Chapter 1: Provider Context

'I came to De Montfort University from Zimbabwe because my friends had said how comfortable they felt studying there. They were right. There is no intimidation, there are students from every place studying together. Without this environment I would never have thought to join societies or go for a position in the union. Here I have got more than an education.' Nyashadzashe Nguwo: De Montfort Student Union Academic Executive Officer.

'Working together, we have achieved the large-scale implementation of Education 2030 and block learning in ten months. While no one is complacent and they recognise our data needs improving in some areas, this energy and determination from our staff is powering many world-class education projects each year, enabled by and helping to further develop our Empowering University model.' Professor Katie Normington: Vice-Chancellor.

'DMU is a major resource for Leicester, and I'm impressed with how deeply involved the university has become in the life of our city.' City Mayor, Sir Peter Soulsby and DMU alumnus.

In this submission, we demonstrate that at De Montfort University our diversity is our strength. We personalise learning to support success for all. The below outstanding features thread through the submission:

1. **We are a sector-leading beacon of excellence in education for sustainable development (ESD)**
2. **Our regional employer partnerships support strong student outcomes**
3. **We offer outstanding opportunities to undergraduates to make a contribution to the region, supporting positive graduate outcomes**
4. **We work in partnership with our students to enhance our educational offer**
5. **Our sector-leading work on promoting wellbeing, decolonising the curriculum and universal design for learning, supports attainment and inclusion.**

1.1 Education for sustainable education.

In 2022 DMU received a first-class placing for the 11th year as one of the most sustainable UK universities in the People and Planet University League Table. We empower undergraduates to tackle environmental and social issues by strategically connecting their learning and extra-curricular activities to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). DMU is the only UK higher education institution to be chosen by the UN as a global hub for one of the SDGs - SDG 16 - to promote peace, justice and strong institutions. We won the 2022 Green Gown Climate Action 2030 Build Back Better category, for helping our students look at sustainable transport options. Our School of Fashion and Textiles won the Green Gown 2021 Next Generation Learning and Skills Award for their holistic approach to sustainability across teaching and research, which impacted on more than 1,100 students.

1.2 Strong graduate outcomes

We attract 43% of our students from the East Midlands. We have an exceptional relationship with the city, its businesses and communities. One in every ten Leicester citizens is a DMU alumni. We are extremely proud of the outstanding outcomes that we deliver for our diverse student body. Leicestershire has lower levels of employment in higher skilled occupations, when benchmarked with the UK. To address this, we launched the Leicester 1,000 project to connect businesses which

require highly skilled employees with 1,000 graduates who wish to stay and work in the region. Since 2018, we have funded a total of 611 graduate internships within 277 different Leicestershire companies and offered 374 sandwich year placements for students in the region. Our ambitious digitally literate students provide free digital advice to local businesses through the Digital Voluntary Scheme that we launched in April 2020. In 2020/21 we matched 23 companies with 47 students, gaining positive feedback from local companies: *'It was a brilliant way to help and support Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Leicester'* (: Business coach).

We are the second highest rated university in the East Midlands for putting first degree UK graduates into professional and managerial roles, highlighting our outstanding student outcomes. We are the Chamber of Commerce's artificial intelligence and cyber partner for projects in the Midlands and one of only 10 national gold standard Academic Centres of Excellence in Cyber Security Education named by National Cyber Security Centre, part of the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ.).

We won a *Times Higher Education* award (2021) and an East Midlands Chamber's Celebration of Culture and Communities award (2022) for our Leicester's Future Leaders programme, which aims to increase the number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) graduates who progress into highly skilled roles in Leicester.

1.3 Student partnership

De Montfort Students' Union (SU) enriches DMU, exemplified by how we worked in partnership with them to establish the most effective way to develop and draft our Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submissions. Our partnership is characterised by frequent dialogue and high levels of trust, which is reflected in the alignment of our two submissions.

Our SU has given regular TEF updates to Academic Board and we have discussed progress for both submissions at regular joint SU and university leadership meetings. We asked the SU how they would like us to support them (while remaining fully independent). They suggested the most useful support we could offer was to pay for them to employ a TEF facilitator to host a series of writing retreats and to offer advice and guidance at different steps in the journey. We provided data workshops so that they were supported in their analysis of TEF data. We have valued and supported the work of the SU in developing the course representative approach, as well as SU feedback about how we could enhance student partnership in academic governance. For example there are now two Student Governors and we have worked with the SU to enhance the role of student panellists in validations.

1.4 Inclusion and well-being excellence

In 2022 we were awarded an Advance HE Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) for our work on Embedding Mental Health into the Curriculum during the pandemic. We developed a suite of open access educational resources on embedding mental wellbeing in all aspects of student experience. We are a pioneer among UK universities for embedding Universal Design for Learning (UDL). In 2018 we were named the first ever 'University of the Year for Social Inclusion' by The *Sunday Times Good University Guide* for our outstanding commitment to diversity, teaching excellence, and graduate outcomes. The editor said DMU was the '*clear winner …[and] provides a template that many other higher education institutions would do well to follow*.'

1.5 Our students

Our student body is large, diverse, and vibrant. Excluding further education colleges that offer higher education we are the:

- 3rd largest recruiter of Black students; 6th largest recruiter of Asian students;
- 3rd largest recruiter of students with multiple impairments; 5th largest recruiter of students with social or communication disabilities; 11th largest recruiter of students with sensory, medical, or physical impairments;
- 6th largest recruiter of students eligible for free school meals; 10th largest recruiter of students from the most deprived areas in England Indices of Multiple Deprivation quintile 1);
- 6th largest recruiter of students with low tariff entrant qualifications (below three Ds at A-level);
- 9th largest recruiter of students aged between 21 and 30.

We offer provision across 25 Common Aggregation Hierarchy 2 subjects, with Business and Management, Creative Arts and Design, Computing, Nursing and Midwifery, plus Law, representing 56% of our full-time (FT) undergraduate population in 2020/21.

Between 2017/18 and 2020/21 our registered full-time undergraduate population ranged from just over 19,000 to just over 21,000. Our registered part-time (PT) undergraduate population grew significantly during this period from 340 to 940 in 2020/21. Three-quarters of our registered PT provision in 2020/21 is delivered through one of our partner institutions. We are in one of the most diverse cities in the UK and have the third most diverse academic staff body outside London, with 28% of staff reporting as Black or minority ethnic.

1.6 TEF Indicators overview

We have outstanding student outcomes data, in particular for completion and progression indicators. Our student outcomes data is within benchmark for each of the three indicators for FT students. For PT students, completion is 11.8% above benchmark for completion and within benchmark for continuation and progression.

Completion data are particularly positive, with FT students seeing improvements in outcome in the most recent year's data (and being 2.8% above benchmark). Part-time students have seen a consistent and marked above benchmark outcome for completion over the four TEF years. Although continuation has seen below benchmark outcomes for PT students, outcomes in year 4 show a significant upturn, returning to above benchmark outcomes.

From a student characteristic viewpoint, student outcome data is excellent. For FT students, all student groups are within or above benchmark for completion; within benchmark for continuation; and for the majority of student groups, within benchmark for progression. While PT student outcomes do highlight some challenges, particularly in continuation for Asian and Black students and students who report a disability, most outcomes are within or above benchmark.

Completion outcome data is also excellent across our subjects, with ten subjects above benchmark for FT students and four for PT students. Continuation and progression present more challenges at subject level, with a number of subjects below benchmark. In a number of instances, the subjects which are below benchmark also impact on student characteristic data. For example, for PT Nursing and Midwifery, study continuation is more than 10% below benchmark. This is a subject in which there is also a high proportion of Asian and Black students.

Part-time student experience data in Academic Support, Student Voice and Teaching on My Course is all above benchmark. We do acknowledge, however, that student experience for FT students is

more concerning – and particularly for Academic Support and Teaching on My Course. This has been driven by poorer NSS outcomes in years 2 and 3 of the TEF data, which were impacted by the pandemic. We have, however, seen a significant upturn in outcomes for FT students in the 2022 results. Although still below benchmark in three indicators, performance has improved – particularly so for Learning Resources. Our NSS is on a positive trajectory that links to our enhancement activity.

The improvement we have seen in the year four 2022 NSS results is also shown across subject areas and student characteristics. For example, even for subjects that are furthest from benchmark across the five student experience indicators, improvements in the NSS have been seen. In Architecture, Building and Planning, performance improved across each indicator - and by more than 25% for Learning Resources between year 3 and year 4. This is similar for other subjects, for example for Media, Journalism and Communication, and Education and Teaching. The majority of subjects have seen at least one or two indicators improve.

