Following a successful project in Education and Childhood Studies in 2021, the Journal was distributed to all new students at the beginning of the 2022/23 academic year. Projects have also facilitated the creation of communities of practice in neurodiversity, tailoring effective approaches to securing student success (SO1). Leaders of two of these projects now contribute to the Inclusive Curriculum module of the PGCert Academic Practice.

Decolonising the Curriculum as an illustration of inclusive curriculum

Meaningful education reflects perspectives from diverse communities, so we have invested in 'decolonising the curriculum'. This reflects our APP goal of decolonised curricular across LJMU by 2025. A 2020 Curriculum Enhancement Internship to audit the English Literature curriculum became a [model for the institution](#). It was adopted across the Faculty of Science the following year, supported by another enhancement project, [EDIpedia](#). Developed through student-staff collaboration, this is a searchable source of scholars from under-represented groups who have contributed to STEM disciplines. The resource is a highly effective way of ensuring outstanding teaching and learning materials reflect diversity across STEM subjects (SE6).

Decolonising the Curriculum is now integrated into validation and programme review. A group of academic staff set up a Decolonising the Curriculum Working Group. This cemented work in the area, with representation from all academic schools and key professional service areas. Recognition of the contextual nature of curriculum reform is supported by a [dedicated website](#) as a repository for subject specific approaches. We monitor impact through a module evaluation question, '*The module helps me to understand the contributions that people from different communities and backgrounds have made to the development of the subject area'*. Introduced in 2020, this provides benchmark data. Results have seen a steady upward trend across all Schools with improvement, ranging from 7% in School of Computer Science and Mathematics (55% to 62%) and 17% in the Public Health Institute (77% to 94%).

Addressing areas that are below material benchmark for the Student Voice

Where student voice required improvement, there has been a focus on providing frequent **informal opportunities to share feedback** and on **closing feedback loops**. Alongside regular meetings with course representatives, weekly sessions for all students to talk to the programme leader were introduced in **Law**. They also set up programme and cohort level WhatsApp groups to enhance communication between peers and with staff. The team's efforts are clearly working as NSS results in 2022 were 5.8% above the subject benchmark (SE7).

While **General, Applied, and Forensic Sciences** and **Computer Science** remain below the sector average, there is evidence of an upward trajectory. Both have increased NSS scores by over 7%. This can be attributed to key initiatives. Forensic Sciences introduced cross programme student

mentors to act as a link between the areas and facilitate the student voice. Meanwhile in Computing, course reps have expanded their feedback gathering techniques via introduction of student-devised confidential feedback form.

There are challenges related to degree apprentice responses to student voice initiatives. This is attributed to limited presence on campus. JMSU have recruited and trained reps on all apprenticeship programmes in last two years to improve engagement. In addition, Degree Apprentice status is now a variable for all institutional surveys. This means that we can meaningfully monitor engagement and satisfaction and act on feedback quickly.

Research-informed teaching [SE3]

Our teaching staff are engaged in research and scholarship, with a significant increase from 24% to 56% in the proportion of staff submitted to the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF). This provides the intellectual infrastructure to support research-informed teaching and reflects the stated strategic intent that research is embedded in academic activity, professional practice, and employer engagement to deliver an outstanding academic experience (SE3). Importantly, it safeguards the currency of the curriculum, shapes teaching activity and enhances the student experience at all levels. Teaching based on staff research inspires students, reinforces the value of their curriculum, and helps them to see research as a realistic career. The importance of research informed teaching in curriculum development is also evident in the case studies within our Impact Hub.

We are proud of the 'Reach' and 'Significance' of our REF 2021 Impact Case Studies. Although the focus is engagement with change and impact outside the university, it is not surprising this is also relevant to the curriculum. As an example, research on cardiac pre-participation screening of athletes is reflected in the UG and PGT Sport and Exercise Science curriculum. This has had a significant impact on the career pathways of graduating students into clinical physiology roles within the National Health Service (NHS)

Understanding the nature of the awarding gap and informing actions

Pedagogic research has informed developments related to our awarding gap. This is a major focus of our APP (see student outcomes page 16). Over £30k was dedicated to research on how institutional practices influence global majority students' opportunities to achieve. The gap was investigated from multiple perspectives using a mixed-method research design. The research provides a comprehensive evidence-base to inform institutional resources and interventions. A distinctive feature was participation of students from minority ethnic backgrounds as researchers and mentors. Work is underway to develop the 2022 Report recommendations.

Staff development [SE4]

Our Teaching and Learning Academy is a focal point for scholarly practice in education enhancement and innovation (SE4). It delivers staff development, with two AdvanceHE accredited programmes: the PGCert Academic Practice at Fellow HEA and the 3i's at Associate Fellow level. The latter supports skill development of postgraduate research students who teach. It has also been successfully used with student mentors and staff from partner organisations. The PGCert is a requirement for all new staff with less than five years teaching experience or no recognised teaching

qualification. Annual enrolments are in the region of 50. The programme scored 100% satisfaction in the 2021 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and 95% in 2022.

