University College Birmingham Teaching Excellence Framework submission January 2023

1. Provider context

University College Birmingham (The University) is one of the most diverse and multi-cultural universities in the UK, welcoming students nationally and internationally. Our programmes are taught in person at our campuses in central Birmingham utilising state of the art physical and digital resources. Our educational mission is "to promote and provide the opportunity for participation in the learning process by those with the ambition and commitment to succeed, and to maintain a learning community that meets the diverse needs of our students, the economy and society at large"[1]. Our core mission and strategic plans[2] as an institution focus on teaching and supporting our distinctive student body. The three core pillars of our Learning and Teaching Strategy 2021-2024 focus on: accessible and inclusive teaching, skills development through innovative pedagogy, and sustainable futures through global citizenship[3].

Our approach to learning and teaching is informed by our desire to enhance student outcomes and experience, but it is also about ensuring that our students are part of a collaborative, engaging and transformative learning environment. Our aim is to provide an individualised experience that accounts for the personal well-being of each student, while prioritising equality of opportunity, academic development and vocational experience. The three pillars of the learning and teaching strategy were designed in consultation with staff, stakeholders and students to offer a student-centred approach to areas that matter most to our student experience and that will support their career aspirations and future employability.

We have university status and taught degree awarding powers, but we take students across Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE), from levels 1 to 7. We also offer a growing number of apprenticeships from levels 2 to 6 in response to local workforce needs and demand. Over 2018-19 to 2021-22, we have averaged 1339 college students, 4946 HE students and 379 apprentices. Of the undergraduate students, 1347 are studying at OUG (largely Foundation Degree) level and 2732 are studying at First Degree level[4]. 3712 are full time, with 366 studying part time (2018-19 – 2021-22 average). We currently (as of 9/1/2023) have 263 academic post holders. Throughout this document, we will be referring to all undergraduates, both full and part-time, unless stated otherwise.

We are a teaching-led institution with a professionally focused curriculum. Our history is important to how we approach our educational strategy; we began as Birmingham College of Food and Domestic Arts[5], and have a strong history of blending high-quality, research-informed, academic teaching with leading-edge skills development. Whilst our curriculum offer has changed over the decades, we retain a focus on outstanding teaching and real-world facilities, underpinned by excellent industry links. Our portfolio is extremely broad, including programmes classified in the TEF data as: Business (Business Enterprise, Marketing, Events, Hospitality, Tourism, Finance and Accounting); Creative Arts (Specialist Hair and Media Make-Up); Performing Arts (Specialist Hair and Media Make-up); Education; Health and Social Care; Agriculture and Food (Culinary Arts Management, Bakery and Patisserie Technology, Food and Nutrition); Architecture and Building (Aviation Management); Sport; and Allied Health (Aesthetics). As we have been developing rapidly, our historical data does not always reflect our current position; we have been through a process of transformational curriculum review to ensure that the programmes we offer are up to date and aligned with regional and national industry standards. Of the programmes in our TEF workbook 51% have either closed, are in teach out or have been substantially revalidated with a new title and

modules[6], and we have 19 new programmes running (which started after 2019) that are either not represented at all in the data or only in a small number of metrics. In the last four years we have started new provision in nursing, allied health, computing, and most recently, engineering and construction[7], none of which is yet represented in our TEF data. Our excellent student experience has been recognised with numerous accolades, including winning University of the Year, and Student Support of the Year at the 2022 WhatUni Student Choice Awards, as well as being shortlisted in the Students' Union, Career Prospects, Lecturers and Teaching Quality and Facilities[8]

We have a diverse student body, with some of the most socio-economically disadvantaged students in the UK; 46% from IMD Q1, 32% were previously eligible for Free School Meals, and 62% are mature. Regarding ethnicity, 20% of students are Asian, 19% are Black, 7% mixed, 50% White and 3% Other [2018-22 average[9]]. Overall, the distance travelled by our students is enormous. National data suggests that students with entry profiles like ours face additional challenges in HE study and do not always complete their degrees successfully[10]. Our very strong completion rates reflect the depth of our understanding of our students' needs. We are experts in supporting non-traditional students to thrive in HE, having often supported the same students to succeed in FE (25% of our FE students' progress to HE studies with us (2018-22 average[11]).

