

TEF 2023 Provider Submission, University of Bristol, UKPRN 10007786

1. *Our Educational Vision*

A Bristol higher education is designed to challenge students to be critical, analysing evidence with care; to produce ideas, knowledge, and fresh ways of thinking and doing; and to address the challenges of 21st century living with courage, confidence, and conviction. The ideas of *knowing*, *acting*, and *being* thread their way through our educational narrative. They are encapsulated in our Education and Student Experience Strategy and our Bristol Futures Curriculum Framework; they are reflected in our emphasis on student wellbeing and sense of belonging through services and spaces designed to include and welcome all our students: from the Global Lounge^a, collaborative library spaces, to our Student Union hub. Our exceptional student outcomes, from students gaining entry to graduate jobs to taking the initiative to partner in start-ups that make a difference, illustrate that our holistic approach to education is developing creative, confident, 'can-do' graduates.

The University of Bristol is a comprehensive, research-intensive university with a strong civic mission. We are committed to students building their disciplinary research skills; we are equally committed to supporting students to explore beyond disciplinary boundaries. We do this through inspiring students' curiosity, nurturing their sense of agency, and enabling them to evaluate evidence, principally by engaging every student in discipline-based research activities. Every undergraduate student at Bristol can expect to take part in a research-rich curriculum relevant to their discipline/s – seminars, laboratories, workshops, fieldtrips, and professional or volunteering experiences in which they pose questions and seek to address complex problems. Our commitment to linking research and teaching is supported by Bristol's performance in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework where we were rated as the fifth highest institution for research quality in the UK. We know that students benefit from close contact with a community of active researchers; we also know that links between research and teaching do not happen automatically. This is why we focus on students developing critical approaches to evidence on our programmes of study.

We established Bristol Futures (2017) as an interdisciplinary hub to prepare our students for the big societal challenges which face us, such as sustainability, the meaning of global citizenship, migration, and wellbeing. In 2019, we launched our Bristol Futures Curriculum Framework¹ as a systemic way of embedding the pedagogic innovation exemplified in our Bristol Futures units. The framework inspires curriculum and assessment design that encourages innovation, active learning, and inquiry-based pedagogies; it recognises the value of students becoming critical consumers and producers of research. The six dimensions of the framework speak to our vision of an education that is: *inspiring and innovative, intellectually stimulating; disciplinary and interdisciplinary, fostering personal development, sense of belonging*, and engaging students in *global and civic challenges* [SE2, SO4]

We have invested £3.4 million in a Curriculum Enhancement Programme (CEP) (2019-2024)², led by the PVC Education, to embed curriculum and assessment innovations in partnership with academics, students, and alumni. We use two principal methods to achieve programmatic enhancements: 'Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment' (TESTA), and curriculum festivals focusing on designing programmes as a coherent student experience. In parallel

^a The Global Lounge is a multi-cultural hub in the heart of campus. It operates as both a lounge – a place to socialise, relax and enjoy collaborative working – and as a dynamic events space, where all members of the community can come together and get involved in a range of exciting cultural activities <https://global-lounge.bristol.ac.uk/>

with these programme-level approaches, we have implemented a university-wide unit evaluation tool (Blue) to collect and act on student mid- and end-of-unit feedback; and revised our Bristol Skills Framework to align with the curriculum framework. [SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4, SE7]

Our CEP and Education and Student Experience Strategy (2022-2030)³ take a holistic approach to developing an inspiring higher education experience for all students, equipping them with skills for life and work. We have used the model of *knowing*, *acting* and *being* (Barnett and Coate 2005⁴) as our conceptual framework: *knowing* is the process by which students connect to and make sense of intellectual concepts in their discipline; *acting* is the process by which they become insiders, learning ways of thinking and doing in a discipline, and methods and skills to use knowledge to positive effect; *being* is their capacity to reflect on their personal and intellectual development, in relation to grand challenges that they will face in their lives. We believe that this emphasis enables our students to make a difference in the world and exercise their agency and contributes to the gains we provide through our excellent education. [SO4, SE1, SE3]

The University made a commitment to enhancing education *and* student experience through investing in strategic leadership. In 2019 the University appointed a PVC for Education and a PVC to lead on Student Experience to work closely together across the joint portfolio. The building blocks of *knowing*, *acting*, and *being* are implicit in our Education and Student Experience Strategy with its emphasis on students flourishing, nurturing a sense of belonging among diverse communities, and the principle of a student-centred experience. We support students' personal development so that they can engage in a challenging, research-rich education with confidence. Academic skills development, personal tutoring, inclusive practice, and integrating wellbeing in the curriculum contribute to all students thriving as individuals within our scholarly community. [SE5, SE2]

The University of Bristol's whole institution approach to mental health and wellbeing is a sector-wide exemplar of good practice⁵. Our approach to wellbeing helps students to thrive in their education and is integral to their personal development and sense of belonging at university. Since 2018/19, the University has invested in creating a newly designed, expanded wellbeing service with clear communication of support on offer. Staff and students have contributed to the development of the University Mental Health and Wellbeing Student Strategy⁶ and we have expanded staff capacity in our Residential Life and Wellbeing Services, Student Counselling Service, and Disability Services. We funded a PhD studentship to evaluate the impact of our revised service which is nearing completion. It demonstrates improvements in our institutional mental health and wellbeing services. Bristol was one of five UK universities awarded the University Mental Health Charter Award, having completed an application process in April 2022. [SE5, SE3, SO6]

This submission shows how we are embedding teaching excellence consistently in every student's academic experience right through to the outcomes of their degrees, recognising that there are some areas where we have work to do. We completed our submission in dialogue with the Bristol Students' Union (Bristol SU). The Undergraduate Education Officer and a member of SU staff were full members of our TEF steering group, with whom we shared all data, analysis and submission drafts. Feedback on draft submissions was also sought from a panel comprising staff and students.

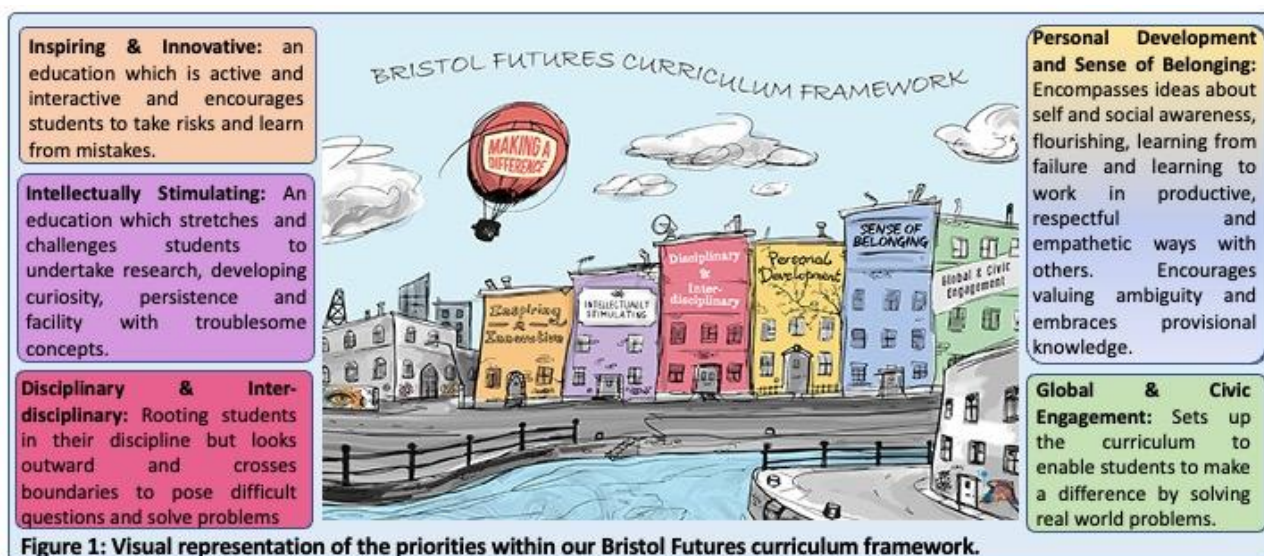
2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Quality at Bristol

In this section we set out the strategic, systemic, university-wide approaches we have put in place to build on our strong foundations, to develop all students' capabilities in *knowing*, *acting* and *being*, and to ensure that our education is transformative. We outline how we evaluate, assure, and continuously improve the quality of our educational provision in a systematic, cyclical, and targeted fashion.

2.1 Systemic enhancement policies, practices, and initiatives

Bristol Futures Curriculum Framework

Building on our Bristol Futures vision to equip students to address society’s grand challenges through interdisciplinary open units (2016), the Bristol Futures Curriculum Framework (2019)¹ represents the next phase of embedding Bristol’s educational values of *knowing*, *acting* and *being* within all our programmes. In 2019, we held a series of curriculum cafes with 170 academics, professional services staff, and students in each faculty to distil the elements of the curriculum framework and outline our shared educational vision. The Bristol Futures Curriculum Framework expresses the vision that our education is about making a difference in the lives of our students, our city and region, and addressing global and local challenges. The framework’s six dimensions represent how our curriculum will make a difference (see Figure 1). [SO4, SE2]



The Curriculum Enhancement Programme (CEP) team, led by the PVC Education, implement the framework, delivering curriculum festivals and writing retreats to build a coherent curriculum narrative across programmes. School Education and Programme Directors undertake leadership development to implement festival outcomes with their teams. Nearly a half of our schools (11/28) have engaged with Curriculum Festivals and are at various stages of implementing their revised and new programmes. Festivals are the catalyst for designing a research-rich education, as illustrated by this feedback [SE1, SE4]:

“Following the curriculum festival in 2020, Civil Engineering has completely rewritten its programme. We have moved from a set of discrete units into a more programmatic design. The process enabled us to create units which knit together content from multiple different engineering disciplines, creating authentic, practice-based units. The presence of graduates at the festival, who now work in engineering, enabled us to embed employability skills and look to the needs of future graduates whilst maintaining a high level of research-led teaching in later years.” (School Education Director).

