

University of Exeter TEF Submission 2023

1. At the University of Exeter, we are growing our global reputation for combining excellence in education and research and we are pivotal to the educational and industrial development of the South West of England. Partnership with our student community is the hallmark of the University. Our students are active participants in the production and dissemination of knowledge; innovation in education; and, in all strategic decisions and policies. Our pursuit of excellence in education is built on the foundation of our 2017 TEF Gold award; a culture of continuous improvement and data-informed decision-making; and our longstanding commitment to co-creation with our learning community of students and staff. Our values-led response to supporting our students' learning and outcomes, our educators and our community in the face of the pandemic testify to our ethos. This submission will demonstrate consistent provision at the highest level across this TEF period.

'Contentment has grown year-on-year within the student body, according to our analysis of the latest National Student Survey. Exeter has risen 35 places to reach the top 25 for student satisfaction with the undergraduate experience. ...Graduate prospects have soared into the top 20 (19=), up nine places from its performance in 2021.' *Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide* commentary on status as Runner-up University of the Year 2023(i).

2. The University of Exeter is a full-service University based on two campuses in Devon (Streatham and St Luke's) and two in Cornwall (Penryn, shared with Falmouth University, and Truro). Students are served by two students' unions: the Exeter Students' Guild (the Guild) and the Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union (the SU). In 2021/22 we enrolled 30,012 FTE students (22,823 UG; 5,416 PGT; 1,773 PGR) – an increase of 33% over a five-year period.

Our mission

3. The University 2030 Strategy (ii), co-created with our students, staff and alumni, captures our collective mission: 'We will use the power of our education and research to create a sustainable, healthy and socially just future.' This statement affirms our social and economic purpose and an important recurrent theme: the synergy between education and research. The 2030 Strategy also recognises the inherent potential of our students and their contribution to our mission, stating that we will 'challenge and inspire our community of learners from every background to thrive, develop the skills they will need for the future and lead the change the world needs.'

4. In pursuit of our mission, we have adopted a comprehensive definition of excellence to direct policy and practice over the TEF period. This definition is captured in our Education Strategy (2019–25) (iii), co-created with students and staff, in five characteristics of excellence: a) **Success for All our Students** – ours is a culturally rich community in which we welcome learners of potential from every background. We promote inclusivity, wellbeing and accessibility through our curriculum, policies and processes. We continually strive to eliminate gaps in access, award and progression to employment. b) **Valuing Educators** – we are creating an inspiring and cooperative learning community for staff and students, in which education and research are synergistic and equally valued. We develop and reward excellent educators, and we foster evidence-based innovation. c) **Global 21st-Century Education** – we are forging a globally attractive and inclusive curriculum and educational experience. Our approach makes meaningful global opportunities open to all and enables engagement with other perspectives, ideas and challenges. d) **Learning Reimagined** – through data analysis, literature review and rigorous experimentation, we ensure that pedagogic innovation enhances learning. We engage students as active participants in the production of knowledge. e) **Graduates of Distinction** – we prepare students for life beyond graduation through the development of curiosity, creativity, critical thinking and global understanding. Employers and other stakeholders are engaged in the development and delivery of our programmes, embedding perspectives that support students to become agents of change.

Leadership and governance

5. Our governance structures are designed to ensure that direct student voices are heard in decision-making at every level; that we capitalise on academic expertise and the richness of departmental diversity; that there is clarity of accountability and responsibility at every level from University to department, programme and module; and that there is clarity of strategic direction.

6. Our senior leaders nurture student partnership in decision-making and strategic direction.

7. Full-time Elected Officers represent the student community on Council and both the principal academic governance bodies, the Senate and **Education Board** and the key student-facing executive governance group, the **Education and Student Experience Executive Committee** which meets monthly.

The strength of our partnership with our students is evidenced in the TEF indicator for Student Voice.

8. Similarly, academic role-holders and elected members represent their colleagues and bring departmental perspectives and expertise to the key governance groups.

Education leaders from departments and Faculties comprise the majority of the Education Board,

9. Direct dialogue between leaders in departments and DVC-ESE and other University role-holders is enabled through two further mechanisms. First, '**Engage**' meetings are held monthly during term time

These enable issues and challenges experienced in day-to-day delivery to be raised, and provide a forum for sharing priorities, good practice and policy developments. Second, **Teaching Excellence Monitoring** (TEM) meetings (para 17) held annually with each department enable rich dialogue on best practice and effecting enhancement. They also foster the creation of a community of practice among all those leading education from departments through Faculty and University.

10. During the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years the University has developed and implemented a change in structure to align more closely to the 2030 Strategy. This has seen the creation of larger and stronger departments located in three Faculties

that promote interdisciplinary solutions to the challenges of environmental sustainability; health and wellbeing; and social justice. In these years of transition to new structures and recovery from COVID-19, we have introduced the **Student Experience Gold Group** (para 18) to increase agility in resource allocation to pressure points and to support pivotal departments to address improvement in student experience during the transition.

11. Strong evidence-based decision-making in all of our governance groups is enabled by our

longstanding and comprehensive data-driven approach to the strategic management of education. The pervasive institutional focus on the use of evidence to drive improvement is also reflected in the student submission

Through our Management Information (MI) Hub, live data are available to education leaders on: module engagement; assessment submission and return; career registration and planning; and student numbers and withdrawals. The MI Hub also provides access to trend data on the NSS and PTES; Graduate Outcomes and Longitudinal Educational Outcomes LEO; degree classifications; pulse surveys; and performance against Access and Participation Plan targets. Tools enable interrogation of the data at aggregation levels from module, through department, to Faculty and University; and by gender, ethnicity, age, domicile and social dis/advantage. In addition to underpinning the TEMs (para 17), these data are pivotal to the work of Success for All working groups (paras 62, 86-87, 92) and the Degree Outcomes Steering Group (para 88) that are crucial to our progress in driving down awarding gaps (para 96).

Learning through the COVID-19 pandemic

12. We are proud of how we instantiated our characteristics of excellence, especially our Success for All our Students and Valuing Educators in the way we handled the COVID-19 pandemic, the single greatest challenge faced by all UK universities over the TEF period. We placed our students, staff and community first and ensured that our pedagogy fit the changed circumstances (paras 25-28). We secured £9.7M funding from Council for **Project Enhance** (para 74) to make investments in digitally enhanced teaching and learning that have great enduring value beyond the pandemic.

We supported our students and led the sector in our pioneering **No Detriment Policy** (para 27),

(iv). We took every opportunity to offer in-person teaching on campus and in the field (para 42) and, acknowledging the value and importance that our students place on their on-campus experience, we made a full return to face-to-face delivery at the start of 2021/22 (ahead of many universities). We have used the experience of the pandemic and the investments made to enhance learning and teaching to create capability and resources that support exceptional experience and outcomes for our students (v).

Our submission structure

13. Our mission, values and clear strategic intent drive our pursuit of outstanding education and outcomes for all our students. The remainder of the submission is structured around the features of excellence in relation to academic experience and student outcomes. It describes both our strategic governance, ensuring quality of experience and outcomes for all, and examples of the depth of local initiatives that flourish within an enabling educational culture.

SECTION 1. Academic experience and assessment

14. Our research-rich, employment-aligned programmes are designed to ensure that our students engage with their learning from week one to graduation; that they are stretched through a varied diet of assessments that enable them to demonstrate their learning and track development of the skills and knowledge that prepare them for post-graduation life in employment or further study. We pursue continuous evidence-based improvement and foster a culture of partnership in innovation and enhancement. The efficacy of the programmes is evidenced in student outcomes, including continuation and completion rates above 95% and progression above 78%; and their quality is independently attested by external examiners, and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (para 50). As the student submission evidences, our students place great value on their exceptional campus experience and co- and extra-curricular opportunities. Constrained access to these in the pandemic was emphasised in the pulse surveys undertaken in lockdowns and reflected strongly in the NSS. Recovery in our 2022 NSS performance (14th nationally and 1st in the Russell Group for overall satisfaction) demonstrates

the enduring quality of student experience and reflects the improvements realised in Assessment and Feedback Academic Support and Learning Community

SE1 The provider has embedded outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting its students' learning, progression and attainment

Embedding excellence, in teaching, feedback and assessment

15. The University fosters a culture of collective responsibility, collaboration, and practice-sharing designed to amplify innovation and mainstream excellence in teaching, feedback and assessment. We operate to rigorous quality assurance and enhancement practices, underpinned by our Teaching Quality Assurance Manual and we ensure that these are flexibly interwoven with an agenda of innovation.