The Academy provides non-accredited staff development opportunities. On campus or online training, self-paced courses, video materials, and written guides maximise engagement. It also supports the work by our network of Associate Deans Education, who organise local development opportunities for academic and support staff. In addition, there are a range of networks for colleagues to discuss areas of academic practice. Topics include academic skill development, research teaching, hidden disabilities, assessment, distance learning, and digital education.

Our Teaching and Learning Conference was a highlight of the academic calendar for 20 years. It enabled academic and professional services staff, students, and colleagues from partner institutions to showcase their educational research and highlight practice innovations. In recent years it attracted around 400 delegates. In late 2021, following the institutional strategic refresh to place 'students at the heart' the conference was rebranded for 2022 to reflect the institutional commitment to the student experience. There were 500 in-person attendees, one in 10 of whom were students (SE4).

Providing a supportive academic environment for our students [SE5]
We have excellent academic and pastoral support stretching students to commit to their learning and success (SE2). **Support has been a strong feature of our provision**, on average 1.8% above the benchmark. Performance in the TEF Year 4 was materially above the benchmark. This was also reflected in UKES results for (2019, p. 25) and (2020,p. 23) with Academic Support rated above sector average . Our Personal Tutor Policy means all students have a named tutor for academic advice and pastoral support. A bespoke VLE site provides tutors with advice and guidance, including where to refer for specialist help. To facilitate students' access, an online booking facility shows tutor availability and puts appointments into Outlook calendars. The system also allows tutors to access tutee's Learner Digital Engagement records, academic results, and attendance record.

We also encourage peer support, with mentoring proving to be an excellent way to achieve this. There are 12 peer mentoring schemes operating in the university. This reflects a broader culture of collaborative work that has been highlighted as an institutional strength, with statistically significant positive difference to the Sector in UKES results. **LJMU was in the top 25% of institutions for the Learning with Others** scale, scoring between 4% and 6% above the sector (UKES, 2019 p.17; 2020, p.16)

We recognise the need to tailor support to particular groups. Our Bridge the Gap Project, for example, successfully piloted a university-wide buddying scheme for students from global majority groups. In addition, we were the first university outside of a pilot project to be awarded the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers Quality Mark in March 2022. This recognised our commitment to care experienced students. Provision was rated as **enhanced** across all seven key strategic areas and **exceptional** for the transitional support provided to students prior to and following their arrival at the university (SE6).

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UKPRN: 10003957

Institutional Study support

Our [Academic Achievement Team](#) provide a range of generic and bespoke learning development support for students to secure outstanding quality academic support tailored to individual needs (SE5). They deliver on campus and synchronous online group study sessions to over 6,000 students each year covering a range of topics. They have also developed a maths revision tool to support students whose Level 2 and 3 maths were disrupted in the pandemic. Over 98% of final year students who accessed the service between 2020 and 2022 successfully completed their degrees. **Students who used the service were also more likely than their peers to achieve a 2.1 or first**. A disproportionality high number of students from Widening Participation and IMD Quintiles 1 and 2 access the resources and sessions.

In 2020, we introduced an online study preparation resource, ['Studying for Success'](#) on Canvas. All new students are automatically enrolled onto this self-directed course, which has been continually refined and updated. The course was designed for induction but has become an aid for yearlong transition into university, with materials released to coincide with key events in the student journey. It is complemented by discipline-specific, asynchronous Canvas courses to which all relevant students are enrolled. So that materials are inclusive and engaging, the Achievement team worked with students to 'decolonise' resources.

Tackling digital poverty in LJMU

The pandemic demonstrated the impact of digital poverty on our students. Learner Analytics indicated a distinct decline in online activity from the moment of lockdown. Triangulating this data with reports from staff and students suggested a considerable number of students had neither the equipment nor data to engage online. Prior to the pandemic, these students had been able to rely on outstanding campus IT provision. Students told us that their domestic circumstances often limited access to IT due to competing demands from family members. To understand the situation, we worked closely with JMSU to canvas students' opinions through student voice work and an online survey (see reference section). Data from over 2500 students prompted us to embark on a significant investment in IT and data to ameliorate students' digital poverty. Between October 2020 and July 2022, the university spent £1.59m on 2965 new laptops, 400 items of recycled equipment and 200 Data Allowance Bundles. The bulk of this expenditure (£1.2m) was in 2020/21 when most university teaching was online (SE5). The scheme has now been built into our financial planning. Moreover, in line with our sustainability agenda, we worked with a Liverpool based social enterprise, [Furniture Resource Centre,](#) to offer low-cost refurbished IT equipment.

Subject-specific academic support initiatives

Two subject areas were below benchmark for Academic Support. Both have improved recently. Positive response to the module evaluation question '*I can access support and guidance for this module when I need it',* grew by 6.9% for ***General, Applied, and Forensic Sciences,*** and 10.9% for ***Apprentice Nursing and Midwifery* in 2021/22**. Several targeted initiatives have been implemented in Apprentice Nursing and Midwifery, including 'Student Brunch Club' where students have direct access advice and resources whilst also being provided with warm food. As childcare can often preclude students from accessing support, their children are welcome. Tripartite reviews have been increased to four times a year to identify students requiring academic support. The external examiner commented: *'Whilst students were back in their substantive roles as clinical*

employees in NHS trusts, academic staff from the university supported them to ensure that when they returned to university, they felt able to continue with their studies.'