Fostering a culture of enhancement

The Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching (BILT), formed in 2017, has had increasing reach and impact on educational innovation and enhancement. Over the TEF period 2018/19 to 2021/22, the University has invested £2.4 million in core educational enhancement and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for academics and graduate teaching assistants. We made the strategic decision in 2019/20 to merge BILT and our professional development team, CREATE (Cultivating

Research-rich Education and Teaching Excellence). This has amplified impact by enabling the two teams to work together to build a culture of teaching excellence, strengthening innovative practice, student partnership work, and CPD. Over the TEF period, there have been 5,067 attendees at BILT seminars, workshops, and digital design courses, with a further 483 staff participating in three annual learning and teaching conferences. BILT has a dynamic digital presence too, averaging around 100 blog posts a year, with 84,200 page views during the TEF period. One of BILT's flagship events is the Bristol Teaching Awards to celebrate excellent teaching. [SE4]

Quality Framework

We have revised our processes for monitoring and reviewing education quality during the TEF period, through the introduction of a new Quality Framework. Delivered by our Quality Team, comprised of a group of senior academics and professional service experts together with trained Student Quality Reviewers to ensure student voice is a core part of our framework, the framework allows us to drive continual enhancement of all provision. Grounded in a risk-based approach, the team share good practice and work with staff to identify and respond to challenges and student feedback, thus developing programmes aligned with our strategic educational priorities. Annual quality reviews engage school teams in focused discussions about their data, educational quality, student voice and, where relevant, professional body requirements that feed into their Education Action Plan, a live document that allows the tracking of progress and change through the year. In-depth revalidation of programmes occurs on a 5-yearly cycle, involving large numbers of teaching staff, student feedback, and external discipline experts. [SE1, SE2, SE7]

Rewarding, recognising, and equipping our staff

Bristol's new academic promotions framework (2020)⁷ ensures that recognition for teaching is built into the fabric of the institution. The framework ensures a holistic approach to promotion and greater parity of esteem between research and teaching. Research-active staff must demonstrate excellence in education practice and personal tutoring as compulsory dimensions within a basket of research; education; leadership and citizenship; and engagement and impact criteria. Teaching-focused staff must demonstrate excellence in two additional education dimensions: curriculum development, and scholarship of teaching and learning. The number and quality of applications for teaching-focused promotions has grown each year during the TEF period from 10 in 2018/19 to 56 in 2021/22, with a total of 110 applications leading to 75 teaching-focused promotions. The University has promoted Professors and Associate Professors on our teaching pathway since 2018/19 with increasing recognition that educational excellence is highly valued at Bristol. All staff seeking promotion must attain fellowship of the HEA. [SE4, SE1, SE3, SE7]

Bristol has created a virtuous circle of educational enhancement, professional development, and reward and recognition. The CREATE professional development team supports Advance HE (HEA) fellowship applications from Associate to Principal Fellow. Our revised scheme, accredited in 2021, is more inclusive, integrates the Bristol Futures Curriculum and Skills frameworks, and includes a new credit-bearing PGCAP. Participation, uptake, and completions have increased in recent years with 1,500 staff taking up CPD opportunities in 2021/22 and higher completion rates at all levels. The proportion of staff holding HEA fellowships has grown during the TEF period, as we progress in increasing the proportion of staff with teaching qualifications: over all fellowship categories, from 103 to 332 staff, with the proportion of our staff holding teaching qualifications increasing from 45% to 58% over the TEF period. We believe this plays a role in our outstanding overall scores on the NSS item: *Staff are good at explaining things* (most recent 4 years combined score 88.1%⁸). [SE4, SE1]

Our annual Bristol Teaching Awards (BTAs) reflect growth in the profile of teaching excellence in our community. Over the TEF period, there have been 2,817 nominations from students and staff for outstanding teaching, with a modest 236 nominations in 2019/20, rising to 983 nominations in the most pandemic-affected year in 2020/21, and sustaining high nomination rates of 889 staff in 2021/22. Raising the profile of teaching excellence is reflected in national teaching awards

our new VC; PVC Education; one Head of School; and the Acting Director of BILT. [SE4, SE1]

Educational innovation and resilience through the pandemic

In the face of the immense professional and personal pressures of the pandemic, Bristol's staff and students displayed creativity, generosity of spirit, and a willingness to learn and work together to deliver an outstanding online education. We were able to mobilise people and resources based on our systems, departments, and roles. Our PVC Education worked with BILT, our Digital Education Office, the Curriculum Enhancement Programme team, Faculty Education Directors, academic and student digital champions and SU sabbatical officers, to deliver a step change to active learning through digital learning design. We made decisions at the start of the pandemic to avoid a simple translation of 50-minute lectures onto digital platforms and asked our community to imagine what was possible in online teaching, taking the deficit out of online education. [SE2, SE1, SE4, SE7]

Following a successful one-hour-a-day 'daily digital' mini-course facilitated by the PVC Education shortly after the pandemic struck (attended by >600 staff), a community of experts and enthusiasts designed a week-long course of digital training for staff in anticipation of September 2020. 58 Digital Champions who were lecturers from our 28 schools, volunteered to contribute to the shape of the course sharing their frontline experience. BILT, CEP, Digital Education Office, Faculty Education Directors, the PVC Education and Student Fellows co-created our seven-day, one-hour-a-day, Digital Design Course. The conceptual foundations of the course were about active learning, dialogue, creating community and a sense of belonging, and using writing and digital tools in exciting ways. Across five weeks over the summer of 2020, 1,489 staff enrolled on the course with 916 participating in its live online sessions, developing the skills to ensure they could start the next academic year confidently with an exciting blend of in-person and online education. A further 1,172 staff have since participated in the asynchronous version of this course and in September 2020 and January 2021 further staff participated in further 'live' runs. Our evaluation⁹ showed that the course aligned well with the Bristol Futures Curriculum Framework, and staff gave positive feedback about its usefulness, scoring it 4/5^b. In response to the statement 'I am learning a lot about my subject' in a Pulse Survey of 2,500 students (Oct 2020), 83% of students responded positively and relatively positively, despite the challenges of the pandemic. While this was a good outcome, we recognise that the pandemic compromised students' full experience of university life, as outlined in the independent student TEF submission. [SE4, SE1, SE2, SE3, SE6, SE7]

Practical and applied subjects encountered further challenges in teaching students. How were they to conduct experiments in laboratories, dissect cadavers, and examine teeth in online mode? The University invested in innovative solutions to bring practice to life for students in these subjects, for example, life-size models of patient's heads in our Dental School, Anatomy@Home bone box sets allowing 3D haptic learning, and different versions of specialist @Home kits to bring laboratory

^b Digital Education Office internal course evaluation data for the Digital Design Course, "How useful did you find the course"(out of 5, where 5 = 'extremely useful' and 1 = 'not useful at all'). Course run May 2020 average score 4.25; June 2020 3.95, July 2020 4.11. Run from August 2020 onwards (self-study version) average score 4.8. New version January 2021 onwards average score 4.67. Course evaluation response rates vary but average 12% across the variants of the course.

learning to life for 1,250 for our Engineering students in the UK and around the world. History of Art staff created self-paced student resources that explored topics or artworks through readings, videos, audio narration, text, and images, using Microsoft Sway. Many of these innovations have continued post-pandemic in response to positive student feedback. [SE6, SE1, SE2, SE7]

'Teaching on My Course' NSS scores remained high and in line with our benchmark during the pandemic years (85% for 2019/20; 82.3% for 2020/21). A record number of nominations (n=983) for Bristol Teaching Awards further evidenced inspiring and innovative teaching during the pandemic. We took proactive steps to ensure all students, irrespective of discipline or demographic were able to achieve outstanding outcomes whilst learning online. We offered digital training ('Digitally Ready') to all students at the start of the 2020/21 academic year, proving very popular with 18,789 page visits. This has now been adopted as standard transition provision. We improved and standardised our Blackboard templates, Re/Play and Talis Aspire resource lists. We invested in digital tools (e.g. Padlet, Mentimeter, Mobius) and provided training to support active learning and teaching online in specialist subjects, sustaining their use post-pandemic. [SE2, SE1, SE4, SE6]

The pandemic challenged the University to undertake systematic and rapid changes to our education, making it more flexible and enabling more accessible academic and pastoral support. While the systematic return to in-person education reignited the joy of being together for our students and staff, we recognised that many online innovations supported student learning, particularly asynchronous content and digital tools used in face-to-face settings. We discovered that aspects of digital education were more inclusive, supporting students with chronic ill health (mental or physical) and/or neurodiversity. We are sustaining and embedding these improvements. [SE5, SE1]

2.2 A thematic analysis of our education provision: successes and challenges

In this section, we identify thematic areas of our education provision, drawing on evidence from across the University and practices from 28 schools within our six faculties that we have identified through our annual quality assurance reviews, BILT case studies of best practice, and our faculty and school education communities. We compare internal and external measures of performance and demonstrate how we are taking forward actions to ensure that we address challenges, taking a systematic approach to improving in areas where our performance is weaker.

