

Provider context

“Transforming lives through innovative, inclusive and entrepreneurial education and research.”

- 1.1 This, our university vision, informs, anchors and shapes the teaching excellence we deliver to our students: a diverse body of over 35,000 people, learning at Levels 3-8 across our Cambridge, Chelmsford, London and Peterborough campuses, and partnerships both in the UK and internationally. We aspire to make **a tangible positive difference to the lives of students we serve and the lives of those around them**; our strong social mission is reflected in ranking 9th in the Times/Sunday Times Social Inclusion league table, 2021, and within the THE's top 350 institutions worldwide. Our university values – *ambition, innovation, courage, community, integrity, and responsibility* – underpin our present (2017-2026) strategy¹; we pride ourselves on providing a *“leading learning and innovation ecosystem that delivers...an outstanding and inclusive educational experience”*¹ for our students. Our underpinning Education, Research and Innovation, and Operating strategies² work synergistically to highlight *inclusivity, civic values* and *sustainability* as essential flavours of our institution; our work enriches both local and global communities.
- 1.2 Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) traces its origins to the Cambridge School of Art, founded in 1858 when the famous Victorian philosopher, writer and early environmentalist, John Ruskin, gave the inaugural address. Early influential figures also include the pioneering educator and politician, Clara Rackham, who was a governor in the 1920s. ARU's passion for widening access to, and participation in, higher education, resonates with the teachings of both Ruskin and Rackham – that **education for all is an enabler of positive transformational change for both individuals and wider society**. Indeed, ARU's student body is best characterised by its diversity; we are proud particularly to attract students from groups that are underrepresented in HE – students who originally didn't think that university was 'for them'. 30.2% of our students fall into quintile 1 of at least one of the IMD, TUNDRA and IDACI measures. We attract considerably more mature (57.1% aged 21+), minority ethnic (36.0%), female (62.9%), and local (36.5%) students than the respective sector averages (29.9% aged 21+, 29.0% minority ethnic, 56.1% female, 21.8% local). 34.7% of our students have an Access/Foundation/'other Level 3' course as their entry qualification (sector average, 17.0%), and 16.7% of our students have 'other' entry qualifications – typically mature learners admitted on the basis of their prior and experiential learning (sector average, 8.1%).
- 1.3 Our outstanding success at serving our particular mix of students is evidenced by **parity of achievement** between different demographic groups: for example, we have no outcomes gaps by disability, IMD quintile and gender – reflecting the educational gain we universally provide. 2022 LEO data also indicate our outstanding success at effectively serving the students we attract: we are ranked **2nd of all providers in England** for median earnings relative to entry qualifications by tariff points, for FT first-degree students one year after graduation.
- 1.4 In the second half of the 20th century, the Cambridge School of Art evolved to offer technical education, becoming the Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology in 1960, and merging with the Chelmer Institute of Higher Education, Chelmsford, in 1989. We gained university status in 1992 as Anglia Polytechnic University, and changed our name better to reflect the breadth of our subject offerings, and spirit of forward-looking, critical enquiry, to Anglia Ruskin University, in 2005. ARU remains a proud and voluminous provider of technical, vocational and professional education, together with traditional academic subjects. **Employability, entrepreneurship and civic impact** are central to our ethos; we are the largest regional provider of practitioners to the NHS, and ARU won THE Entrepreneurial University of the Year in 2014. Our apprenticeship provision is growing rapidly in response to employer demand; its breadth and scale will feed through into our TEF 2027 dataset. Other exciting recent developments include: the launch of ARU's Medical School in 2018/19, responding to a nationally recognised need for more doctors in Essex and surrounding regions; the

opening of ARU Peterborough (ARUP) in 2022, which received £68M in governmental investment – including £20M from the Levelling Up fund – as a project to remedy regional inequalities in HE participation; and investment of £5.8M OfS Teaching Capital funds in simulation for education.

- 1.5 Our UK full-time/part-time (FT/PT) student body – by TEF 4-year aggregate headcount – is 77% undergraduate (71% FT; 6% PT), 15% postgraduate taught (9% FT; 6% PT), 2% postgraduate research (1% FT; 1% PT) and 4% studying credit/modules. Around 68% of such students learn within one of the four Faculties at our Cambridge and Chelmsford campuses: Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (FAHSS); Business and Law (FBL); Health, Education, Medicine and Social Care (FHEMS); and Science and Engineering (FSE). 24% study at ARU London (ARUL; whose students changed to 'registered only' status with ARU from the 2020/21 intake onwards), 4% at ARU College (ARUC; our provider of Level 3 education for first degrees with integrated foundation year and pre-Masters teaching, based in Cambridge and Chelmsford), and 4% at UK regional partner colleges, whose students have 'registered only' status with ARU.
- 1.6 ARU offers courses in 30 CAH-2 subject areas. At undergraduate level, our most populous subject areas in the TEF data dashboard are: Business and Management (31.0%); Nursing and Midwifery (12.8%); Allied Health (6.7%); Health and Social Care (6.3%); Architecture, Building and Planning (4.4%); Computing (3.9%); Creative Arts and Design (3.3%); Biosciences (3.1%); Education and Teaching (3.1%); Sociology, Social Policy and Anthropology (3.1%); Medical Sciences (2.6%); Performing Arts (2.5%); Psychology (2.5%); and Sport and Exercise Sciences (1.7%).
- 1.7 Our teaching staff in all subjects bring their **vibrant research, innovation and knowledge exchange activities to the design and delivery of our courses**. ARU was peer-assessed to have 'world-leading' research in all 16 of the Units of Assessment to which we submitted in REF 2021, with nine subject areas also rated as 'world leading' for impact. We rank in the top KEF 2 quintile for research partnerships with non-academic organisations and the second-from-top KEF 2 quintile for 'local growth and regeneration'. In 2022, we were ranked 1st in the UK, and 20th in the world, for the impact of our work on the 'Good Health and Wellbeing' UN Sustainable Development Goal in the Times Higher Education Impact Rankings. We won the Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2021 for our world-leading work in music therapy – an excellent example of ARU as a crucible of quality and innovation in both teaching and research, delivering significant public benefit.
- 1.8 Having reflected on ARU's TEF dataset in light of the rating criteria, **our FT provision data are consistent with 'very high' quality, with significant elements of 'outstanding' performance, and our PT data are of 'outstanding' quality with respect to student outcomes**. In this submission, we particularly explore areas of 'outstanding' provision, where performance is materially above benchmark (*mab*) – illustrating our evidence-based approaches that have facilitated such excellence – alongside those where performance is materially below benchmark (*mbb*) – articulating our focussed actions to make improvements for present and future students, together with any early evidence that these interventions are working. We include the 'optional' category, 'Higher education modules or credit-bearing courses at undergraduate level that do not lead to the award of a qualification'. ARU provides credit-bearing CPD/short courses to around 1000 students per year (19.4% of taught PT provision over four years, by headcount) – a key facet of our agile response to the need for flexible, lifelong learning in the sectors and communities we serve.
- 1.9 This submission, endorsed by our Senate, was prepared as a wide collaboration among ARU academic and professional services staff from subject areas/central services throughout the institution, who have contributed evidence from their areas of specialism. representatives of the independent Student Submission leadership team were members of our university submission leadership team, thus ensuring that the student voice is thoroughly and systematically represented herein. Key decisions about inclusion of 'optional' courses were made collaboratively and are reflected in both submissions, and the Student Submission authors had full access to the sources of evidence we identified and gathered, for their use.

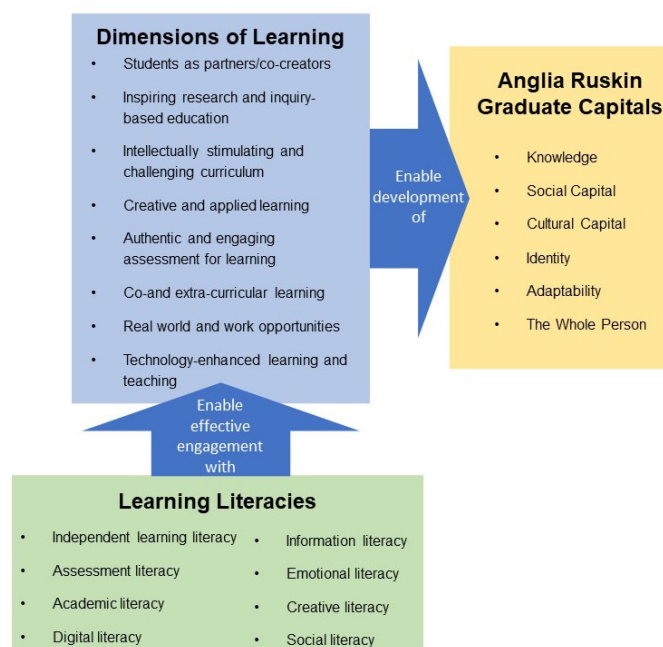
In this submission, (x) indicates an internal paragraph cross-reference; ^x cites evidence listed in the References section.

Student experience

2 Innovative pedagogy and curriculum design enable us to serve our diverse student body effectively.

2.1 Our Education strategy² crystallises our distinctive approach to delivering educational excellence that is fitting for our mix of students and courses. It is centred on recognising and celebrating the diversity of our students' backgrounds, interests and styles of learning. This diversity informs the way we deliver our education and support our graduates and alumni to achieve their full potential, excel in their chosen careers and tackle environmental and societal challenges. ARU courses are underpinned by sector-leading research, and create space for students to work in partnership with businesses and organisations. All our students are part of vibrant living and learning communities that enhance their belonging; our offer is innovative and provides flexible learning for life, creating opportunities for students and our alumni to grow and learn together throughout their lives.

2.2 Our Active Curriculum Framework³ informs our Education Strategy, placing our students "*at the heart of our University*"¹. Developed in collaboration with students (2017-2019), it ensures that course content and delivery inspire students to **engage actively** in their learning, so as to develop to their fullest potential⁴. Underpinned by the principles of Universal Design for Learning⁵, it aims to **minimise barriers and maximise opportunities** for all learners. Thus, inclusivity is 'baked in' to the design of all our courses, not a post-hoc 'add on', reflecting our determination to deliver effective educational gain to all.



2.3 Committed to supporting our students' development as lifelong learners, we empower them to develop Learning Literacies to engage effectively and actively with their learning. As a result of our holistic, whole-curriculum approach, drawing on Tomlinson's Graduate Capitals framework⁶, students develop the **ARU Graduate Capitals** required to achieve highly successful outcomes.

2.4 We design our undergraduate students' **learning journeys** to enable them to meet the challenges of our stretching and professionally accredited courses (3.7), with a specific emphasis at each Level:

2.4.1 Level 4: **transition** – We support students to thrive via curricula that build upon Level 3 study, while explicitly conferring a thorough grounding in the Learning Literacies they will need to succeed, tailored to their individual starting points. IntoARU, our online transition module, introduces HE study, and our academic/wellbeing (6;9) support; in 2021, over 90% of new students accessed the module⁷.