This positive trajectory is also seen for different groups of students. For example, Asian and Black student experiences of Academic Support improved by 2.5% and 6.2% respectively. For students with a specific learning disability, for example, their experience of Learning Resources improved by more than 16% between year 2 and year 3 NSS data.

We work with 14 UK academic partners, with more than 3,000 students across 80 programmes in 2021/22. Continuation data for in-scope partnership provision are 3.4% above benchmark, based on a population size of 332. Completion rates for in-scope partnership provision are 3.9% above the benchmark value, based on population size of 591. Progression is 10.6% below benchmark value, based on a population size of 43. Although based on a very small population size, discussions have taken place with the partner that makes the most significant contribution to this specific dataset to understand and address the reasons for students not progressing. Most students in this dataset undertake a two-year HND programme with the partner, progressing to DMU or another HEI to top-up their studies, either immediately or often following a break of study.

1.7 Recognising the challenge – green shoots

In 2019 DMU was placed on enhanced monitoring by the OfS for condition E2, governance and leadership, which saw the removal of the Vice-Chancellor (VC) and Board of Governors. The after-effects of this were significant and created a lack of trust between the students, staff, and senior management. This impacted on NSS data, which saw a decline. Since 2019, and despite Leicester having the longest Covid lockdown in the UK, there has been a rapid enhancement. Through the interim VC and the appointment of Professor Katie Normington as VC in 2021, together with a new Board of Governors substantial improvements have been achieved. DMU is on a positive trajectory. NSS student satisfaction increased by 5% to 69.82% in 2022 - a rise of more than five times that of the national average, which was 0.88%. Our governance improvements ensured the OfS removed DMU from enhanced monitoring in 2021. Advance HE's governance review reported that governance '*had been transformed*' and '*a culture [has been] established that welcomes diversity, encourages debate and engagement and actively listens to the student voice.'*

Our enhanced Joint Executive meetings between DMU's Leadership Team and SU lead to tangible benefits for students. Important positive outcomes from these meetings include the provision of free sanitary products on campus. The university signed the Sexual Violence Charter in response to SU requests. The VC and SU have promoted this via the 'You're right, That's wrong' project, with training provided for sports teams and students to raise awareness. The university and SU took a joint

position in response to the war in Ukraine, with support provided to affected Russian and Ukrainian students, illustrating how our partnership with the SU brings demonstrable benefits to students' lives.

1.8 DMU: The Empowering University

In 2021 our Board of Governors approved our new 'Empowering University' strategy with a mission to '*discover gateways of opportunity that empower students, staff and our community to create a fairer society*.' This followed a period of extensive consultation and co-creation, with more than 1,000 staff, students, alumni, governing body and key partners. Our strategy has four pillars: Learning for Life, Knowledge Creation, Empowering People, and Partnerships with Purpose. These pillars are supported by four cross-cutting themes: Equality for all, Sustainability and the SDGs, Digital Transformation, and Financial Strength.

Our Education 2030 (E2030) programme envisages what education will look like in the next decade and delivers it now. Our transformational approach to curriculum design is focused on the integration of employability, sustainability and entrepreneurial activity into our courses and is underpinned by our Decolonising DMU strategy. Using an innovative curriculum sprint methodology (reported in Times Higher), our new Block curriculum creates the learning environment to deliver outstanding student outcomes for all. We have introduced block-mode learning for 70% of our first-year UG students. We chose block-mode as evidence shows improved outcomes for all students, particularly disadvantaged learners (Slevin, 2021). Our recent Block Pulse survey results (35% response rate n:900 students) reported that 93% of students were *enjoying focusing on one module at a time* and 92% reported the module design *was good for work-life balance.* We continue to achieve national and international accolades. In November 2022, we won Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) funding to evaluate the impact and success of block delivery in UK and Australian Universities.

Chapter 2: Student Experience

Section A: Academic experience and assessment

2A.1 Teaching excellence and valuing teaching careers

A distinctive feature of our academic provision is our breadth of subject range, from technical and applied subjects to those more theoretical and performance based. Our curriculum is enhanced by staff who work in practice, such as in Pharmacy and Architecture, and through the work of scholars such as   (2022), where the university has a reputation as a centre for expertise on pracademic research. This brings great value to enhancing our provision by ensuring that our curriculum is informed by the latest industry practice. Our academic promotions criteria have clearly defined pathways for progression from Lecturer to Professor in Teaching and Learning, Knowledge Exchange and Practice, as well as Research. In our most recent academic promotion round, three of the five staff promoted to professor were on teaching and learning and practice pathways. Our promotion criteria are aligned with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). On our Teaching and Learning pathway staff are required to hold Senior Fellowship (SFHEA) at Associate Professor level and Principal Fellowship (PFHEA) at Professorial level. On our other pathways staff are required to demonstrate that they are working at SFHEA level at Associate and full Professor level. 52.5% of our academic staff have Advance HE Fellowship, which is above the 2021/22 sector average of 45.5%. In 2021/22 some 135 members of staff were awarded Advance HE Fellowship.

Our Centre for Academic Innovation and Teaching Excellence (CAITE) provides leadership and support for academic development, digital education and pedagogic enhancement for our 1,650

academic members of staff. CAITE draws on a community of 26 Teacher Fellows (TFs) who devote 10% of their time to work on strategic teaching enhancement activities and have access to a staff development budget to support their work. We have 16 National Teaching Fellows (NTFs) and have been awarded two CATEs by Advance HE. 15 members of staff have been awarded PFHEA and we are above sector average for SFHEA. Our TFs, NTFs and PFHEAs are the heartbeat of academic innovation in DMU, supporting our continuing professional development programme and mentoring staff for promotion to Associate and full Professor. Many staff have been recognised for their teaching practice in national and international networks. Wendy Stevens was named 2018 Audiologist of the Year by the British Audiology Society; Dr Philippe Wilson received the 2019 Joseph Black Award from the Royal Society of Chemistry for research-led teaching of analytical chemistry; Professor Jo Rushworth received the 2020 Teaching Excellence Award from the Biochemical Society; Dr Swati Virmani was named the 2021 Best New Lecturer by the Economics Network; and Professor Katie Laird won the Outstanding Contribution to Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths at the 2022 Enterprising Women Awards.

2A.2 Enriching teaching and learning quality within DMU and within the sector

We are committed to embedding an anti-racist culture and teaching practice within the university. 26 staff and managers from across Student Welfare attended the Decolonising and Student Welfare training in 2021/22, while 20 staff from the Disability Advice and Support team attended 1:1 meetings with students training in 2022. These were aimed at heightening their understanding of conducting meetings with students, with a focus on the individual needs and cultural variability of students. DMU colleagues are involved in three of the 17 QAA Collaborative Enhancement Projects, as well as leading project work with Advance HE on business education (Dr Leanne de Main). We work with our students to co-create the curriculum to ensure that it responds to student needs and employer expectations and have established a Curriculum Co-creation Project Board. In 2020/21 lecturers Emma Wright and Dr Rosi Smith won a 4K Advance HE Good Practice grant to collaborate with disabled/neurodivergent students. They co-produced the final year Special Educational Needs and Disability module for BA Education Studies, which was shortlisted in the 2022 HE Pearson Awards for the 'Most Innovative Approach to Bringing Inclusivity and Sustainability into the Classroom.'

Our work on decolonisation is sector leading (Hall, 2022). Dr Simon Stevens won the Political Studies Association Award for Outstanding Teaching in 2021 for diversifying undergraduate politics modules to include decolonial theory, Black feminist thought, Queer theory, and disability theory. Staff in Nursing and Midwifery are at the forefront of sharing practice on decolonising the curriculum through publications (Raynor et al, 2021; Ménage et al, 2021) and informing practice through professional bodies. Bernadette Gregory, Dr Zaheera Essat and Lisa Rollinson (third year DMU student midwife) are members of a Royal College of Midwives Steering group on Decolonising Midwifery Education across the UK. We have decolonised library resources and created decolonised teaching and learning toolkits, which underpin all our teaching, while additionally reviewing our approach to block teaching as part of the wholescale Education 2030 university curriculum review in 2021/22.