Annual Teaching Excellence Action Planning (TEAP) and Monitoring (TEM) process

16. Since 2018/19, every department captures enhancement actions and accountabilities in their TEAP prior to the start of the academic year. Actions are informed by the NSS, student feedback, attainment/awarding data and employability outcomes. TEAPs are living documents and address institutional priorities for common action and local challenges. This has enabled pan-institutional focus and best-practice sharing around Experience and Awarding Gaps; Assessment and Feedback; Academic Support; and Learning Community.

17. TEM meetings enable detailed synoptic assessment of the whole institution that complements College-level monitoring. Chaired by DVC-ESE, held in every department, and comprising academic, professional service and student leaders, TEMs emphasise shared responsibility for delivering enhancements. Progress in implementing TEAPs is reviewed; best practice is celebrated and shared; priorities for institutional investment are identified. The insights gained were fundamental to ensuring that the design of Project Enhance (para 74), our ambitious pandemic response, accounted for the diversity of programmes. Furthermore, TEMs highlighted the need for major investment in our assessment platform that was secured in 2021/22 (para 30); and the need for a holistic evaluation and plan for student support that is being undertaken in 2022/23.

Student Experience Gold: a priority intervention and support process

18. The University's Student Experience Gold Group, established in 2021/22 ensures and supports pan-University focus on student experience and outcomes as we undertake our University restructure, emerge from the pandemic and address its impacts on our incoming and continuing students. The Group has access to strategic funding and professional services support to meet needs identified by staff and student leaders. In departments with large cohorts associated with Centre- and Teacher-assessed grades, this included the creation of Student Experience Officer roles, to amplify efforts to foster learning community, and appointments to address staff–student ratio challenges, to ensure improvements in timely feedback identified as a priority through SSLCs (reflected in the student submission).

In 2021/22, all departments in receipt of targeted support improved their weighted-mean NSS scores: Law (4%); Politics (5%); Economics (9%); Management (10%); and Psychology (1%). These improvements reflected increases of 10%, 10%, 18%, 9% and 3%, respectively in Learning Community and 6%, 4%, 6%, 21% and 7%, respectively in Assessment and Feedback.

Quality assurance of assessment and feedback

20. Module results and student outcomes are reviewed by Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committees (APACs). These are held first at department level (DAPACs). Modules where there is a significant change in the distribution of marks (mean and/or standard deviation) year-to-year are flagged for review and potential action at the DAPAC. Emerging themes from

each DAPAC are then discussed at a College-level APAC meeting, and finally at University level. 21.

Enhancing assessment and feedback

22. Our Education Strategy articulated a goal of 'rebalancing assessment'. Specifically, we have targeted: reducing replication and redundancy in summative assessment; increasing personalisation of assessment; increasing rapid feedback and self-evaluation in formative learning; and increasing competency-based assessment to complement summative assessment. While the pandemic required additional initiatives, this section demonstrates both our innovation and agility.

23. Across the TEF period, our institutional focus realised improvements in the timeliness and quality of feedback. Supported by strategic prioritisation post-pandemic and a longstanding three-week turnaround policy, we have seen an improvement in question 10 (Feedback on my work has been timely) in NSS 2022. The TEAP and Student Experience Gold processes have prompted College and departmental reforms. For example, Humanities introduced College-wide assessment norms in 2020/21 to create greater consistency between programmes, especially across extensive Combined Honours provision in the College. Biosciences introduced feedback norms on quantity and quality of feedback for staff in 2021/22. In NSS 2022 the Biosciences Assessment & Feedback category average increased to 70.2% (+11.2%),

24. Evidence-based enhancement in assessment and feedback is promoted through TEMs (para 17) and has included: a) In Biochemistry, colleagues were concerned by a gap in performance between students Supported by a 2017 Education Incubator grant (paras 47-48), they developed a resource to support learning threshold maths concepts and have since implemented it and demonstrated its efficacy in closing the 'Maths gap'. They have also pioneered a method to create unique exam papers and answer files for students, discouraging collusion in online open book examinations (vii).

b) In Geography, colleagues have led the sector in their use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS)-based story maps in assessment. Academics have undertaken pedagogic research to develop guidance, mitigate challenges and demonstrate enhanced outcomes (ix). Adoption of story map assessments across several Geography modules has been identified by the leading GIS company ESRI as a case-study for sector-wide promotion. c) In Archaeology, enhancements to assessment and feedback strategy have included greater information about performance against marking guidelines in improved feedback forms; reduction in examinations; and diversification of formative and collaborative pieces, including an online exhibition. External examiners praised this as extremely innovative and original best practice. In NSS 2022 the Archaeology Overall Satisfaction score increased to 85.2% (+15.7%) and the Assessment & Feedback category average increased to 75.4% (+6.7%),

Teaching, assessment and feedback in the pandemic

25. To ensure consistently excellent learning, teaching, assessment and feedback during the pandemic – and recognising the unfamiliarity of blended and online learning for much of our academic community – we called on our experts across all career stages to create **Institutional Design Principles for Blended and Online Learning** (x). These were then used by each

department to create agreed departmental norms that reflected their student cohorts.

26. We also recognised the demand that would be placed on academic staff to transition to blended learning, and the challenging graduate and internship market our students would face. Therefore, we created

roles (for recent graduates) and roles (for undergraduates) to work alongside our academic colleagues to support creation of digital learning resources and bring the design principles to life. Through Project Enhance (para 74), we rapidly invested in technology for online and hybrid delivery.

27. Throughout the pandemic we sought to protect student assessment experiences and outcomes. Critically, recognising the fundamental role of summer assessments in the learning journeys of our students and in creating a sense of normality under extraordinary circumstances, we continued with all planned assessments in the 2019/20 academic year. To help students have the confidence to continue their studies and engage with their assessments and to ensure that none were disadvantaged, we rapidly developed and implemented our pioneering **No Detriment Policy**, co-created with Elected Officers (xi). The policy was underpinned by analysis which demonstrated that performance in summer assessments could be predicted with a high degree of certainty from prior performance. QAA acknowledged the value of the policy in its guidance on No Detriment (iv).

28. Similarly, in 2020/21 we offered a full diet of assessment, with over 130,000 online exams delivered. With the passage of time, the pre-COVID-19 body of prior assessments were insufficient for the application of the No Detriment Policy and, therefore, we again worked with Elected Officers and activists to develop a **No Disadvantage Guarantee** that provided appropriate support, while ensuring that the University and its stakeholders could continue to have confidence in our processes. Our analysis of grade distributions in 2019/20 and 2020/21 demonstrated that our policies were particularly effective in protecting underrepresented and disadvantaged students and, importantly, that they did not generate grade inflation (xii).

Assessment Reimagined

29. Coming out of the pandemic, we recommitted ourselves to the agenda of reform outlined in our Education Strategy (para 22). Our Assessment Reimagined programme is a strategic initiative to transform assessment and feedback experiences for students and staff. It is centred on student feedback, reflected in the student submission, and builds on improvements made in response to that feedback that are evidenced in NSS 2022 (para 19). The programme is guided by principles of inclusion, authenticity, robustness and efficiency

30. A key strand of this work, the **Examination and Assessment Platform Project**, represents a £1.5M investment in new tools embedded within our VLE to improve the quality and timeliness of feedback and to enhance student and staff experience of assessment. The project is piloting the platform during 2022/23, with a view to rolling out to the whole University in 2023/24.

Generating, sharing and recognising excellent practice

31. Excellent practice is initiated, nurtured and shared in deliberative and coordinated ways to amplify innovation and mainstream excellence in teaching, feedback and assessment. This is achieved continuously through **DESE Engage** and TEMs (paras 9,17) and also through: a) large-scale funded projects on institutional priorities; these include **Assessment Reimagined** (2021), the **Transformative Education Framework** (2021) (xiii), and the **Success for All Strategy** (2019) (xiv) (paras 29-30, 62); b) the annual EduExe conferences; open to all staff and students, comprising panels, workshops and keynotes by international experts; c) publication of cases studies; identified in TEMs, externally and internally through both our Excellence in Education

blog (xv) and our dedicated space on **Times Higher Education Campus**; d) the annual Teaching Awards; which for over a decade have highlighted and celebrated outstanding performance and practice; e) the staging of regular education-focused events, such as weekly webinars in the Centre for Innovation in Business Education.

SE2 Course content and delivery inspire the provider's students to actively engage and commit to their learning and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential

Course content and delivery

Degree apprenticeships

32. One key feature of the TEF period is our strategic commitment to degree apprenticeships. We address regional and national skills in areas of institutional expertise; create flexible opportunities for study; and work with employers to support apprentices to become highly skilled graduates. Furthermore, we derive co-benefits for all of our students through better understanding of employer priorities and through developing skill and innovation in hybrid and online learning.