Learning Resources [SE6]

Learning resources have consistently been a very strong feature of our provision. They are materially above the benchmark for 3 of 4 TEF years, with satisfaction particularly high for degree apprentices.

Physical estate

We are a large, city-based university spread over two main campuses. In response to student feedback, we introduced timetabling principles to limit travel between sites and ensure that students can maximise their time on campus. In the TEF cycle, we completed the first phase of an ambitious Estate Masterplan investing £110m on facilities for teaching, learning and the wider student experience. The signature development was a new Student Life Building placing students at the heart of the university and city. Open 24/7, 365 days-a-year, the building provides a central hub for students with teaching spaces, IT clusters and student-facing services, alongside our Students' Union. Our new Sports Centre is next door, offering subsidised membership to students. Other key developments include the relocation of the School of Education from a satellite campus to the city centre, and a library extension providing a new café alongside collaborative and quiet study spaces. Extension and refurbishment of a key building in the Faculty of Health now incorporates a healthcare simulation facility enabling students in nursing, midwifery, and paramedicine to develop cognitive, technical, and behavioural skills through safe technologically advanced experiences.

Library resources

Our library adopted a 'digital-first' policy in 2015, prioritising investment in digital content to maximise student access to resources. This investment focused on content through an increased range of e-resources, coupled with enhanced digital library systems. We have a range of best-in-class products to support content discovery, including a fully integrated reading list system enabling students to link directly to recommended resources from the VLE.

Learning Technology

We have invested heavily in Canvas, our VLE, to provide a responsive mobile-to-desktop platform, and a dynamic learning and engagement space. This includes Canvas 24/7 support, allowing students to obtain help and guidance irrespective of time and location. We also have the scope to connect third party and institutionally developed learning technology tools to Canvas. This means our VLE provides a 'digital ecosystem' experience for staff and students. This functionality allows us to deploy an institutional solution for key issues such as lecture capture or plagiarism detection, as well as meeting local level demands. As Canvas is fully integrated into the Microsoft single sign-on, students can work on multiple learning technologies in the same environment. This provided an all-encompassing virtual teaching space during the pandemic. All synchronous online delivery was scheduled in the VLE, providing service continuity for students when on-campus teaching was impossible. It was a remarkably stable and consistent user experience with not a single occurrence of service degradation or disruption.

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STUDENT OUTCOMES [SO1-3]
Continuation and completion [SO1, SO2]

Our students come from a wide range of educational backgrounds, and we recognise the imperative of tailoring support to secure highly effective progress during and beyond their studies (SO1). A combination of core institution-wide engagement and support measures, and bespoke provision in a range of contexts, delivers strong outcomes in the TEF data.

Academic Support

In addition, to the Personal Tutor System (see page 12), all programme staff provide universal and tailored support to students. All students are offered pre-entry engagement with academic programmes and professional services to support a structured transition into university. Analysis of NSS open text comments is compelling, with students recognising and valuing the support and commitment of staff to the completion and success in their studies. Moreover, sentiment analysis of student comments identifies 'support' as a defining (favourable/positive) characteristic of our university. Additionally, there is targeted referral/deferral support linked to the results notification system that directly alerts students to our Academic Achievement team who provide additional one-to-one support during assessment periods (SO2). University-wide academic support measures include a learner analytics tool and attendance monitoring system designed to track engagement patterns at an individual level. It triggers intervention at an early stage. This has been progressively refined since its introduction and has provided a valuable tool for understanding and supporting engagement.

To some extent, pressure is part of student life, and to help students deal with normal stressors, we have introduced a Wellbeing Journal. The purpose of this is to encourage students to develop proactive positive approaches to their wellbeing and mental health. Information about the Journal is included on our Personal Tutor Canvas site to encourage tutors to use it as a provocation to conversations about academic and personal development. To reduce students' anxiety of in-person examination, the Faculty of Science introduced exam hall simulation experience that is offered to all students. Feedback indicated that students found the exercise useful.

Welfare

While we aim to develop students' resilience to normal stress, we recognise that we are in a climate marked by spiralling young adult anxiety and have seen a rapid acceleration in demand for mental wellbeing services. We have expanded of our mental health counselling resource. The TEF period also saw the **establishment of a team of Student Wellbeing Officers**. They provide first-response triage and signpost students to relevant services, including group discussions, and one-to-one counselling and mental health support. This is complemented with online resources, such as SilverCloud - a digital mental health platform.

We are also involved in work at the leading edge of student support provision. In 2019, the Office for Students provided £575k for us to collaborate with the University of Liverpool and Mersey Care NHS Trust to develop integrated referral pathways and interventions for students with complex mental health needs. The project addressed the needs of students including self-harm, suicidal ideation, eating disorders, substance misuse, anxiety, stress, and depression. Independent evaluation found that this 'Liverpool Model' has improved the support available to students presenting with severe or

enduring mental health needs. This approach is now being used to help inform developing partnerships between HE providers and local NHS services in other parts of the country.