2A.3 Sustainability

We are the UK's only UN Academic Impact (UNAI) Sustainable Development Goal hub and ranked 30th in the world for our approach to responsible consumption and production in the 2022 *Times Higher Education Impact Rankings.* In 2020/21,131 modules contained ESD and 109 staff and 95 students completed the one-day Carbon Literacy training programme to make manageable changes

to reduce their carbon footprint. DMU participates in the annual month-long national 'SDG Teach-In' campaign that reaches more than 20% of our students. In 2020 alone, 6,151 students were taught about the SDGs. In a survey of teaching staff, we noted that 62 staff from across the faculties demonstrated they had embedded sustainability and/or the SDGs in their modules. Many of the UN Days are observed each year with activities targeted at course disciplines. There were 60 Law and Criminology students engaged in a live Q&A with UN Peacekeepers as part of UN Peacekeeping Day in 2021. The annual Roadley Award in Fashion and Textiles gives students the opportunity to apply for funding to support projects that align to the SDGs. In the last four years, we have supported 140 students with approximately £40,000 funding. We provide ten grants worth £600 each year for students to work on ideas like 'Envirogreen' – a project to create a vertical allotment on the DMU campus to grow a variety of fruits, vegetables and plants for the local community. Additionally, Project Lily, a student-led project for SDG 5 (Gender equality) is aimed at implementing strategies that prevent any sort of sexual assault from taking place on campus and beyond. We have taken more than 3,000 students to the UN in New York to engage with the senior policymakers and influencers at the UN.

2A.4 Influential pedagogic research

A distinctive feature of our academic practice is the practice-led pedagogy, which we adopt at the disciplinary level. Our Faculty of Arts, Design and Humanities runs an 'IT Guerrilla Forum' and a 'Let's Talk' series to share best practice. Our Faculty of Health and Life Sciences organises monthly Tips, Tricks and Treats pedagogic forums. Our Faculty of Business and Law leads a Teaching and Learning Enhancement (TaLEnt) programme focusing on pedagogy, scholarship of teaching and learning and academic development, and in 2020/21 organised 32 events attended by over 1,000 staff. In 2018 we won an Advance HE CATE award for designing a scenario-based car crash (CrashEd). We worked with staff and students from Leicester College and a Police Forensic Collision investigator to recreate a learning environment that enables students to understand about a real-life emergency. CrashEd has also been used to assist school students, particularly from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds, understand physics and use maths to work out the trajectory of a crash. Julia Reeve obtained an NTF in 2021 for her work on using Lego to integrate play within the curriculum (Reeve and Towlson, 2019). TF Roger Saunders introduced in 2021 an innovative podcast series called the 'Learning and Teaching Chat Show' to provide staff with an informal platform to develop papers for publication, such as using slam poetry for teaching (Bhogal-Nair, 2022). Dr Irina Gokh launched a YouTube channel, 'International Business Conversations', which has had more than 8,000 views and features academic content and interviews with experts such as

Our staff play a leading role in shaping practice at national and international level. PVC Education Professor Susan Orr chaired the 2022 OfS Blended Learning Review. Dr Chris Odindo, Associate Professor in Student Experience, led DMU's contribution as one of 15 universities in a 2022 Advance HE Business Collaborative Project. We publish our own journal 'Gateway Papers', edited by Professors Momodou Sallah and Richard Hall (both NTFs) to provide a platform for pedagogic research. Many of our staff edit leading educational journals in their disciplines: for example, Professor Alasdair Blair (NTF) is lead editor of the Journal of Political Science Education. Through such roles, our staff have a transformative impact on curriculum design in universities by increasing awareness and understanding of pedagogic practice.

2A.5 Supporting enhancement across our subjects

Our Academic Innovation Projects (AIP) align with our strategic ambitions and enhancement priorities, as identified by our academic indicators. Since 2018 we have provided more than £100,000 of funding for staff to undertake projects, many involving co-creation with our students to drive enhancements in teaching quality. We have funded projects in below benchmark subject areas such as Architecture and Education and provided frameworks within these subject areas that foster innovation and creativity, the impact of which is visible in our data upturn. In 2021 we reviewed our peer observation of learning and teaching (POLT) scheme as part of a renewed emphasis on teaching quality, given our NSS metrics. We have embraced the shift to digital education to ensure our students can navigate complex digital worlds. In 2021/22 we restructured our digital education support by establishing a Digital Learning and Teaching Team and committed more than £4 million to replace our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) following an extensive procurement process that actively involved 77 members of staff and 16 students. This work is aligned to the recommendations of the OfS Blended Learning review. We support collaboration between students and staff across faculties. Kerryn Wise in Performing Arts has led a project called 'Risky Play with Virtual Reality Technologies', which develops students' digital literacy skills to enable them to learn the latest creative industry skills. Our Fashion and Textiles curriculum responds to industry skills gaps by integrating into the curricula 3D CAD methods in Fashion Design, Virtual Reality (VR) techniques in Footwear and Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven design work in Fashion Textiles.

2A.6 Subject level focused analysis and enhancement work

We recognise that NSS 'Teaching on my course' data is materially below benchmark, but we note that these data are improving (by 2.2% in 2022), which tells us our enhancement approaches are having a positive impact. We note the 5% improvement in overall NSS satisfaction in 2022 and 12% improvement in 2022 International Student Barometer (ISB) data, which is 6% higher than benchmark (overall rating of 91% student satisfaction). These data offer clear evidence of the positive impact of our Empowering University enhancement approaches. We note that our FT student experience metrics show most of our subject areas are either within or above benchmark (Allied Health; Economics; General, Applied and Forensic Science; Health and Social Care; Law, Mathematics, Performing Arts; and Politics).

There are pockets of student experience and outcomes which are below benchmark, which are primarily associated with our 'other undergraduate' provision. This includes other undergraduate at level 4, other undergraduate at level 5+ and first degree with integrated foundation year, which account for just under 6% of the total undergraduate population. Student experience and outcome data in these areas is broadly like that of the university in general. We are addressing these issues as part of our wider university approach of locally owned subject level plans which draw on best practice from within and outside the university, to address below benchmark TEF metrics. The Media School has established a regular Teaching Forum for all staff to share good practice. Our Architecture programmes, which have a very strong relationship with the regional Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) branch and the Leicester and Rutland Society of Architects (LRSA), have developed a Career Perspectives 'festival' where alumni talked to current students to support graduate outcomes. While such initiatives have led to positive movement in some of our core NSS metrics, we recognise that there is more work to do. This includes technical, studio and experiential subjects, where students were disproportionately affected during the pandemic. In response to this, we funded a project which provides our students with a digital introduction to labs and workshops, as for many of our students the pandemic reduced their experience of working in laboratories.

2A.7 Split data

We are committed to ensuring all students achieve their potential. Our UDL expertise is reflected in the fact that our split high-quality student experience data is overwhelmingly within benchmark, representing the very high-quality student experience that underpins our degree programmes.

2A.8 Assessment and feedback

Authentic assessment is a distinctive feature of our curriculum. We provide students with opportunities to translate theoretical and conceptual learning in practical and applied ways. This involves collaboration across discipline boundaries. The Law School co-delivers with the School of Paramedicine an authentic learning scenario where final year student paramedics are cross-examined by a member of the Law School. Forensic Science students undertake an expert witness assessment that follows a crime scene to court process. Fashion Design students undertake commercially orientated assessments on their design project work. Student pharmacists produce care plans, undertake audits and practical exams that involve role plays with patients and healthcare professionals. Politics students act as consultants to external organisations. Sports Journalism students complete a match report in the press box at Leicester City, 15 minutes after the final whistle.

Our assessment and feedback data are within TEF benchmark and improved by 3.1% in 2022 against TEF benchmark, reflecting our upward trajectory through new university leadership. Seventeen of our subjects are within or above benchmark, with only six below benchmark. Of these six subjects, we were pleased that five had an improvement on student experience of Assessment and Feedback of more than 10% each between 2021 and 2022 (Architecture, Building and Planning; Media, Journalism and Communication; and Sociology, Social Policy and Anthropology). We recognise that Chemistry is the only subject not to have improved on Assessment and Feedback and are addressing this as part of our wider focus on improving Assessment and Feedback practices. We recognise that there are some pockets of lower performance for assessment and feedback in our splits which we are addressing. Mature students' experience is materially below benchmark as is the experience of other ethnicity students. We are pleased to note that Asian and Black student experiences of assessment and teaching are within benchmark. In 2022 we changed our Assessment and Feedback Strategy to reduce feedback turnaround time from 20 to 15 days, to ensure that students receive feedback in a timely manner and engage with formative assessment.