Student-centred

Bristol's refreshed 2022-2030 Education and Student Experience Strategy³ positions students at the heart of our educational partnership. We prioritise student partnership as part of our vision to strengthen students' agency and involvement in their learning experiences (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten 2014)¹⁰. We developed the Education and Student Experience Strategy in consultation with students: students participated in workshops, we consulted our Sabbatical Officers, discussed the strategy with Student Staff Liaison Committees, and surveyed key student groups including SU liberation groups. Our students are core members of quality assurance activities and participants in the curriculum enhancement programme, contributing to the development and approval of programmes. They are active in strategic educational agendas including assessment and feedback, research-rich education, wellbeing in the curriculum, decolonisation, sustainability, and inclusive learning. They bring their experience and insight to our systems and processes, to support every student's navigation of our services. This is integral to our strategic agenda, but we are not complacent and we are acting to ensure that all students have a voice and agency in their education. [SE7]

The University has invested £2.4 million in a Student Experience Programme (SEP), drawing on student expertise to shape every student's experience of services across the University. SEP

supports our strategy to make Bristol a place where students feel a sense of belonging and thrive. Drawing on student expertise, it targets redesign of systems and processes related to enquiry management, disability support, and assessment information. In line with issues raised in the student TEF submission, we are working actively to improve students' ability to navigate systems and access information intuitively. We have improved our approach to student communications, developing a Student App and supporting community-building activities. 13,000 unique users have engaged with the App since 2021. As part of SEP, the SU and University have appointed two shared Student Insight roles to lead a Student Advisory Group, comprised of 50 students recruited to mirror as closely as possible the current make-up of the student body: 80% UG, 20% PGT, 70% home/EU, 30% international, 52% women, 44% men,

This group contributes to long-term strategic activities as well as quick turn-around requests for engagement and response. [SE7, SE5, SE6]

Our partnership with the Students Union (SU) is a vital part of engaging in dialogue with our students. Relevant members of the senior team have an active dialogue with the SU Sabbatical Officers, meeting with them fortnightly. SU officers are represented on University Education Committee and Student Experience Committee, contributing to policy debates at a high level. They serve on our highest academic body, Senate. They also contribute to our quality framework reviews through pre-meetings with our Student Quality Reviewers (see Section 2.1: Quality Framework). [SE7]

Elected SU Sabbatical Officers are the formal representatives of the student body. They face challenges in representing our large and diverse student body, as evidenced in the NSS item 'The SU effectively represents students' academic interests' which 42% of students agreed with in 2022. The SU oversees the election of between 800-900 academic student representatives, elected annually by their peers, trained by the SU, and serving on Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) across our 28 schools in six faculties. The aim of the student representative system is to raise awareness of problems and generate solutions to them in partnership with staff, providing positive feedback on best practice which can be shared more widely. In practice, there are challenges. We are in discussion with SU leaders to see how the representative system might be made more effective. We are keen to support them in their mission to represent our whole student body. [SE7]

Together with schools, the SU promotes and supports a vibrant community of 61 disciplinary societies that contribute to a culture of wider intellectual stimulation, pride, and fun about scholarly endeavours. The SU awards 'group of the month' prizes to societies, complete with digital badges and the invitation to host an Instagram takeover of the main SU account. Recent award winners include Engineers without Borders for its event programme, and the Physics Society, Chaos, which has won national awards for volunteering and the best society in the last four years. Chaos recently hosted an inclusive international conference with high-profile speakers. [SE7, SE1, SE2]

Our SU Undergraduate Education Officer (2020/21) co-created the Sustainability Champions initiative. This consists of part-time student roles focused on embedding sustainability in 12 programmes across our faculties, working in collaboration with the SU, BILT, and our Academic Director for Sustainability. 11 champions were appointed in 2021/22 and 14 in 2022/23. They collaborate with academics to identify needs for change and opportunities for students to address global challenges through their learning. The UKRI Green Gown 2022 awards^c recognised its

^c University of Bristol student Carlos Shanka Boissy Diaz was a winner in the category of Sustainability Champion – Student at the 2022 UKRI Green Gown Awards <https://www.greengownawards.org/2022-finalists-new>. The University was also Highly Commended in the category of Campus Health, Food and Drink; and a Finalist in the Next Generation Learning and Skills category.

success. Co-ordinated, collaborative action on the cost-of-living crisis is a recent further example of productive dialogue and co-design between our staff and our students. [SE7, SE1, SE2]

BILT is a hub of student partnership and co-creation with students. It has recruited and employed 20 paid Student Fellows over the TEF period. Student Fellows adopt an area related to one of our strategic educational themes and work with academic mentors to design and deliver their projects. Themes include: students as researchers; assessment and feedback; embedding sustainability and wellbeing in the curriculum; and decolonising education. Their achievements include producing an undergraduate research journal, running a research festival, producing blogs and podcasts. One Fellow working on wellbeing produced a series of podcasts about vulnerability in higher education; several contributed to a 'Blended Learning and Accessibility' online conference to embed inclusive learning in digital modes. Student fellows influence educational agendas through making contributions at University Education Committee, leading sessions at our annual Learning and Teaching Conference, BILT seminars, and content creation for BILT's digital presence. [SE7]

The Student Fellows play a leading role in BILT's annual Hackathons which, like computer hackathons, are generative problem-solving events. 50 students have been employed to participate in hackathons during the TEF period. These intensive periods of student-led and student-driven co-design provide solutions to education and student experience priority areas. Students present their proposals and plans to senior staff and student representatives, developing their skills whilst shaping their education. Priority areas included education decision-making, digital storytelling, wellbeing, student success, blended education, a day-in-the-life-of-a-student during the pandemic, and designing a curriculum for the future. Hackathons provide illustrative insights into student experience, which feed into initiatives such as the use of student-facing language in unit descriptors, and development of our Student App, ensuring its navigation is intuitive. [SE7]

NSS data and qualitative comments indicate that students feel they have very good opportunities to feedback on their experiences through student representation systems, Student Staff Liaison Committees, Town Halls and other fora, and unit surveys (such as Blue). While we are materially in line with our benchmark, we realise that we have more work to do in this area, especially as our most recent year's data is below benchmark. Split indicators identify 15 subject areas below benchmark on student voice questions, reflecting SU concerns that there are inconsistencies in student representation at local level. We are in dialogue with the SU, who are investigating sector-wide best practice in this area. We are also sharing best practice from high performing schools to improve student voice and students' ability to shape their academic experience in lower performing disciplines. We have recently implemented our new unit evaluation system (2021/22) to ensure that every student has the chance at mid- and end-of-unit to exercise their voice and shape their educational experience. Academics are asked to respond to students about Blue feedback and record their responses on Blackboard. [SE7]

An inspiring, innovative, and research-rich education

Over the TEF period, the overall NSS indicator for 'Teaching on my course' was in line with our benchmark (83.1% at Bristol compared to a benchmark of 84%). In 2022, 86% of our students found their courses intellectually stimulating, 4% above the sector average (82%). We believe that the way our students engage in the research-rich environment at Bristol is behind this score. Disciplinary research and pedagogic scholarship inform and shape our degree programmes. Most undergraduate students (80% in the class of 2021/22^d) undertake capstone research projects in final

^d Internal records show that 4403 of 5503 graduates in 2021/22 undertook a capstone unit (80.0%). Grown throughout TEF period from 71.2% (4902) in 2018/19, 74.8% (5042) in 2019/20, and 78.4% (5259) in 2020/21.

year which bring their learning together, fire up their curiosity, refine their skills, and develop their agency as independent researchers. In courses where this is not possible because of professional and clinical requirements, we support students to engage in research, for example, securing INSPIRE funding from the Academy of Medical Sciences. [SE3, SE1, SE2]

Students' experience of undertaking research has powerful resonance with our vision of a transformative education. Across the University, students engage in projects that make a difference. They work with partners, for example in Engineering Design, a group of eight final year students have been working with a former Dyson engineer on an Engineering for Good project to refine a hand-spun washing machine, with each student researching aspects of the design. This poverty-busting project could change the lives of millions of (mainly) women around the world, saving them from up to 20 hours of hand-washing a week. Our Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CFIE), winner of an Advance HE Collaborate Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE), delivers 14 integrated master's programmes with local, national, and international industry partners from across the sciences and humanities, empowering students to collaborate on research and implement applied solutions to real world challenges, turning their ideas into practice.

[SO6, SE1, SE2, SE3, SO1, SO4, SO5]

Research-rich education comes alive for our students through civic and global partnerships with industry, third sector, educational, business, and community organisations embedded in many of our degree programmes. Our Engineering and Social Science faculties have invested in industry and professional liaison staff who build partnerships across the city and region, so that students can engage in authentic research and community projects. In Aerospace Engineering, students' education is enriched by collaboration with Airbus and Leonardo, who teach students, set real-world design projects, and mark them. Dental, medical, and veterinary students experience placements with clinical partners. Students across nine Theatre programmes benefit from the expertise and facilities offered by the Bristol Old Vic theatre and work with local theatre groups in the city. Bristol offers students on 22 undergraduate programmes a year in industry spread across four faculties: Social Sciences and Law, Science, Engineering and Life Sciences. Overall, the University works with more than 6,000 employers to deliver specialist teaching content, year- or unit-long placements, mentoring, and careers events. [SE3, SE1, SE2, SO1, SO4, SO5, SO6]

As testament to our success in nurturing applied and authentic learning through partnerships, the University of Bristol was recently named as the leading university in the UK for generating income from spinout companies. In building on this success and the achievements of our Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (CFIE), we have recently launched a new start-up accelerator for students which will enable students to be mentored by teachers in CFIE to develop their research-to-innovation ideas. This dynamic model is at the heart of plans for our new Temple Quarter Enterprise Campus, next to Bristol Temple Meads Station, designed to capture the educational and enterprise promise of industry-academy partnerships. [SO6, SE1, SE2, SE3, SO1, SO4, SO5]

In many schools, students edit and publish in disciplinary student journals, such as *The Bristorian*, and attend discipline specific conferences such as the British Psychological South-West Undergraduate Conference. In a university-wide initiative, BILT Student Fellows edit our annual *BILT Student Research Journal* (2019-) which has published work by 116 students and attracted 1,673 web reads. BILT's annual Student Research Festival (2020-) offers students from all disciplines opportunities to present posters, short papers, and chair sessions. 61 students have presented their

research to date. Undergraduate students are also involved in external research activities. During the TEF period, our undergraduate students co-authored 275 peer-reviewed journal articles and were listed in 67 conference proceedings and external contributions^e, overwhelmingly in partnership with our academics. These activities create an appetite for research with about one fifth of our undergraduate students (20.4%^f) choosing to undertake postgraduate study. [SE3, SE1, SE2, SO1]