Continuation and Completion rates

The strength of our provisions for supporting student continuation and completion is reflected in our data. At headline level, we sit in line with benchmark for both measures for full time students and above it for part time students, and for continuation for Degree Apprentice students. For part-time students, we are 20.6% above benchmark for continuation and 9.3% for completion. For Apprentice students, we are 3.1% ahead of our benchmark.

The data for several demographic groups is also outstanding: mixed race and other students (both relatively large groups) demonstrate excellent continuation results, while completion rates for black, mixed race and other (in our case, mostly Arab students) are materially above benchmark, as is that for students with disabilities. Over the TEF period we made a good progress in narrowing the awarding gap for the majority of our target groups. The gap between black and white students, was at its the lowest in 2022.

The awarding gap for students with disability is effectively closing, but we also realise that more needs to be done to improve dynamics of change for IMD and POLAR indicators. At the same time, more complex/multifaceted split indicator, such as ABCS quintile, shows that we **achieved excellent outcomes for our Quintile 1 students**, who are less likely to achieve positive outcomes based on several characteristics. Both continuation and completion for these students are materially above the benchmark (SO2).

Longitudinal progress on closing awarding gaps
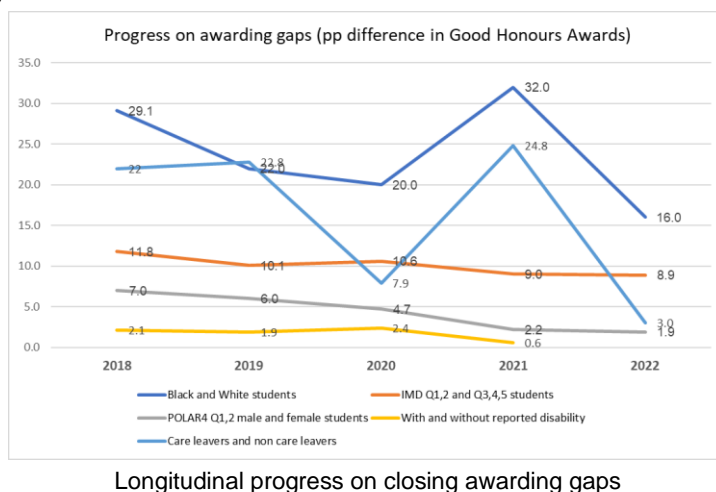
Areas that are below material benchmark for continuation and completion

Only a subcontracted programme taught outside LJMU was materially below benchmark for continuation. Numbers on the programme are very small (n=40 across the TEF period). Sports Development and Coaching Foundation Degree is a partnership with Everton Football College. This is part of Everton Free School, winner of the TES *'Specialist Provision of the Year'*, that offers an alternative education pathway to those where traditional methods in mainstream schools have failed.

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Employability Strategy and activity to support Progression [SO1]

Our strategic objective is to be an 'experience driven' university, with work-based learning mandated in the core curriculum. This commitment is at the core of the Student Employability, Enterprise and Employment Strategy helping ensure students develop the experience, skills and mindset valued by employers, while building networks and social capital.

Our approach reflects the needs of our students. We have a higher-than-average proportion of first-generation students who are significantly more likely to enter in lower skilled roles than those whose parents had university experience. Few have had the opportunity to engage in activities that boost capability and confidence, to build and lever professional networks, or to receive high quality advice and insight that broadens horizons and scaffolds ambition. The National Union of Students Poverty Commission (2017) showed working class students are less likely to have spare time to attend employability talks and workshops, to volunteer or to engage in internship experiences that build CVs and skills. We advocate for inclusive practice amongst recruiters. As an example, we have been active in the social mobility-focused Purpose Coalition, contributing to workshops with 15 leading law firms that led to a 'Levelling Up Law' Opportunity Action Plan. In July 2021, we hosted an Open Door Roadshow event, described by the Purpose Coalition as *'incredible to say the least […] courageously candid'*.

LJMU is an annual participant of the Graduate Aspiration Programme (Formerly Justice Undergraduate Mentoring Programme). Mentors are provided from the Civil Service and government departments with the aim to improve social mobility, increase confidence and expand students' networks. In 2021/22 LJMU secured 20 places and have been awarded 71 places in 2022/2023, the 2nd highest university across 45 participating universities.

Curriculum [SO1, SE2]

Our strategy requires all undergraduate programmes to integrate assessed work-based learning; embed the development of nine key employability skills; and incorporate in-curriculum activities at Level 6 that equip students to transition into highly skilled employment or self-employment.

Programmes must include learning outcomes and assessment items associated with nine skills in a shared employability framework. This draws on analysis of over 40 independent studies into the characteristics employers seek in new entrants. It is echoed in the Graduate Attributes foregrounded in our Learning and Teaching Strategy. All programmes must include 'Future Focus' at Level 4. This is an employability skills and mindset e-learning resource and workshop delivered to all new entrants. It guides students to think about their strengths and introduces them to goal-setting and active exploration around their futures. This responds to career readiness data gathered in enrolment that tells us that 67.1% of new students have received no *'careers guidance, with a careers advisor or other careers professional'* prior to joining us. Delivered into 77 Level 4 modules, 2021/22 evaluation indicates 93% of students felt more confident and informed about their future saying, *'the goal-making part will really help in the future'* and *'they made me feel confident that John Moores takes an interest in our future'*.