33. Since the launch of our first programme in 2016/17, we have expanded our portfolio to 14 programmes, with a further 3 set for launch in 2023/24. By the end of the 2021/22 academic year we had 2,475 apprentices . Our

Centre for Degree Apprenticeships provides a seamless service across Faculties for students undertaking apprenticeship programmes.

34. In 2022, an **Ofsted inspection** of our degree apprenticeship programmes gave a 'Good' award, indicating that we are on the trajectory for 'Outstanding' as the provision matures and concluding: 'The standard of work which apprentices produce is high, and apprentices achieve well, with a significant number achieving high grades. Lecturers work with academic mentors to develop a coherent approach to skills development over time, which results in apprentices developing significant new skills and knowledge in line with their curricular goals.

Our TEF indicators capture

our outstanding performance significantly above benchmark for all Experience indicators; the gap between benchmark and indicator for Continuation is due to erroneous reporting of successful completers on level 4 programmes as non-continuers on level 6.

Curriculum enhancement

35. Our 2030 Strategy recognises the strength of an interdisciplinary culture founded on disciplinary excellence. This longstanding ethos of the University is reflected in our continued evolution of interdisciplinary programmes and opportunities alongside a full portfolio of provision enabling subject specialisation. Our Education Strategy articulates a model in which curricula are constantly under review to ensure they are current, relevant and employer focused. These have been key foci over the TEF period.

36. One of the most important strategic developments has been our growth of **interdisciplinary opportunities** for students on non-regulated programmes beyond our established model of 'enhanced modularity' (30 credits outside core discipline each year) by creating an innovative suite of 45 credit 'minor' pathways, focusing on skills. Students can graduate with 'proficiency in': Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Modern Foreign Languages or Social Data Science.

Pathways for Data

Science and Artificial Intelligence and Sustainability are imminent. These opportunities complement the expansion of our portfolio of **interdisciplinary programmes** beyond our already successful Combined Honours and Flexible Combined Honours portfolio. Key offerings now include Liberal Arts; Natural Sciences; Politics, Philosophy and Economics; and Medical Sciences.

37. We have further increased the integration of **employability** into the curriculum. In 2018/19,

we centralised support for work placements following rising student demand, to facilitate a collaborative and consistent approach to delivery and marketing. In 2021/22, 1,612 students secured a UK-based short-term placement, an increase of 77.5% from 2018/19. Placements outside the UK increased to 310 in 2021/22, up 68% from 2019/20. In addition, we have rolled out the option to take a supported year in the workplace and earn a degree '**with Industrial Experience**'. In 2022/23 we have 108 programmes offering industrial or professional experience placement years, up from 34 in 2018/19. Since 2018, 1,355 students have graduated from such programmes and 1,605 students are currently registered on them.

38. In line with our vision for a **Global 21st-Century Education**, we are developing provision that addresses the challenges facing humanity. Recent projects focused on embedding the UN's **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) in the curriculum have drawn on our outstanding research on the environment, climate change and social justice (para 107). We are regularly placed at or near the top of the UK leader board for 'number of students reached' and 'number of teaching staff pledged to participate' in the 'teach-in' of the SDGs. In 2021 over 9,000 students experienced content relating to the SDGs within the 'teach-in' week. (xvii)

39. In accordance with our institutional commitment to **racial and social justice**, we have worked across the TEF period to enhance inclusion and representation in our curricula and, where appropriate, to decolonise them. During the TEF period we have created the role of Associate Dean for Taught Students (Racial Equality and Inclusion) to work directly with student unions and student groups. They are leading the development of the **Transformative Education Framework** (paras 112-113) to support departments to embed inclusive education, racial and social justice, and sustainability into the curriculum (xiii). The Framework capitalises on resources already created, including: a) a decolonisation toolkit, which assembled case-studies of excellent practice to inspire the creation of decolonised teaching materials. Colleagues have presented this work at the HEIR Conference (2021) and at a national Decolonising Academic Development working group. b) Funded by the Centre for Social Mobility, the 'Mapping Decolonisation' project identified where decolonial teaching was embedded and where it could take place. It has contributed both to the modification of modules (e.g. Global Lives: Decolonial Geographies) and the design of new modules (e.g. Anthropocene, Geographies of Migration).

It is available to students across the University and involves guest lectures organised in collaboration with the University's Decolonising Network. d) Between 2020 and 2022, the History Department reviewed its entire Stage 1 core curriculum and introduced a range of changes designed to prompt students to reassess the relationship between British and global histories. e) In Medical Science, the Decolonising Medicine module investigates the extent to which science and medicine from the Global North have been founded on colonialism, discrimination and injustice.

Redesigning major subjects

40. Two major projects of programme redesign were completed in the TEF period to address prior weakness in student experience evident in subject-level TEF metrics. Our Economics programme was redesigned based on the open-access CORE curriculum, which is acknowledged for its inclusive and student-centred approach, focusing on solving society's greatest problems and praised by *The Economist* (xviii).

The new Engineering Programme (Eng2020) uses Gold Standard Project-Based Learning with a focus on global engineering challenges and entrepreneurship. Student feedback, not yet featuring

in TEF metrics, highlights the opportunity to work with cutting-edge industry (e.g. undertaking a Design Sprint with Spaceport Cornwall) to develop technical and entrepreneurial skills.

Flexible delivery: virtual field trips, exchanges and work placements

41. Fieldwork comprises a substantial component of programmes in Biosciences, Geography, Environmental Sciences, Geology, Mining and Archaeology. In addition to providing essential skills for students, through social media posting in 'Fieldtrip Fortnight', they fulfil an important public educational and attention-raising role with regard to the environment and climate emergency.

42. During the pandemic, we committed to offer physical fieldwork wherever possible, working closely with county Public Health organisations to enable this. Where not possible, we enabled students to meet the learning outcomes of field trips, exchanges and work placements through the design of virtual experiences that will enhance future practice. a) The History module, Post-Colonial History in South Asia, involved a virtual exchange with Lahore University enriching the experience of students from both universities and deepening contact between the cohorts. b) The Camborne School of Mines created a virtual mine experience enabling more accessible and frequent interaction with the mine environment, enhancing student learning and skills acquisition of direct relevance to future employment. c) Medical students usually develop cultural competency skills in a different medical context on a field trip to Colombia. This has been virtualised, employing the Collaborative Online International Learning framework to ensure the key skills are developed.

SE3 The provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarly, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to an outstanding academic experience for its students

Our research–teaching ecosystem

43. The synergy between education and research infuses every aspect of our University and the quality of the research that inspires all of our teaching and learning is outstanding. The **Research Excellence Framework 2021** found 99% of our research to be of International Quality and 94% to have Internationally excellent impact (xix). It is the normal experience of Exeter students to be taught by academics working in a research-intensive environment and contributing to advancing their disciplines and understanding of critical interdisciplinary challenges.

44. During the co-creation of the Education Strategy, our community of staff and students defined the University as an International Learning Community of Staff and Students in a **Research-Education Ecosystem**. We identified seven characteristics of the synergy between research and education: a) the community advances knowledge and scholarship; b) inspirational teaching and learning is informed by staff research; c) the staff–student dynamic in teaching and learning inspires research ideas; d) students and staff undertake research that enhances their own learning; e) students and staff engage in knowledge exchange activities; f) published student research contributes to knowledge; g) graduates are change agents and ambassadors for the knowledge creation undertaken in the University.

45. Across the University, we create opportunities for students to learn through their own research both within and outside the curriculum. Student group and independent research projects benefit from access not only to supervision by active researchers but also access to the facilities and resources that enable the world-class research undertaken by those staff. Paid research internships have been offered across the TEF period in all Colleges,

46. Research opportunities enrich student learning, bring original ideas to research and enable students to develop skills and attributes that boost their employability: a) On the Penryn campus

Law and Business programme, week-long 'hackathons' have been embedded in core modules across all years of study. Students work in teams to research and produce solutions to interdisciplinary problems for real-world industry partners

This work was recognised as sector leading in a peer-reviewed journal article (xx). b) The Arts Council England-funded 'Unlimited Value' research project was embedded in several Business School modules (UG and PGT) between 2016 and 2018.

c) In interdisciplinary STEM, since 2012, Exeter students have participated in the annual iGEM competition. In this worldwide event, students push the boundaries of synthetic biology by tackling issues facing societies around the world, from clearing minefields to removing microplastics from washing machine effluent. The Exeter student teams have experienced considerable success in this competition, winning gold medals in each of the last five years and, in 2022, also winning awards for Best Inclusivity, Best Manufacturing Project and Best Human Practices.