2.4.2 Level 5: **breadth** - Studying in mixed cohorts drawn from across ARU, all students take one of our innovative Ruskin modules alongside their subject-specific modules. Described by our External Examiners (EEs) as "*quite distinctive in the sector*"⁸, and a finalist in 'Next Generation Learning and Skills', 2021 Green Gown Awards, these modules facilitate interdisciplinary thinking and collaboration to tackle profound societal challenges, such as climate justice, preparing students to engage with complex problems. Each Ruskin module is also aligned to a Sustainable Development Goal, supporting our commitment to sustainability as core to our education⁹. In 2021/22, 88% of respondents reported their Ruskin module experience caused them to think differently, reporting they will take new skills of leadership, teamwork and confidence to their course (181 responses;

1,825 responses invited)¹⁰. EEs commend our Ruskin modules as “*an important step in developing interdisciplinary thinking*” that leads students to “*develop transferable skills,*” “*with the important benefit of exposing students to skills that they may not otherwise have the opportunity to focus on during their degree programme*”, including, “*synthesis, integration, and collaboration*”⁸.

- 2.4.3 Level 6: depth** - Our EEs strongly confirm the efficacy of our curricula at delivering currency and transferable skills (**4.4**), and that our Level 6 modules emphasise curiosity and enquiry-based learning. All ARU honours degree students benefit from studying a personalised Major Project module in their final year¹¹ where independent learning and a tailored working relationship with an academic supervisor enable students to stretch themselves in an area of their academic interest, serving as a capstone to their studies.

3 Our curriculum design and teaching practice are shaped by disciplinary research and professional practice, as well as pedagogic research and scholarship.

- 3.1** Drawing on the expertise of our teaching staff, as well as contributions from employers, we deliver an outstanding experience for our students, preparing them for their chosen careers. All our permanent and fixed-term academic staff hold either ‘**teaching and research**’ or ‘**academic practitioner**’ contracts. We introduced the latter in 2017, and currently have 156 academic practitioners amongst our staff, most of whom work 0.4-0.8 FTE for us, alongside complementary work in their industry/sector. They bring a wealth of practical experience and knowledge to our education delivery, particularly in relation to enhancing learners’ employability prospects.
- 3.2** Located in the Centre for Innovation in Higher Education¹², and complementing our REF/KEF activity (**1.7**), **pedagogic research** by ARU staff captures the student voice (**8.3-8.5**), positively informing education, and has received external recognition. For instance, our ‘Raw Tag’ art and sustainability project was a finalist in the prestigious ‘Re-Imagine Education’ awards. Our research on the features of course design and delivery before/during/emerging from the pandemic that most positively impacted students’ perceived efficacy of learning and building positive learning communities¹³, together with evaluation of staff experiences of hybrid/online teaching, inform our current practice: we record ‘live’ teaching sessions for students to consolidate learning; use enriching simulation for education (e.g., **4.6.3**) and effectively signpost learning journeys in Canvas (our Learning Management System). We encourage innovation through **Learning and Teaching Project Awards**, supporting 10-15 annually¹⁴, and sharing their insights at our annual ‘Engage’ Conference (**5.4**). Our sabbatical scheme, re-launched in 2021 to include Education and cross-institutional team projects alongside Research, is the first in the sector to signal parity of esteem across these areas.
- 3.3** Our students are stretched by the expert delivery of research-rich content to become active participants in research/practice development. Students undertake a wide variety of **Major Project** types appropriate to their subject, including work-based/employer-briefed projects, where student outputs solve real-world challenges. As a result of our 2019/20 strategic review of Major Projects¹⁵, there was a 5.1 percentage point year-on-year improvement in average Module Evaluation Survey (MES) scores for Major Project modules (271 responses from 1806 responses invited, 2019/20; 298 responses from 1758 responses invited, 2020/21¹⁶), where module MES scores indicate percentage of students who strongly agreed/agreed that overall, they were satisfied with the module.
- 3.3.1** Our educational environment is enriched by staff/PhD research seminars to which undergraduates are invited. We host inter/national research conferences (e.g., Innovate UK, 2018/19), broadening students’ horizons; we collaborate with industrial institutions in research contexts, facilitating student placements; and the service improvement-led entrepreneurial spirit brought by ARU delivering the national **NHS Clinical Entrepreneur** programme¹⁷ enriches the innovative spirit of our courses.
- 3.4** Our innovative course design and enhancement practices **engage local and national employers** to create curricula that meet societal need, giving our graduates clear progression pathways into societally valuable roles. During 2019/20, we convened 33 curriculum co-design groups, covering all our courses, comprising: employers; students; Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB)

representatives; educational developers; and learning technologists – alongside academic course teams¹⁸. All our courses were successfully revalidated and delivered in the refreshed form from September 2020. Commendations from the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) in re-accrediting our Computing provision (2020) exemplify the efficacy of our approach: *“In the meeting with the Employer Advisory Group... [and i]n the meeting with students...the IET Panel identified many commendable features, mainly grouped around the support that [the School] gives to students and the engagement and outcomes around employability and resources”*¹⁹.

- 3.5** Recognising the tremendous value of direct employer involvement in portfolio development, we convene **Sector Interest Groups** (SIGs) with employers and external stakeholders to advise on sector need, course content and curriculum design. First used for the development of the whole course portfolio at ARUP in 2021/22, SIGs are now standard practice across all our course development activity. To date we have held 32 SIGs, serving all campuses and comprising over 170 individuals from industry, education, government and business membership organisations. An Engineering SIG participant remarked, *“it is refreshing to have been part of a forum of like-minded... employers who have worked with the Faculty Heads to outline what skills and talents are needed to support local business growth. ... The collaborative approach to course design, [is] focussed on creating a competent, adaptable, flexible and rounded workforce that meets the future needs of local employers.”*²⁰.
- 3.6** Assessed **Live Briefs** are embedded in compulsory modules at Levels 4 (from 2020/21) and 5 (from 2021/22) in every course. Such modules have an average MES overall satisfaction score of 82.5% (1748 responses; 6655 responses invited)²¹. Employer partners present real-world challenges directly to students and later give feedback on students’ submitted work, alongside feedback and formal marking by academic staff. This authentic assessment experience develops students’ Social and Cultural Capitals (**2.3**). Common themes in students’ written feedback include insight into industry, with increased interest in and opportunity to develop industry-specific skills: *“Really enjoyed this Live Brief and was highly practical. Highly recommend continuing this and reaching out to local charities and organisations to generate more Live Briefs”*; and *“For undergraduates, this type of task gives a real taste of what the world of work requires”*²¹. 90.5% (50 responses; 110 responses invited) of employer partners strongly agreed/agreed that students were professional in their response to the challenge posed, and 72.5%, that the work produced by the students is of value to their business/organisation. Exemplary comments include: *“The students’ fresh eyes... provided a valuable different perspective and will help our Public Health Information team as they ... determin[e] priorities in our regional workstream”*; and *“It’s a great way to engage with students at a local university. It is genuinely interesting to see what approach they take to the brief and be able to discuss with them.”*²¹
- 3.7** ARU has 83 **PSRB-accredited courses** across the breadth of our provision, demonstrating the relevance and currency of our curricula in preparing students for professional practice; during the TEF period, 45.1% of the honours degree awards we made carried PSRB accreditation. We are the largest regional provider of practitioners to the NHS, graduating 2098, 363, 870 and 107 students from our Nursing, Midwifery, Paramedic Science/Studies and Operating Department Practice courses, respectively, during the TEF period²², during which our students completed 44,836 individual placements with the NHS. Further, we are responsive to sector need in our credit-bearing **CPD/short-course provision**; we offer 88 CPD/short courses at undergraduate level serving around 1000 students per year, 55 of which are aimed at working health professionals²³. During the TEF period, 94.5% of registrants successfully completed their health-related CPD modules, which scored 87% average overall satisfaction in MES (327 responses; 919 responses invited)²⁴; survey comments illustrate the value this provision adds to students’ career progression: *“The learning on this module has enhanced my expertise and career.”* (‘Cardiac Care’, 2019/20); and *“The knowledge acquired about assessment, symptom recognition, treatment and management has increased my confidence levels”* (‘Critical Care’, 2018/19).

4 Our outstanding, embedded teaching, feedback and assessment practices are tailored to support students' learning, progression and attainment.

- 4.1** Transition into HE (**2.4.1**) is supported by formative assessment across various modes, scaffolded so that students understand criteria before submission of their first coursework. We systematically introduce principles and practice of Academic Integrity, where Faculty Leads enact our **educative** approach, especially supporting students new to UK-based study (see Student Submission).
- 4.2** MES data from all modules delivered during the TEF period evidence **high levels of student engagement**: *'I came to my learning sessions prepared... in order to participate in all activities'* (2018/9-2019/20) / *'I have been able to prepare effectively for all taught activities...'* (2020/21-2021/22) scored 79.5% – where all global MES question scores herein are the trimesterly average percentage of respondents who strongly agreed/agreed, and represent 56,529 responses from 210,544 responses invited¹⁶. We systematically embed a wide variety of learning activities – including practice- and team-based learning, quizzes, debates, group-work, flipped learning and playful learning/gamification – to facilitate active engagement (**2.2**), and stretch students to develop their knowledge and skills to the fullest potential. Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) data (see Student Submission) also show that students have fed back positively about active engagement.
- 4.3 Course Leader Funding**, allocated to support innovative initiatives tailored to the needs and context of each student group, further enhance students' experience. Over the TEF period, £240,678.43 was allocated to 437 initiatives, including educational visits (e.g., Midwifery students assisting local farmers with lambing), guest speaker events (e.g., a Music Therapist discussing benefits for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), student conferences, and purchases of subject-specific study support (e.g., online crime scene apps for Forensic and Investigative Sciences)²⁵.
- 4.4** Our module-level EEs corroborate the effectiveness of our practices²⁶:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
<i>Number (percentage) of reports received by analysis date</i>	205 (91%)	206 (91%)	205 (88%)	215(89%)
Report Area	Percentage of EEs in agreement with statement			
The curriculum is current	99	99	99	99
Transferable skills are developed	96	93	95	96
Assessment criteria and marking standards are appropriate and clear	97	98	98	98
Feedback on student work is constructive	89	90	97	95

- a picture which is supported by global (**4.2**) MES data from survey statements: *'Module lecturers are good at explaining things'* (2018/19-2019/20) / *'Module lecturers have taught the module effectively'* (2020/21-2021/22) – 81.9%; *'This module is intellectually stimulating to me'* – 77.5%; *'The criteria used in marking for this module were made clear in advance'* – 78.8%; and *'I have received helpful and informative feedback on my work within this module so far'* – 70.5%.