Rollout of the Strategy is supported by our Student Futures team. Careers and Employability Consultants are assigned to each Faculty and provide expert advice and practical support. In 2021-22, the first programmes were validated in line the Strategy. Of the 26 programmes validated, eight were in subject areas below their OfS benchmark. Other programmes where Graduate Outcomes were below benchmark, were targeted for intervention. This included ringfenced one-to-one Careers and Employability Advisor time, group skills training, and revised modules that amplify targeted employability work.

Employers are engaged in course delivery. Using the School of Engineering as a case study, it hosts a quarterly Industrial Advisory Board (IAB). All BEng and MEng programmes were reviewed in 2021-2022, and the Board worked with groups of students to offer input to the design of modules and provide improvement feedback (SE3, SE7). These programmes are accredited by one of the three Engineering Council Institutions (IMechE, IET and IED). Our Marine and Mechanical Engineering programme is recognised by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and the Merchant Navy Training Board (MNTB) and MEng students meet all the academic requirements for registration with Chartered Engineer (CEng) status.

'Experience-driven' university [SO1]

Many of our programmes integrate work-based learning activity. Workforce-facing provision, such as Degree Apprenticeship programmes or those that confer practitioner status (e.g. Nursing and Teaching) integrate placements as a matter of course. For others, the Student Employability, Enterprise, and Employment Strategy targets **'at least one core, assessed work-based learning or placement experience for every undergraduate'**, with a **'rich suite of extra-curricular activities offered in addition**'. Activities in place to support delivery of this objective include:

1. Sandwich Year support

There are clear progression benefits associated with LJMU students undertaking a sandwich year. Those graduating in 2019 who had completed a year in industry performed 28.1% better in securing highly skilled employment than their peers (SO3). However, there are barriers for many students in taking advantage of such opportunities, based on their income and geographical mobility. The sandwich year opportunities created in Liverpool City Region SMEs through our European-funded LJMU Graduate Futures project have helped remove these barriers and ensure students are able to gain access to work environments that will mature their understanding, skills, and approach.

2. Consultancy clinics – Business and Law

Operating from a purpose-built £2.6m facility in the centre of Liverpool, our Liverpool Business School Clinic offers student consultancy to businesses across the City Region, enabling students to apply theory in real-world environments. In 2020/21, 225 students provided consultancy to 39 organisations, while in 2021/22, 290 students worked on 72 projects supporting 54 organisations. The Clinic impresses students and clients alike:

> *'Applying theory into practice helped me to find a tangible solution for a business and understand how valuable my knowledge can be. It has given me the confidence to explore employment options once I complete my course' (*Final year student, Business with Marketing).

> *'It has been a pleasure to work with so many passionate LJMU students who have been keen to showcase their credentials as the marketeers of the future in our industry. They have provided genuine help to us by undertaking a real-life research project that we're putting to*

> *direct use in order to offer the best possible ticketing packages for our supporters.'* (Marketing Manager, Wigan Warriors)

The School of Law adopts a similar model. Its pro bono Legal Advice Centre engages students at all levels. Final year students work with an allocated solicitor supervisor in a specific area of law. Students attend the Clinic for 2.5 days a week and see clients under supervision. The Clinic delivered advice and representation worth £600,000 to the local community in the academic year 2021-22, and in December 2022 was Highly Commended in the national Law Works Award for Best Contribution by a Pro Bono Clinic.

3. Internships for employability.

We launched our Discovery Internship Scheme in 2020, committing over £1m funding for Level 5 and Level 6 students to work with local organisations, especially SMEs. 100% of students told us the scheme was valuable and they would encourage other students to apply,

> *'I learned new skills, met good people, got more experience in working in a fast-paced environment and learned what it's like to operate in a business environment'* (LJMU Student).

Employers have also been very happy with their experience, with one employer writing,

> *'It's fair to say we learned new skills and have become more knowledgeable in some areas as a result of our students' expertise! Our latest Intern went on to secure a fantastic graduate position in the city at a top 6 accountancy firm – great news for them and something we are very proud of'* (E&P Services).

The in-house Production Unit in Liverpool Screen School facilitates an average of 150 professional work experience opportunities each year. Students work alongside professional crew and gain credit for their involvement. Our alumni support this, for example, the city's Director of Culture provided film and documentary projects and BAFTA nominated owner of Hurricane Films offered placements.

4. LJMU Global Opportunities

Having been disrupted during the pandemic and Brexit, LJMU's Study Abroad programme recovered in 2021/22, securing £570k Turing funding. 192 students were placed in summer abroad activities, and 91 students secured placements across 18 counties starting from September 2022. This increased for 2022-2023 to £918k, supporting 450 students on internships, placements summer schools, study, and volunteering opportunities. Study Abroad scaffolds student mobility, supports intercultural skills, widens horizons, improves confidence, and develops understanding of global career markets. Students rated the experience as 4.5/5 in having a positive and significant impact on their adaptability, resilience and being able to learn from experience.