Students benefit from being taught by academics who are leaders in their field; equally they benefit when academics use evidence-led teaching practice. BILT has funded 97 scholarly education projects (£138,000) since 2018/19, supporting staff to conduct education projects and pedagogic research, some of which have entered the public domain as books, peer-reviewed articles, and conference presentations. 90 case studies from these projects have created a scholarly hub for teaching and learning, facilitating sharing of best practice and innovation in areas such as authentic learning and employability, inclusive teaching, assessment and feedback, blended learning, sustainability, decolonising education, and research-rich teaching. Disciplines extend the range of scholarship. Our Veterinary Science staff have developed a wide portfolio of evidence-informed teaching and learning projects (35 peer-reviewed papers, 87 conference contributions and 16 funded projects since 2016). For example, the team led an international team to develop an Evidence-based Veterinary Medicine online learning resource, integrating the resource within their curriculum. BILT's academic director has played a leading role with our Economics school in hosting the Economics Network, the largest and longest-established academic organisation devoted to improving the teaching and learning of economics in universities. [SE3, SE2, SE4]

As a mark of our inspiring education provision and tailored academic support, not only are our 'Teaching on my course' scores high, but they *do not vary* by mode of study, student age, ethnicity, sex, and socio-economic background, whether they are domiciled in the UK or abroad, and whether they live with a disability. There is some variation in teaching scores by subject, for example students in Performing Arts, Medicine and Dentistry programmes rate the teaching much higher than our benchmark. In contrast, English Studies, History and Archaeology, Philosophical and Religious Studies, and Psychology scores are below benchmark. The pandemic adversely affected subjects with practical elements such as Film and TV studies (Creative arts and design). Our Education and Teaching programme is a relatively new area, recording NSS data from 2020. This programme has improved since 2021 with significant bounce-back to a score of 89% in 2022, well above the 81.9% benchmark. Combined and General Studies CAH is our Liberal Arts programme which is materially below benchmark for 'Teaching on my course'. A similar picture occurs with Economics; Law is just below benchmark. Our quality assurance and enhancement teams are working with all underperforming subjects to identify the steps to improve students' academic experience. Concrete actions include supporting interactive teaching through flipped approaches and active learning for large classes. [SE1, SE2, SE5]

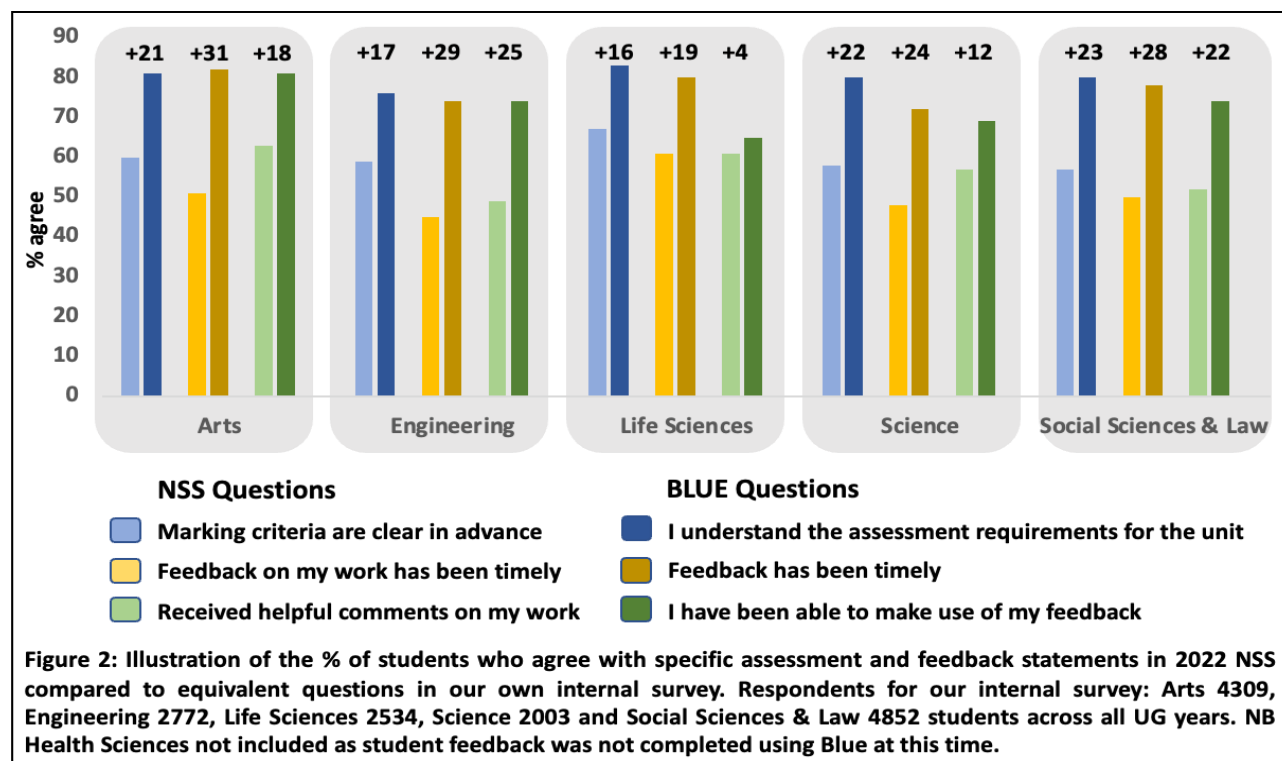
Assessment and feedback: our ongoing challenge

Assessment and Feedback remains a key challenge for us, and we are focussing on sustained work in this area. Our NSS indicators on the Assessment and Feedback questions across most subjects and demographic splits have declined over the TEF period and are well below benchmark. Our own internal unit-level survey provides a contrasting picture to the NSS indicators (Figure 2). Student

^e Internal records show that, from 2018 to 2022 inclusive, 340 undergraduate students have been published or listed in conference proceedings 441 times (some students have more than one qualifying entry), 77.6% of which were peer reviewed journals or external conferences.

^f Graduate Outcomes, 2019/20 first-degree graduates, 601 out of 2944, 20.4%.

reflections on their experience of assessment when they complete the NSS are at programme level. In contrast, our Blue survey focusses on students' perceptions of assessment at unit level. Whilst we still have work to do to understand this disparity fully, early evaluation suggests that our focus on improving programme-level consistency and coherence of assessment and feedback is the right one. In this section we will outline systemic, university-wide programmes of work addressing weaknesses in this area and highlight existing strengths we are building on. [SE1, SE7]



TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment) is our key institutional action to improve our assessment and feedback, with its strong focus on taking a programme approach. TESTA is a National Teaching Fellowship Funded project (2009-12) which has been widely used across the UK sector as a research and change process (Jessop *et al.*, 2014¹¹; Jessop and Tomas 2017¹²). Delivered through our Curriculum Enhancement Programme, TESTA's evidence-based evaluation of patterns of assessment and feedback across programmes builds up a comprehensive picture of how students experience assessment. TESTA enables staff to make changes in assessment patterns on their programmes, for example rebalancing formative and summative assessment, sequencing varieties of assessment, and managing student assessment loads better. We deliver TESTA in two formats - full and Fast Track. 33 schools and/or programmes from across all our faculties have participated since 2019/20 (12 full TESTA) with current funding continuing to 2024/25. Our initial evaluation has been positive (Hopwood Stephens¹³) with further evaluation in train to evidence TESTA's institutional impact. In Anthropology, integration of more formative assessment and an overall reduction in the volume of assessment has seen the NSS score for 'Assessment and Feedback' rise to 65% in 2022, compared to 47% in 2021, 41% in 2020, and 50% in 2019. Psychology undertook TESTA in 2020/21. Their NSS Assessment and Feedback scores have improved from 44% in 2020, to 68% in 2021 and 61% in 2022. These early signs of impact are encouraging, giving us confidence in our use of TESTA to bring about institutional change in Assessment and Feedback. [SE1, SE3]

Our University Assessment Principles¹⁴ provide a comprehensive overview of guiding principles for assessment and feedback, which faculties and schools use to enhance assessment literacy among

students and staff. The Faculty of Arts has developed full assessment briefs, located in the same place on Blackboard unit sites, ensuring that key information is accessible to all students and clearly explaining the task and its purpose. These briefs, developed collaboratively by staff and students, have addressed the perception of implicit criteria flagged by our student representatives. Many subjects in Arts have seen significant improvement in the NSS assessment and feedback question set as a result⁹. Biological Sciences collaborated with students to develop an interactive Assessment and Feedback Portfolio, that maps assessments across the year, explaining how each tests and develops skills that connect to future units and assessments, and helping students to understand, engage with, and act on their feedback. In other areas assessment guides and feedback cafes ensure students are encouraged to engage with assessment and feedback through regular, informal opportunities to talk with academic staff, study skills advisers, and peer student mentors. [SE1, SE4]

Medicine, Dentistry, Biosciences, Pharmacology and Toxicology are discipline areas that are materially above our benchmark for the TEF assessment and feedback indicators. We are sharing their best practice with other programmes in discipline-appropriate ways. There is plenty of best practice across the University in assessment and feedback, evidenced through our unit evaluation, publications¹⁵, and External Examiner reports, but we realise that from a student perspective, consistency is key. Many disciplines at Bristol practise authentic assessment which enable students to apply their learning. These range from Research Grant Proposal assessments in Life Sciences to Industry Pitches in Arts, Objective Structured Clinical Examinations in Health Sciences, and students working in design teams on authentic projects in a simulated office environment in Civil Engineering, described in an 11-episode BILT blog, 'The Office'. [SE1, SE7, SO1]