- 4.5** The Students' Union (SU) runs **student-led teaching awards**, celebrating our teaching and professional services staff. A 2019 analysis identified four main themes from 288 'Excellent Teacher' and 441 'Outstanding Personal Tutor' nominations, which were: 'makes sessions enjoyable'; 'is dedicated/puts in time'; 'cares about students' and 'innovative/effective teaching methods'²⁷. Typical nominations include: *"She makes everybody feel engaged in the lectures, explains so much more than could ever be put on the PowerPoint, motivates us through quizzes (with prizes) and will always make time to [talk] to people."* (2019); and *"X is a brilliant lecturer! They endeavour to make every lecture intellectually stimulating, and has adapted to the new Covid-19 teaching modus operandi in a stellar fashion"* (2021) (see Student Submission).
- 4.6** We met the challenges posed by **the Covid-19 pandemic** with agility and rapid investment of considerable human and financial resources to ensure an excellent academic experience for our students, reflected in Trimester 2, 2019/20 MES results, compared to global MES results: of the eleven survey statements referenced in this narrative, average percentage agreement in Trimester

2, 2019/20 is within 3 points of the trimesterly average for the entire TEF period (4.2), for all statements, and within 0.5 points, for nine statements¹⁶.

- 4.6.1** When government mandated pausing on-campus education in March 2020, 100% online provision was accomplished within a week, thus minimising disruption to students' learning. Drawing on our extensive experience in delivering engaging distance-learning courses, we established an Active, Inclusive and Collaborative Learning group to ensure we served our diverse body of learners effectively in this context. We brought together key resources – including 'how to' guides, short video tutorials and activities²⁸ – to ensure that elements of course delivery based on Canvas embodied active learning²⁹, supplemented by 49 hour-long CPD sessions. We also designed curriculum support interventions to foster belonging amongst dispersed off-campus learners ('Building Learning Communities'³⁰). Attended by 80 academics who cascaded good practice amongst their course teams, additional funding then enabled further post-lockdown development of learning communities.
- 4.6.2** Inclusivity was at the heart of our efforts to offer as much on-campus education as possible during periods of restriction. To enable clinically vulnerable students and students with personal pandemic-related logistical challenges (e.g., lack of available childcare) **to continue engaging with their education**, we gave all students a choice between on-campus or online study (unless in-person attendance was mandated by a PSRB), and developed bespoke registration mechanisms to facilitate this. To enable the successful education of the resulting hybrid cohorts, we devised and implemented a Unified Active Learning model of teaching delivery, made possible by investment in learning technologies (7.3) and staff CPD (5.4), in which on-campus and online students shared active learning experiences, collaborated, and remained part of one connected learning community³¹.
- 4.6.3** For courses with compulsory practice placements, we re-sequenced curricula such that students could still progress with theory aspects when practice placements were not possible, and we created **award-winning** (AdvanceHE Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE), 2022) **virtual simulated placements** for student nurses unable to access placement areas because of their high risk for Covid-19. This work has been hailed by regional and national stakeholders (Health Education England, NHS Partners, Council of Deans of Health) as significant, innovative best practice. Simulation now is an integral part of the nursing programme (RN6D) with short blocks prior to or after practice-learning experiences, reflecting PRSB changes.
- 4.6.4** We made on-campus delivery available as soon as allowed, successfully lobbying for Drama Therapy to return to campus when it was omitted from a governmental list that did contain Music Therapy and Art Therapy. When on-campus teaching was permitted only under socially distanced conditions, we conducted many repeat sessions across an expanded (8am-8pm) teaching day, ensuring that students could derive full benefit from our specialist facilities and dedicated staff³¹.
- 4.7** In terms of **subject areas**, we draw learning from those that perform *mab* in teaching, assessment and feedback practice (4.7.1-4.7.3), applying transferrable principles across the institution via our staff development programme (5), and we actively engage in the systematic improvement of subject areas that perform *mbb* (4.7.4-4.7.7) utilising this learning (8.4).
- 4.7.1** Our FT **Education and Teaching** and **Sport and Exercise Sciences** subject areas, **ranked 1st** (Guardian League Table (GLT), 2021) and **1st/3rd** (GLT, 2021/2022) in the UK, respectively, are *mab* for 'teaching on my course', with exceptionally high course NSS results: BA (Hons) Primary Education Studies, 100% (2019 and 2021); BA (Hons) Education, 100% (2020); and BSc (Hons) Sport and Exercise Science, 100% (2020 and 2022). Explicit links between theory and practice are brought both by lecturers and lecturer practitioners in Education and Teaching, enabling students to apply theory to practice to the fullest extent; an EE (2022) notes, "*excellent and useful reflections*"³². Assignment support is embedded throughout modules, with timetabled peer and formative feedback scaffolding learning where needed. Students typically report, "*All modules are highly stimulating and fun. The learning outcomes are clear. We are given clear guidance and support*" (NSS, 2022). Sport and Exercise Sciences also focuses teaching and assessment on applying learning in real-world scenarios, through extensive Live Briefs. Strong links with local clubs/organisations give students

valuable additional learning opportunities. For example, students on the BSc (Hons) Sport Coaching and PE course run an Easter Sports Camp with Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), coaching children aged 8-14.

- 4.7.2** In similar vein, in **General, Applied and Forensic Sciences** FT, and **Architecture, Building and Planning** PT, provision – where ‘teaching on my course’ is *mab* – students benefit from staff profiles including crime scene practitioners and ex-Police Officers, and quantity/building surveyors and construction managers, respectively, together with more traditionally trained academic staff. Teams provide authentic, real-world experience for students, ensuring the development of relevant practical and technical skills, exemplified by: *“Really enjoyed the scenario-based studies which I feel give a great understanding of the JCT contracts and also practice letter writing and response skills for life after/during the degree... Good range of topics which are applicable for the evolving industry. Lecturers have good industry experience”* (Surveying, NSS 2022). There is also strong engagement with industry via Live Briefs and student placements (e.g., GSK, LCG, Anglia DNA and Eurofins for Forensic Science). Excellence in Construction and Surveying is the main driver for PT ‘male’ satisfaction being *mab* across 4/5 measures.
- 4.7.3** Areas where performance is *mab* in ‘assessment and feedback’ – FT **Nursing and Midwifery, Education and Teaching**, and **Sport and Exercise Sciences**, as well as PT **Architecture, Building and Planning** – share common features: they utilise a diversity of assessment methods, closely linked to practice. Nursing and Midwifery students say: *“The authenticity of the assessments, utilising real scenarios and case studies, means that we can easily link theory to practice”*. Graduates find that assessed work is directly useful for their employability: *“I utilised my portfolio during a recent job interview and was able to demonstrate not just to the panel but to myself ... how far I had come”* (Midwifery graduate). A 2022 Surveying External Examiner wrote, *“Assessment processes are necessarily robust to meet RICS standards, but feedback is sensitive and provides positive support/guidance. Qualified and very experienced professional staff give very helpful reasoned advice and students will greatly benefit from this in their technical/professional development journey.”*
- 4.7.4** The *mbb* NSS results for FT **Performing Arts** provide a case of learning from the pandemic. BA (Hons) Drama scored 82% in NSS 2018, but scores for some categories were considerably lower; students fed back that they preferred modules with a practical basis to enhance employability in their field. Changes embedded in enhanced curricula resulted in positive feedback in 2019/20 first-year MES results (e.g., ‘Studio Performance’, 84.5%, and ‘Production 3’, 100%). However, the new provision was severely affected by the March 2020 and January 2021 lockdowns. Revised assessments – e.g., solo performance on video – did not meet student expectations; falling below benchmark shows our efforts to manage hybrid delivery did not work well for Performing Arts. 2022/23 is the first time the new degrees are being delivered under normal conditions, and the first NSS scores for the new curricula are eagerly awaited.
- 4.7.5** Similarly, the *mbb* NSS results for PT **Allied Health** are closely related to the pandemic. Our two major courses – FdSc Hearing Aid Audiology and FdSc Ophthalmic Dispensing – are workplace-based degrees, where students learn remotely and come onto campus for a number of residential weeks each year. During Covid-19, students’ learning was severely impacted by workplace closures. Residential weeks were also heavily affected. Our accrediting PSRBs maintained their requirements of practice hours/practical competency assessment; many students therefore were not able to progress through their course at the expected rate. Students also found PSRB-mandated online proctored examinations difficult to manage. These courses are the key driver for several PT Student Experience demographic ‘splits’ that are *mbb*: ‘time series – year 3’, ‘age on entry – 31+ years’, ‘other undergraduate – level 5+’, ‘other undergraduate’, ‘disability reported’ and ‘female’. Similarly, and although our data indicate Student Experience results broadly in line with benchmark for FT Allied Health provision overall, we have identified one practice-based course that encountered pandemic-related challenges – DipHE Paramedic Studies – as the primary driver for results *mbb* in ‘other undergraduate level 5+’ provision.

- 4.7.6** PT satisfaction for 'assessment and feedback' is *mbb* in **Health and Social Care**. All modules have undergone a review of assessment; using EE, MES, SSLC and NSS insights, we developed more explicit links between the mode of assessment and the graduate skills needed. Recent positive student MES feedback (2022) has praised, "*a much more creative approach*", highlighting, "*I loved peer feedback and support... It was a great encouragement to receive a video feedback from tutor*".
- 4.7.7** We acknowledge the need significantly to improve student experience in our **Veterinary Sciences** provision (Veterinary Nursing), delivered by University Centre West Anglia (UCWA), which underwent pandemic disruption (as **4.7.5**). Our action plan to improve teaching, assessment and feedback also focusses on embedding understanding of assessment criteria and feedforward in taught sessions, and regular marking standardisation exercises. Our small BSc (Hons) Animal Behaviour course constitutes FT **Agriculture, Food and Related Studies**, *mbb* for 'teaching on my course'. Our action plan increases field course provision for enhancing investigative practical skills, confirmed by students as "*very beneficial*" (SSLC, 2022), and increased engagement with business and external organisations in curriculum content and delivery – learning from best practice at ARU.