We also have a new and innovative partnership with the University of Warwick (UoW) which accredit 33 of our degree programmes;[12] this is not only a marker of the quality of our teaching and overall student experience but also a tool for our students to use to demonstrate the value of their degrees and the scale of their achievement to employers. The agreement to provide accreditation was a consequence of a thorough institutional quality assurance process which took place in 2021. This involved academic experts from UoW assessing the quality of our teaching, assessment, and student experience across a broad range of programmes culminating in a large-scale validation event. The final institutional assessment panel concluded that: "*We have a high level of confidence in the quality and standards of provision. Regulations, policies, and processes are rigorous, systematic, inclusive, and transparent.*" We are the only institution with which UoW partners in this way, which is a marker of the quality of our provision. Our first students on UoW accredited degrees began studying with us in February 2022 and 1600 have progressed onto these programmes since the partnership started[13]. The partnership is also much more than this; it is a cross-regional collaboration with a university which is currently ranked 8th in the UK (Guardian 2022/23 League Table), and represents a joint commitment to make a lasting positive impact on our region, closing skills gaps and providing improved life chances for both young people and adults in the region, enabling pathways to high-value jobs. This is based on a reciprocal partnership; for instance, we contribute our expertise in teaching and supporting students from non-traditional backgrounds.

Our students often enter with non-traditional entry qualifications; only 11% enter with A or AS levels, 50% enter with BTECs and 38% enter with other qualifications or non-tariffable qualifications[14]. We offer multiple entry pathways to most programmes, with Foundation degree (FD) entry for students with less traditional entry qualifications. Of the students who began level 4 study with us between 2018 and 2022, 35% enrolled on a FD, and 65% enrolled on a BA or BSc. Many of the FD students go on to undertake a top-up degree with us (on average, 74% of completers with FD awards have continued to top-up based on starts between 2013 and 2016[15]). Whilst making a substantial contribution to social mobility, this does cause some challenges in the presentation of data for the TEF, as FD students who proceed to top-up are officially starting a new programme and so appear in the data twice, in consecutive years. If interim study as shown in the

TEF workbook was taken into account, our progression rate for full-time 'other undergraduate' students would be 48.9%, which is above our benchmark, rather than 37.3%.[16] We discuss this further in the student outcomes section below.

Our location in the West Midlands is important to us and is embedded in everything we do; our activities produce £358 million of economic impact for the region and nationally.[17] Birmingham and the wider West Midlands are regions with high levels of diversity[18], which is reflected in our student body, but also with high deprivation and lower levels of highly skilled employment than the national average[19]. Our UK-domiciled students are predominantly local (4076 UK-domiciled students enrolled in 21/22, 2386 had a permanent address in the West Midlands Combined Authority area, (WMCA) with 1431 of those in Birmingham local authority), 78% commute to study, and 39% remain in the West Midlands to work after graduation[20]. Consequently, we support local, sustainable workforce needs by being reflexive and responsive in developing our curriculum to meet regional skills gaps[21]. For example, we work very closely with local stakeholders, including the Mayor of the West Midlands and WMCA to deliver their Plan for Growth. For instance, we have developed new provision including apprenticeships and HTQs, and have developed new curriculum in line with the planned Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE).

We are research-informed in our curriculum design and pedagogic practices and also in how we support our students; for instance, through our innovative approach to using diagnostic testing and learner analytics, we make bespoke and evidence-based interventions by combining student access and usage data from a range of sources to calculate an engagement score for each student, monitoring changes in their 'at risk' levels over time. We have robust mechanisms for student feedback and co-creation and an excellent relationship with our Guild of Students. The Guild has been represented on our TEF working group, and student focus groups have been consulted and feedback provided as part of this submission.

Our students were severely impacted by the pandemic, predominantly due to our demographic characteristics but also because of the applied curriculum areas we cover. This is visible in some of our data, particularly the most recent NSS, where two programmes were significantly impacted by lengthy restrictions on close physical contact. This will be discussed further in the next section. Our awards of University of the Year, Student Support of the Year and our outstanding performance in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, all in 2022, show that despite the challenges of the pandemic we provided an outstanding experience for our students.