2A.9 Employability designed into curriculum

We embed employability and placement learning opportunities across all subjects. In Psychology our compulsory final year module 'Employability Skills and Psychology' was highlighted by the British Psychological Society as sector-leading. Through 50 hours of work experience and a LinkedIn Learning micro credential course, students are equipped with the self-awareness to make successful career decisions and understand how to develop their own graduate employability and job readiness. DMU is one of the few UK universities to offer X-Culture as an optional assessment for final year marketing students. More than 6,000 students from some 650 universities and more than 100 countries take part in the project. Students work together in Global Virtual Teams for a semester, experiencing challenges and learning best practices of international collaboration. DMU has had six winners for three consecutive years and is the only UK university twice to achieve this accolade.

Our academic programmes are accredited by 62 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and our practice-based programmes work with livery companies including the Cordwainers, Leathersellers, Dyers, Framework Knitters and Patternmakers. Architecture has recently gone

through PSRB revalidation in 2021, where the professional body, RIBA, commended the School for their work: *'Despite the constraints of the recent pandemic, the activities available to all students was impressive. The University and School has given excellent support to staff and students throughout this period and reflects the approach to supporting the whole community. This was reinforced by the positive student comments.'*

The advice of business, the third sector and our alumni are essential to supporting students to succeed. Our Business Advisory Board comprises more than 30 local, national and international businesses, charities and public sector organisations and provides insights that help inform curriculum development as well as mentoring students and hosting internships. We engage industry experts as guest lecturers to ensure that our students learn about the latest developments in practice. We actively support our students to establish start-ups and engage in national competitions such as the Progressive Industries Design Awards. In 2022, product design student   won gold in the student design category for her concept of a self-care pop-up shop for cosmetics brand LUSH, noting that *'the best thing about winning the award was that it directly helped me to get my year-long work placement at Wilson & Brown/Array.'*

2A.10 Research engaged teaching

Our staff are actively engaged in pedagogic research and we stretch our students' learning as they progress through their studies. Second and final year students undertake advanced level projects and dissertations supervised by staff engaged in cutting edge research, where more than 60% of the university's research was judged as world leading or internationally excellent in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF). In English, Professor Gabriel Egan (NTF) uses computational analysis of text to enable students to 'wrangle' the vast amounts of textual data that are now encountered in every workplace. Our Politics students undertake advanced research methodologies that includes training in 'R' programming language. Our annual Cultural Exchanges festival is in its 21st year, being run by students on the Arts and Festivals Management degree and involving high profile speakers such as   . Staff can bid for £1,000 Research-Engaged Teaching (RET) awards to develop their work and disseminate it at the annual Learning and Teaching conference. Kenneth Morrison who is a Professor of Southeast European History, received an RET award in 2020 for his final year undergraduate module on 'Yugoslavia and Beyond.' This drew on his experiences of providing guidance to governmental and non-governmental institutions, such as the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as a Specialist Adviser for the House of Lords. Other Research Engaged Teaching awards include the teaching on the final year undergraduate module Emerging Materials and Processes, which introduces students to the science and technology of materials deposition and their characterisation and applications.

Section B: Resources support and student engagement

2B.1 Context

Our outstanding learning environment is co-created with students to offer a 'home from home' experience, ensuring students learn in a supportive, safe, environment which promotes a sense of belonging and supports them to achieve their full potential. We have designed our learning environment through a deep understanding of the needs of our diverse student body, providing personalised learning experiences tailored to individual needs.

We are pleased that our overall learning resources and student voice metrics are within benchmark, and that our Year Four data is showing improvement on the previous year, as we recover from the pandemic. We firmly connect our challenging NSS data in 2020 and 2021 to the impact of the pandemic, which was felt more acutely in Leicester than elsewhere. The upturn in 2022 results is reassuring, demonstrating that our new strategy is having a positive impact. The learning resources theme improved by more than 14% between 2021 and 2022 and is now in line with the sector average. Within this theme, the questions: *the library resources have supported my learning well* is now slightly higher than the sector average (and improved by more than 12% between 2021/22); and *the IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well* has improved by just under 14% (and is in line with the sector average). We are proud that the improvements in data between 2021/22 at DMU are much greater than improvements across the sector.

Our academic support data has also improved, despite being below benchmark overall. Although further improvements are needed, the academic support theme improved by nearly 4% between 2021/22. The three theme questions have also improved: *I have been able to contact staff when I needed to* by 1%; *I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course* by 5%; and g*ood advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course* by 5%. At institutional level, across the diverse range of students at DMU, in most cases, learning resources and student voice is within benchmark (except for male students for student voice). We are taking active steps to improve academic support with an extended offer to students. At subject level, academic support data vary, with some good practice, including six areas above benchmark (in Health and Social Care, History and Archaeology, and Mathematical Sciences, for example). But there are also areas for improvement which we are addressing through monitored annual enhancement plans. PT students' experience for academic support and student voice are both materially above benchmark, although we recognise the need for improvement in learning resources for PT students. Academic support, learning resources and student voice data at our partner providers is strong testament to the quality of their teaching and the support we provide.

2B.2 Outstanding learning environment and learning resources

Over the last decade we have invested significantly in transforming our campus to create a very high-quality learning environment. This included £136m of investment as part of our reimagining of our campus programme of work, including the award-winning Vijay Patel building that is home to our Faculty of Arts, Design and Humanities. Over the last four years we have invested £11m in physical and digital learning spaces. This has included new innovative teaching and student spaces in the Faculty of Business and Law such as our Trading Room, mock law courts, and state of the art Diagnostic Radiography Kyoto Kagaku CT anatomical phantom manikins for health care learning. Recognising the programme of study as the anchor of a student's experience, one-stop-shop Student Advice Centres (SACs) are embedded within each faculty, ensuring easy access to more specialist advice at subject and pastoral level. All students have access to a Personal Academic Tutor that is embedded in their programme of study to provide academic and pastoral support. We consult students and staff on the effectiveness of this support. In 2019 we organised personal tutoring vision cafes, attended by more than 60 staff and students, which led to recruiting 12 student personal tutoring advocates to further promote the values of personal tutoring. In 2020 we undertook focused surveys with 70 students and 16 staff which in 2021 held focus group discussions with 208 staff and 64 students. The feedback from these consultations informed our key principles for personal tutoring, including institutional membership of UK Advising and Tutoring (UKAT).

Our Library and Learning Services (LLS) are at the heart of our campus, physically and digitally, and are highly valued by our students. This is demonstrated in our NSS Q19 scores, with 83% satisfaction in 2022. We recognise that the drop in satisfaction from 89% in 2019 and 2020 to 71% in 2021 reflected the loss students felt when unable to access the physical library spaces during the pandemic. LLS re-achieved the Customer Service Excellence standard for the fourth time in 2022, demonstrating continual improvement at each assessment. The outstanding service provided by LLS was recognised by the award of 25 compliance plus awards, an increase of three from the previous assessment and the second highest ever awarded to any UK HEI. Compliance plus awards recognise '*Behaviours or practices that exceed the requirements of the standard and are viewed as exceptional or as an exemplar for others.*'

The library curates a wide variety of interdisciplinary study spaces around the campus, from silent focused study through to active spaces for group work. Students can access specialist technology, including 3D printers, sewing machines, high spec gaming and rendering PCs. Spaces are adapted and redesigned through the academic year, using user experience (UX) design principles. The co-location of creative making spaces and specialist technologies with IT and study facilities ensures students have access to the resources they need in a single location. Students respond positively in surveys to the library environment: '*I appreciate the support in the library and the help I have had with assistive learning, due to my disability.*' To support wellbeing and accessibility, study rooms are designed to control ambiance and lighting, including preferred LED lighting colours. During exam and assignment periods, a wellbeing 'night trolley' service serves hot drinks, fruit and food free of charge, promoting a 'home from home' experience and an opportunity to talk to a friendly face.

Our Centre for Learning and Study Support (CLaSS) provides students with highly effective support for academic writing, study skills, digital skills, information skills, maths and statistics, and research methods. Students can self-select for attendance at a variety of workshops, drop-ins, tutorials and clubs, alongside accessing in-curriculum support and a range of peer-support activities. Engagement is high. In 2021/22 some 3,356 students attended CLaSS sessions and 15,418 students benefited from in-curriculum sessions. Student satisfaction is outstanding, with 96.6% of respondents agreeing that the service improved their understanding of the topic or skill, in the latest user feedback survey. Students say CLaSS has '*fantastic approachability, understanding and patience. I've gone from feeling stressed and overwhelmed to armed to get started.*'

Our innovative Drawing Centre (DC) supports creativity across the curriculum. Our DC supports students from all disciplines in drawing, model making, craft, photography and animation, as extra curriculum enrichment. This cross-discipline offer is unique across the sector, focussing on a non-assessed personalised co-curriculum where all students can develop creative skills and attributes. In 2020/21 DC had 1226 visits from students, who highly valued their experience: '*DC managed to convince me that I was more capable than I'd realised, and now I am in a position where I feel I can stand on my own two feet, which I've never before felt the confidence to do in a creative setting.*'

Our 'home from home' experience extends beyond learning resources to pastoral services. With significant populations of students from many major religions, including more than 5,000 Muslim students (just under 20% of our student population), our OpenFaith initiative provides outstanding faith services, designed to celebrate diversity and nurture the spiritual lives of students of all religions and none. We are one of the few UK HEIs to employ a full-time Imam, who provides spiritual guidance and wider pastoral support for Muslim students, whom we are aware are less likely to access mental health services. Having an Imam embedded in our campus enables us to identify and

address real issues for students which impact on study. For example, feedback from female Muslim students suggested they experienced difficulties in relation to their periods, with those who wanted to shower before praying having to travel home to do so. Our Imam worked with the university to provide on-campus shower access, so that students can now shower and pray on campus.