5 Our teaching staff are leaders in innovative Higher Education.

- 5.1** Our academic staff are supported to develop best practice by Anglia Learning & Teaching (AL&T), our central unit whose staff include three National Teaching Fellows (NTFs). Our percentage of staff recognised for their innovative teaching by AdvanceHE Fellowships is **sector-leading**: 77-88% across the TEF period (sector: 41-46%)³³. We support all our staff to gain their first or next level of Fellowship, through our AdvanceHE-accredited schemes:
- 5.1.1** Our three-day Learning and Teaching in Practice course serves sessional staff new to HE; the optional assessment results in AFHEA. Participant feedback includes, "*The course has made a real difference to my teaching. I thought I was interactive before but your course has taken it to a whole new level. I now try to put the student at the heart of what I do*"³⁴.
- 5.1.2** Full-time staff who join without Fellowship undertake a mandatory PGCert Learning and Teaching in HE, resulting in FHEA. Across the TEF period, the average course MES score for the PGCert was 96% (198 responses; 736 responses invited)³⁵. A positive external reputation ensures that we also attract staff from other HEIs to take our PGCert; during the TEF period, 193 of 325 course entrants were external to ARU³⁶. writes: "*the students perform to a high standard as a result of the high-quality teaching and support they receive. They are in line with the highest performing students in the sector. This is an excellent programme*"³². Clinical teaching staff have two specialist routes to FHEA: the PGCert Medical and Healthcare Education, with a simulation-specific variant.
- 5.1.3** Our Professional Recognition Scheme mentors more experienced staff, resulting in **exceptionally high numbers** holding SFHEA (127 in 2021/22) and PFHEA (22 in 2021/22) status³³. The External Examiner writes, "*Applications... were strong... I feel... applicants are mindful of inclusion principles and how students are supported in the way they engage them in activities, assessment tasks and through the use of various technologies to support effective learning*"³⁷.
- 5.2** We, **exceptionally**, have NTFs and CATE (**4.6.3**). Short-listed nominations for THE Awards 'Of the Year' include: 'Technician' (), 'Digital Innovation' (), 'Innovative Teacher' (), 'Entrepreneurial University' and 'STEM Research Project'
- 5.3** We actively engage with the QAA, Staff and Educational Development Association, Association for Learning Technology, and Society for Research into Higher Education. We are an active member of the University Alliance Teaching and Learning Network, sharing good practice with other HEIs, including during the pandemic (e.g. on 'No Detriment' policies). Via the Network, we have collaborated on two sector-wide funded education research projects (2022)³⁸.
- 5.4** Our CPD culture supports staff via self-guided resources³⁹ and a strong programme of workshops (434 sessions during the TEF period; 3881 total attendees) culminating in our annual T&L 'Engage' Conference, co-designed by students, and attended by 150 staff on average. We also hold popular annual DigiFest weeks, and a Course Leader Conference (100 average participants)⁴⁰.

- 5.5** AL&T hosts practice networks internally, and leads national networks. Our Pedagogic Research Community sponsors monthly meetings and dedicated writing retreats. Our Active Learning Network has 97 members, runs monthly topic meetings, and connects with the global Active Learning Network (600 members), with three AL&T team members leading⁴¹. The Head of AL&T chairs the international Playful Learning Association (300 members) .
- 5.6** To ensure that our staff are properly recognised for their engagement with all aspects of our university mission, in 2019/20 we overhauled our Academic Careers Framework to confer education-, research- and practice-focussed academic careers with **equal prestige and promotion opportunities**. In the two promotion cycles since the new Framework has been implemented, 31 staff have been promoted to Associate Professor and to Professor, and progressed between Professorship grades, owing specifically to their contributions toward our education mission⁴².
- 6 Excellent academic support is embedded within and provided alongside the curriculum.**
- 6.1 Academic staff** are highly accessible to students, with drop-ins and appointments available both on campus and online to maximise inclusivity. The global MES result (**4.2**) for, *'I have received sufficient study advice and support on this module'* was 74.6%.
- 6.2** Each student has a **Personal Development Tutor (PDT)** who stays with them throughout their course. Strong individual relationships are built between staff and students; 87.9% of Trimester 1, Level 4 respondents knew their PDT (2019/20 survey; 124 responses of 3813 invited). PDT sessions are timetabled as group and one-to-one tutorials; students value their PDT learning communities and experience them as conduits for a strong sense of belonging⁴³.
- 6.3** During the TEF period, our central **Study Coaches** provided around 800 individual appointments and 160 group tutorial sessions each year⁴⁴. Students who engaged with the service reported an improvement in their academic skills (87% of 68 opt-in 2021/22 survey respondents) and feeling more confident about their next academic assignment (91%), exemplified by: *"Our coach was... knowledgeable and reassuring in equal measure... I cannot thank... the university enough for providing this service, I was so scared of failing, but I feel like I can achieve this now"*⁴⁴.
- 6.3.1** We have three **Royal Literary Fund (RLF) Writing Fellows** who offer academic support with writing, on campus and online. Over the TEF period, RLF Fellows conducted 815 individual tutorials, valued by students: *"another essay that I had started with your advice in mind [- I] can see very clearly how to amend it now... your advice... will help me to better structure and check essays"* (2020/21); and *"I will use these resources for upcoming assignments"* (2021/22)⁴⁵.
- 6.3.2** The **ARU Language Centre** provides support to students for whom English is an additional language, including training in core language skills to enable progression to a main course (with progression rates in excess of 95% on aggregate (2018/19-2021/22), and introducing students to our systems and processes. Over the TEF period, we served over 3000 students; participation increased year-on-year⁴⁶. Our most recent International Student Barometer results (2019) show 94% of students were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the language support offered⁴⁷.
- 6.3.3** During the TEF period, our central **Student Advice team** (contactable on campus and remotely) offered personalised advice on 82,000 queries regarding extensions, intermissions, and requests for deferral of assessment via Exceptional Circumstances claims (**13.6**) working collaboratively with the independent Students' Union Advice Centre (see Student Submission). Students also benefit from AskARU, a searchable database of 532 FAQs, and online mechanisms to report an absence, request an extension, and track cases⁴⁸. During Covid-19, we put in place additional resources to ensure a continuously well-supported academic experience for each student: we handled year-on-year growth of extension requests effectively (requests in April/May: 2019 – 1980; 2020 – 3300; 2021 – 5000). Our total 2018/19 - 2020/21 spend on **Academic Services was £73M**⁴⁹.
- 6.4** At **subject level**, we learn from areas where students are particularly satisfied with their academic support: FT **Education and Teaching, Sport and Exercise Sciences, and Philosophy and Religious Studies** and PT **Architecture, Building and Planning** provide high-quality, personalised

support to their students, with embedded engagement opportunities (e.g., Course Leaders' weekly drop-in sessions). *"Lecturers are open to discuss, in a safe space to share our views in challenging situations within the profession itself, they are very supportive even during COVID and felt well supported by lecturers and faculty"* (NSS 2022, Education and Teaching). Tight-knit learning communities engender this excellent academic support – informing our present focus on creating and sustaining strong learning communities across our whole provision (4.6.1).

6.4.1 Areas where academic support scores were *mbb* (FT **Architecture, Building and Planning, Performing Arts, Veterinary Science**, DipHE Paramedic Studies, and PT **Allied Health (4.7.5)**), were particularly impacted by the pandemic; we have provided additional practice learning opportunities to address concerns. The small PT cohort in **Education and Teaching** undertake top-up education by distance learning; we are working with student representatives to promote opportunities for support via online communication tools/drop-in sessions.

7 Our physical and digital learning resources enable students to flourish.

7.1 In 2018/19-2021/22, we **invested £42.1M** in the student-facing physical estate of our campuses, including: the £18M Medical School; £6.2M in specialist learning resources (including clinical skills/simulation suites (£3M); an electronics laboratory (£270k); optometry/audiology (£120k) and paramedic science (£2.5M) practical facilities; a creative arts Futures Lab with 3D scanning/printing facilities; and enhanced architecture studios (£96.2k)); £6.4M in general learning resources, (including upgrade of teaching, studio, and open-access computer spaces (£6.2M); enhancement of the Chelmsford library (£51.6k) and the Student Advice Centre (£150k)); and £2.2M in support of the wider student experience (including a larger Muslim prayer room in Cambridge, and an outdoor wellbeing 'Forest Pod' in Chelmsford)⁵⁰. We also built Phase 1 of ARUP (£9.5M investment committed), with specialist facilities for Biomedical Science, Agri-Food Technology, Computing, Engineering and Education.

7.1.1 Such investments complemented our **excellent existing facilities** including: the £45M Science Centre (2017), containing a 200-place undergraduate teaching laboratory and state-of-the-art specialist facilities serving 6 subject areas; the Bloomberg Financial Markets Lab; the professional-grade Mumford theatre and Covent Garden studio; four dedicated Team-Based Learning classrooms; and the University Eye, Law, and Sport and Exercise Therapy clinics, which provide valuable services to the community, hand-in-hand with integral aspects of students' education.

7.2 During **the pandemic**, whenever it was legal so to do, open-access learning spaces were available to students – important to our widening participation mission, together with our free-of-charge laptop loan scheme, and digital poverty funding schemes; when our campuses had to close, we introduced a cash fund (£190,800 distributed to 477 students in one month⁵¹ (**9.2**)) to enable students without their own appropriate device to purchase a laptop and continue studying.

7.3 Our **Digital Strategy**⁵² centres on the student educational experience. Investments in **IT infrastructure** significantly shaped by the pandemic include: updating audio-visual technologies to modernise teaching spaces (£750k) plus equipment to enable hybrid synchronous teaching and learning (£100k); replacing computers in teaching labs, including to enable students to use specialist software on high-performance devices via remote access (£640k); Adobe Creative Cloud offsite software licencing; and rapid acquisition of specialist laboratory simulation software to support students' practical learning (£700k)⁵⁴. **Software and solution development** during the TEF period (£1.5M) includes: a new student web portal (MyARU) linked to all ARU information and systems; Canvas development, for accessibility on any device, and integration with assignment submission software, academic record systems, Office 365 and multi-media platforms⁵³; rapid implementation of Microsoft Teams/Stream for remote education; and the TopDesk enquiry management system for staff-student interactions (**9.1.1; 9.5**)⁵⁴.

7.4 85% of our library resources are provided digitally. We provide a personal copy of one key e-textbook per module to Level 4 students; academic staff embed these to exploit e-textbooks' interactive

functionality, and to utilise student engagement learning analytics. In 2021/22, 8,747 students were eligible for e-textbooks, of whom 7,814 (89.3%) registered to access the service. Of those registered, 7,208 (92.2%) actively used their allocated e-textbooks. These data demonstrate **engagement at ARU that is above the average for UK universities** of a similar size that also have large projects with the e-textbook provider (80.4% registration rate and 84.6% activity rate)⁵⁵.

- 7.5 We continuously enhance learning resources based upon student feedback:** satisfaction with learning resources in TEF Year 2 was *mbb*; we convened a Task and Finish Group to conduct thematic analysis of NSS free-text comments, and formulate actions for immediate implementation (e.g., recruiting more staff to support students with IT enquiries), alongside recommendations for longer-term enhancements. Reflecting the impact of improvements we have made, Years 3 and 4 are broadly in line with benchmark, and global MES results (**4.2**) show, '*Learning materials... for this module have effectively supported my learning*' – 80.5%, and '*I have been able to access module-specific resources... when I needed to*' – 82.3%¹⁶. Our Student and Library Services team annually review NSS question 19 results ('*The library resources... have supported my learning well*'). For subject areas performing below the ARU question average; the team works with Course Leaders to develop action plans (e.g., increased library purchases of key texts, diversification of reading lists, and investing in group-learning and wellbeing spaces).
- 7.6 Our subject area learning resources results** are broadly in line with benchmark, reflecting the positive interventions that benefit all students, and our very high-quality specialist resources. For example, in our most recent **Nursing and Midwifery Council** reaccreditation (2019), the panel commended the variety of good-quality learning resources and student support embedded into the programme⁵⁶. Our cutting-edge development of Virtual Reality includes a tour of simulated service-user environments, helping students to understand different perspectives in a multi-disciplinary healthcare team: "*it feels like you're actually there. I reached out to touch Edna and I spoke to her, even though I knew she couldn't hear me. I just forgot I was still sitting in a classroom. It was really interesting to see the world from her perspective...*" (recent graduate nurse).
- 7.7 Results *mab* in FT Sport and Exercise Sciences and PT Architecture, Building and Planning** reflect particularly strong investment in state-of-the-art specialist facilities, and excellence in integration of synchronous teaching with PSRB and Canvas resources, respectively.
- 7.8 Satisfaction with learning resources is *mbb* in FT Sociology, Social Policy and Anthropology** in which we identified BSc (Hons) Psychology and Criminology as a key factor. Delivered 50% each by two Schools, student feedback noted struggles to connect fully with resources provided by either. We responded by replacing the course with a new curriculum accredited by the British Psychological Society, which is demonstratively led by our Psychology subject area. For practice-based courses in FT **Performing Arts**, PT **Allied Health**, FT **Veterinary Sciences**, and DipHE Paramedic Studies, the *mbb* scores reflect the significantly disrupted access to practice-based learning during Covid-19 (**4.7.4-4.7.5**). We have acted upon *mbb* results for FT **Engineering**, FT **Materials and Technology** and FT **Agriculture, Food and Related Studies**, via investments in a new £250k Automation and Robotics laboratory, upgraded digital workstations, and additional field trips, respectively.