Stimulating innovation in teaching and learning: the Education Incubator

47. The Exeter Education Incubator creates spaces in which academics can develop pedagogic innovations (xxii). The 2017 launch underlined our strategic commitment to pedagogic research and our commitment to valuing and developing our educators, a key strand of our Education Strategy. The Incubator has received University funding of £250k per year and has attracted £128k from city partners. It has supported 95 staff-led projects

and 8 student-led projects.

48. **Incubator projects** among others referenced throughout this submission, include: a) InVEnTA (Interactive Virtual Environments for Teaching and Assessment), developed by Geography academics, uses geospatial and visualisation technology to create and explore immersive free-roaming interactive virtual environments. Used widely at Exeter and made available to other institutions, InVEnTA won the Times Higher Education award for Technological or Digital Innovation of the Year 2020, with judges praising 'its potential to extend the classroom into a virtual world' (xxiii). b) A team from the Business School led a project on 'Understanding international students' academic, wellbeing and sociocultural adaptation', to identify activities that support the development of intercultural competence skills. In 2021/22 the Intercultural Café (32 weekly sessions) and Intercultural Communication workshops reached 728 students. These students reported greater confidence levels in knowledge, understanding and communication with people from other backgrounds, an increased awareness of University services and willingness to reach out for help. c) A project to explore the potential of Lego Serious Play (LSP) in an academic context led to the training of a community of facilitators across our campuses. The project delivered over 100 LSP sessions for 2,500 students, 12 skills sessions attended by over 400 staff and an LSP Toolkit to support staff in delivery. LSP techniques have been embedded in module delivery and learning activities (e.g. induction sessions, tutorials, wellbeing events).

Professional practice and industrial engagement

49. We have strong relationships, internationally, nationally, and regionally with more than 250 partner organisations, including J.P. Morgan, Amazon, BT and IBM. These have been further strengthened through collaboration in degree apprenticeships. Across our taught portfolio, we build

industry partner and employer feedback into the curriculum design and review process. Business School programmes have run Enhanced Programme Boards every three years since 2015/16. At these reviews, employers and alumni meet with the programme directors, identifying areas for development to further boost the career-readiness of graduates.

50. Many core programmes are subject to **Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body** accreditation and in all we embed the development of excellence in professional practice. In 2021/22 we delivered 65 accredited programmes, an increase of 16% from 2018/19, with 1,935 students graduating from these programmes in 2021, an increase of 12% from 2019.

51. Our Business School programmes have undergone rigorous external quality assurance evaluation processes to secure the prestigious 'triple crown' accreditation of **AMBA, EQUIS and AACSB**, making it one of only 25 British business schools to hold this title and placing it in the top 1% worldwide (xxv). Since 2021, the Business School has applied its Principles of Professional Practice across its undergraduate programmes, embedding professional behaviours as part of the Graduate Skills to Thrive framework. This work was recognised as sector leading at the Chartered ABS learning, teaching and student experience conference in 2022.

52. Other examples of professional practice embedded in programmes include: a) the Access to Justice Clinic module, supported by local lawyers, in which students give basic legal advice in the areas of debt, housing or employment law to members of the public in Exeter and the South West. Over 100 students take this module each year, and data shows that they achieve higher results at the end of their studies than the rest of the cohort. b) In partnership with the London Film School, students on the BA Film Studies module The Contemporary Film and Television Industries take part in masterclasses with industry professionals and field trips to the Berlin film festival (Berlinale and European Film Market) and London. c) Students on Clinical Exercise Prescription work in partnership with CP+R, a private cardiac rehabilitation provider based in London. The module has expanded to teach the core cardiopulmonary exercise testing and interpretation skills that have been identified as a core employability skill by the employer.

In summary, we ensure high-quality education through strategic oversight, a culture of innovation, and a commitment to evidence-based enhancement. We have made strategic investments informed by our understanding of the needs of students and educators, and responsive to the demands of the pandemic. We have transformed our programme offerings, particularly with a view to the needs of graduates in the labour market. We have reinforced our commitment to a synergy between research and education. As a result, our students benefit from an exceptional, immersive and distinctive academic experience that prepares them for the graduate labour market.

SECTION 2. Resources, support and student engagement

53. Our Education Strategy declares a commitment to nurturing an international learning community of students and staff. This involves support for staff development; investment in resources and student support, and outstanding student engagement.

SE4 There is outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice is embedded across the provider

Developing educators

54. We support all academic staff to develop as educators and integrate the quality of contribution to teaching, learning and student support into all contracts and promotion criteria. We ensure equality of opportunity for Education and Research (E&R) and Education and Scholarship (E&S) staff by establishing clear progression pathways through all career stages to professor for both in the Exeter Academic programme of support.

55. Our sector-leading **ASPIRE** (Accrediting Staff Professionalism in Research-led Education) Framework has been accredited continuously by Advance HE (since 2011 as separate pathways and since 2016 as a framework) (xxvi). Exeter was the first to be accredited at all 4 fellowship descriptors from Associate (AFHEA) to Principal Fellow (PFHEA) and is still 1 of only 33 institutions accredited for all 4. Open to all academic and professional services staff, it comprises three routes to HEA fellowship: the experiential ASPIRE Professional Recognition Pathway (covering from AFHEA to PFHEA); our taught Academic Professional Programme (APP, for FHEA); the initial Learning and Teaching in Higher Education taught programme (for AFHEA). Our 2021/22 percentage of academic staff with any fellowship stood at 56%, well ahead of the sector average of 46.7%. The Provost and two DVCs are PFHEA.

ASPIRE Professional Recognition Pathway (PRP)

56. Over the assessment period, 21 AFHEA, 96 FHEA, 89 SFHEA and 19 PFHEA have been awarded on the PRP. We offer flexible support to applicants. Alongside regular guidance workshops, assessor calibration sessions and mentor forums, we have embedded synchronous and asynchronous online support for applicants. In addition, we hold fortnightly online writing sessions in which applicants can post questions or draft text for live feedback from the PRP team. Since 2020, we have further enhanced flexibility by offering a dialogic PRP route based on constructive conversation with an expert panel of assessors.

Academic Professional Programme (APP)

57. In 2018, the University replaced the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PCAP) with a level 7 apprenticeship APP, which is mandatory for new lecturing staff.

Exeter's programme is often regarded as an exemplar: we presented a 2019 session with Advance HE for DVCs and PVCs and 15 other HEIs have requested information about our programme.

Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (LTHE)

58. Our LTHE (taught) programme is mandatory for postgraduate researchers who are teaching and assessing and is encouraged for professional services staff who support education. To ensure continuous improvement in the programme across the TEF cycle, the following enhancements have been made: incorporating more accessibility and inclusivity information for learners; focusing assessment on the Education Employability Portfolio (accepted as more authentic and helpful than previous models); supporting participants with marking in their disciplines; and incorporating the student voice via student-led taught sessions and resources.

Continuing professional development

59. The Leadership Difference, the core programme of the new Exeter Leader initiative, brings together mixed cohorts of professional and academic staff to share experience and cross-fertilise ideas. We also tailor a range of specific development opportunities to education leaders including coaching. We are also working with academic leaders to offer a more structured rollout of coaching skills using both our Accredited Internal Coaching network and local initiatives.

60. Short courses support priority areas and a particular focus of CPD in the TEF period has been ensuring colleagues are equipped to support our students' mental health. During the assessment period over 380 colleagues have attended courses, including Mental Health Awareness, Mental Health First Aid for Higher Education, and Mental Health First Aid for Personal Tutors. Other courses included: Handling Difficult Conversations, Academic and Personal Tutoring,

Giving and Receiving Feedback, Researcher Development: Getting Stuff Done, Strategies for Developing Self-Confidence, Esteem and Value, Building Our Own Support Network, Overcoming Imposter Syndrome, and Recognising and Controlling Fatigue. In 2021, 463 academic colleagues attended 840 development sessions on 89 topics amounting to over 1,000 hours of learning.

National Teaching Fellows (NTF)

61. leading educators from across the University have been awarded NTFs in the assessment period. These colleagues are drawn from Natural Sciences, Renewable Energy, Law, Bioscience, Geography and our Academic Development and Skills professional service team.

SE5 The provider ensures a supportive learning environment and its students have access to a wide and readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs

Ensuring a supportive learning environment

62. Our **Success for All Strategy Group**, chaired by the DVC-ESE, leads comprehensive and in-depth scrutiny and direction of support for academic experience and outcomes. Focusing on ensuring equality of opportunity in a supportive learning environment for all of our students, working groups address key aspects of student life (Access; Transition and Induction; Progression; Financial Support; Inclusive Education) and on ensuring special attention to underrepresented groups (mature students; underrepresented students; international students; diversity in postgraduate education). Examples of initiatives led by the working groups are outlined below and in the consideration of outcomes (para 87). The efficacy of these interventions is evidenced by the outstanding continuation and completion metrics (consistently exceeding 95%) and strong progression into graduate employment.