We have one of the largest Islamic prayer spaces of any UK university. Our facilities enable more than 1,000 students to pray daily, with fully accessible adjoining ablution facilities. During Ramadan we provide a daily Iftar feast to more than 2,000 students (Muslim students and those of other faiths are welcome). This ensures students studying late on campus can break their fast in a safe location without leaving campus. We also work with a range of local faith leaders and our Sharing and Breathing Spaces enable quiet reflection and group activities for students of all faiths and none.

2B.3 Personalised student support

'As soon as I arrived at DMU, seeing the campus and meeting with the disability team, I knew it was the right place, the right university, for me. It was the little things they did that made all the difference - things like they would help me with my post and make sure I knew in advance when fire alarm tests were going to happen' -   , Fine Art.

Our programmes are complemented by outstanding academic support. As one of the largest recruiters of Black and Asian students, students with multiple disabilities and students eligible for free school meals, we recognise our diversity, and our student support reflects this. Our commitment to providing an inclusive, supportive educational environment is reflected in our overall high-quality student experience. Our outstanding student outcomes data for all undergraduate, first degree and undergraduate with PG components, show we are either within or materially above benchmark.

A notable feature of our university-wide approach to mental health has been the introduction of a Single Point of Access (SPA) booking system for students that provides a common referral route to disability, mental health and counselling services. The impact of this work is reflected in our disability metrics, which are either within benchmark for our high-quality student experience provision or within and materially above benchmark for outstanding student outcomes data. This highly effective sector-leading work brings joined-up thinking to what are often complex cases, ensuring we support our students with personally tailored support packages in a timely manner.

We are pleased to be within benchmark for our high-quality student experience in supporting students with a registered disability and students eligible for free school meals. This evidences the outstanding work that we invest in early-stage interventions. We introduced a university-wide approach to promoting Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) in recognition of the importance of early access to support, addressing the findings of DfE research that BAME students were less likely to access support but more likely to benefit from it. We acknowledge that students who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to have access to high-quality advice and ensure that academic staff can provide accurate information about DSA. We fund diagnostic assessments of Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), recognising students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to have received diagnosis in school. Our Autism Team include mentors and study skills tutors, who provide 1:1 support, weekly mindfulness sessions, a podcast series and social activities to provide a supportive, nurturing and inclusive learning environment.

Our Brain in Hand (BiH) initiative was introduced as a result of the increase in students with learning disabilities and autism accessing Counselling Services. BiH is an assistive technology, designed to

support individuals with autism, mental health difficulties, Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs) and acquired brain injuries. It helps students respond to everyday problems and self-manage their anxiety by building strategies and solutions for managing change. Students using BiH note improvements across learning, including time management, organisation and routine; attendance and participation; concentration and focus; task planning and goal setting; strategies for managing change; confidence and independence; and their ability to reduce and cope with anxiety and stress.

We are proud our outstanding work to support student mental health has gained external recognition, reinforcing our outstanding student outcomes metrics. Our sector-leading work has received OfS funding to work in partnership with Leicestershire Partnership Trust (LPT) and the Leicestershire and Rutland Commissioning Groups (CCG) on the 'Building Bridges to Wellbeing' project. This evidenced-based work addresses barriers to engaging with our mental health support services and the NHS and aligns with our strategic objectives of establishing partnerships with purpose.

We understand the importance of supporting mature learners, who often face competing priorities balancing study, work and personal commitments. We recognise that we are materially below benchmark for student experience on academic support and assessment and feedback for mature learners aged 31 and over. As a result, our welfare team has broadened the range of times when appointments are available (on campus and remote). Students can book appointments 24/7 through a self-booking system. This extends to partner colleges and includes distance learning students who are often mature learners. In Media we worked with our partner Raindance to support deferrals for their students who are typically mature and in FT work. We have extended our appeals panels to include a member of the disability team to direct students to appropriate support.

Our No Space for Hate initiative assists students to make decisions about how to respond if they have been subject to hate incidents. Our Mandala Project brings together staff and students who co-developed a programme of work that tackles sexual and domestic violence. The focus of this work has been on developing a sustainable model that includes approaches to training, student support and appropriate governance of our interventions. The promotion of healthy relationships forms a core part of this work, and training and events to underpin this have been successfully facilitated. Seventy-two student leaders attended the interactive sessions during 2021/22.

2B.4 Student partnership and engagement

Working with students to empower them and enhance their experience is our VC's key priority and reflects the renewed focus on the student experience under her leadership, being evidenced by the upward trajectory in our NSS metrics. Each month she meets with a group of students to ensure that student perspectives are at the heart of her leadership. This approach is mirrored in faculties through our PVC Student Experience and faculty Associate Professors Student Experiences (APSEs). We established a space in the library to support commuting students with flexible seating, lockers and refreshments and a maker space for model making, design and fabrication. In 2022 we introduced discounted accommodation on campus for commuter students as a direct result of student feedback, offering discounted rates for one- or two-night stays during the week.

Our Associate Professors Student Experience are a key link between the university, students and the SU and play an active role in supporting the recruitment of student representatives across our subject disciplines to enhance the student voice. They also act as a key faculty contact, enhancing the student experience through Faculty Student Experience Working Groups and Staff Student Liaison Committees. Student co-creation has been designed into our Decolonising DMU (DDMU)

initiative, where we established a DDMU Student Leader role to work with staff to challenge everyday norms of university life and work towards solutions, such as tackling the awarding gap. In 2021/22 some 92 students were appointed to these paid Student Leader roles, of which 60 were also elected to be Race Equality Advisors. Students worked in faculties and directorates, delivering more than 1,320 hours of work. Our students have engaged in partnership working on decolonising with Georgia College and State University, culminating in joint Black History Month events.

Our focus on student empowerment is reflected in the transformation in our working relationship with the SU and student body. Our students played a key role in the decision taken to shift to block teaching and were fully involved in the consultation and design of our E2030 programme as part of the wholescale curriculum review in 2021/22. Feedback from our Student Action Committee informed our E2030 approach, with students noting the benefit of focusing *'on one thing at a time'* and allowing modules to be *'tackled in an effective way'* where *'assignments are not clumped together.'* We provide training and mentoring to support our student contributions to programme and partner validation, appointment panels, membership of university committees and meetings. We operate a vibrant student representation system with staff/student liaison committees in partnership with our Students' Union. Student matters are tabled as the first substantive item on key university committees and our Academic SU Sabbatical Officer holds a Deputy Chair role of the University Learning and Teaching Committee (UTLC), demonstrating the SU's integral role to our governance.

In 2018 we introduced the role of Student Learning and Teaching Consultant (SLTC). Students apply for paid research consultancy projects and present findings to the university to effect change. In 2019/20, undergraduate students in one faculty researched factors impacting on student attendance, with their survey having an impressive response rate of 435 students. The survey identified concerns that students had about social engagement and well-being support and led to new initiatives such as a pop-up Coaching Corner area in the library in 2020, where staff and students provide short bite sized presentations on topics of interest. For some students, the process of undertaking research project work has provided a springboard for an academic career. Mature student
undertook a SLTC project in 2019 and after graduating with a first-class degree joined DMU as a lecturer in Accountancy and Finance in 2021. Our staff take and act on regular feedback at all stages of the student journey. Disability Services seek feedback from prospective students on the information they provide about support for disability at university: 100% of respondents reported that their knowledge had increased as a result. One applicant said: '*It was amazing that the university cares about supporting us before we have even made our final university choice.'*

Section C: Pandemic support for student learning

2C.1 Context

At 371 days, Leicester's pandemic lockdown was the longest in the UK and at one point accounted for 1 in 10 new cases of Covid-19 across the UK. This lockdown impacts on three out of the four years of our TEF data. We immediately launched a peer-to-peer support Good Neighbour scheme to address student isolation, wellbeing and cases of Covid. 80 student volunteers self-organised support networks, and signposted students to available support such as group online chats and essential supplies. We adopted a targeted approach to pay particular focus to supporting first generation students, care leavers, estranged students and asylum seeker students. Our student and staff volunteers contributed more than 20,000 hours to support our community in the first year of Covid, gaining national recognition through the award of £100,000 from Barclays Bank to provide

additional resources to support our Covid-19 response. We drew on our research to support the Covid response, with Professor Katie Laird's research on germ education leading to improvements in handwashing behaviour through a resource platform that has reached over 140,000 people.