5. UNITEMPS: an institutional employment agency

UNITEMPS is our award winning on-campus recruitment agency, launched in 2019. In its first 18 months it paid over £2m in wages to our students. The agency is based in our Student Life Building and has 8,358 students on its books. UNITEMPS has created 1,056 jobs across multiple domains with several students moving from temporary to permanent roles. Feedback from students has been extremely positive '*...just want to thank you again for everything you have done for us, we wouldn't be able to go if it wasn't for your help and support in gaining employment opportunities in our final year, so once again thank you'* (UNITEMPS student).

Career planning and lifelong access to careers advice and guidance

The Business School works with TGConsulting to provide employability Assessment Centre Simulations. 491 students attended day long sessions at Anfield Stadium. The impact report and

video clip showed participants more than trebled their overall confidence associated with achieving things they set their minds to.

All LJMU students have access to one-to-one careers meetings with qualified Careers and Guidance professionals who deliver in-person and online appointments. We have 1,626 active employers connected via Careers Zone 24/7 advertising positions directly to our students. During the pandemic (2020/21), four virtual fairs were hosted, which brought over 150 organisations to students. In February 2021, two weeks after the regional lockdown was lifted, the university, in collaboration with JMSU, held an on-campus fair followed by a March Grad Fair together bringing over 170 organisations to over 1,100 student face-to-face attendees.

The university has invested significantly in employability e-learning resources that are accessible 24/7 and tailored to LJMU students; proactive communications are issued to all 28,000 students through regular newsletters and targeted discipline-specific engagement activities. The university also has a life-long offer of careers and employability support to all LJMU alumni and through UNITEMPS, a twice-yearly Graduate Contact Centre has been set up to support graduates at 6- and 12-months post-graduation by highlighting ongoing services and placement opportunities.

Student Enterprise and regional intervention [SO1, SO3]
The Graduate Outcomes Survey indicates that nearly half (47.1%) of our students chose to work in the Liverpool City Region, with 70.6% staying in the Northwest. Combined Authority data confirms LJMU to be the biggest contributor of graduate talent to the LCR by a significant margin, with 28% of new entrants each year being alumni. Progression is closely tied to the economic health of the region, which has fewer graduate-level opportunities than other parts of the country.

The LJMU strategy sets a high priority on the creation of new graduate jobs and graduate-owned businesses in the Liverpool City Region. One plank of this activity relates to student entrepreneurship, and according to the most recent HESA data LJMU has one of the North West's best records for start-up (SO3). We rank 2nd in total graduate start-ups, 2nd in firms surviving after three years, 3rd in total start-up employment, and 5th in total turnover. Our Start-Up Hub builds on this success and offers a wide range of support for students interested in starting their own business. Since 2021, the Hub's activities have been enhanced by LCR Founders, a £1.2m ERDF-funded collaboration with University of Liverpool for which we are the lead partner. LCR Founders has established a community and support ecosystem that has resulted in the creation of scalable and co-founded businesses amongst alumni of the region's largest universities.

We have also been successful in securing European funding for a £2.1m LJMU Graduate Futures project, providing bespoke consultancy and training to Liverpool City Region SMEs to harness degree-level talent, with the goal of creating more graduate-level jobs. The programme will facilitate over 120 sustained graduate placements, sandwich years and shorter-term internships by December 2023.

Progression rates [SO3]
Given the lag in the progression data between intervention, graduation and survey, the impact of our strategy is not yet fully reflected in the data. However, we are broadly in line with benchmark for full-

time undergraduates, with a year-on-year reduction in the absolute gap from benchmark, and we are materially above benchmark for part-time students (SO3). The gap for black graduates in High Skilled Employment moved from -2.9% below university average in 2018/19 to +2.3% above average in 2021/22. Contributing to this were a student-led #BlackGirlExcellence careers insight day in June 2021, participation in the Anthony Walker Pathways initiative; and the pairing of leadership team members with black students and graduates through LJMU's reciprocal mentoring scheme.

Progression for students with disabilities is addressed through a dedicated Disability Employability Group, and evidence-based practice is supported by the PhD research of the convenor of this group. Additionally in 2020,   students were hired as Student Consultants and contributed to development of employability materials. (SE7). In 2022   disability interns were hired in Student Futures to further this work, providing infographics and clearer, filmed explanations of services, including British Sign Language translation based on their own lived experience of disability. Each semester, regular bespoke sessions are delivered with specific topics including 'Sharing your disability with employers' and 'Identifying disability friendly employers' alongside an institution-wide event in Disability History Month. Furthermore, in 2022, one of our recent graduates spoke about neurodiversity at our Students at the Heart Conference and AdvanceHE conference. He has subsequently co-founded his own equality consultancy business and has been awarded a full funded VC PhD studentship.