We are not formally including our apprenticeship provision in this submission, as the data available on our higher and degree apprentices is minimal (70 students have continuation data, but all other fields are suppressed). However, apprenticeships at Higher and Degree levels are a new and developing portfolio for us and will play a more significant part in future TEF submissions. Where our approach to teaching and supporting students has been particularly informed by the needs of apprentices, we have noted this in our submission.

2. Student experience

Educational Strategy
The three pillars of our 2021-24 Learning and Teaching (L&T) Strategy[22] build on our exceptional and sustained record of teaching excellence and the success of our previous strategy and TEF submission. The strategy was developed over 2020-21 in anticipation of our new partnership with the UoW, taking into account lessons learned during the first year of the pandemic and student and stakeholder feedback. We pride ourselves on our ability to adapt and respond to the needs of our

students and stakeholders in developing an inspiring, innovative, and future-focused curriculum. Content is linked to industry and PSRB standards (where relevant) and delivered through multiple methods: lectures, visual materials, technology, classroom discussions, reflective practice, interactive sessions and applied assessments and exams.

Our Student Success Strategy 2022-24 builds on the L&T strategy, using the three pillars to focus on support for students outside of the formal curriculum. The three pillars are integrated throughout our curriculum offer and monitored as part of the quality enhancement cycle.

Pillar 1: Accessible and inclusive teaching and learning across a wide range of vocationally led programmes. Pillar 1 upholds the importance of a positive learning environment throughout the student lifecycle and includes personal tutorial support, industry sector-leading teaching spaces, and a safe environment to test creativity and entrepreneurial new ideas. We also commit to developing an unbiased inclusive and diverse culture of co-created curriculum with multiple stakeholders and with high quality virtual learning support and assessment that meet QAA standards and benchmarks.
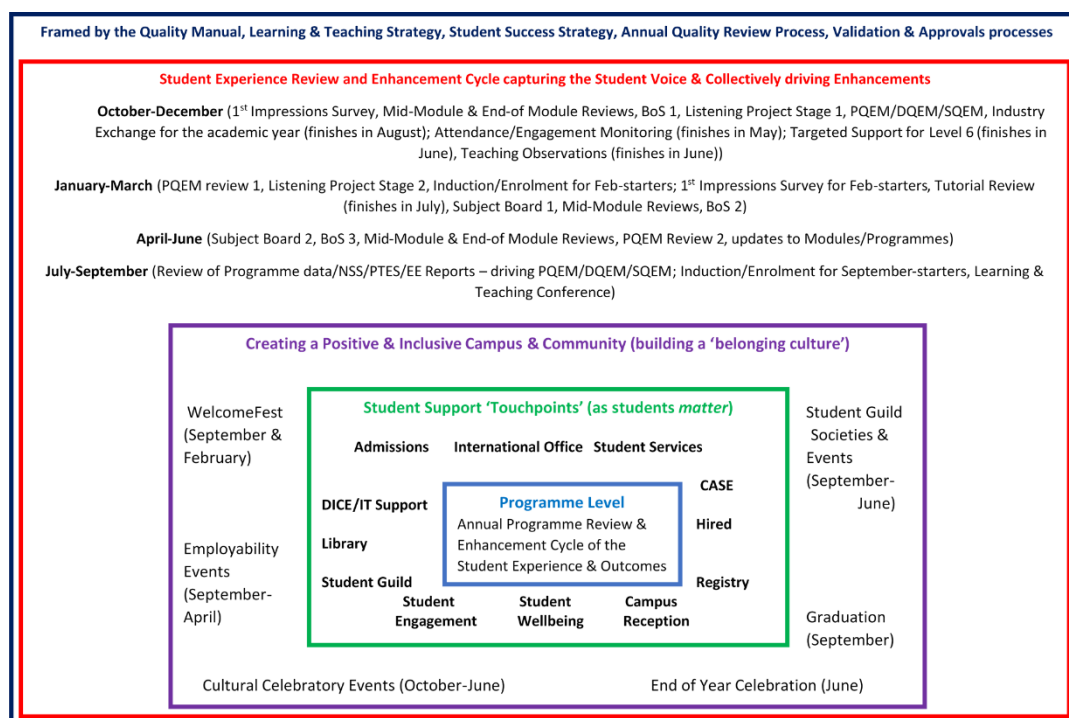
Pillar 2: Opportunities and Skills through Innovative and Future Focused Curriculum and Pedagogy. A vibrant employer-focused curriculum, leading the way with technology-enhanced active learning using simulated and immersive learning environments within world-class facilities that support critical thinking, diverse placements and work experience for new generation skills. For example, digital, problem solving, projects, self-assessment and reflection, communication, collaboration, resilience and lifelong learning that enrich personal and professional development and are transferable to a range of work settings.