8 Student engagement is systematically embedded into our academic governance structures, leading to continuous enhancement of the student experience.

- 8.1** Our Principles for Partnership agreement (2018)⁵⁷ ensures that the student voice is woven into all we do, with student representation on all our university committees apart from the University Executive Team. Examples of institution-wide enhancements originating from student campaigns include: implementing Universal Design for Learning (**2.2**) in all our learning materials, such that they are fully accessible to students with learning difficulties by default (first championed by a 2017 student campaign via our effective committee structures); and introducing 118 Student Assistants for Learning and Teaching (SALTs; 2020/21-2021/22) in response to student feedback that large

hybrid classes would benefit from an additional pair of 'hands, eyes and ears' to help facilitate fruitful learning interactions between students and staff.

- 8.2** Following an extensive research exercise and an all-student referendum, in 2017/18 the SU implemented a new representative structure. Students identified that they most cared about having representation for their course and educational experience. The SU moved from one whole-university 'Education Officer' to a FT Vice President and two volunteer Executive Committee roles for each core Faculty; this has enabled student voice to be more embedded in academic enhancement at every university level. The student body also elects representatives for Equality Networks (Gender, Accessibility, Race, LGBT+, and International) who run campaigns to enhance students' experience (e.g., working with ARU to create gender-neutral toilets on all campuses, and conducting an Accessibility Audit of the university estate) and attend various relevant university working groups (e.g., Sexual Respect, and Disability).
- 8.3** Course-level student representation includes trimesterly SSLC meetings, followed by Course Team Review meetings, where staff put in place actions to address student feedback. SSLC reports are analysed thematically (see Student Submission), and acted upon in Faculty-level committees – where cognate SU Vice-Presidents and Faculty representatives are members of the Faculty Education Committee and Faculty (student-staff) Partnership Team – and at whole-university level. Module Leaders seek 'real time' student feedback via mid-trimester 'spot check' surveys, and online discussion boards; the global MES result (**4.2**) for '*Staff have shown that they value students' views and opinions about this module*' was 80.1%¹⁶.
- 8.4** Statistical and thematic analyses of MES/NSS results inform our **continuous quality enhancement processes**. Where satisfaction is below 70%, the relevant Module/Course Leader is supported by educational leadership colleagues to devise and implement an improvement plan, monitored by the Faculty Education Committee. We share good practice between subject areas, via our strong CPD culture (**5.4**), and senior/AL&T staff who have oversight of student experience across many disciplines. Recent examples of fruitful cross-pollination include: legal practitioners being invited to help shape students' Major Projects in Law – shared with Business and Management course teams who wanted to improve the authenticity of their Major Projects; and the innovative 'creative bootcamp', where final-year humanities students work with creative arts students to represent their research themes – shared across FAHSS for whole-Faculty implementation.
- 8.5** Our **pandemic response** was strongly shaped by student voice: following extensive student consultation, and supporting both inclusivity and wellbeing, we provided a study mode choice (**4.6.2**), and implemented a set of temporary regulatory measures to prevent students from being academically disadvantaged by circumstances beyond their control. Evidence for the efficacy of our partnership working is seen in our *mab* FT student voice result for TEF Year 4.
- 8.6** At **subject-level**, our FT **Education and Teaching, Sport and Exercise Sciences, Philosophy and Religious Studies, English Studies, and General, Applied and Forensic Sciences** areas, with *mab* scores, share an emphasis on strong partnership, responsive work with students, a culture of accessible staff, and staff well connected to local employers. The latter is also visible in our **PT** provision, where staff are well connected to professional networks and to their students employed in the relevant sector, forging excellent working relationships.
- 8.6.1** Our efforts to be responsive to the student voice amid the challenges of the pandemic in FT **Performing Arts** and **Veterinary Sciences** were only partially successful. We have redoubled our efforts to seek and act upon student feedback – particularly from extended practical/placement contexts – via 'always on' electronic means and regular Course Leader contact. Student voice scores are *mbb* in: FT **Architecture, Building and Planning** – to improve this, in 2020/21, we acted upon student feedback as part of a thorough curriculum and assessment strategy redesign and Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) accreditation (2021); and in **Agriculture, Food and Related Studies** where the course team have particularly engaged with the Faculty Student Experience Officer to further support students and increase their voice beyond standard fora such as SSLCs.

Student Outcomes

9 We value student belonging and wellbeing, and develop policies and practices that facilitate excellent academic engagement, continuation, completion and progression.

- 9.1** The importance we place on fostering a sense of **belonging** in our learning community (**4.6.1**) goes hand-in-hand with inclusivity being key to our institutional mission; together, these enable all students to succeed in their studies. During the TEF period, our NSS results for 'Learning Community' were **consistently above sector average**, with the positive gap growing from +2.5% to +6.2% (2019-22).
- 9.1.1** Fostering belonging for student success begins when students first join us, with our **Welcome Buddy** programme for all undergraduates, including ARUC Level 3 starters. We recruit over 900 buddies annually, each matched with a group of 5-10 new students, with a chat space within our enquiry management system (TopDesk) to build community; we recognise outstanding buddies through the Welcome Buddy Awards. Analogously, from 2021, ARUL's **Student Peer Mentoring** programme links new Level 3 and 4 students, and students returning after a study-gap, with a Level 6 Peer Mentor, to provide peer support that is contextualised for ARUL's distinctive mix of students.
- 9.1.2** Our **International Office** provides a wide range of transition support to international students, including: a pre-departure buddy scheme; bespoke campus orientation; and an online orientation module (2020 onwards), covering our learning technologies and study skills support, which achieved 96-100% new-student engagement. Our most recent (2019) International Student Barometer results⁴⁷, show 93% of respondents were very satisfied/satisfied with their welcome experience: *'My arrival and orientation experience was great and a good start at ARU'* ().
- 9.2** As a widening participation institution, we place considerable emphasis on **removing financial barriers** to students engaging with their studies. Three FT Student Money Advisers provide expert financial guidance, particularly assisting students needing to take study-breaks. They also administer **hardship funds**, provide budgeting guidance, and signpost external organisation support, responding to over 22,000 emails over the TEF period. During the **pandemic**, we significantly increased our hardship fund to support students required to self-isolate, and to purchase laptops as needed (**7.2**). Reflecting our student demographics, the OfS provided ~£1.8 million in 2020/21; we also introduced a post-Covid digital support fund, for undergraduates with low household incomes⁵¹:

Fund	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Hardship fund (including home/EU, international and risk)	£240,000	£115,000	£140,000
Laptop fund/digital support fund	£200,000	N/A	£55,000
Disability support bursary	£32,000	£28,000	£48,000
Care leavers bursary	£10,000	£18,000	£76,000
Internship bursary [^]	£3,000	£200	£1000
Placement travel bursary [*]	£28,000	£1,800	£4,000
Go International [^]	£7,000	£0	£1,000
Self-isolation fund	£80,000	N/A	N/A
OfS-funded support	N/A	£1,800,000	N/A
Total	£600,000	£1,963,000	£325,000

^{*} = a change in the NHS learning support fund in 2020/21 to include paramedics resulted in a reduction in our placement travel bursary. [^] = International exchange and internship travel were reduced by the pandemic.

- 9.3** Our **outstanding personalised pandemic support** is reflected in our above-sector-average 2021 NSS scores: *'I have received useful information about changes to my course from my university or college during the Covid-19 pandemic'*, +4.8%; *'I have received timely information about my course from my university or college during the Covid-19 pandemic'*, +5.5%; *'My university or college has taken sufficient steps to support my mental wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic'*, +10.3%.
- 9.3.1** Our Student Services team provided **exceptional support** to self-isolating students (over 100 staff contacted 4000 students), logging 5803 calls from March 2020 to April 2022⁵⁸, arranging food parcels (including options for dietary/religious requirements) and medicine drop-offs, and inviting them to a

closed Facebook support group, which has now evolved into a wider ARU Wellbeing group. Course Leaders were informed and tailored teaching materials to each isolating student's circumstances.

9.3.2 Working with local Public Health, we promptly delivered university Covid-19 testing. Where outbreaks were suspected (e.g., in a hall of residence) we provided testing in less than 24 hours, minimising time students were restricted, and supporting them with refreshments and counselling access.

9.4 We have a positive culture around **wellbeing and mental health** with students feeling comfortable receiving support, without stigma. Our Student Wellbeing Guide⁵⁹, free online self-help resources⁶⁰, including mental health apps such as Silvercloud (used by about 300 students per year) and Fika, and leaflets placed in high-footfall areas, provide tips to maintain good wellbeing, as do our Wellbeing Facebook (1314 members) and Instagram (202 followers) sites⁶¹. Student and Library Services held 28 wellbeing workshops from November 2019 - November 2021, serving 272 students⁶².

9.4.1 Our **Suicide Prevention Approach** promotes engagement with the Zero Suicide Alliance online training [⁶³] for all our students and staff, completed by all our senior managers. We also co-produce suicide prevention campaigns with students: our 2021/22 campaign consisted of 19 interventions (e.g., videos and social media posts) receiving 3388 engagements.

9.4.2 Our **Peer Wellbeing Mentor (PWM)** scheme (launched in 2019/20 with PWMs, growing to 28 in 2022/23) lead activities such as: wellbeing drop-ins, available 30 hours per week; international student meet-ups; and online chats⁶⁴. We collaborate with Mind to deliver in-person Good Mood Cafés and online Open Door Calm Spaces, serving 761 students in March 2020 - July 2022. Over 90% of attendees indicated they acquired new wellbeing skills⁶⁵. Our **Wellbeing Student Competitions** engage students in planning awareness campaigns, with winning entries implemented. Our January 2021 'Own It' campaign featured 28 online interventions across video, blog, and quiz formats, with over 45,000 views. The 2022 Cambridge 'Feel Good February' campaign created a mindfulness Self-Care Corridor; Chelmsford featured meditation in our Forest Pod. We further co-design projects with our SU Officers: in Autumn 2020, we co-produced over 30 wellbeing videos, and in December 2020, we collectively provided festive parcels for students who were alone.