In 2022 we launched our new Assessment and Feedback Strategy¹⁶ to bring about a strong shared direction for assessment post-pandemic. The strategy focuses on three priority areas that reflect TESTA priorities: the first is to design *Integrated* assessment and feedback which looks beyond units to take a programme view, balancing formative and summative assessment and sequencing assessment within and across years of study; the second is to ensure that our assessment is *Designed for All*, supporting all students to succeed through demonstrating their learning in different yet equivalent ways; and the third priority is *Authentic* assessment and feedback which brings theory to life by giving students the opportunity to apply their learning, make decisions, and exercise agency in solving problems. The strategy builds on our areas of excellence and strength and seeks to drive a consistent approach to assessment and feedback. [SE1, SO1, SO5]

Academic Support: the value of 'someone who knows you'

Student satisfaction with academic support has declined during the TEF period (reflecting wider sector patterns), with our most recent indicator in 2021/22 being the lowest across the four years (69.3%). In analysing reasons for the decline, we find common ground with the independent student TEF submission which identified inconsistencies in students' experience of personal tutoring. The pandemic may explain some of this inconsistency, especially the reduction in face-to-face activities, transition to online provision, and the complex personal challenges faced by students. Repeated occurrences of industrial action may have exacerbated the decline. Split indicators signal that we need to continue to take targeted action to improve academic support mainly for our Black students (5.3 points below BM) but also for our White students (3.3 below BM), which are both below benchmark. Split indicators align broadly with internal research (Belonging, Connection and Community¹⁷, produced in partnership with the Students' Union and co-funded by the University) on

⁹ Improvements in Arts subjects NSS2021 to NSS2022 (Assessment and Feedback question set): Anthropology +21.0%pts; English Studies +7.7%pts; History +14.1%pts; Music +6.5%pts; Theology & Religion +18.8%pts.

students' sense of belonging which showed that disabled students, Black ethnicity students, international students, and those with caring responsibilities felt less connected. Our Global Lounge, launched as a physical space in 2021, is improving this sense of belonging for international students with the provision of 307 cultural, social or 'language-practice' events in the last year, attended by 9,716 students. The Global Lounge Impact Report 2021/22¹⁸ evidences the impact of this initiative on the international student experience, as illustrated by this quotation from a feedback form:

"The University really supports anything to do with cultural experience and the Global Lounge helps you get that one step further. The team are really, really helpful and go out of their way to make sure you have everything you need. They've made our entire journey really comfortable, and I think the University as a whole does a fantastic job."

In this section we examine the cornerstones of our academic support provision: personal tutoring and academic skills development, we reflect on achievements and initiatives, and we show how we are addressing the challenges that our NSS scores indicate, especially for students with protected characteristics and those from widening participation backgrounds. [SE5]

Our strategy and systems foster an inclusive culture where every student is encouraged to express their views and can be comfortable with who they are. Our commitment is written into our strategy - 'students should feel known and listened to as individuals'. The Bristol SU's recent research¹⁷ conducted in collaboration with the University showed that most students feel known through their programmes and accommodation, and that 9 out of 10 students at Bristol feel connected to someone at university. Responses to the NSS question, *I have been able to contact staff when I needed to*, affirm that the staff-student connections are broadly positive with 85.1%⁸ of students responding positively through the pandemic with a firm 'yes' in 2021/22 at 81.2%¹⁹. We know that Medical, Dental, Veterinary and Biological Sciences students report higher than benchmark levels satisfaction with academic support. Integrated master's students are more satisfied with the academic support they receive than our three-year bachelor's students (with a TEF indicator above benchmark). This may relate to the extended opportunities they receive to engage with research in a supported environment. We are working to identify and share this best practice with other subjects. [SE5]

Academic support for our students begins before they arrive. Students are directed to our 'Upgrade to University' online study skills learning resource, designed to help them begin to understand and manage the transition between school and university study. Tailored support is available to students with protected characteristics and from widening participation backgrounds. In partnership with the SU we deliver a planned university-wide schedule of Welcome Week events, promoting academic success and encouraging students to explore different and new opportunities. From 2020/21, our University of Bristol Student App has brought this comprehensive schedule of events and information together. Discipline-specific induction events introduce each student to sources of academic and personal support in their schools. Our Disability Services Team support students with a range of disabilities, learning difficulties, and other health and mental health conditions, working with students and relevant staff to develop strategies which enable students to succeed and flourish in all aspects of their studies. This includes tailored study skills support for disabled students. Our degree outcomes data²⁰ show that our students with disabilities achieve 'good degrees' at the same or higher rates than their non-disabled peers. [SE5, SE6]

Throughout their time at Bristol, students can expect ongoing contact with a personal tutor: three contact points in each teaching block during their first year and at least two contact points in each teaching block thereafter. All our teaching staff are involved in personal tutoring, with every student normally building a relationship with their tutor through the course of their degree. Our academic

promotion criteria⁷ require staff to evidence excellence in personal tutoring, reinforcing our commitment to its value. Personal tutoring sessions engage students in reflection about their academic and personal development linked to the Bristol Skills Framework, supporting students to identify strengths and weaknesses, learn where to access help, strengthen their understanding of academic integrity, guide option choices and capstone project development, responding to feedback, and planning for graduate life. 166 students nominated staff for the Bristol Teaching Awards Outstanding Personal Tutoring Award in 2021, and 157 in 2022. [SE5, SO1]

Our Senior Tutor network consists of experienced staff with oversight of personal tutoring across schools and faculties in the University. Senior Tutors lead on tutoring policy and practice ensuring a consistent approach. They also conduct training, facilitate staff and student workshops, and offer one-to-one sessions for students who need further support or guidance. The network meets around eight times per year to refine approaches to personal tutoring, update policy and handbooks, and share best practice for training personal tutors. BILT provides personal tutor training and CPD, which draws on the expertise of our Senior Tutor network. [SE4, SE5, SE7]

The challenge of student number growth, from 24,860 to 29,770 in the TEF period, has prompted us to explore more sustainable models of personal tutoring that enable all students to feel there is someone who truly knows them, even at scale. We have invested in growing the number of academic staff who have more time allocation for personal tutoring from 737 to 880, to meet our growth in student numbers. With growth, our student demography has diversified from 67% state school intake in 2018/19 to 76% in 2021/22. In tandem, the ratio of POLAR quintile 1 students (the least represented) to quintile 5 (the most) has narrowed^h, as we enable entry to students from low participation neighbourhoods. The proportion of home undergraduate students who enter Bristol on contextual offers has risen from 24.9% of our intake to 36.9%, averaging at 32.1% over the TEF period. During the same period the number and proportion of undergraduate students with a disability increased from 2,876 (15.1%) to 4,329 (18.7%)²¹. [SE5]

Inclusive academic support and teaching for diversity are integral to ensuring that students from widening participation backgrounds flourish. Degree outcomes data from internal research tell us that students who enter the University of Bristol on a two-grade lower contextual offer perform in line with their peersⁱ. Individual students on contextual offers thrive and succeed at Bristol, illustrated by this case study of a Geography graduate who was awarded a prestigious Fulbright Scholarship. The Bristol Scholars programme for widening participation students from city schools who have experienced significant challenges during their secondary education exemplifies how we support students. During the TEF period, we have provided intensive academic and pastoral support to enable our 263 Bristol Scholars to thrive, including one-to-one coaching, a tailored residential conference, and additional engagement activities. In 2022, 26% of Bristol Scholars achieved a first class honours, 54% a 2:1, and 20% a 2:2, evidencing the value of our support. [SE5, SO1, SO5, SO6]

^h Ratio of POLAR Q5 (most represented) to Q1 (least represented) was 9.07:1 in 2018/19 and 6.67:1 in 2021/22.

ⁱ Good honours (First & 2:1) outcomes by offer type at intake (contextual/standard offer), internal data from Education Data and Insight Team Awards Dashboard, December 2022.

| Award Year | Contextual headcount | Standard headcount | Contextual with Good Degrees | Standard with Good Degrees |
|------------|----------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 2018/19 | 652 | 3451 | 91.6% | 90.0% |
| 2019/20 | 663 | 3938 | 89.7% | 91.9% |
| 2020/21 | 912 | 3700 | 93.4% | 93.6% |
| 2021/22 | 1390 | 3484 | 89.4% | 89.9% |

Our research on personal tutoring at Bristol has tracked 55 of our undergraduate students from across the University through their time with us and engaged with staff to review and evaluate personal tutoring (Alberts, Birdi, Lart, 2019-2025²²). It was co-funded by the Tuixen Foundation²³ and recently presented at the United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring Annual Conference 2022²⁴. A key output - 'Someone who knows you'²⁵ – explored students' expectations and experiences of personal tutoring to improve our understanding of student needs, explore variations, and share best practice. We have extended the reach of this project to investigate best practice in personal tutoring for Black students, international students, students with disabilities, and those with intersectional experiences. This project is enabling us to investigate, design and pilot best practice, and develop tailored models that ensure all students thrive and have a consistent personal tutoring experience. The project has also fed into improvements to eVision, our student records software, including a new 'tutee overview' screen designed for personal tutors to help them get to know their tutees and easily view information to assist in supporting them. Our research has been the catalyst for piloting new models that separate procedural, pastoral, and academic aspects of personal tutoring through a triage system, so that students feel known by someone equipped with the skills and knowledge to support their personal development in a holistic way. Building on our research we are piloting a new personal tutoring model in one of our large schools (Economics) and discussing different approaches with other institutions to further improve and refine our models for the scale and size of our institution and to ensure excellent academic support for all students. [SE5, SE3]