Pillar 3: Local and Global, shaping sustainable futures and global citizenship. We celebrate the diversity of our learners and are committed to supporting local and sustainable futures and global awareness. We support our students to have a sense of purpose anchored in the local, regional and national community where they can actively participate. Our curriculum goes beyond the subject-specific to offer authentic international experiences to embed life skills that can affect change: for example, leadership, entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial, cultural awareness, emotional intelligence and data literacy.

Quality enhancement cycle: monitoring, evaluation, impact and effectiveness
Our commitment to the student experience is regulated through robust Quality Enhancement Monitoring (QEM) processes that ensure that learning outcomes, content and assessment are constructively aligned and embed the three pillars of our learning and teaching strategy, co-creating sustainable futures with staff, students, industry partners, stakeholders, and service users. This starts at programme development and continues through a quality enhancement cycle that monitors the student experience from pre-arrival, induction, learning and teaching, module and programme feedback, student satisfaction, success and adapting our curricula in response, including regular periodic review. This is achieved as described in figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Framed by the Quality Manual, Learning & Teaching Strategy, Student Success Strategy, Annual Quality Review Process, Validation & Approvals processes

Student Experience Review and Enhancement Cycle capturing the Student Voice & Collectively driving Enhancements

October-December (1st Impressions Survey, Mid-Module & End-of Module Reviews, BoS 1, Listening Project Stage 1, PQEM/DQEM/SQEM, Industry Exchange for the academic year (finishes in August); Attendance/Engagement Monitoring (finishes in May); Targeted Support for Level 6 (finishes in June), Teaching Observations (finishes in June))

January-March (PQEM review 1, Listening Project Stage 2, Induction/Enrolment for Feb-starters; 1st Impressions Survey for Feb-starters, Tutorial Review (finishes in July), Subject Board 1, Mid-Module Reviews, BoS 2)

April-June (Subject Board 2, BoS 3, Mid-Module & End-of Module Reviews, PQEM Review 2, updates to Modules/Programmes)

July-September (Review of Programme data/NSS/PTES/EE Reports – driving PQEM/DQEM/SQEM; Induction/Enrolment for September-starters, Learning & Teaching Conference)

Creating a Positive & Inclusive Campus & Community (building a 'belonging culture')

WelcomeFest (September & February)

Student Support 'Touchpoints' (as students *matter*)

Admissions   International Office   Student Services

Student Guild Societies & Events (September-June)

DICE/IT Support
Library
Student Guild

CASE

Programme Level
Annual Programme Review & Enhancement Cycle of the Student Experience & Outcomes

Hired

Registry

Employability Events (September-April)

Student Engagement   Student Wellbeing   Campus Reception

Graduation (September)

Cultural Celebratory Events (October-June)   End of Year Celebration (June)

As part of our QEM we collect module feedback, programme evaluation and external examiner feedback. Analysis of External Examiner comments between 2018-19 and 2021-22 demonstrates a particularly positive focus on innovative industry-focused assignments, with 10 external examiners commenting specifically about this, with additional comments related to detailed and timely lecturer feedback. Suggested improvements are implemented within 6 weeks, and monitored as part of our QEM.