With NHS Test and Trace we opened a Covid testing centre on campus and established a Safe Trace team to support students and staff impacted by Covid. In 2021/22 777 students reported a positive Covid test or needed to self-isolate and were supported through food and essential supplies. We introduced a Covid Hardship Fund and emergency food voucher scheme, providing 768 awards totalling £140,075. Approximately 60% of awards were made to Black, Asian and Minoritised students, 35% to students declaring a disability, and 40% to the most disadvantaged students.

We adopted an evidence-based approach by surveying our students and prospective students to tailor support to their needs. We worked in partnership with the SU to assess the impact of the pandemic on students' wellbeing and academic experience through an 'Are you okay?' campaign (QAA, 2021). This led to 400+ individual conversations between staff and students. We worked in partnership with the SU to offer an 'Ask the Expert' panel of senior DMU and SU staff to respond to student learning and wellbeing concerns. This framed our support to students, including hardship funds, library access, placements and our no-detriment policies. The evaluation of our no detriment policy highlighted that students' reasons for leaving being associated with academic failure fell by 13.9%; retention for students studying at level 4 improved by 2.1%. We introduced new forms of remote assessments and created a 24-hour window for our students to complete their summer 2020 exams, which led to a significant closing of the Disability Awarding Gap by supporting students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLDs). This positive experience has helped to redesign our approach to exams going forward. We have moved away from pre-Covid approaches, drawing on the feedback from a consultation exercise that included feedback from 1,327 students in 2021/22.

2C.2 Blended delivery

Between March and May 2020, we delivered 25,168 Blackboard Collaborate Ultra sessions, with 74,296 unique attendances and 6,398 recorded sessions. Our students viewed more than 100 million minutes of virtual learning sessions in 2021/22 and our staff delivered 110,000 automated online sessions via MS Teams. We recorded 2.8 million student attendances via Teams teaching over 2021 and 2022. We addressed the digital poverty gap by issuing 356 laptops to students and have continued to support students with laptop loans post lockdown. We ensured students could access 874,849 books in e-format and 52,844 electronic journals (April 2020) and established a live chat help desk support staffed by library staff, academic support, maths support tutors and digital support staff. We introduced Studiosity to provide 24/7 support for students in their learning of key subjects such as Maths and English. Between October 2020 and September 2022, some 1,482 students benefited from 154,634 minutes of Studiosity support, with a 95% overall satisfaction rating (76% extremely satisfied and 19% somewhat satisfied). Feedback was provided to 1,385 students on a total of 3,629 submissions, while 229 students engaged with 332 live connect sessions.

We created remote computer labs so students could access industry software online. We established a virtual studio for Graphic Design students on social media to encourage students' creativity to thrive. In Architecture we used Miro to ensure a key part of studio practice could be maintained regardless of location. We sent students parcels containing materials and tools that were tailored to specific subjects and year groups, such as leather, lasts and specialist tools to Footwear Design students and clay, moulds and chicken wire for Design Crafts students. More than 200

Engineering students were provided with a 'Lab in a Box' to facilitate practical, hands-on remote learning, which was commended by the Institute of Engineering and Technology.

We produced extensive guidance on digital learning that was externally recognised by the QAA (see Labbe and Blair, 2020). As Leicester emerged from lockdown, we transformed more than 300 classrooms and labs into hybrid learning spaces whereby students could either attend in person or dial in online. We developed a mini module for all students at the start of the 2020/21 academic year to prepare students for learning online, which was accessed by 2,247 students. Through partnership with the SU, we enhanced this resource into a new provision in 2021/22 that we call BaseCamp, which was accessed on 11,160 occasions. At the start of 2022 academic year 19,693 users engaged with BaseCamp. At a subject level, we co-created workshops with students to help design teaching and learning materials. The Law School developed and launched 'Radio DMU', a co-led weekly programme of talks, discussions and guest speakers.

2C.3 Employability and careers support

Our Careers Service developed a digital strategy which won a bronze award for Excellence in Digital Innovation in the 2021 WhatUni awards, and a second award was gained for digital innovation from IT supplier Abintegro. We launched Live Chat in the DMU Skills Hub, a daily two-hour window for students to message team members via a chat channel. Students' engagement with online careers increased significantly. Between 2019-2020 we saw a tripling of activity in our Skills Hub activity for the busiest month of October. There were over 60,000 unique activities undertaken in the Careers Skills Hub in 2020/21. 280 students registered for our Enterprise online Careers Start-up Summer School in 2021. Our Faculty of Health and Life Sciences online Employability conference was attended by 1,849 students. We recorded more than 127,000 separate student logins to our Careers Service between September 2021 and March 2022 and recorded 18,700 separate event bookings. Over the same period our Skills Hub had 12,165 separate logins and a total of 33,619 unique activities completed. Our international opportunity team, DMU Global, developed a new virtual international student experience that won the 'Building Back Better Category' in the 2022 Green Gown Awards, and which is now fully embedded into our curriculum. More than 1,000 students have participated in free virtual international opportunities since 2020, including virtual internships in Fiji and a collaborative fashion sustainable project with a partner university in Kazakhstan. Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with 95% overall satisfaction and 88% of students valuing the accessibility and flexibility of virtual experiences.

Chapter 3: Student Outcomes

Section A: Employability and continuation

3A.1 Context

Our approaches are highly effective in ensuring students succeed and progress beyond their studies. Performance across completion, continuation and progression metrics are overall within benchmark. We support a student body where nearly one-third have no experience of higher education in their families. Across student groups for completion, all are either within benchmark or materially above benchmark, including those eligible for free school meals and students with a disability.

Continuation is within benchmark across different student characteristics too. There are pockets of students who are below benchmark for progression (mature students; students whose ethnicity is *other*; and graduate outcomes quintiles 4 and 5). All other groups are within benchmark. Completion

data at CAH2 level is outstanding - with ten subjects materially above benchmark, including Business and Management, Law, and Psychology - all of which have large cohorts and account for 41% of our student community. Nursing and Midwifery is the only subject materially below benchmark for completion and we recognise that there are challenges within the continuation indicator. The School has adjusted the assessment load for students, reviewed staff-student communication, introduced new processes so students can more easily access support and funded a project on student attrition. Newly introduced post-placement reflection workshops help students understand links between theory and practice, which supported student attainment. The majority of our subjects are within benchmark for continuation with Health and Social Care, Forensic Sciences and Materials and Technology materially above benchmark. We note concern in Architecture, Building and Planning, so we have introduced mentoring and mock interview schemes to provide additional support. For progression, we see some areas materially below benchmark (issues addressed via monitored annual enhancement plans); there are also a number above benchmark. For PT students there is a similar pattern of outcomes – with completion outcomes strong (more than 11% above benchmark).

3A.2 Employability

Employability is embedded throughout all programmes. In 2021 we won the Best University Careers/Employability Service at the National Undergraduate Employability Awards and were shortlisted again in 2022. The judging panel praised the effectiveness of our digital employability strategy, and our digital Skills Hub that offers an automated CV review tool, based on applicant tracking systems used by graduate recruiters. Students use a Careers Self-assessment tool to self-rate their employability confidence and are provided with a personalised suite of employability development tools plus e-learning based on their strengths and weaknesses. This supports students to secure work by the time they graduate, which relates to their future career plans. Of the 50.1% (n=1,376) who told us they had a job in our survey of graduates in the summer of 2022, 80% (n=1,106) said that their job fitted with their future career plans. Careers and Employability's 24/7/365 service provides personalised support that targets support for students at risk by deploying course employability statistics, personal characteristics, Participation of Local Areas data and whether they have accessed the service previously.