A second research project funded a BILT fellowship for lecturer Fabienne Vailes to conduct research on personal tutoring which culminated in her book *The Flourishing Student* (2017; 2022²⁶). This prompted a deeper understanding of the intersections between academic and personal development, sense of belonging, and wellbeing. We acted on these insights by investing £100k in expanding provision of our open unit 'The Science of Happiness'. 1,406 undergraduate students have enrolled on the unit in the past two years. It incorporates peer learning to help students develop science-based strategies for living a more fulfilling life and embeds skills to thrive in an increasingly complex world. Early indications of the effectiveness of this unit were evidenced in a PLoS ONE article (Hobbs *et al.*, 2022²⁷) which indicates better mental health in students who had undertaken the unit when compared to a control group who had not^j. [SE3, SE4, SE5, SO5, SO6]

Academic skills development

We offer Study Skills to every student, facilitated through small group workshops, one-to-one tutorials, online sessions, and asynchronous self-paced activities. Our sessions and resources are designed to build students' confidence and competence in key skills, including 'Reading and Writing Skills', 'Exam and Assessment Preparation', 'Data Skills', and 'Time Management'. The pandemic prompted us to offer online courses in addition to in-person workshops. Online study skills support has proven very popular with users increasing by over 1100% between 2018/19 and 2021/22. In response, we are expanding this area of provision. As part of Study Skills, we employ Bristol Futures Student Advocates who are trained to deliver peer-to-peer support at drop-in advice sessions; design, deliver and evaluate Study Skills workshops; contribute to the planning, content, and organisation of the Study Skills service as team members; and use their insight as students to create a subject-related suite of resources and activities to support other students in their academic development. They have created and facilitated many successful sessions, including Coding Club, where students explore coding to solve complex problems. The sessions are co-created and student-

^j We caveat this as 'early indications' due to limited population size in study, n=166, control group n=198.

led, with the Study Skills team in supporting roles. The University also hosts four part-time Royal Literary Fund Writing Fellows, who support students to develop their approach to writing. [SE5]

Our Peer Assisted Study Scheme (PASS) provides peer learning for first-year students. We have trained and employed 340 students as PASS leaders. In 2021/22, 2,350 students engaged with PASS, providing opportunities for them to ask questions and gain confidence by interacting with peers who have more experience of HE. On average, students who attended eight or more PASS sessions improved their grades by 10.4% and displayed increased continuation rates compared to those who had not engaged with PASS (Allen *et al.*, 2021²⁸). Internal PASS evaluation surveys (response rates between 10.6% and 24.0%), showed that 94% of PASS participants agreed that the scheme had improved their student experience, with 77% stating that PASS helped them feel confident in coping with their studies. In addition to PASS, we have invested in a peer mentoring scheme to support students in their transitions to university life, offering advice and guidance to help them settle in and successfully navigate starting at Bristol through one-to-one sessions with a trained, experienced second- or third-year student mentor. Around 300 paid mentors are employed each year. The scheme has supported more than 2,700 mentees in the last three years. Over half of these student mentees are from widening participation backgrounds^k. [SE5, SE3]

In response to the diversity of our student body, we offer a range of support to develop students' academic skills and sense of belonging. We provide tailored academic, personal, and legal support to our Sanctuary Scholars, who come from asylum-seeking and refugee communities. Our Centre for Academic Language and Development (CALD) embeds language and academic literacy in courses with high numbers of international students. We support mature students to thrive and be confident in their studies through 'Building Up To Bristol', an induction programme focusing on academic literacy. In Biological Sciences students meet informally with staff in cafe settings and in Arts 'Meet your Tutor' sessions staff talk about their professional journeys, including tackling moments of failure. Schools lead supportive activities for students with protected characteristics, for example, Law colleagues run a series of informal staff and student LGBT+ lunches, that are especially appreciated by students from jurisdictions where their identities are subject to legal or social sanction. Creating a sense of belonging extends to how we help our students feel at home in the wider city. For example, Universal City, an interactive map created in partnership with local artists, poets, and filmmakers, connects students with African and African Diaspora owned businesses, community organisations and histories, and encourages engagement, connection, and community activity. Despite these initiatives to strengthen students' sense of belonging, we recognise the specific challenges for part-time students. Across all areas of our education provision, many NSS indicators for part-time students are significantly below benchmark, albeit representing a very small population of students (less than 1% of our denominator). Our strategy commits us to flexible provision, and as part of this, we are reviewing our part-time provision to develop programmes tailored to the needs of part-time students. [SE5, SE6]

Our vision at Bristol is to ensure every student feels that they belong and can be agents of their own learning and futures. Our academic support aims to enable students to thrive in an inclusive academic community. While we know that we have challenges to address, we are working in evidence-based and intentional ways to address them. We are pleased that 88% of our students

^k Of the students who booked peer mentoring in 2021/22, 52.9% met one or more WP criteria (aspiring state school, care-experienced, disability, minority ethnicity). Not all WP data was available therefore true number may be higher.

responded positively to the additional NSS provider statement “I feel my university experience has helped me grow as a person” in 2022.¹ We want and need to go further. [SE5, SO6]

Our Learning Resources

Our learning environment plays a vital role in students’ educational experience and helps to nurture their sense of belonging in social and collaborative spaces. Our students benefit from studying in specialist teaching facilities which nurture their disciplinary sense of belonging: from scientific laboratories, clinical skill suites, large scale computer rooms to earthquake simulation facilities, theatres, and concert halls. Student comments emphasise the value they place on the learning environment and its influence on sense of belonging: “*state-of-the-art facilities and building makes lab work really enjoyable*” and a “*sense of pride in building and facilities translates to a great community feel amongst staff and students*” (NSS 2022) [SE6, SE7].

During the last four years, we have invested £80+ million in capital projects, focused on creating outstanding learning environments to improve our students’ learning and nurture their sense of belonging. Strategic investments have focused on collaborative, active learning spaces that are digitally enabled. At Langford Vet School, we invested £2 million in redeveloping a collaborative, active learning space. On Clifton Main Campus, we invested £15m in study and social spaces for students, converting an administrative centre, Senate House, into a learning and social hub that brings together students, support services, and Bristol SU. Students love congregating here, as illustrated by this comment: “*Separating my work from my home space has a really positive mental health effect too. Senate House is one of my favourites because of the social study spaces, which are decorated and furnished to feel like home*” (Student feedback to PVC Education, 2022). [SE6]

We design learning spaces in partnership with students to be user-friendly. For example, we consulted with students to design study and social spaces in the School of Humanities extension (£14 million), winning a 2022 Bristol Civic Society Design Award. Mathematics students have a strong stake in the redeveloped Fry Building (£33 million) as evidenced in NSS free-text comments: “*the department building is definitely something I will miss*” (NSS 2022) and “*using the new Mathematics building*” was the best thing about being a student (NSS 2021). [SE6, SE7]

The pandemic has foregrounded the significance of the digital environment. This has required investment in digital tools and hybrid rooms and re-imagining our physical spaces post-pandemic for students to learn online, synchronously, and asynchronously, adjacent to in-person sessions. Our strategy is to develop more flexible spaces that support active learning, especially in view of academics’ increasing use of flipped learning. Audio-visual and digital equipment contribute to a seamless and flexible learning experience for our students and have particularly helped students with health conditions and vulnerabilities during Covid. Routinely, we spend £1.64 million annually to ensure that our teaching spaces are equipped with high-quality AV and IT equipment on a rolling replacement plan. 113 of our 242 centrally managed spaces are equipped for lecture capture/streaming with captioning (Re/Play), increasing flexible access to teaching sessions and supporting inclusive practice. Use of Re/Play functionality has increased significantly over the TEF period from approximately 2 million total views across 35 and 40 thousand presentations to 4.8 million across 50 thousand presentations. We increased investment in 20 hybrid teaching suites during the pandemic and invested in improving our Virtual Learning Environment by more than £1 million during the pandemic years, including supporting the purchase of licences for digital learning tools such as Padlet to improve students’ learning experience. [SE6, SE2]

¹ NSS optional additional questions n=3490, response rate 25%; response rates are generally lower for the additional questions

We invested an additional £1 million in Library resources through the pandemic to enable students to have direct access to texts to support research-rich learning. We recorded 19,839 students spending an average of 4.6 hours on e textbooks, enabling decisions about renewing licences based on student usage. Our primary source material supports research-rich learning, for example, OUP's Law Trove, Elsevier's ClinicalKey titles and the Adam Matthew Explorer package. We also created in-house scans of rare/hard to obtain items (6,717 scans were provided in 2021/22, with 118,915 recorded views) and 3-D visualisations of objects from Special Collections/the University of Bristol Theatre Collection used in teaching and independent study tasks. [SE6, SE2]

Our TEF Learning Resources indicator is in line with benchmark at 80.3%, but, like others, our scores declined over the period of the pandemic. In the 2018/19 indicator students rated their experience of our spaces, digital, and material resources highly (86.6%). Our scores have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels, with a slight recovery in 2021/22 to 79.7% from a low of 70.9% in the year of dashed expectations (2020/21). The pandemic challenged us to recalibrate our investments to support students' digital learning. 63% of our JISC Digital Insights Survey respondents in 2020/21 (n=495) experienced poor WiFi connectivity. We improved WiFi in University-owned accommodation and established our Digital Equity Policy²⁹ to fund students to purchase or access improved connectivity and/or hardware. Discipline level split indicators show a mixed picture, with some in line with benchmark and some falling materially below. This may be due to the subject limitations on government-permitted face-to-face activity. We are continuing to invest to sustain flexibility and innovation. [SE6, SE7]

3. Student Outcomes

Our strategy focuses on ensuring that every student realises their potential, academically and personally, by providing students with skills and experiences that prepare them for success in the future. We are a top-ranked institution for graduate employability because we invest in students' development, building their transferable skills and career-readiness from early on in their studies. As demonstrated previously (section 2.2), we provide tailored academic support, outstanding teaching, a sense of belonging, and excellent learning resources that contribute to students' success through their degrees, culminating in outstanding rates of completion. In this section, we outline how we build students' skills to prepare them to make a difference in their careers and the world.