Facilitating inclusion and cultural change

63. In 2018, the University reflected upon instances of racism and harassment within our student community and instituted a root-and-branch review of our practices and culture. The **Provost Commission** searched for best practice in student induction and support, learning and teaching, culture and environment and funded racial equity projects. Collaboration with the Advance HE 'Embedding EDI in the Curriculum' project led to the creation of a self-assessment toolkit for departments. The Provost Commission established enhanced reporting tools for harassment and discrimination and raised awareness of our commitment to inclusivity through events, speaker series and targeted actions in Freshers' Week. The work of the Commission was used to develop a new Vision for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity 2025 and is mainstreamed through the Success for All working groups and the Transformative Education Framework (paras 62, 86-87, 112-113). The effectiveness of these measures is reflected in outstanding performance for Student Voice amongst students of Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnicity (5.1 to 6.3% above benchmark).

Induction and transition

64. Recognising that our increasingly diverse cohorts seek tailored support and information ahead of arrival, we have developed a range of engaging, discipline-specific, online pre-arrival courses. These offer students the opportunity to connect with each other prior to arrival and have enabled us to focus more resource during Freshers' Week on interactive events that prioritise community and friendship formation rather than information delivery. Following three successful years in the Business School, the approach was rolled out across the whole institution in 2021, when 6,000 students enrolled on online pre-arrival courses. This is complemented by the New Students' Guide, launched in 2020 in partnership with a student spin-out company, Loomery (xxviii). This web-based guide has checklists of tasks to complete before and at arrival and has a facility to connect with current students to ask questions about life in Devon and Cornwall.

65. An **Enhanced Induction programme** provides support for those who may find the transition to university more challenging (e.g. due to disability, experience of being a carer or in care) (xxix).

This programme includes whole- or half-day events on campus before the start of term, where new entrants meet with staff and students. For those who might benefit, English language and study skills support is available through our on-campus partner, INTO University of Exeter. Despite the challenges of online delivery in 2020 and 2021, we have seen consistently excellent levels of engagement and strong evidence of impact. In 2021, 45% of survey respondents prior to the event felt aware of the support services available to them, shifting to 100% after the event.

Academic tutoring and support

66. In the TEF period, and in accordance with our Education Strategy commitment to support all students to fulfil their potential and in the light of student feedback concerning Academic Support, we clarified the purpose of personal tutoring and set consistent standards for five scheduled meetings per year with undergraduate students and at least three with PGT students. Senior Tutors in each department assume responsibility for more complex cases, liaising as appropriate with professional services colleagues. Both during the pandemic and since, students report high levels of agreement regarding access to academic staff and the support they give (pulse surveys and NSS question 12); nevertheless, as reflected in the student submission, there is lower satisfaction with advice and guidance. Therefore, in 2022/23, we are establishing a Student Support task & finish group, comprising staff and student leaders, to examine this issue holistically, identify best practice in the sector and further refine our tutorial and student support policy.

Study Zone

67. The University's Study Zone was established in 2018 to provide a one-stop centre for learning resources and support with study skills (xxx). Through both digital and physical offerings, the service tailors support to the needs of students in a timely fashion. The first port of call is the comprehensive and easily accessed **Study Zone Digital** designed to normalise engagement with academic skills support. The platform has seen 633,000 site visits since its launch in 2020, with the most visited pages including 'academic writing process', 'referencing', 'exams and revision' and 'critical reading'. Study Zone also offered 170 in-curriculum workshops and lectures, integrating with the module content to ensure support for 17,000 students. More intensive support is offered to students who require it and, over the assessment period, 500 students have taken advantage of 106 workshops and 1,600 students have received 2,713 one-to-one academic study skills appointments, directly supporting students who may not otherwise have fulfilled their potential.

Library services

68. The University of Exeter's library provides 24/7 high-quality support to students through a mix of face-to-face support on campus, email-managed enquiries and live chat support (xxxi). Library staff answered over 11,000 chats in the last academic year and 87% of rated chats were given the maximum score for satisfaction. Recent digital investment is outlined in paragraphs 77-78.

Wellbeing services

69. Exeter's Wellbeing and Welfare Services (xxxii) provide confidential support to all students to enable them to continue their studies, including tailored support for disabled students, care-experienced students, student carers, estranged students, international students, LGBTQI+ students, mature students and, through partnership with the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic-led community-based charity Nilaari, for our students of colour. The work of the service includes emotional and mental health support, exam adjustments and individual learning plans (ILPs). In common with national trends and as reflected in the student submission, we have seen increased demand for this service (5,043 students in 2018/19 to 7,138 in 2021/22). We have increased the recurrent budget accordingly (£2.53M in 2018/19 to £3.32M in 2021/22) and made an additional £600k investment in 2020/21 to manage increased demand related to COVID-19, highlighted through our pulse surveys. We continue to seek to improve the service and, in 2023, will be

participants in the UUK-led 'Service Redesign' project

Pandemic and post-pandemic support

70. Our strategic response to the pandemic focused on supporting student learning and mental health by enabling students to continue learning as normally as possible (paras 25-28) and responding to student feedback. Further measures to support students included: a) Our **Exceptional Circumstances Policy**, which ensured students could inform the University online of any adverse personal circumstances affecting their studies. All students who were able to demonstrate a link to COVID-19 for their circumstances were supported under the policy. b) During 2019/20 and 2020/21 we adjusted our **Mitigation Policy**, stripping out requirements for evidence of impact and enabling students to request deferrals for one or more assessments. The need for this intervention is illustrated in the numbers requesting mitigation that rose from 5,296 applications in 2018/19 to 25,811 in 2019/20. Greater flexibility was appropriate to extraordinary times: coming out of the pandemic, we have worked with student leaders to develop a revised policy that combines more of the structure and rigour of pre-pandemic policy with retention of sufficient student agency to realise accessibility benefits witnessed in the pandemic-era policy. c) **Enhanced ILPs** have been developed to ensure consistent provision of alternative assessments according to pre-determined matrices. These continue to be used as normal practice. d) **An emergency IT fund**, established in March 2020, awarded nearly £40k to allow students to buy laptops and other hardware and pay for broadband/wi-fi access. This fund was open to all students, with a quick, light-touch assessment to ensure continuity of learning as far as possible. Now managed through our Success for All fund, in 2020/21 students received £207k in IT hardship support.

<i>SE6 Physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning</i>

Investing in our facilities

71. Our students benefit from excellent learning resources, many associated with our research-intensive environment, including fully equipped laboratories, research collections in the physical and digital library, and environmental monitoring stations. Furthermore, in pursuit of our Education Strategy commitment to reimagine learning for today's students, since 2018 the University has invested £22M in further improving its study space and learning and teaching physical infrastructure and almost £10M in digital resources and capability in Project Enhance (para 74).

72. Major **investments in our estates** have included the following, prioritised in partnership with the Guild and the SU: a) £6M in the creation of student-facing information hubs (xxxiii) reflecting subject group specialisms, co-located with academic departments across our campuses. Each hub provides resilient and comprehensive student support service, including wellbeing and employability support; food outlets; and additional study spaces, responding to demand for more individual and group-work space. b) £6.5M investment in Maker-Space facilities for engineering and physical sciences on our Streatham Campus provides for dynamic, flexible and responsive learning environments replicating the digital and mechanical equipment that graduates will encounter in modern industrial settings. c) £1.2M Digital Maker spaces on Streatham and Penryn campuses to promote interdisciplinary, creative learning and design thinking. d) £800k in High Performance Computing (HPC) capacity and analytic software for undergraduate use in numerical modelling, analysis and simulations. e) £1.75M Renewable Energy Engineering Facility (REEF), on our Penryn campus, allowing students to experience and practice clean energy technologies. f) £2.6M study and social space facility on St Luke's Campus, providing increased capacity and much improved environments for group and individual study.

Enhancing our digital offering

73. One of the stated priorities of our Education Strategy was to capitalise on digital

transformation. This was accelerated by the pandemic and enabled by major institutional investment in Project Enhance to realise our commitment to excellent education through the pandemic (paras 25-28) and to have lasting value post-pandemic.