9.4.3 Our **Counselling and Wellbeing Service** has 6.2 FTE professionally qualified counsellors, 3.2 FTE Mental Health Advisers, and 2 FTE Wellbeing Advisers. During 2019/20-2020/21, we provided: 3048 assessments; 10,604 counselling and 3387 mental health advising sessions; 1727 SilverCloud app reviews; and 1104 drop-in sessions. We also made 177 positive crisis interventions, and provided advocacy to victims of sexual violence, referring 76 students to our Sexual Violence Liaison Officer. Throughout the TEF period, the numbers of sessions provided of each type increased year-on-year, except for crisis interventions, which decreased in frequency as a result of our proactive wellbeing support that works to prevent crisis situations from arising⁶¹.

9.4.4 Our **multi-faith Chaplaincy** has campus-based Chaplains, alongside associate chaplains and faith advisers from numerous religions⁶⁶. Our SU supports eight student-led faith-based societies. Our campuses have multi-faith prayer spaces, with designated space for Muslim students. Our Chaplaincy team contributed to the development of our Good Speech guidance to support our debating ethos, underlining our commitment to freedom of speech.

9.5 PDTs provide **holistic academic and pastoral support (6.2)**, delivering a programme of activities featuring study skills, community building and employability, and acting as students' 'first port of call' for advice. We use our **Continuation and Completion protocol** proactively to contact students whose engagement is lower than expected (quantified via attendance at timetabled sessions, Canvas, and library use), via TopDesk. In Trimester 1, 2018/19, 1530 such Level 4 students were phoned; with a successful contact rate of 49%, those contacted had an annual withdrawal rate 6% lower than those who had not been successfully contacted⁶⁷. In Trimester 1, 2020/21, the average engagement of students receiving a call increased, with the greatest increase for male students (13.83% between the first and final reporting point); these students were 18.7% less likely to withdraw from their studies than similar students not receiving a call⁶⁸. In 2021/2 the protocol was rolled out to all undergraduate students, where the average engagement of students with 'very low'

engagement increased by 3.3% upon contact, and that of students with 'low' engagement', by 6.3%⁶⁸. The system also enabled referral of students to Counselling and Wellbeing via TopDesk, increasing 'Cause for Concern' referrals from 285 in 2018/19 to 840 in 2021/22⁶⁹.

- 9.6** We offer targeted support to students **joining their courses late**. Module leaders have dedicated office hours to support these students to catch up; they also receive a personalised introduction to our academic systems. Our wide-ranging academic and pastoral support is designed to ensure that students succeed in their modules at the first attempt. Where students need a further opportunity to take a module, we carefully construct a personal **Retrieval Package**¹¹ to support course completion.
- 10 We draw on best practice in subject areas with excellent continuation and completion to inform enhancement to other parts of our provision.**
- 10.1** Our **PT** provision scores *mab* for continuation and completion across many subject areas and demographic 'splits'. We are specialists in attracting and supporting PT students already employed in their chosen field, sponsored to earn their HE qualification. Our **long-standing relationships with regional employers** reflect our curriculum co-design practices (**3.4-3.6**) ensuring that our courses remain relevant to sector needs. We invest considerable resource into assessing Accredited Prior (Experiential) Learning (AP(E)L) of applicants to provide exactly the PT education needed to progress to the next stage of their career; we conferred 2,901 honours degree awards with AP(E)L during the TEF period, with classification profiles in line with our total awards. PT course delivery patterns, designed to fit with employers' and employed students' needs, use day- and block-release models to fit sector need and the geographical catchment area of the students and employers.
- 10.1.1** Continuation rates of PT **Allied Health** students and completion rates of PT **Nursing and Midwifery** students are *mab*. In the latter, we work closely with our Practice Learning Partners (PLPs) to ensure course delivery meets both individual student and employer needs. CPD is incorporated into PT provision, making these courses particularly valuable to students already in work, seeking to progress. As part of our lifelong-learning mission, our credit-only courses/CPD/short courses provide an important service to the public sector (**3.7**) where there is an extensive interface between CPD uptake and engagement with PT courses leading to a qualification. Completion in FT Nursing and Midwifery is broadly in line with benchmark where the subject benchmark is relatively high – our main driver for *mab* completion for 'age on entry – 31 years and over'.
- 10.1.2** Similarly, our PT provision in **Sport and Exercise Sciences**, and **Education and Teaching**, have continuation rates, and continuation and completion rates, respectively, *mab*. Students join these blended-/distance-learning degrees either directly via their employer, or while employed in the sector, and benefit from education tailored to their needs: "*The staff go above and beyond to support students through uni work and personal issues*" (Education and Teaching NSS, 2020).s
- 10.2** **Completion** of our FT **History and Archaeology** courses is *mab*; the small BA (Hons) History teaching team prides itself on the personalised support it provides. This is also the case for BA (Hons) Social Care; continuation and completion rates are *mab* for the PT cohort, and the FT cohort's strong results are a main driver for *mab* results for students who self-describe as 'Ethnicity – Mixed'. The **Health and Social Care** course team maintain strong relationships through which students feel that academics, "*consider other circumstances in a student's life that can sometimes affect performance ...then go the extra mile to support the student*" (student-led award nomination, 2019). Social Work students make excellent use of our Study Skills Plus provision (**6.3**), reflecting their relatively high percentage with declared disabilities, and the strong emphasis the course team places on these resources: "*The social work team... [work] closely with Study Skills to support students, raising their confidence and making HE less daunting for them*" (EE, 2020)³².
- 10.3** The excellent academic support provided by ARUC ensures our continuation and completion results for FT '**first degree with integrated foundation year**' are *mab*. Students benefit from Individual Academic Learning Plans, alongside staff engagement in an Academic Concern Reporting process. ARUC offers: a tailored programme of support to those who are late to join their courses; weekly

study skills drop-in sessions; and dedicated pastoral support, including Wellbeing Champion appointments/drop-ins, and comprehensive support for vulnerable students and under-18s.

- 10.4 Continuation in FT Nursing and Midwifery** is *mbb*, in contrast to that of our PT students in employment. The pandemic caused significant challenges in accessing practice-based learning for FT students; staff shortages and Covid-19 hospital admissions resulted in fewer placements for 'amber' risk-rated students. Some student nurses were deployed 'out of circuit', affecting their practical ability to continue engaging; others answered the NHS 'call to action' for student nurse/midwife deployment – their positive vocation manifesting 'negatively' in the data. Uneven treatment caused unease: student midwives, deployed in the first lockdown only, were unpaid and felt their contribution was not recognised, leading some to disillusionment and non-continuation. Differing guidance on vaccination as a prerequisite for placement also limited opportunities. To enable continuation, course teams spread workload and assessments over a longer period, and innovated significantly in virtual simulated placements (**4.6.3**), especially to support students at high Covid-19 risk. Our current in-year data show an improving trend in continuation.
- 10.4.1 PT Engineering** continuation and completion results are *mbb*. Acting upon student and employer feedback, we have timetabled additional online academic support to complement periods of block-release teaching – thus maintaining student engagement throughout the academic year.
- 10.5** We acknowledge the need to improve continuation rates for **FT students aged under 21 years**. In addition to institution-wide good practice, we are focussing on subject-specific interventions to support continuation where this demographic group is strongly represented:
- 10.5.1 In Creative Arts and Design**, with FT continuation and completion *mbb*, subject-specific belonging is fostered through team-based induction workshops, course Instagram pages, peer-learning between students of different year groups, and field trips. Recent data suggest these efforts are bearing fruit: continuation rates in the Cambridge School of Art improved from 85.1% in 2019/20 to 90.5% in 2021/22. To enhance completion, formative assessment and feed-forward has been strengthened, with opportunities for 'in-module retrieval' where necessary.
- 10.5.2 Continuation of FT students in Biosciences, Medical Sciences, and Agriculture, Food and Related Studies**, and continuation and completion of FT students in **General, Applied and Forensic Sciences**, are *mbb*. Course teams are encouraging peer-learning networks to build community and academic engagement. For example, Forensic and Investigative Science students start their courses with a team-building 'murder mystery' event, the BSc (Hons) Animal Behaviour course has additional field trips, and Medical Science students partake in course design via Curriculum Focus Groups.
- 10.5.3 BA (Hons) Architecture** mainly constitutes FT **Architecture, Building and Planning provision**, where continuation is *mbb*. Early data following redesign and RIBA accreditation (2021) is positive: the 2021/22 continuation rate was 89.1% (3.5 percentage points above 2017/18-2020/21 mean).
- 10.5.4 Veterinary Sciences** FT continuation and completion rates are *mbb*. The course team have instituted individualised progress-tracking documents for each student, enabling timely intervention and provision of additional support where needed.
- 10.5.5 Continuation and completion is mbb** in the small subject, FT **Materials and Technology**. Targeted interventions have increased student engagement, and improved MES results in Trimester 1 2022/23 modules (overall satisfaction, 100% and 82%). **Politics and Economics** FT students have continuation rates *mbb*; both subject areas have recently been redesigned in response to student feedback – refocussing the curriculum with a global, contemporary outlook, and sharing good pedagogical practice with Business and Management (**12.2, 12.3.1**), respectively. In response to continuation rates *mbb* for FT **Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmacy**, in 2022 the course team introduced a monthly Student Support Management Group meeting, identifying students at risk of non-continuation, putting in place appropriate academic and/or pastoral support.
- 10.6 Continuation of 'non-UK domicile' students** is *mbb*, largely driven by ARUL Business and Management students. During the TEF period, the student body at ARUL was composed of 64% EU

nationals, including 35% with Romanian nationality⁷⁰. Uncertainty surrounding Brexit, plus the burden of processes to achieve settled status, affected continuation. Some EU students experienced isolation during the pandemic, electing to return to their home countries; others were affected by a lack of paid work in the London hospitality industry to support themselves. In addition to the academic and pastoral support provided (6; 9), ARUL students benefit from an further hardship fund, a commuting bursary scheme (£500 p.a., per student), and the ARUL Peer Mentoring scheme (9.1.1).

- 10.7 Continuation of FT students **eligible for free school meals** is *mbb*. We have invested increasing sums each year in hardship funding each year (9.2), to help remove financial barriers to continuation. Over the TEF period, the percentage of pupils, nationally, eligible for free school meals has also risen – to 22.5% in 2021/22⁷¹; we will invest further, to ensure that our support keeps track with need.
- 10.8 Continuation of FT students in **ABCS Quintile 4 or 5** is *mbb*. We have not yet been able to recreate the ABCS measure internally, but have considered continuation by other participation/demographic measures: we observe no significant differences between POLAR4, IDACI or IMD quintiles, but do observe a modest difference by TUNDRA quintile – the average TEF period continuation rate of students in quintiles 1-2, and 4-5, are 87.4% and 84.5%, respectively⁷². As TUNDRA focusses specifically on the participation rate of state-funded mainstream school pupils in England, we will work to understand what more we can do to support continuation from higher-participation areas.