Face-to-face support is accompanied by digital resources, such as interview simulation software, as well as embedded support within courses. Through this work, we aim to increase BAME student leader role models and help further reduce progression gaps for highly skilled employment. Our ground-breaking student-business conference brought students and Leicester businesses together to explore barriers to BAME recruitment and career progression and learn together about unconscious bias. The conference transformed students' levels of self-belief and confidence, with the percentage of students wanting to build their career in Leicester increasing from 67% to 87%.

In 2020/21 some 1,776 students undertook a mandatory placement of over four weeks (courses offering this include Education Studies and Nursing and Midwifery). Our 'frontrunner' internship on-campus work experience scheme enables up to 100 students each year to gain work experience that provides an important ladder of opportunity. Students support our enhancement work by reviewing faculty assessment and feedback practices and supporting strategic projects that include the procurement of a new virtual learning environment. We have increased the number of frontrunners to 120 in response to an increase in student applications (increase from 299 to 446 from 2020 to 2021). The pandemic impacted on the number of students attending embedded career sessions, resulting in a decline from 9,433 students in 2018/19 to 8,289 students in 2019/20 and

7,806 in 2020/21; however, we have seen an upturn in 2021/22, with 8,602 students attending. We have also seen a doubling of embedded employability sessions in 2021/22 in our faculties of Business and Law and Computing, Engineering and Media.

The applied nature of our degree programmes is reflected in the opportunities that we provide students to present their work to industry. For example, the School of Fashion and Textiles works with a wide variety of industry clients on external briefs across the undergraduate curriculum, with clients ranging from high street to designer level including Next, Boden, Jimmy Choo and Bauer. In 2021/22 Footwear Design students won the Cordwainers Footwear Designer of the Year and Drapers Footwear Designer of the Year, with graduating students going straight to design jobs at prestigious companies such as Alexander McQueen and Burberry.

3A.3 Employability: extra curriculum

With the University of Leicester and Leicester City Council, we have established a Leicester Graduate City project that aims to keep more graduates in highly skilled graduate jobs in Leicester, driving regional economic prosperity. A key focus has been the roll-out of new internships at the end of the second year, creating earlier connections between students and local employers. The impact of this work led it to be shortlisted for an Institute of Student Employers Award for Best Work Experience, Internship or Placement Programme in 2022.

Our Employer Engagement Strategy has re-defined how we find, target, and build mutually beneficial partnerships with employers. We have developed bespoke solutions and programmes that best serve the recruitment needs of employers and increased the number of network events and activities like Speed Interviews (focused 10-minute interviews between recruiters and students). Our Lead & Inspire Programme supports BAME students as part of work to close the progression gap between university and highly skilled employment. 86 students across undergraduate and postgraduate studies have so far engaged with the programme, and in 2021/22 95% of students felt their confidence, leadership and network had grown as a result of the programme, while three-quarters had created a LinkedIn profile or used their account more because of the programme.

3A.4 Enterprise education

We are ranked seventh for British universities with the most student and graduate start-ups. 140 new businesses were launched by DMU students and graduates in 2020/21. Our student business incubator programme, 'The Crucible', is based in our Innovation Centre where final year students and alumni benefit from masterclasses from industry experts, one-to-one mentoring and free office space. Now in its fifth year, the 12-month programme has been highlighted by Research England as an exemplar of university start-up support.

Our DMU Entrepreneurship team mentors hundreds of students and graduates each year online and on campus. DMU Entrepreneurship online summer schools cover topics such as starting a business, financing, marketing, and legal considerations. Nearly 300 students signed up for the 2021 session and we delivered more than 150 one-to-one support appointments with students from more than 15 nationalities. We recognise student success through annual Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Awards and in 2022 four of our students presented their work on sustainability at the UN headquarters in New York, where they and their work were described by Michaelle Gyles-McDonnough, Director of the Sustainable Development Unit, as an 'agent of change.'

Our Launchpad programme for third-year undergraduates and alumni who are looking to launch their own start-up business, attracted 117 participants in its first year. We established a Graduate Champions Start-up Catapult programme, which springboards third years and recent graduates into launching their ideas. We created a Pitch2Win competition, which asks students to film a 30-60 second pitch about a new business idea, with the competition supported by the Sir Thomas White Loan Charity. Our Enterprise Placement Year offer enables five second-year students to pause their studies to concentrate on building their business ideas into new start-ups. 2021/22 saw the highest number of applications to the scheme thus far. Our 'DMU Made' website offers a platform for creative students and graduates to sell their work.

3A.5 Continuation and completion: in the curriculum

To support completion, we were early adopters of lecture capture through our system 'DMU Replay', which ensures our students can review the session content at their own convenience. DMU Replay helps all students, but especially those with learning differences, international students, and those on placements. Since its launch in October 2016, DMU Replay has amassed more than 3,963,441 student views and 156,202 unique users. 41,449,257 hours of recording have been made available to our students. We provide students with engaging and challenging work that focuses on authentic assessment, enabling all students to achieve their potential. First-year Business Management students take a Dragons' Den-style module that is known as Fox's Lair where they work in groups to pitch their ideas to an external panel of experts. Advertising and Marketing students undertake live case studies, Google Digital Garage, and TED-style presentations. Final year Law students take part in a Legal Advice Centre which enables them to get a real sense of the practice of law. External examiners have commented extremely positively on this approach, noting that '*with the combination of different types of assessments, students ... are ... achieving good grades in the different modules.*'

3A.6 Continuation and Completion: Extracurricular and Belonging

Ensuring continuation and completion is of vital importance to our students' health and wellbeing. This is particularly the case for students who arrive at university with added needs or who may not be fully prepared for higher education. We create a healthy and resilient community in which all students can reach their full potential. Our university-wide approach to wellbeing 'Healthy DMU' aims to reduce health related inequalities. We design approaches which closely reflect the way in which individuals and groups conceptualise their own wellbeing. We introduced 'Look after your mate' training in recognition of the fact that BAME students and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to seek peer rather than professional support. Students can attend a session each month; 9 workshops have been offered with 42 participants. Attendees' feedback scores report that the workshops '*increases students' skills to look after their own mental health*' and '*confidence to support and signpost a friend who is experiencing difficulties*.'

A key aspect of our outstanding educational provision is the contribution that our student body makes to our own city. In 2018/19 a total of 13,619 hours of volunteering were recorded by 494 students on their Higher Education Achievement Reports (HEAR) transcripts through our outstanding #DMUlocal initiative. The onset of the pandemic at the start of 2020 meant that 5,271 hours of volunteering were completed by 216 students in 2019/20. These projects have had a massive impact on our local community and highlights the commitment by the university and our students to the public good. Our students benefit from the enrichment of their own learning, with experiences that often require them to undertake specialised training that is recorded on their HEAR reports, alongside their volunteering

hours. This ensures students are fully recognised for their efforts in undertaking work to improve the health, education, and social regeneration of Leicester and beyond and gain an important marker of esteem that enhances their applications for further study and employment. Just as we have a commitment to broaden our students' learning and understanding through local engagements, we equally look to ensure that they are engaged with developments at a global level. An important aspect of this is our award-winning international experience programme, #DMUglobal. Since its start in 2014 it has offered more than 13,000 overseas student opportunities to over 65 international destinations. In 2018/19, the last full year before the pandemic, some 3,020 students took up this opportunity and reported a 96% satisfaction rating.

3A.7 Personal identities and representation

We are below benchmark on academic support in Computing and teaching on my course in Engineering and Computing. In collaboration with our students, we co-created a Women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) Society to support students studying these subjects. In 2021/22 our Women in STEM Alumni Career Journeys Panel Discussion event and Women in STEM Skills sessions from alumni were well attended. This Society has also organised external visits and has contributed to online You Tube panel discussions that are an excellent educational resource for students. Enhancements such as these are important in helping to deliver outstanding Student Outcomes, where across the subjects of Computing, Engineering, Materials and Technology, Mathematical Sciences, Media, Journalism and Communications we are either within or materially above benchmark for student outcomes, except for our composite completion indicator for Engineering. We are also engaging in the Association for Black and Minority Ethic Engineers' Transition programme for career development and to amplify skills for employment.

3A.8 Societies, sports and the learning environment

Our SU's 81 student-led societies enrich learning, ranging from their focus on academic study (Black Law and Nursing societies), faith (Christian Union and Islamic societies), sport (Boxing and Ultimate Frisbee societies) and social and culture (Hip Hop Dance and Korean Culture societies). Students can apply to the SU to start their own society if they cannot find one reflecting their interests. A number of societies provide an important forum for the university to engage with on strategy matters, such as the Ethical Hacking Society in relation to cyber security. Students have been helping our IT department deal with cyber threats. Our student entrepreneurial society, Enactus, is another example. Enactus is formed from a network of students, academics and business leaders, dedicated to transforming lives and shaping a better, more sustainable world via the power of entrepreneurial action. In 2022 it received three awards and reached the semi-final of the UK Enactus National Expo.