74. **Project Enhance** attracted a £9.7M investment to support the creation of a flexible, resilient blended teaching portfolio for 2020/21 and to enable the ongoing digital transformation of learning and teaching. This investment continues to benefit teaching and learning to the present. It enabled us to: a) employ a team of academic developers and technology advisors to support academics in their shift to flexible online delivery. b) Recruit, train and deploy digital learning developers (DLDs, graduates) and digital learning assistants (undergraduates) to enhance modules (para 26). The DLD concept was so successful that we continued this scheme and have DLDs in the institution for 2022/23. c) Enhance our VLE capacity to support 20,000 concurrent users. d) Invest £611k in the virtualisation of key software packages used in teaching, making them available remotely and free-of-charge to students. e) Create an Enhancement Hub, a single repository and signposting site for educators. The Hub linked its resources with our Education Toolkit, creating a seamless, networked learning repository, which has had 457,706 total visits since launch. f) Develop our distance-learning support. Through the Alibaba interface we have been able to ensure continued access to key online systems and resources for students in China, and supported around 10% of our student body to study remotely in 2021/22. g) Invest in LinkedIn Learning to provide access to a wealth of professional study and personal development resources; and in Studiosity, a service to provide rapid feedback on written work. Our students accumulated over 500,000 minutes of Studiosity usage in the last year.

75. Our **Digital Hub** was planned pre-pandemic and established in 2020 (xxxiv). Modelled on the Apple Genius Bar concept, it is a face-to-face and online digital skills support service. Since launch in March 2020 and supported by student digital ambassadors, we have helped more than 5,900 students face-to-face, resolving 78% of queries instantly. Online, our Digital Hub site has had 36,163 unique visitors and 437,796 page views (of over 200 Guides and 100+ videos). With the pandemic pivot to online and hybrid learning, the Digital Hub was able to react rapidly, supporting new and returning students delivering training on all digital tools used for learning and teaching.

76. In tandem with the introduction of the Digital Hub, the University invests £160k annually in digital tools to support collaborative teaching efforts, with rollout accelerated by COVID-19. These include Mural, Mentimeter, Padlet and Zoom. This complements our annual investment in the Microsoft suite licences, including Teams, for all staff and students.

77. Over the TEF period we have invested heavily in **Digital Resources** in our libraries, increasing budget from £5.98M in 2018/19 to £6.86M in 2021/22, with an additional investment of £875k to facilitate acquisition of digital textbooks. We prioritise digital resources; the proportion of our spending on these has increased from 93% to 96% over the same time. We have the second-largest collection of ebooks in the Russell Group, while usage of ejournals rose by 47% from 2018/19 to 2021/22.

78. Driven by the research-focused Next Generation Library project, we have also expanded our digitised primary sources, spending around £1M per year to establish one of the best collections in Europe.

<i>SE7 The provider embeds engagement with its students, leading to continuous improvement to the experience and outcomes of its students</i>

Student engagement

79. As stated in paragraph 1, partnership with our student community is the hallmark of the University and engagement with students is embedded throughout our leadership and governance

structures (paras 5–11) and in our academic departments, ensuring that students are at the heart of our enhancement strategy. Building on strong performance for Student Voice, we continually seek to improve our partnership with students through collaboration with the Guild and the SU.

80. In 2021/22 the Guild and the SU led the collaboration to create a **Student Experience Framework** that seeks to define the key characteristics of the holistic student experience that will enable our students to realise their potential (xxxvi). Our student leaders provided the definition of the three pillars of the Framework: enabling students to Grow, Thrive and Discover. It also challenged the University to implement more agile systems of student engagement; this led to a reconfiguration of the **Student Experience Partnership Board**, and a commitment to ‘inverting’ existing governance structures, with a view to empowering all students. In the first year of operation, this Board has guided the comprehensive collaborative response to the Cost-of-Living Crisis, which has been well received by students (xxxvii).

Enhancement with our students

81. As we work through the opportunities presented by the Student Experience Framework, we maintain a comprehensive system of Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs). The management of SSLCs, and the recruitment and training of representatives, is overseen and reviewed in partnership between the University, Guild and SU. Regular meetings are supplemented by additional engagement activities designed to suit individual departments.

82. In addition, we maintain engagement with students at module level. Our Education Strategy committed the University to actively engaging with students during a module, thus giving lecturers the opportunity to act immediately on any issues. Feedback is vital to us, identifying good practice on the one hand, and enabling resolution of problems or confusion concerning teaching or assessment on the other. Light-touch exercises (such as the ‘stop-start-continue’ surveys in Humanities) are deployed mid-module across the University, alongside more traditional systems of end-of-module feedback.

83. **Students as Change Agents**, established at Exeter in 2008, is a vehicle enabling students to lead change that will directly affect their experiences. The concept has been adopted by many universities and is developed in annual conferences, including at Exeter in 2017. In partnership with the Guild and the SU, we have evolved SACA to focus on high-quality supported projects, including payment of students on internship rates. Our aim is to create meaningful changes and to support students fairly in a time of cost-of-living pressures.

84. The **Student Library Champion** Scheme, instituted in 2011, engages students in the management of our libraries. Library Champions advocate our libraries and obtain feedback from fellow students on how library services can be improved. They are given a budget to spend on resources and undertake pilot projects as part of the scheme and they provide insights that guide the work of the University’s study spaces team.

85. During the pandemic, we recognised an intensified need to check on, and respond to, student wellbeing and engagement. We ran 7 ‘**pulse surveys**’ between October 2020 and November 2021, eliciting between 1,500 and 3,800 responses per survey. The surveys uncovered complexity in student connectedness. For example, in autumn 2021, a higher proportion of students felt part of the University than felt connected to their friends; and, despite over 70% reporting opportunities to work with coursemates, only 55% felt connected to them. These and other insights were invaluable in directing the University, Guild and SU responses, which included: ‘Get Connected’ campaigns; virtual breakfast clubs; use of GatherTown to create a digital twin of the Physics coffee room; extending all online classes to allow students to interact with peers and ask informal questions of

academic staff (Humanities). Our most powerful institution-wide response was the **Festival of Discovery** in Summer 2021, which included a full programme of academic and social events designed to build confidence, belonging and peer-to-peer connections and to offer experiential learning opportunities. This was designed to set students up for success in the following academic year and is reflected in a 14% increase between March 2021 and October 2021 in the proportion of students reporting that their studies were going well.

In summary, in the areas of resources, support and student engagement we have invested purposefully in our people and their work/study environments. We have maintained our position as a research-intensive University at which academics are committed to developing themselves as educators. We expanded our systems of support for students, working in collaboration with them and meeting the challenges of the pandemic. Throughout, as confirmed by our metrics, we can demonstrate outstanding levels of performance across these areas.

SECTION 3. Positive outcomes

86. Success for All our Students is a core commitment in our Education Strategy, now embedded in our strategic governance through the creation of the Success for All Strategy Group (para 62). In 2018 we established our place as a national leader in this area by bringing academic researchers and professional practitioners together, under joint leadership, to form the **Centre for Social Mobility**. This is dedicated to improving access, success and progression in Higher Education through research, evaluation and evidence-informed practice and policy that we enact (xxxviii).

SO1 The provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies

87. It is through the comprehensive, data-informed and in-depth scrutiny of the student lifecycle and the experience of each demographic group through the Success for All working groups (para 62) that we achieve outstanding continuation, completion and progression rates. Overall, 96.6% of our students continued studying with us after their first year, and 96.2% completed their degrees, exceeding the already high benchmarks in both cases for all years. Success continues after graduation with progression to employment exceeding benchmarks in all years except 2020, and there was strong post-pandemic recovery in 2021 with 10.8% materially above benchmark.

88. The Success for All Strategy Group also benefits from the work of the **Degree Outcomes Steering Group**, established in September 2020. This carries out detailed scrutiny of all student success data. It provides a collaborative space for academics, professionals and student representatives with a shared interest in developing our understanding of awarding patterns, awarding gaps and overall degree outcomes. The work is supported by academic colleagues conducting research into awarding gaps.

89. Our undergraduate degree outcomes are subject to review

ensuring both internal and external scrutiny. This is a holistic review undertaken through the dual lenses of addressing degree awarding gaps and assuring degree standards. The outcomes of this review are published in our annual Degree Outcomes Statement (xxxix). Additionally, in our commitment to ensuring success in exceptional years, we published a supplemental report on the impact of our 2019/20 No Detriment Policy in 2021 (xii). This has been highlighted as sector best practise by UUK (iv).

90. Since 2020, and in consultation with student representatives, the University has also published an **Exceptional Years Handbook**, which outlines mechanisms for always providing teaching and learning opportunities so that student outcomes are protected, and which stipulates best practice for assessment and mitigation.