11 We embed highly effective approaches to ensure student progression within our curricula, supported by a rich and tailored co-curricular employability offer.

- 11.1 Our **Employability Strategy** (2018-23)⁷³ prioritises enhancing the development of our students' *'lifelong employability skills'* via the ARU Graduate Capitals (2.3) to secure positive graduate outcomes. We systematically implement the Strategy and monitor progress through our multi-level governance and oversight structure, encompassing university-, Faculty- and School-level groups.
- 11.2 We **embed employability into the curriculum and assessment**, co-designing curricula that feature Live Briefs, Ruskin Modules, and practice-based Major Projects with employers, and securing high levels of PSRB accreditation (2.4; 3.4-3.7). 151 of our course titles (50%) involve compulsory placements, and 129 (43%) offer a Sandwich Year placement. Over the TEF period, 4046 students completed an undergraduate course with compulsory placement elements, and enrolments on Sandwich courses have grown from 241 in 2018/19 to 871 in 2021/22. The overall MES satisfaction for placement modules was 76% (477 responses; 2892 responses invited).
- 11.3 Our **Employability Service** works closely with course teams to deliver embedded in-curriculum interventions, including an employability timeline mapped across the student journey from application to post-graduation⁷⁴ and sessions on career planning/postgraduate study, work experience/placement, enterprise and entrepreneurship, and Live Brief preparation. Activities are tailored by course: students are supported to use compulsory placements to identify suitable career pathways. Courses without compulsory placements use in-curriculum activities (e.g., alumni career case studies) illustrating opportunities and support searching and applying for roles. We deliver over 300 in-curriculum sessions each year to approximately 7,500 undergraduate students, of all Levels⁷⁵.
- 11.4 Our online Career Centre⁷⁶ provides effective complementary **co-curricular support**⁷⁵:

	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Career Centre unique users	4,192	8,022	9,107	10,565
Career Centre activities logged	46,003	124,464	169,186	175,356

- 11.5 We offer in-person and online career fairs and employer-led events; our Futures Festival, introduced in 2021/22, provided 2 weeks of events and workshops for all year groups; 72 sessions attracted over 1300 students. Employability and Careers Advisers also provide one-to-one support⁷⁵:

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Unique students	6,011	6,637	8,044
Total student-adviser interactions	13,253	14,783	15,707

- 11.6 Career Pulse** enables students to identify their own development needs. Since 2019/20, over 9,000 students have taken or re-taken their 'Pulse'; engaging with their personalised development plan increased students' confidence score by 1.1 on average (from 5.5 to 6.6 out of 10)⁷⁷.
- 11.7** Recognising that our **graduates** may require support beyond graduation, we offer lifetime access to our online Alumni Career Centre. Our Graduate Development Advisers, introduced in July 2021, have supported 369 final year students/graduates so far, with 10% notifying us that they have secured employment as a direct result of our help⁷⁸.
- 12 Subject-level activities to enable excellent progression are tailored to students and courses.**
- 12.1** FHMS deliver a wide range of Interprofessional Learning (IPL) opportunities; in-curriculum IPL conferences, and other activities attracted about 980 students in 2021/22, with exemplary feedback: *"A great range of topics and all delivered with excellence,"* and *"I learned so many things and I have more confidence and passion about being a future nurse"*. 94% of attendees said that they now better understand IPL. Co-curricular opportunities, such as monthly Interdisciplinary Clinical and Research Ethics Cafés are held online at lunchtime, so students can join, including from placement areas. Sessions typically attract 40-50 students, with MS Teams chat promoting inclusivity. Extra-curricular opportunities include monthly evening seminars, open to students, the public, and qualified professionals; presenters include The Samaritans (169 attendees), and author (112 attendees). Certificates of attendance issued to professionals from local NHS Trusts and local Authorities encourage students to start building their portfolio of evidence of continuous learning.
- 12.2** In FBL, the innovative ARU Certificate for Professional Development, running since 2019/20 and being piloted for wider roll-out, offers co-curricular modules, providing students with opportunities for increasing breadth of knowledge, building technical skills, and accessing wider networks. *"You gain a lot of experience, connections and knowledge that will complement your academic course at ARU... excellent content for your CV and job applications once you graduate"* (typical student participant). 62 students completed modules in 2019/20, rising to 560 in 2021/22. Module completion confers 15 co-credits on degree transcripts, supporting students' employability narratives.
- 12.3** At **subject level**, our FT **Allied Health** and **Veterinary Sciences** *mab* outcomes reflect well-supported routes into students' chosen vocations: e.g., graduating from BOptom Optometry allows direct entry onto the General Optical Council's register. PT students in **Business and Management** and **Engineering** – already embedded within their industries – are motivated to progress positively on graduation. *Mab* outcomes in FT **Sport and Exercise Sciences (4.7.1)** and PT **Health and Social Care** reflect deep embedding of employability into the curriculum. BSc (Hons) Public Health has Live Briefs at all Levels – including a Level 4 interprofessional Live Brief with Medical Science students (100% overall satisfaction, 2021/22 MES), and a Public Health placement at Level 6. Social Work students have 100% employability (2020/21 GOS), with 96% recording their work as meaningful and high-skilled. The ARU Graduate Capitals **(2.3)** are embedded from the point of admission; interview days are held in partnership with Local Authority service users, and practising social workers are part of 'Readiness for Practice' modules and assessment. Students welcome such involvement: *"There have been various speakers [on] the different aspects of social work. This has enabled me to become a reflective practitioner"* (NSS 2020). Employers also appreciate this close relationship: *"thank you for [the] collaborative and partnership working we have managed to develop over recent years... I look forward to continuing to develop innovative approaches to both qualifying and CPD opportunities in the region"* (Essex Social Care Academy, 2020).
- 12.3.1** Progression is *mbb* in FT **Business and Management**, delivered at our Cambridge and Chelmsford campuses, UCWA, and ARUL. ARUL serves a majority of students, where this provision is also the main driver of *mbb* results for FT 'Registered-only' provision, FT students identifying as 'Ethnicity – Other', and FT 'first degree with integrated foundation year'. Recognising the improvement needed, we revalidated our courses in 2019; impact will show in our next TEF dataset. Active learning, comprising online screencasts, tutor- and student-led workshops, and assessment practice

sessions⁷⁹, replaced the traditional 'big lecture' teaching model; average MES module scores increased by 10% year-on-year⁸⁰. Fostering learner autonomy and practical knowledge application, students benefit from Live Briefs at all Levels. 87% reported better understanding of employer expectations; and 87% agreed they gained authentic experience of using professional skills (2021/22 survey, 47 responses). Qualitative comments include, "*The live brief serves as a great opportunity to build employability skills and... presentation skills*". In 2020/21, approximately 820 students engaged in 19 in-curriculum Employability Service sessions, and 2,245 students – 90% of those at Level 5 – completed an assessment requiring them to present and discuss their career development plan in an interview. Students comment that, "*This is the best experience ever. My study is related to my work and it's helping me a lot in my personal and professional development.*"

12.3.2 Similarly, FT provision in **Computing** has been refreshed recently, informing future progression data. "*Employability skills are embedded throughout the programme*" (EE, 2022): Computer Science courses have dual PSRB accreditation (BSC and IET), with student membership offered, and compulsory practical components to Major Projects; students build an interview-ready portfolio of project work, using industry-standard laboratories; the internationally recognised Cisco CCNA curriculum is embedded in Computer Science/Networks and Cyber Security courses; and Computer Gaming students benefit from multiple Live, industry-standard briefs. A recent graduate stated, "*The vocational approach... has given me a definite advantage in the job market, making the task of securing a job as a Software Engineer relatively straightforward*". Co-curricular events include PSRB-sponsored 'Dragon's Dens', and gaming hackathons with professional developers. Companies attend careers fairs and final-year student poster displays at which, students were offered jobs: "*The graduate demonstrated very good communication skills, internal drive and came equipped with the necessary technical skills to [undertake] the role of Graduate Software Developer upon their arrival*" (Employer). Across the TEF period, sandwich year uptake grew (9→27 per year), with these graduates achieving 90% positive destinations.

12.3.3 To improve *mbb* progression in FT **Biosciences**, we introduced compulsory zero-credit CPD modules at Levels 4/5 in 2019, an innovation adopted from Sport and Exercise Sciences, following its clear positive impact. Students assemble portfolios of evidence of co-/extra-curricular activities, engaging with our Employability Service (**11.4-11.6**), and build confidence for future employment. Following consultation with SIGs (**3.5**), employment-relevant skills further enrich the curriculum.

12.3.4 In **Media, Journalism and Communications**, where FT progression is *mbb*, innovations include collaborative relationships with the Cambridge Film Festival where students, since 2021/22, take-up voluntary and paid employment. From our yearly trip to the Cannes Film Festival, students' reviews are published in the Arts Picture House's 'Take One' online magazine. In **Politics**, *mbb* progression has been addressed by a new BA (Hons) Politics and International Relations replacing previous curricula; it includes work placements and embedded communication/project-management skills.

12.3.5 Our arts-based BSc (Hons) Audio and Music Technology course comprises FT **Materials and Technology**. Alumni case studies indicate that graduate outcomes, currently *mbb*, typically take 5-10 years to score as 'positive' as it takes time to gain traction within the industry, sometimes involving significant amounts of voluntary work. Once established, graduates reach a high percentage of employment in their specialism, sustained by entrepreneurial application of their acquired skillset, leading to a lifelong vocation. Their high-profile eventual positions, such as international careers in live sound engineering, and audio-visual consultancy, offset initial slow career development⁸¹.

13 Our approach to defining and evidencing educational gains is consonant with our mission of 'transforming lives through innovative, inclusive and entrepreneurial education and research', in the context of our diverse student body.

13.1 The overarching aim of our Education Strategy² provides a good definition of what 'educational gains' means to us: '*ARU's outstanding and transformative education will support students at all levels to achieve their full potential and create a positive impact on their lives and work*'.