Addressing progression at subject level

We have a **long, and successful history of preparing students for employment through vocational programmes**, and the 2019-20 Graduate Outcomes Survey results in these areas are impressive (SO3) - Nursing (97.5%), Pharmacy (92.1%), Midwifery (100%), Primary Education (94.7%), Civil Engineering (93.5%) Building Surveying (85.7), Construction Management (87.5%), Electrical and Electronic Engineering (91.7%), Environmental Health (87.5%), and Mechanical Engineering (84.1%). However, while data at subject level is variable, with six subject areas sitting materially below their benchmark, there are signs of progress across the university.

Time series split indicators in the TEF dashboard demonstrate a year-on-year reduction in LJMU's distance from benchmark for High Skilled Employment in full-time students of 2.6% overall, to 0.8% below benchmark. In the last year, Highly Skilled Employment levels among Full-Time, First Degree, UK students rose from 62.9% to 68.0%. The university climbed 12 places for Graduate Prospects in the 2023 Times/Sunday Times university league table, having risen seven places the previous year. We scrutinise gaps between lowest and highest performing programmes for High Skilled Employment, as an indicator of inequality in experience and employability gain. This gap has reduced by 14.4% over the past three years.

At the start of the TEF period, we made the strategic decision to use optional 'Employability and Skills' questions in the NSS to provide comparative data. In 2022, responses to the overall category were 5.1% above the sector and agreement with the statement *'My institution offered activities and resources designed to prepare me for the next step in my career'* was 7.7% above sector.

Addressing progression in areas materially below benchmark [SO1, SO3]

Student Employability, Enterprise and Employment Strategy (2019 - 2023) themes have been key to addressing progression in areas materially below benchmark. Teams have tailored these to meet

local needs, with the focus being flexed accordingly. Some areas have focused on **exposing students to the workplace or applied learning.** In *Criminology*, an Employability Portfolio includes work with a charity supporting people affected by crime. Students complete a research project applying knowledge of criminology into authentic practice, effectively communicating as practitioners in real world settings. In *Psychology*, we work with local charities to set mini challenges for students relating and evidencing their skills related to theory. *History* is working with heritage and cultural partners to bring work-related learning into the curriculum. *Biosciences* have provided opportunities for final year students to undertake NHS and industry related projects. These interventions enable students to gain hands on experience, network with employers and industry professionals, and understand the organisational agility of companies alongside building practical employability skills.

In other areas, the emphasis is on **curriculum renewal.** *Sport and Exercise Sciences* have incorporated a professional practice spine across all programmes. This means that students follow a three-year pathway of careers and employability, including a Level 6 placement module. Growth careers sectors were also introduced via new modules, for example Exercise and Health Psychology. The *Animal Behaviour, Biology, Wildlife Conservation and Zoology* programmes have introduced residential fieldtrips into Level 4 core modules. These are designed to develop subject-specific, teambuilding and social skills. Feedback from this year's students was very positive with 100% agreeing that *"the trip helped me develop other relevant professional skills"* In 2021-22, a new degree in *Education and Primary Studies* was introduced with a renewed focus on employability and integrated enrichment activities including safeguarding and paediatric first aid along with enhanced work-based learning for non-QTS students.

Employment in creative industries often focuses on self-employment. Hence, the *Drama* team has a focus on encouraging **Student Enterprise to enhance outcomes.** Drama Graduates have co-founded their own theatre companies, including the Rubbish Shakespeare Company, Headstrung, and Ugly Bucket. The Liverpool Screen School facilitated 30 student placements on the ITV series '*Maternal*' partnering with the Liverpool Film Office to offer 'set-ready' training. Over half of students were offered additional work in the production after the placement finished and graduates went on to work on high-end TV productions such as '*Outlander*'.

EDUCATIONAL GAIN [SO4-6]
Our approach to educational gain centres on providing students with authentic learning experiences that raise aspirations, contextualise skills and knowledge and support achievement relevant to students' future ambitions This is now embedded in our institutional Learning and Teaching implementation plans (SO4).

Why is Authentic Learning important in LJMU? [SO5, SO6]
This reflects our institutional mission, what students tell us that they want, and is supported by analysis of institutional (Student Outcomes) data. The LJMU strategy and supporting strategies for Learning and Teaching and Student Employability reflect the need for curriculum design and co-curricular opportunities that progress employability skills and real-world insight. We have undertaken longitudinal, in-depth analysis of NSS free text comments at institutional level to provide an evidence-based and highly effective understanding of what students' value most about their course (Zaitseva

and Finn, 2021) (SO5). Every year, our students have consistently highlighted practical and applied aspects of their learning experience. They frequently cite placements, field trips, site visits, laboratory sessions, experiments, and other types of experiential and authentic learning as highlights of their course.

When courses achieve the right balance of practical and theoretical components, our students feel they have developed the essential skills, knowledge, and confidence to pursue their career objectives. By contrast, a perceived lack of practical experience, limited applied context, or insufficient opportunity to utilise practical skills are often referenced when students offer suggestions on what needs to be improved in their course. Along with that, students identify where key skills are underdeveloped, including through comparison to employers' 'wish lists' for higher-level job roles or from experiences of job interviews.