Innovative support for outstanding employability outcomes

Achieving outstanding graduate outcomes does not happen without strategic interventions to support students in their career aspirations. Our Careers Service is home to more than 50 expert members of staff who provide an innovative programme of support and opportunities to our students and recent graduates, built around user-experience, and informed by the talent and skills needs of our external partners. They play a significant role in realising all our students' potential, identifying subjects or demographic groups that require additional support and deploying resources accordingly. We have created a strong partnership between academic staff, professional networks, and our Careers Service at Bristol, with dedicated Employability Advisers embedded in each faculty to support students and academics in integrating careers and skills work in the curriculum. By design, many of our programmes prepare students for entry into employment by integrating the Bristol Skills Framework in their teaching and personal tutoring, helping students to reflect on their strengths and improve in areas of identified weakness. The Faculty of Arts holds a careers week each year that includes alumni talks alongside workshops on career planning and CV writing. Biological Sciences embeds careers events into the second year: students write a literature review with support from a freelance scientific editor, create a group careers resource mapped on to a particular area of future employment or further research, and write a reflective portfolio. In Engineering, all first-year students

are allocated an industrial mentor that they meet with throughout the year. Many have site-visits to connect their learning with real-world problems. Students gain from the experience, setting objectives at the start and writing personal reflections throughout. [SO1, SO5, SE2, SE3, SE5]

We deliver career-focused mentoring for students from under-represented backgrounds through our successful Bristol Mentors programme. The scheme has supported 418 students over the last four years, matching eligible students with alumni who help them explore ideas, set goals, and identify opportunities, supporting them to break into the job sector and identify their next steps in the transition from university to work. 6.5% of participating students were Black, where 2% of our UG student population is Black. This scheme contributes to our outstanding and above benchmark Progression indicator for Black students - 84.7% against benchmark of 81.8%. [SO1, SE5, SO3, SO5]

Our Bristol PLUS Award is an extracurricular programme designed to support students to develop career-readiness. Students complete four workshops/courses, 70 experience hours (including paid employment, internships, placements, or volunteering), a Bristol Futures online course, and a reflective account. 3,234 students were awarded Bristol PLUS in this TEF period, including a proportionately higher number of Black students from our student population. Our internal analysis (using TEF Progression data) suggests that awardees are more frequently in graduate work or study^m. The combined benefits of Bristol Mentors and Bristol PLUS are captured in the words of

a recent graduate (2020): *'They've allowed me to think critically and independently in a way that puts my career into my hands. I didn't feel as though I was being thrown into deep uncharted waters. Rather, slowly building momentum until I felt strong enough to swim up on my own. I now leave university with huge amounts of experience under my belt. In such a short time I have achieved so much and grown in confidence. I don't think any of that would have been possible had it not been for that day I decided to sign up to the Bristol PLUS Award.'* [SO1, SO6].

Our mission as a civic university has driven us to work hard to support more of our graduates to find work in Bristol, contributing their talents and skills to the region, with an increase from 12.9% of 2017/18 graduates, to 14.6% for 2019/20 graduates³¹. We have strong relationships and an excellent reputation with city employers, large and small, supporting talent pipelines into key sectors in the area, including start-ups. We have an enviable reputation for student start-ups. We have increased the proportion of graduates who identify 'running my own business' as their 'more important' activity, from 1.1% of 2017/18 graduates, to 1.7% in the class of 2019/20³¹. Given the increase in our student numbers, this relatively small percentage change has almost doubled the number of students from 44 to 86 individual graduates. Nearly £7.5 million was invested as either grant funding or equity funding in start-ups in our New Enterprise Competition, supporting 194 start-ups. Companies House data shows us that of the 19 businesses that have won funding since 2017 at the growth stage, 17 are still viable. We are particularly proud that we have increased the proportion of female start-up founders from 16% to 53% in this period. [SO1, SO3, SO4, SO5, SO6]

Outstanding Continuation, Completion, and Progression indicators

During one of the most challenging periods of higher education in modern times, 97.2% of our students continued their studies, and 96.3% successfully completed their degrees (TEF overall indicators). We have consistently outstanding rates of Continuation across our provision, meeting or exceeding the high overall benchmark in all 4 years covered in this TEF submission. Our

^m Internal analysis links Bristol PLUS awardees to the OfS Progression data by unique student ID (HUSID). 84.1% (n=428) of graduates from 2019/20 who completed the PLUS award were in positive destinations (defined by TEF Progression indicator), versus 81.7% (n=2140) for those who did not do Bristol PLUS.

performance in this area is truly exceptional. These rates are evident across both 'first degree' and 'undergraduate degrees with postgraduate components', and 'other undergraduate' degrees and 'other undergraduate level 4' split indicators are above benchmark. All subject groupings meet or exceed their Continuation benchmarks. The overall Continuation indicator for our part-time students is also materially above benchmark. Excellent rates of Continuation apply across the protected characteristics and socio-economic backgrounds of all our students. For example, Continuation for students with a disability (95.6%) is above the benchmark. For students of all ethnicities the Continuation indicators are higher than the already very high benchmarks. Likewise, Continuation is outstanding across gender split indicators. 96% of students from areas listed in the first two quartiles of the Index of Multiple Deprivation continue their studies. We have outstanding Continuation indicators for students in most age groups, although Continuation for our mature students (31+ years) show a mixed picture, with lower Continuation indicators than benchmark for full-time students compared to part-time students who are above benchmark. Given the very low numbers of mature students, there are statistical uncertainties within these split indicators. Continuation is below benchmark for our degrees with integrated foundation years. We will continue to work to improve the tailored support offered to this small group of students. [SO2]

Our Completion indicators are similarly outstanding, with 96.3% of our full-time students successfully completing their degrees, in line with very high benchmarks in each of the four years of this TEF period. Again, our Completion benchmarks are acknowledged to be high, once more confirming that our performance with respect to student outcomes is outstanding, with all subject areas meeting or exceeding their benchmarks. More than 93% of students with a disability complete their studies, a figure which is in line with the benchmark, all ethnicities are in line with or above benchmark; gender splits and all socio-economic measures demonstrate excellent Completion indicators. Analysis²⁰ of our degree outcomes confirm the impressive achievement of our students, with over 90% achieving a 'good degree' (1st or 2:i) during this TEF period (excluding 2021/22 data due to availability of dataset). Whilst our TEF split indicators for ethnicity do not show any deviation from benchmark for completion, our internal, more detailed analysis of degree outcomes does show a degree awarding gap in terms of this group of students obtaining a 'good degree' (gap of 12.3, 9.3 and 6.2pp in 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 respectively). However, the notable closing of this gap, year on year, encourages us that the work we are doing on tailoring academic and pastoral support (section 2.2) is having significant impact. We note the below-benchmark Completion indicator for the population of students 31+ years (denominator of 140) and will be undertaking more evaluation to understand this fully so that we can tailor support for this unique group of individuals. Below-benchmark indicators for a small number of part-time students completing their programmes erroneously includes students who followed English short course units for credit in 2018/19 and 2019/20 but were mistakenly returned to HESA as CertHE completers. Rebuilding the Completion indicator from the raw data supplied by OfS, but excluding these students results in an increase in the indicator for English studies to 49% which is closer to the benchmark for that CAH of 52.7%. The overall indicator increases from 54% to 69.2% which is comfortably above the benchmark of 62.2%³². [SO2, SE5]

We are proud of our outstanding Progression indicators and significant improvements in Graduate Outcomes in this TEF period. In *The Times* Top 100 Graduate Employers we are consistently ranked as one of the most targeted universities with outstanding indicators year on year: 2019, 2nd; 2020, 4th; 2021, 7th; 2022, 3rd. Our *Times/Sunday Times* Good University Guide graduate prospects score has seen us move from 44th in the sector / 22nd in the Russell Group in 2019 to 13th in the sector / 9th in the Russell Group in 2023. Our overall Progression indicator is materially in line with the benchmark. Our performance in Year 1 (our 2017/18 graduates) matches our 3-year average. In

Year 2 (our 2018/19 graduates) we witnessed a dip to 3% below benchmark. The raw indicator values for this year would have been heavily impacted by the pandemic for all providers. It is difficult to understand why this cohort was below benchmark for our students. However, our most recent graduating cohort for which figures are available (2019/20) shows a more positive performance at only 0.8% below and therefore materially in line with our benchmark, indicating a strong recovery and that our strategic institutional approach to Progression is working. Previous targeted and intensive work by our Careers service increased outcomes in Sociology, Social Policy and Anthropology, and Psychology to more than 3% above their benchmark, so we anticipate similar improvements in the early stages of the next TEF cycle with subject areas that are below benchmark. Our Black students show outstanding Progression with an indicator 2.9% above their benchmark. However, disabled students are below benchmark for this indicator. Based on Access and Participation data in 2021, we have provided tailored support and opportunities for disabled students. We have seen improvement in Progression for disabled students recently; those with no disability reported saw an improvement of 4% for 2019/20 graduates compared to 2018/19 graduates, whereas those with a disability reported saw nearly a 6% improvement for the same period³¹. Given this positive trajectory following recent interventions, we expect to see this reflected in improved Progression measures for this group in the next TEF. [SO3, SE5, SO1, SO6]