91. In addition to the work through the Success for All working groups addressing the experience

and outcomes of larger disadvantaged groups (mature, disabled, underrepresented), we have further developed our wrap-around support for care-experienced and estranged students and for refugees and asylum seekers. We hold the NNECL Quality Mark and are signatories of the Stand Alone Pledge. Our Exeter Cares initiative, administered collaboratively with the Guild, provides tuition-fee waiver, enhanced transition support, a dedicated welfare officer, access to extended accommodation contracts and bursary provision. In 2021 we won a Stand Alone Pledge award 'for general, financial and graduation support', followed by a second award in 2022 for 'innovation and creativity in supporting estranged students' emotional wellbeing' (xl). We are a University of Sanctuary and offer an Access to Exeter Bursary for all UG refugee and asylum seekers from low-income households, and award a number of Sanctuary Scholarships each year

SO2 There are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses

Continuation and completion

92. Our data demonstrates outstanding rates of continuation and completion, exceeding the high TEF benchmark for most of our courses and groups of students. This is testament to our work within the TEF cycle: overseen by the Success for All Strategy Group, informed by data and targeted especially at underrepresented and at-risk groups.

93. As outlined in paragraphs 64 and 65, induction has been enhanced across the University. This is supported by a best-practice framework developed by our Success for All Working Group focused on Induction and Transition. Our aim is to grow peer relationships, flag the support and help available, foster a sense of belonging and enable students to better navigate university life.

94. Through our strengthened personal tutoring system, we monitor students' submissions of work to identify those at risk. For example, the 'frequent look, rapid remediation' system on the BMBS course in the Medical School is designed so that frequent assessments allow early support where appropriate. This system contributes to the >99% continuation rate for Medicine.

95. We are proud to be above the TEF benchmarks for the continuation and completion of mature students, both in the 21 to 30 and over-31 age ranges. Support for these cohorts is overseen by our Success for All Mature Students Working Group. After their engagement in the Enhanced Induction programme, mature students are encouraged to join a peer support programme and are provided with information and advice about the range of academic support available to them (xli).

96. We are 30.6% materially above benchmark for completion of Black students and are addressing the below benchmark completion for Asian students as a Success for All Strategy Group priority action in 2022/23. We have made **progress in narrowing key awarding gaps**. We have closed the disability awarding gap for three years. With respect to ethnicity awarding gaps, in order to determine progress in the context of fluctuation, the mean awarding gaps in 2019/20 and 2020/21 are compared with the mean gaps in 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19. These comparisons show that mixed ethnicity students outperform white students and the following reductions in awarding gaps have been achieved: Asian students 28%; Black students 50%; students of other ethnicity 64%.

SO3 There are outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses

Progression into graduate employment and advanced study

97. Our Education Strategy commits us to preparing 'graduates of distinction'. As highlighted above (paras 32–34, 37, 46, 49–52) this goal has motivated strategically driven and substantial changes to what and how we teach, particularly focused on embedding skills and employability in our curricula. As a result, rates of progression are aligned with the TEF benchmark for most of our

courses and groups of students and some subjects are materially above benchmark (Business & Management 99.9%; Philosophy & Religious Studies 94.6%, Psychology 93.4%).

98. We use the Graduate Outcomes survey data as a KPI, observing the *Guardian* methodology (i.e. first degree, full-time, UK-domiciled). In 2017/18 we scored 84.9%, followed by 80.5% in 2018/19, and 85.7% in 2019/20 (the most recent data, and our highest destination score to date). This improvement has been reflected in league tables, for example being ranked 14th for Universities Targeted by the Largest Number of Times Top Employers in 2021-2022 (xlii). These results are also testament to our excellent partnerships with top employers (para 49). Excellent outcomes have also been achieved by our non-UK UG graduate population, with graduate destination scores as follows: 2017/18, 87.6%; 2018/19, 86.8%; 2019/20, 89.1%. The latest LEO data (24/12/22) for median earnings five years after graduation is £35k, placing us 17th in the sector (tax-year 2019/20).

99. Employability support is led by our **Student Employability and Academic Success (SEAS)** division. Support includes experiential and interdisciplinary learning experiences to enhance student careers, employability, student and graduate employment, entrepreneurial competences and behaviours, personal and professional development. Over 31,000 users are registered on our career-support platform, of whom 15,466 are undergraduates and 11,598 are recent graduates demonstrating our ongoing commitment to supporting our graduates.

100. All students are asked to complete a career registration survey at the start of each academic year to reflect on their journey to career-readiness and identify opportunities and to enable us to tailor support to students. All first-year students join 'Create Your Future', a personal and professional development programme that explains how to gain skills for employability and the practical steps they can take to achieve their career goals.

101. The portfolio of employability and careers support is accessible to all students. Nevertheless, we recognise that students from less advantaged backgrounds will benefit from bespoke careers advice and development support and tailored opportunities. The latter includes access to paid internships; the **Global Leaders Experience** programme, providing short-term, employability-focused global experiences; the UpReach scheme, providing an intensive programme of employability support with professional service firms (for which Exeter is the largest university partner); and our Access to Hidden Professional Pathways scheme, working with specialist third-sector providers to create all-expenses paid experiences and occupational training.

102. Furthermore, as part of our Access and Participation Plan, we provide targeted careers and employment support to students in receipt of **Access to Exeter (ATE)** bursaries, a cohort who are identified as socially disadvantaged and/or underrepresented in HE. In our Graduate Destination Survey the gap in securing graduate-level destinations between ATE students and non-ATE students narrowed to -0.2% in 2019/20, a significant improvement on the scores of previous years,

103. Boosted by this range of supportive measures, we are proud that progression rates for Black and mixed ethnicity students are significantly above the TEF benchmark, as are those for students previously eligible for free school meals. We are also proud of outstanding continuation and completion rates for students over 31 years of age and improving our progression performance for this group is a priority for the Success for All Mature Student Working Group, which leads on our action plan to support mature student access, success and progression.

104. We are continually monitoring data on progression in order to identify emerging issues, including through our TEAP process. This enables swift intervention by departments, illustrated in

two examples: a) in Physics, we noted that excellent rates of progression for MPhys programmes contrasted to lower rates for students leaving after three years with a BSc. In response, in 2020 the department redesigned core modules, reinforced the BSc project work support which was identified as key to students' employability, and focused Stage 3 tutorials around careers skills, assigning key staff responsible for employability to these core areas. b) Allied Health (constituting Medical Science and Neuroscience students) was another outlier in 2017/18 and 2018/19. In response, the programme lead developed the Academic, Personal and Professional Learning Evaluation, which aids students in identifying, acquiring and evidencing the most commonly required employability skills. These disciplines now perform above the TEF benchmark (reporting as Medical Sciences).

105. Our positive and improving progression data is a result of our strategic emphasis on supporting employability skills for all students, independent of background, both within our curricula and through SEAS. Strong performance against benchmark aligns with our Career Destination Survey and, given the historically strong correlation between it and Graduate Outcomes results, we are confident of further improvement in the 2020/21 Graduate Outcomes survey.

In summary, Exeter's comprehensive focus on ensuring Success for All of Our Students has produced strong and improving results in our students' outcomes. The analysis and agenda-setting work of the Success for All Strategy Group, supported by researchers and academic leaders across the University, positions us well to maintain our outstanding performance.

SECTION 4. Educational gains

SO4 The provider clearly articulates the range of educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions

106. Our commitment to outstanding educational gain is embedded both in curriculum design and enhancement (paras 32–46) and in co- and extracurricular opportunities available to all through our partnership with the Guild and the SU and through our Careers Zone. Each student is enabled to personalise their experience through engagement with these opportunities. Our intended educational gains are articulated to prospective students alongside other information that helps inform their choice of University, programme of study and future career. We clearly communicate that we are working to create a sustainable, healthy and socially just future and emphasise that, through education and research, our students and staff can together 'create the possible'. This communication and engagement continues throughout our students' educational journeys and, as alumni, beyond.

SO5 The provider's approaches to supporting its students to achieve these gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points

Our graduate attributes

107. Educational gain at Exeter is focused on the development of core graduate attributes. Our Education Strategy defined curiosity, creativity, critical thinking and global understanding as key for life beyond graduation. Informed by our excellent relationships with industry (para 49), feedback from alumni and analysis of the global changes in the world of work, we have refined these target attributes in our University Strategy 2030 as follows:

- **Intellectual enquiry.** We believe that students and staff alike learn through research and discovery, and this is reflected in our curricula. We provide a multitude of opportunities for students to engage in research to enhance their learning (paras 43-46).
- **Problem-solving skills.** Exeter designs curricula and uses teaching methods that embrace interactive, challenge-based approaches. Our Engineering, Medicine and allied health programmes are sector leaders in the adoption of problem-based learning. As evident in Section 1, comparable initiatives are apparent across a range of other disciplines.