Cross-referencing LJMU module enrolment data with Graduate Outcomes Survey and DLHE evidence over the past four years has reinforced the strong positive impact that work experience in the curriculum has on outcomes. Professionally accredited programmes and those with the option of a year in industry not only help graduates forge valuable industry contacts, but also dramatically impact on the prospect of securing High Skilled Employment after graduating (a positive differential of 28.1%) and even on degree attainment (SO6).

What is Authentic Learning in LJMU? [SO4, SO5]

Authentic learning is a pedagogical approach that situates learning tasks in the context of future use. We see this as an approach that enables students to develop robust knowledge that transfers to real-world practice. Previous LJMU approaches to advancing employability through the curriculum focused on a university-wide approach that embedded a standard methodology and associated suite of content into programmes. Whilst raising the profile of employability across the university, this did not inspire innovation and the flexing of curriculum opportunities in line with subject-specific norms. Hence, while the approach embodied in our new Student Employability, Enterprise and Employment Strategy is for all undergraduate programmes to include a core assessed work-based learning experience, the aim is that this should be defined and operated in line with appropriate disciplinary norms and needs.

Authentic education is based on curriculum opportunities that equip students with skills and knowledge gained through subject-relevant experiential learning that can be tailored to students' needs. There is no single approach, instead, a range of activities reflect the need for dynamism, encompassing models as diverse as sustained or short duration placements, student projects, service learning and the curation of professional portfolios. Through these activities, students can start to develop and discover interests, skills, aptitudes, and passions, and make better informed career choices. This method of learning is more often self-discovery than any other form of learning and it brings a clearer path to what they want to pursue after their course completion.

Our strategy is that programmes should have PSRB accreditation where possible. These programmes are inherently work focused, but all undergraduate programmes have work-based learning as a core element. This can take many forms and is tested in validation. The traditional work placement is supported by a comprehensive Placement Learning Code of Practice, Faculty

placement support units, and our Student Futures team. Where placements are less accessible, we work to create or recreate the workplace in the university.

In support of an extensive placement programme – recently diversified through a civic engagement placement pilot for nursing and midwifery students – our Faculty of Health has developed an impressive array of simulated health and social care experiences. Engineering students have access to the Construction Hub. In Education and Childhood Studies, students have access to a Forest School, which is also used in Initial Teacher Education and by local schools. Expected operational procedures and safeguarding essentials underpinning these diverse work-based learning experiences are outlined in a shared institutional Placement Learning Code of Practice and implemented by Faculty-based Placement Learning Support Units.

How do we know that this is working? [SO6}

Socio-economic inequality means that a high proportion of our students do not have the privilege of networks and connections that characterise the life experience of more advantaged students. Nor are they open to a wide range of job opportunities near their homes and families. ***As a result, we argue that our students' progression is structurally constrained***. Nonetheless, there is strong evidence that the LJMU student experience has a positive impact. In 2021, the university was ranked highest in the Northwest for social mobility and was 4th out of all post-92 universities in England (Designing an English Social Mobility Index; HEPI, 2021, p.43). The Index used Access and Continuation data for students from IMD1 & 2, and LEO data to assess the 'social distance travelled by graduates, and the number of graduates transported'.

How will we measure gain in the future? [SO6]

To ensure sustainability, methods of data collection should capitalise on existing data and reporting to avoid additional burden on students, academic teams, and to ensure the focus remains on core teaching and learning activity. We believe that the social mobility index is an appropriate institutional measure for education gain. We will support this with complimentary data sets:

- The NSS question for Learning Opportunities (Q9: *How well has your course developed your knowledge and skills that you think you will need for your future*?) will provide an indicative measure of students' perceived readiness. Subject-level results can be cross-referenced with responses to the Graduate Outcomes Survey question *'I am using what I learned during my studies in my current work.'*
- NSS free text comments analysis at institutional and subject level will continue to capture a more nuanced longitudinal dynamics of student priorities and attitudes.
- We will revise module evaluation questions to focus on active learning and encourage reflection on personal development. This will facilitate students' reflection on knowledge, skills, and experience. Module based data will offer a granular picture of a student's journey and help us to understand the extent to which learning is non-linear and shaped by academic and personal successes and setbacks, and this will be monitored through the personal tutor system.

Provider name: Liverpool John Moores University
UKPRN: 10003957

Summary

The narrative in this submission reflects a period of intense change and forward momentum for the university. The deliberate strategic intent of placing the student experience at the heart of everything we do has focused the institution on delivering the very best for every LJMU student. The university structure has been recalibrated to support this focus and the 'student experience' in all of its complexity from recruitment through study to employment, drives the university agenda. At the core of the LJMU approach is how it feels to be a student at Liverpool John Moores University, not as an anonymous number in a community of 28,000 but as an individual who has made an informed choice to study at our university. We respect and celebrate our students for their commitment, and we are determined to meet and surpass their expectations throughout their LJMU journey. In this narrative submission and supporting evidence we believe we can demonstrate our strategic intent and collective institutional endeavour to drive change through data without losing sight of the individual who has invested their dreams and aspirations in Liverpool John Moores University as the catalyst to realise their personal ambition.

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