Supporting students when things go wrong

Unfortunately, there are times when students' lives and learning do not run smoothly. Our extenuating circumstances process³³ supports students experiencing acute personal or medical difficulties and enables their impact to be considered when results and classifications are ratified. Our Wellbeing and Disability Services teams work in partnership with individual students, programme teams and personal tutors through our Support to Study³⁴ process. The pandemic has been a major source of disruption during this TEF period, requiring us to put more support in place for students. We worked with our SU sabbatical officers, creating a suite of additional institution-wide support mechanisms to address additional impacts on our students' experiences, wellbeing, and outcomes. A holistic approach to progression for continuing students focused on achievement of programme-level learning outcomes, automatic extensions to assessment deadlines, and relaxed expectations for evidence to support extenuating circumstances applications. Our degree mark safety net (2019/20) and unit exclusion criteria (2020/21) ensured positive outcomes for students while limiting impacts on grade inflation³⁵. Institutional analysis²⁰ of the impact of our pandemic mitigations and new modes of assessment on degree outcomes illustrated a positive effect on our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion awarding gaps. The gap in relation to achieving a 'good degree' halved from 12.3 percentage points in 2018/19 to 6.2 in 2020/21 for students from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds. The gap for international students also halved during the period (from 19.8 to 10.8). Our disability award gap has effectively closed in this period and is hovering around zero, with some year's data showing students with disabilities receive good degrees more frequently than non-disabled students²⁰. These award gaps were closing prior to the pandemic, but our mitigations and modes of assessment accelerated progress, illustrating the impact of our pandemic mitigations for this particular group of students. In consultation with our students, we are identifying how to sustain innovative teaching and assessment methods that close the awards gap and support student success. [SO1, SE5, SE7, SO5, SO6]

4. Educational Gain

Our vision is to inspire students to make a difference in the world and their spheres of influence because of their higher education experience. The educational pillars of *knowing*, *acting*, and *being* are central to our idea of educational gain. At Bristol, educational gain involves the whole person,

and the communities of which students are a part. It is intellectual, so that students gain value from disciplinary and interdisciplinary challenges on the 277 single and joint honours undergraduate programmes we offer. In their capstone projects, students achieve 2.25 percentage points higher on average than on their taught unitsⁿ, suggesting the gains to be found in undertaking research. Our students also develop agency in making choices about units to study and identifying their self-directed goals in personal tutorials, taking opportunities to make a personal connection to *knowing*. Increasingly, our students are exposed to practical, applied, and authentic learning through simulations and academy-industry partnerships. In our award-winning Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship's suite of joint programmes, students work closely with entrepreneur-academics on collaborative projects. The Bristol Futures Curriculum Framework has set the direction for students to learn in disciplinary and interdisciplinary ways, and for our education to inspire and stimulate students to address civic and global challenges. Our Assessment and Feedback Strategy (2022-)¹⁶ embraces real-world, authentic learning. [SO4, SO6, SE1, SE3]

Our plans for Temple Quarter Enterprise Campus (TQEC), which will open in 2026, capture the spirit of educational innovation and civic partnership through deepening the relationship between our applied, digital, and creative research, and authentic educational experiences for our students. Temple Quarter is a brownfield city-centre site adjacent to many of Bristol's creative, digital and cultural industries, its financial and legal firms, and Bristol Temple Meads train station. We are seizing its potential to fuse innovation, urban regeneration, and civic education partnerships. TQEC will host CFIE together with Engineering degrees and our Business School, offering a variety of learning, study, and collaboration areas, including hack spaces, state-of-the-art laboratories and research facilities, along with spaces for students, partners, academics, and the local community to relax and socialise. The central ideas that frame TQEC are: interdisciplinarity; academy-innovation partnerships; developing the regional skills pipeline; taking advantage of flexible and digital advances in education; and widening the demography of our students to include more regional, part-time, and mature students. [SO4, SE2, SE3, SE6]

TQEC symbolises the second element of educational gain at Bristol, which is to harness *knowing* for *acting*, the capacity of students to become insiders in the discipline, yet confident about transferable skills and crossing discipline and sector boundaries to apply their learning. *Acting* implies students knowing the ways of thinking and doing of the discipline and expressing these in skills and applied learning. Our Bristol Skills Frameworks points in the direction of key generic skills that students interpret through disciplinary lenses. Throughout their study with us students begin to frame problems and solutions as disciplinary experts in their home schools, whether that be as dentists, historians, or engineers, and have a chance to stretch beyond their fields of disciplinary expertise. [SO5, SO4]

ⁿ Internal analysis by our Education Data and Insight Team (2022) compared students average mark on their capstone project unit with their other final year units.

| Academic Year | Ave. Capstone Unit Mark | Ave. of other final-year Unit | |
|---------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| | | Marks | Difference |
| 2018/19 | 67.90 | 65.20 | 2.70 |
| 2019/20 | 68.47 | 66.57 | 1.90 |
| 2020/21 | 68.25 | 66.21 | 2.05 |
| 2021/22 | 67.13 | 64.73 | 2.40 |
| Overall | 67.90 | 65.65 | 2.25 |

Our education brings gains through being holistic, not only through intellectual stretch and authentic learning, but also through focusing on the personal and social development of our students. The concept of *being* brings to the fore that our curriculum develops students' capacity to relate theory and evidence to the world and to their life worlds. In practice, this means that teaching and assessment help students to navigate failure and success and learn from both; enabling students to enter society's conversations, contributing to debates, taking action, framing questions, and valuing different perspectives. Our thriving SU, student networks and disciplinary societies, hackathons, and student fellow opportunities give impetus to student reflection and action on the great challenges of the day, such as sustainability. Students lead Climate Action emergency days and contribute to decisions about investment in clean energy companies. 80% of all our UG students undertake opportunities that augment their programmes^o, in industry, placements, study abroad, Bristol PLUS and Bristol Futures units, building their confidence and sense of agency in the world. [SO4, SO6]

Being is relational, and it involves finding a sense of belonging and community, incorporating practical approaches to life balance, fulfilment, and wellbeing. As an educational idea, *being* builds on our whole-institution approach to wellbeing and the steps we have taken in programme delivery, volunteering and community opportunities, open units, and through our curriculum framework, to build a sense of community. As recent SU research study 'Belonging, Connection and Community'¹⁷ involving 1300 students, has shown, 78% found a sense of community on their programme of study, and 4 of 5 found the University a welcoming place. [SO4, SO6]

Bristol has placed a strategic focus on becoming a diverse and welcoming global university. Our policies and practices ensure that educational gain supports all students to succeed, reflected in our Assessment and Feedback Strategy¹⁶ priority of 'designing for all', our academic support and mentoring programmes, the work of our Student Inclusion team, and tailored initiatives such as Bristol Scholars, Building Up To Bristol, and Bristol Mentors. We support students from different starting points and backgrounds to succeed, for example through our preparatory gateway course for potential Foundation Year applicants, and a pre-registration 'Preparing for Academic Success in the UK' course for international students. [SO5, SO4]

In the changing context of higher education, we keep returning to these three conceptual pillars of *knowing*, *acting* and *being* (Barnett and Coate 2005⁴). The idea of *knowing* ensures that we design programmes of study that excite students' curiosity and enable them to seek to press the boundaries of knowledge and ask questions which have yet to be answered; the concept of *acting* that we build the skills, both disciplinary and interdisciplinary, to enable students to apply their learning in different contexts; *being* is about a transformative educational experience that shapes students' views of themselves, their influence in their chosen careers, and their interactions with others. For us, educational gain is about preparing students to make a difference in the world through an education which makes a difference to them personally. [SO4, SO5]

^o Analysis of internal records shows that, of graduates from our undergraduate programmes 2018/19 – 2021/22 inclusive, 79.7% (16,504 out of 20,704) took part in one or more opportunity from a basket including: placements; Bristol Futures Open Units; group projects, Bristol PLUS award; alumni mentoring; industrial mentoring; industrial experience.

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- ¹⁴ Institutional Principles for Assessment and Feedback in Taught Programmes, most recent version approved by University Undergraduate Studies Committee and University Graduate Studies Committee in February 2018, original version approved by Senate June 2015: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/assessment/assessment-and-feedback-principles/>
- ¹⁵ Wakefield, A., Pike, R. & Amici-Dargan, S (2022). Learner-generated podcasts: an authentic and enjoyable assessment for students working in pairs, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2022.2152426>
- ¹⁶ The Assessment and Feedback Strategy 2022-2030 was approved by University Education Committee November 2022: <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/assessment/assessment-and-feedback-strategy/> building on the Institutional Principles for Assessment that have been in operation since 2015 (see ref. 14).
- ¹⁷ 'Belonging, Connection and Community' research conducted in partnership between Bristol SU and the University, co-funded by the University, findings published August 2022: <https://www.bristolsu.org.uk/support/research/belonging-connection-and-community>
- ¹⁸ Global Lounge Impact Report 2021/22, submitted to PVC Student Experience and PVC Global Engagement August 2022, and to Deputy Vice-Chancellor October 2022. Held on University document management system.
- ¹⁹ NSS 2022 (single year) question satisfaction score.
- ²⁰ Analysis of taught degree outcomes were submitted to University Education Committee in March 2021 for 2019/20 awards, and in April 2022 for 2020/21 awards. Summaries of these analyses were published in the relevant years' Degree Outcome Statements: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/degree-outcomes-statement/>
- ²¹ From internal data drawn from central student records and Disability Services. TEF size and shape data covers a different period and inclusions, showing an increase from 10.8% (1960) in 2017/18 to 13.2% (2840) in 2020/21.

²² Personal Tutoring Project is a research project co-funded by the Tuixen Foundation, which was set up to review and evaluate personal tutoring at the University of Bristol. The research is led by Dr Nienke Alberts and Dr Rachel Lart in collaboration with Prof Alvin Birdi, the University academic lead for personal tutoring.

<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/academic-quality/studentsupport/ptresearch/>

²³ The Tuixen Foundation is a grant making trust whose mission is to provide opportunities to disadvantage individuals to fulfil their potential: <https://tuixen.org.uk/>

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³¹ Internal analysis of Graduate Outcomes survey data, Graduate Outcomes Dashboard, held in Education Data and Insight Team document management system and published on the University intranet site.

³² Internal analysis was conducted revealing the error in historical HESA returns, but the decision was taken to not reopen the return to request a fix. Workings on the indicator rebuild are held internally within the internal University document management system.

³³ Extenuating Circumstances Process is based on information in the Taught Code, which is approved each year by University Education Committee: <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/students/support/academic-advice/assessment-support/extenuating-circumstances/>

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