3A.9 Peer Mentoring

Working in partnership with the SU, we support our students through tailored peer mentoring schemes that range from employability to supporting international students. Student participation across all peer mentoring activities increased from 776 in 2018/19 to 841 in 2020/2021. The number of students engaging in-group mentoring has increased from 115 in 2017/18 to more than 500 in 2021/22, with 44 placed in a successful ongoing 1:1 business mentoring partnership and 100% positive feedback from all students on the quality of their experience. The scheme was re-awarded an 'Approved Provider Standard' for mentoring and befriending' in 2019. The external assessor commented: '*One of the real strengths of this project is that ... having a mentor equips them [students] with skills and raises their aspirations and expectations*.'

Our i-Buddies peer mentoring scheme matches newly arrived international students with existing DMU students as we recognise that while living in a new country is an exciting experience, it can also be a daunting one. In 2020/21 some 101 students took part in i-Buddies. Over 1,000 students have been involved in the scheme since it was set up in 2012. Students additionally can access disciplinary-based peer mentoring schemes that include Psychology, Midwifery and Criminal and Community Justice. Our Media School has a long-established peer mentoring scheme (Gurus and Grasshoppers) which involves second and third-year students mentoring first and second years, with 90% of students engaging with a scheme that supports student success and progression.

Section B: Empowering education gain

3B.1 Context

'I didn't fit the mold at college and I had a terrible time. But at DMU, my tutor's personality and confidence were inspiring to me, as those were the exact reasons I didn't fit in at college. Being taught by a successful woman like her was a great inspiration and made me feel like I could be my authentic self and still achieve amazing things.' –   , Computer Science.

At DMU we seek to foster a love of learning which reflects that for many of our students university is a new beginning. This is often on the back of previous educational experiences where our students were unsupported and their talent and skills overlooked. We recognise the complexity and diversity of our students' life experiences. Many face personal, social and economic challenges that impact on their academic studies. At DMU some will access a very wide range of extracurricular activities, while others will focus attention on the within course offer. Our education gain framework recognises these different starting points which are at the core of our Empowering University strategy.

3B.2 DMU's empowering educational gain

'Empowering educational gain' at DMU is defined as the distance travelled for students in relation to their knowledge, skills and personal development, within our empowering university ambition. This distance travelled enables us to assess the extent to which our empowering educational offer (formal and informal learning within and extra curriculum) develops the skills, knowledge and confidence that empowers students to find and use their voice to create a fairer society.

Our supportive and nurturing community of academics, students and expert advisers provide a learning environment which empowers our students to achieve their dreams and realise their full potential. We are committed to providing accessible higher education and our indicators and contextual data reflect our success in attracting a diverse student body. Our DMU Local and Global programmes stretch learning beyond the classroom. We ground students in digital literacy and equip them with employability and entrepreneurial life skills, reflecting our outstanding student outcomes. We work hard on our access to university outreach work and maintain low tariffs that aid access and inclusion. We have already moved 70% of our undergraduate courses to Block delivery (students study a series of four, 30 credit modules in sequence over each year of study).

We seek to build confidence in our students so that they can learn and live well. This includes drawing on our collective diversity to challenge the status quo. We work to ensure that students understand how they can bring about change through the knowledge that they have acquired (Charlton and Blair, 2021). This represents learning as transformatory as well as distance travelled. To support our evidence-based approach to educational gain, we commissioned a DMU Principal Fellow and a Senior Fellow to review HEFCE/OFS funded learning gain research and car ry out

engagement meetings with staff and students in the SU, Library, in Academic Support, Careers, and Faculties. This work identified research, approaches and measures for educational gain that already exist within DMU that could be further developed and shaped into a coherent framework.

3B.3 Building an evidence base

Our evidence-based approach drew on our own research, where we have measured the transformative impact of elements of a DMU education (Charlton and Blair, 2021). In line with the applied nature of our curriculum, we have always recognised that university is more than just a graduation certificate; it is also about the experiences and learning that our students gain. As Tight notes in his systematic review of learning gain, learning gain '...is more than a simple statement of what students know or can do on graduation. It concerns the difference between that and what they knew or could do on entry to higher education' (2021: 4). The OfS similarly stresses that 'the research defines learning gain as the 'distance travelled', or the improvement in knowledge, skills, work-readiness and personal development students can show at two points in time' (HEFCE, 2015).

These definitions were the starting point for our work on defining educational gain and its measures at DMU. We evaluated existing forms of learning gain measures at DMU using the HEFCE mapping table (HEFCE, 2017:17). We identified that we had strong foundations to build on. This included:

1. Annual evaluations of students who undertook volunteering and surveys of recent graduates (Charlton, 2022: 29). These measures point to positive educational gain for extracurricular activity that aligns with our strategy.
2. Self-Assessment Evaluation offered to students prior to enrolment. This formative tool develops students' reflection against these headings: Academic Writing, Digital Literacy, Employability, Information (Library) Skills, Numeracy, Reading, Verbal Communication and Visual Literacy The take up and engagement rates are strong (the majority of our first years engage with this survey) and questions asked, align to our educational gain framework.
3. Career readiness survey that demonstrates 11% self-report learning gain from students engaging with the tool over time.
4. Alumni surveys that evaluate our educational offer in relation to career planning.
5. Tariff scores and their relation to classification outcomes (these data evidence that we offer an education that takes students from their different starting points to successful outcomes).

3B.4 Our educational gain framework

To develop the rigour of our educational gain work we have brought these measures together into a framework that allows us to assess student knowledge, skills and personal development at different points, from arrival to post graduation. We adopt mixed methodologies to measure educational gain. In addition to broad data analysis, we will collect self-report data and conduct focus groups to ensure we have rich qualitative data to work with as well as large scale quantitative data analysis. Specifically, our educational gain framework will draw upon:

1. **Knowledge measures.** These measures will focus on the distance travelled from entry tariff to degree outcomes, with attention paid to outcomes for students with different protected characteristics.
2. **Personal Development measures.** We noted HEFCE research that explores the use of NSS optional self-personal-development questions (HEFCE 2017). We recognise the benefits of deploying these optional questions as a core part of our annual internal University Student Survey offered to students at the end of year 1 and 2. This, combined with the Self-Assessment

Evaluation questions, will help us to have strong self-report measures at three points on the students' journey. We have selected these questions:

The course has helped me to present myself with confidence.

As a result of the course, I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems.

The Self-Assessment Evaluation data supports students in their first tutorial and the aggregated scores help us plan and target support at course level. These data support personalised learning and helps us offer a strong tutorial and learning support package to students. These data are primarily for the students' use for their own development, but we will ensure we will integrate these measures to support our educational gain approach.

3. **Skills and employability measures.** We will deploy the careers NSS optional question and align it with alumni surveys conducted after graduation, namely:

   As a result of my course, I believe that I have improved my career prospects. Good advice is available for making career choices.

   We will align our career readiness survey measures to help us collect data at different points - induction, graduation and post-graduation.

4. **Holistic gain measures: Focus Groups.** We want to ensure that our educational gain approaches explore the diverse ways our students experience DMU life and study. We are using a focus group approach, starting with level 4 students who started Block Teaching in October 2022 and we will ask these students to work with us throughout their degree programme as part of a longitudinal methodological approach. As part of the focus group approach, we will pilot an innovative, visual learning profile, which captures the affective domain in terms of how this group of students think and feel at four stages in their programme. This innovative spidergram evaluative approach will be deployed with our focus groups students (Lui et al., 2019).

Conclusion

For more than 150 years DMU has striven to provide an innovative curriculum where our students find a new beginning. We are a university which places high value on widening access. We empower our students, staff and the local community by creating a diverse and welcoming learning environment where people feel comfortable exploring the boundaries of what they can achieve. We take pride in transforming people's lives and, across three centuries, have played an integral part in the growth and rich history of the development of the City of Leicester. Our educational journey continues to evolve and we share the knowledge and research of our staff and students at a local, national and international level. We recognise our moral and ethical responsibility as educators and change makers, placing sustainable action and influence at the heart of everything we do. We were delighted that the UN named DMU as one of only 17 SDG academic hubs worldwide. Through networks of strong relationships across multiple industries, we ensure students are as ready for the world as it is for them, creating high-quality experience opportunities and co-developing courses with industry experts. At DMU, our students say, '*I didn't leave home, I found a new home.*'

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