- 13.2** 2022 LEO data indicate our success: we are **ranked 2nd of all providers in England** for median earnings relative to entry qualifications by tariff points, for FT first-degree students one year after graduation. We effectively prepare students for their chosen professions, via our sector-informed courses (**3; 11**): for example, high-ranking median earnings after one year are seen in Architecture, Building and Planning (**1st of 53**), Allied Health (**6th of 84**), Engineering (**8th of 94**) and Health and Social Care (**13th of 80**)⁸².
- 13.3** As a widening participation provider, a key part of the educational gain we offer is to **broaden access to, and encourage participation in, Higher Education in the first place**, adapting our offer to meet the needs of the students we attract and serve, ensuring success regardless of background. During the TEF period, we consistently ranked in the **top 25** of the Times/Sunday Times **Social Inclusion** league table – 9th in 2021. Our range of educational products and our admissions approach promote inclusivity, offering educational gains to a wide variety of entrants, including people who didn't think university or a particular subject was 'for them'. For example, based on their successful 2019 Athena SWAN Bronze Award⁸³, FSE reviewed all applicant-facing and Open Day materials, utilising in-house Consumer Psychology expertise to ensure equal appeal to all genders – practice that has been extended across our subjects. Impact (2019-2020) includes an 8% change in the gender gap in FSE enrolments (43.0%→51% female), with female participation in Computing (10.2%→15.3%) and Engineering (6.7%→14.1%) around subject benchmarks (15.6%/16%)⁸⁴. Our new Peterborough campus further increases the inclusivity of our offer, toward TEF 2027.
- 13.3.1** Our **Outreach** teams work with over 100 schools and colleges, engaging around 5000 pupils with HE opportunities. Programmes align with the OfS's attainment-raising requirements: we offer 6-12-week in-school programmes in English and Maths for Year 6 pupils; half-day on-campus GCSE Options events for Year 9 pupils; and 5-day residential events for Year 12 offer-holders, prioritising work with schools and colleges whose percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is 22% or above. Our work with IntoUniversity Clacton-on-Sea, since 2017, exemplifies our positive impact: in 2021/22 we supported 1510 pupils, of whom those in Year 12 had a 55% HE progression rate, compared with the local rate of 17%⁸⁵.
- 13.3.2** We accept a **wide range of entry qualifications**, including access courses, international qualifications, and prior experiential learning (**10.1**). As a result of our inclusive approach, existing methodologies for quantifying educational gains are not a good fit for our student body. Although publicly available data shows positive impact – during the TEF period, 16 of our 44 GLT subjects scored 8 or above out of 10 for 'value added' – educational gains of around a third of our students are not reliably reflected by existing 'value added' algorithms; throughout the TEF period, 21.6% of our entrants achieved their place via 'Level 3 qualifications of which none are subject to UCAS Tariff', and 9.4% were 'mature students admitted on the basis of their previous experience' (HESA data)⁸⁶.
- 13.4** We **design our courses to enable participation** for those who may not otherwise have the opportunity for HE study. 158 (53%) of our courses have an **extended degree version**, providing a route to a degree for those who do not have the requisite qualifications for Level 4 entry. ARUC enables *mab* continuation and completion for Level 3 students (**10.3**): *"My foundation year... helped me acknowledge different aspects of my degree course and what to expect... I could not ask any better institution to guide me... I thank ARU College for making my dream come true!"* (ARUC student)⁸⁷. We provide 127 PT, (**10.1**), 48 distance-learning, and 28 blended-learning courses, enabling students unable frequently to attend a university campus to gain educationally; during the TEF period, we made awards to 444 blended- and 1842 distance-learning students, with classification profiles in line with our total awards. Our **CPD/short-course provision** delivers targeted and specific educational gain to our wider employer community (**3.7**).
- 13.5** We identify and **remove barriers** to enable all students to **realise their full potential**. Our inclusive approach – informed by our Athena SWAN (2015, 2018) and Race Equality Charter (submitted) Bronze Award action plans – places Universal Design at the heart of our education (**2.2, 8.1**), and is coupled with our principle of embedding key outcome-enhancing interventions in compulsory

aspects of students' courses, to ensure educational gains for *all* students (2.2). Our Student Success Steering Group, chaired by the DVC (Education), focusses on all aspects of policy that promote inclusivity, reviewing data and proactively developing interventions to address barriers to success. The Governors' Student Matters Subcommittee comprises individuals of high educational standing, taking a strong and distinctive student-centred approach when reviewing our policies and systems.

- 13.5.1** We support **care-leaver/-experienced students** with a bespoke induction that links students to peers from similar backgrounds, and annual bursaries – serving 258 students in 2020/21-2021/22.
- 13.5.2** We see clear impact of our work to address student outcomes gaps between different demographic groups. Across all student outcomes measures, female/male, IMD and geography of employment quintiles, and disability reported/not reported categories **perform similarly with respect to benchmarks**. ABCS, age on entry, domicile, eligibility for free school meals, and ethnicity categories have only occasional differences in benchmarked student outcomes between groups, discussed above. Impact is also apparent in the small gaps between percentages of 1st/2.1 classifications awarded (2016/17-2020/21). **Very small gaps** are observed between POLAR4 quintiles (1-2, and 3-5, were within 0.5 percentage points), age groups (students aged under 21 on entry were within 1.2 percentage points, variously, with those aged 21-25, 26-30 and 31-40), and presence/absence of a declared disability, including all sub-categories of disability listed (students with were within 1 percentage point of those without)⁸⁸. The latter **exceptional outcomes** are the result of systematic measures: our Universal Design for Learning approach (2.2), and Accessible and Inclusive Learning Materials Policy (8.1)⁸⁹ remove the necessity for many additional adjustments for disabled students. Recognising that obtaining supporting documents can create additional financial burden, we also offer adjustments to students without prior need for diagnosis or documentation, including: reasonable adjustments to taught classes; information sharing with ARU services to provide additional support; signposting to Study Skills Plus; and basic assistive technology training.
- 13.5.3** The Curriculum Change workstream of our **Race Equality Strategy**⁹⁰ further embeds our good assessment practice (4.1)⁸⁹, and enables maximal educational gains for all via integrating voices that reflect students' identities positively, encouraging teaching that explores diverse cultural, ethnic and international perspectives. Each Faculty benefits from a 0.5 FTE academic Race Equality Lead, and four paid Race Equality Student Advocates. We hold staff CPD events on diversification/inclusive practice, embed these topics within our PGCert Learning and Teaching in HE courses, and we are developing Collaborative Online International Learning opportunities for all our students.
- 13.6** We design our systems and processes to **remove structural barriers to inclusivity**. Our policies for extensions and Exceptional Circumstance requests have student wellbeing at their heart: during the TEF period, they were refined temporarily, in consideration of pandemic circumstances (8.5), and permanently, to increase accessibility to groups of students who were previously less likely to use them (e.g., removing the need for students with long-term medical conditions to provide medical evidence on multiple occasions). Our 'blocked' **timetabling** for FT courses – with contact across two-three days per week – recognises that many of our students need to work PT to support themselves financially and/or have caring responsibilities, and thus enables proactive study/life planning. From 2019 to 2022, agreement with the NSS question, '*the timetable works efficiently for me*' has improved (79%→81%); **we ranked 5th out of 96 mainstream universities** in 2022.
- 13.7** Our **co-/extra-curricular offer** to support students' academic and personal development, and employability, is rich, varied and impactful. It offers additional learning gain for students particularly interested in launching their own business – our GOS self-employment rates are increasing (4.7%→5.1%, 2018-2020), and above sector averages (2018, 4.3%; 2020, 4.7%) – working with the public sector, and gaining skills while undertaking paid employment or voluntary roles with ARU.
- 13.7.1** Launched in 2019/20, our Mentoring at ARU programme, while open to all students, specifically **provides mentorship to under-represented groups**: students identifying as minority ethnic; students from POLAR quintiles 1 and 2; and care-leaver/-experienced students. We seek to increase students' Social Capital, increasing their ability to gain graduate-level employment. A total of 390

students applied across the 3 cycles delivered so far (84% of whom were from target groups), with 276 successfully matched to a mentor. Impact is exemplified by student feedback: *"I have gained an amazing mentor... to support me in future applications... This program has clarified the next steps I should take after university and allowed me to identify... the skills required to get to this next step."* (2021/22). All participants take their Career Pulse before and after the programme (**11.6**), which in 2021/22 demonstrated an average overall score increase of 2 points (from 5.5 to 7.5/10)⁹¹.

13.7.2 Our annual Big Pitch competition supports students to win a prize of £10,000 **to invest in their own business**, receiving ongoing support and workspace in our Arise Innovation Hubs. Students enter (215 across the TEF period) with a video elevator pitch and are supported to develop their entrepreneurialism and financial planning skills. Six finalists compete before an expert panel. Winners' success stories include:

and continuing to grow; , an IT business and web services company founded in
graduate, now serving corporate clients; and , designing a retrofittable
safety device monitoring alertness in drivers, which also won funding from ⁹².

We also encourage students to enter external competitions to increase educational stretch and improve their graduate profiles; recent successes include the Architects' Journal Special Award for Innovation and Sustainability (), and National Social Work Student of the Year ().

13.7.3 Students at the Heart of Knowledge Exchange, an innovative, expanding project initially funded by OfS-/Research England that we lead with Essex and Cambridgeshire County Councils, engages students in developing innovative solutions to real-life challenges set by public sector partners; in 2021/22, 60 complex social challenges tackled by 381 students in 37 consultant teams, led to 77 knowledge exchange workshops, with a total of 1159 student participants⁹³. Impact is exemplified by a challenge set by Essex Police/Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to improve safety for women and girls: five funded student internships culminated in the 'In Her Shoes' educational package, now implemented in Essex secondary schools. *"Experience from SHoKE is worth its weight in gold. [It]...strengthened my ability to work collaboratively in a multidisciplinary team, built on my leadership, consulting skills, self-confidence, and stakeholder management skills"* (student participant). Open to all students, SHoKE particularly celebrates capturing the voices of under-represented groups; external partners value our teams' diversity: in 2021/22, 51% of participants identified as minority ethnic; 39% as having caring responsibilities, and 28% as having a disability.

13.7.4 Our **International Community Experience** programme enables transferable civic engagement skills development; we support 10-20 students each year to volunteer overseas. For example, our **Sustainable Sainji** (India) project enables students to apply their subject knowledge to real-world sustainability challenges: our Nursing, Medical and Paramedic students led first aid roadshows in villages; Architecture and Engineering students helped with building/water supply projects; and others worked with teachers to emphasise comprehension over rote learning. *"It's allowed me to put into practice the theory I have learnt whilst at university"* and *"it's given me the chance to ... see how I can involve a different way of thinking"*, demonstrate the transformative nature of the experience.

13.7.5 ARU Temps, our on-campus recruitment agency, provides students with opportunities to develop key transferrable skills, enhance their CVs and widen their network of local employers while earning money in a way that fits around their studies. In 2019/20-2021/22, 2954 students worked a total of 242,205 hours, earning £2,833,999. Hourly-paid roles within ARU include Student Ambassadors, Laboratory Demonstrators, Research Assistants, Sport Activators, SALTs (**8.1**), Residential Assistants, Digital Marketing Interns, and Administrators; we are within the 37% of HEIs who pay the Real Living Wage rate⁹⁴. Since 2020/21, ARU Temps also offers competitively advertised 8-12-week internships, delivering 117 roles so far, including Software Developer, Project Co-ordinator, and Sport and Exercise Therapy intern⁹⁵. We give the final word to our students:

"I...improved my ability to communicate... I have also developed the skills necessary to deal with community groups professionally"; "I have been able to utilize skills I have been developing over the past few years... I have met and worked with... professionals from all around the globe!"

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