- **Entrepreneurship.** Our Centre for Entrepreneurship provides a focus for research and education in entrepreneurship and creates opportunities for student and recent graduate entrepreneurship across all Faculties, including through our entrepreneurship pathway (para 36) and the Exeter Entrepreneur. Based in The Deck, a collaborative workspace in the Innovation Centre, the Startup Team supports students at every stage of the journey from idea to trading. Over the TEF period it has: enrolled 2000 students in extra-curricular incubation programmes; engaged 3,500 more in co-curricular workshops, events and competitions; and awarded £147k in grant funding to more than 100 new ventures. A large number of those ventures have gone on to receive significant investment alongside national and international awards (xliv).
- **Digital literacy.** The National Data Strategy recognises that the data revolution has implications for the entire UK workforce. Therefore, we promote Digital Literacy through core modules across our programmes and through: a) our Q-Step Centre, funded since 2014 by the Nuffield Foundation and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), embeds quantitative methods training in social science into substantive degree programmes and modules; b) our Digital Maker Spaces and HPC capacity support students in both research-led teaching and also digital skills development (paras 71-72); c) our Digital Arts and Humanities strategy, published in 2021, with a core aim to enhance digital literacy in the arts and humanities.
- **Cultural competence.** Being culturally competent means having the knowledge and skills to be aware of one's own cultural values and the implications of these for making respectful, reflective and reasoned choices. Several of the curriculum enhancements to address social justice described in paragraph 39 have the intention of promoting cultural competence and systematic development will be addressed through the Transformative Education Framework.
- **Global citizenship.** There is a growing demand for graduates who are able to understand and identify solutions to environmental, social and governance commitments and challenges. Building on our international reputation in the area of climate change and sustainability, this is a growing area of curriculum development. a) Since January 2022, our students have access to Future 17, established in partnership with QS. Future 17 presents students with real-world challenges aligned to the UN SSDGs.

Activities focus on a climate theme, cutting across all degree programmes and tying in with departmental priorities around carbon reduction. c) The **Times Higher Education Award of Business School of the Year in 2022** recognised the commitment to embedding sustainability across all aspects of the work and teaching of our Business School (xlv).

Supporting educational gain

108. Our established processes of internal review routinely attend to educational gains. This happens most obviously in our TEM process (para 17), but also in module and programme accreditation, and reviews of outcomes. At an individual level, attention to educational gains underpins our engagement with students, not least through assessment feedback and personal tutoring. Further initiatives aim to extend and consolidate educational gains.

Grand Challenges

109. Grand Challenges has been a flagship University of Exeter programme for the past ten years and, in the TEF period, has attracted students from international partners: University of South Florida, Leiden University, the University of Mannheim and the University of Padova. Run annually in the third term, students work in research-led interdisciplinary groups, supported by top academics and invited speakers, to tackle real-world problems, including climate change, mental

health and social inequality. It supports and builds on our interdisciplinary curricular highlighted in paragraphs 35-39 and development of several of the graduate attributes outlined above.

110. Open to all students, more than 400 take part each year. Feedback is overwhelmingly positive, with over 90% of students reporting that they would recommend it to others. Most frequently, students report developing communication, leadership and teamworking skills, public speaking and presentation skills, improved research skills, time management skills, and confidence. The benefits and philosophy of the programme is summed up in a quote from a recent participant: 'It really sets you up for the world of work, where there will be people from all areas collaborating on one goal.'

111. **Challenges Online**, run in 2020/21, was a finalist for the Green Gown 2021 Award in the Tomorrow's Employees Category (xlvi), and in the global QS Reimagine Education 2020 Award in the Sustainability Category. Our approach to, and evaluation of Grand Challenges has been published to support others develop similar initiatives (xlvii).

Transformative Education Framework

112. Our Transformative Education Framework, co-created through engagement with student and staff community in 2021/22, focuses on three principles that are now guiding curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular work with students and staff: inclusive education, racial and social justice, and sustainability. As we move forward, the Transformative Education Framework will provide strategic direction for our work in these areas.

113. We aim to enable all students to see the challenges associated with the climate emergency, inequality and social injustice in their fields of study; promote the application of critical thinking skills in learning, with an aim to address societal challenges and foster collaboration, drawing on the strength of our community's diversity of experiences and areas of expertise and create a learning environment that promotes respect by embedding inclusivity and cultural competence.

<i>SO6 The provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and demonstrates its students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains</i>
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Evaluating educational gains

114. In addition to reviewing the outcomes of our programmes and modules and supporting students in reflection upon their achievement, we consistently search for new ways of evaluating educational gains, building on experience within and outside the curriculum. Our Data Foundations Project captures our ambition for personalised and rich evaluation of Educational Gain (para 118).

115. Since 2016 the Business School has operated an **Assurance of Learning** process, as required by the accreditor AACSB, in which wider graduate attributes that extend beyond normal module or programme requirements are assessed. Interventions are made each year the wider educational gain is not being met for a particular group or programme. We will be working on rolling out such best-practice approaches to all our Faculties.

116. We are building on published and ongoing research in the field of educational gain, including the former HEFCE/OfS Learning Gain Project and subsidiary projects. We are also trialling the use of readily accessible and recognised tools such as the **Sustainability Literacy Test** or 'Sulitest' which provides a universally applicable knowledge assessment tool to help ensure that our students are well equipped in their future careers to take sustainability into account (xlviii).

117. For more than ten years, Exeter has recognised students' achievement of extra and co-curricular educational gains through our **Exeter Award** and **Exeter Leaders Award**, recognising contributions to student leadership. The Exeter Award helps students evidence the development of attributes and skills to boost their competitiveness in the graduate jobs market. In the ten years to 2020/21, an average of 512 students per year completed the Exeter Award, and an average of 77 completed the Exeter Leaders Award. After a pandemic-affected year in 2021/22, we are seeing

increasing uptake this year. The Award framework allows students to choose different pathways, including Sustainability and Entrepreneurship and to capitalise on activities with which they are already involved, with the University, the Guild and the SU.

The Data Foundations Project

118. During 2021/22, the University conducted the Data Foundations Project, a qualitative research project aiming to identify the data and analysis needs of its educators and student-facing professional services teams. Key findings and priorities for action included: a renewed focus on how education and student experience data is captured, stored and managed; the development of integrated and readily accessible student data analytics, to facilitate focused student support including interventions to close attainment and awarding gaps; and the development of analytics to support the whole student journey, academically and pastorally. A new Data Strategy is currently under development as a result of this work and will equip us to efficiently and effectively capture all our students' educational gains over time.

In summary, Educational Gain at Exeter is achieved through the integration of curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities provided by the University and in partnership with the Guild and the SU. We take a comprehensive approach to ensuring and evaluating educational gains. This extends from our sustained attention to our curricula, through our provision of unique co-curricular opportunities, to the mechanisms we offer students to document their achievements. We continue to research and innovate, in order to consolidate our outstanding achievements and develop new mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating Educational Gain.

Conclusion

119. Throughout the TEF period we have been committed to internationally excellent education that creates a sustainable, healthy and socially just future. This is founded on:

- talented, engaged students from all backgrounds studying collaboratively with passionate educators whose subject expertise is informed by their world-leading research and whose teaching is informed by scholarly engagement with pedagogy and innovation;
- comprehensive focus on 'success for all our students' to ensure equality of opportunity and outstanding outcomes;
- student progression to graduate-level employment supported through structured programmes delivered by professional staff in partnership with employers;
- the leadership of the University, working in partnership with elected student representatives in the Guild and the SU, and with academic leaders across the University to establish a cultural environment that fosters student-staff engagement and collaboration, and makes visible the value that we place on teaching and learning; and
- the support of the governing body, to continue to invest in the highest quality physical and virtual learning environment in which internationally excellent education can flourish.

120. The University of Exeter ended the TEF monitoring period in a position of strength, based on our strategy for systematic educational enhancement. We are rising in the NSS, national and international league tables, and have an improving set of TEF metrics. Through dedication to partnership with our students, we led the sector in our co-created No Detriment Policy, which was fundamental to student success and wellbeing in the pandemic. Our partnership continues to advance outstanding student experience and outcomes, informed by our co-created Student Experience Framework and directed by our co-led Student Experience Partnership Board.

Together we will make bold changes to our curricula to ensure that we continue to challenge and inspire our community of learners from every background to thrive, develop the skills they will need for the future and lead the change the world needs.

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