Students are intrinsically involved at all stages of programme design and review. Feedback is sought on new programme proposals, ensuring extensive feedback from focus groups and internal and external survey data collected at periodic reviews undertaken every five years. Student representatives are members of the Validation and Approvals Committee and contribute to module feedback, influencing module review and periodic review outcomes. Feedback is obtained through module and programme reviews and student forums helping us to inform effective teaching and learning practices for new curricula. In addition, comprehensive industry and graduate feedback is obtained to inform the curriculum design.

A significant number of our Professional and Vocational programmes have Professional Statutory and Regulatory Body approval (PSRB): for example, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the Health Care Professionals Council (HCPC), the Society of Sports Therapists (SST), the National Strength, and Conditioning Association (NSCA), the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMPSA), the Institute of Hospitality (IoH) and the Digital Marketing Institute (DMI)[23]. We also have programmes with external accreditations; for example, we were awarded Gold Accreditation in Hospitality from People 1st International in February 2022 and we undergo regular reviews for our Hospitality Assured (Premier) accreditation from the IoH. We remained the best performer in the education sector and in the top 10% of all Hospitality Assured Accreditations and received an award for the 'Highest Score' in 2021/22 at the Award ceremony[24].

We are recognised as an Institute of Travel & Tourism 'Centre of Excellence' with our last award in June 2019. The award covers all tourism and aviation Higher Education programmes.

Assessment and feedback
We made significant progress between 2018 and 2022 on our assessment and feedback and have been above sector average for scores in this area of the NSS for several years (figure 2). We have an inclusive approach to assessment, maintaining high and consistent standards whilst supporting students to achieve the best possible outcomes. Evidence of our excellent support for students with disabilities or additional needs can be seen in the assessment and feedback split metrics, which are above benchmark. Students with disabilities or additional needs are provided with specific assignment support, which depending on their learner support plan, might include additional time for assessments, tailored assessment formats, and 1:1 support with a Specialist Support Tutor (we provide 20 of these sessions per week on average[25]).

All programmes are monitored to ensure learning outcomes, indicative content and assessments are constructively aligned. We embed formative learning and assessment activities within all programmes to ensure that students receive regular developmental feedback on their progress to scaffold their skills and knowledge effectively. All programmes and modules are scrutinised for this approach at validation and before assessments are launched to students. Various assessment modes have been adopted, including peer-to-peer feedback (in practical and simulated sessions), employer interim feedback on industry live projects and placements, feedback on draft submissions (predominantly for individual research projects), and feedback provided on mock exams and other 'practice' assessments.

Figure 2

NSS - Assessment & Feedback Scores

Legend: UCB (SHMM & Aethetics Excl.) — UCB — Sector Average
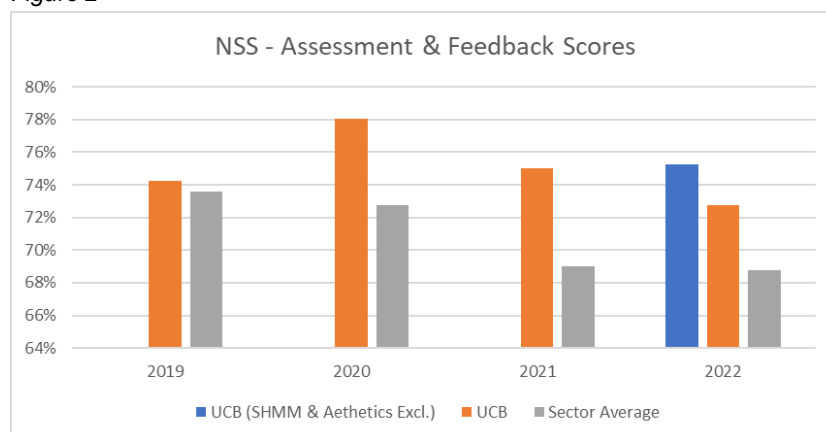
Programme delivery and academic support are differentiated to ensure students are appropriately stretched and supported. Students regularly highlight the supportive culture for their learning (WhatUni awards, NSS, Boards of Studies, Module Evaluations & External Examiner reports) and how their skills and knowledge have enhanced accordingly.

Engaging and tailored learning environment
One of our mechanisms for tailoring students' academic and professional skills development to their needs and starting points is Graduate Advantage (GA). This is a weekly timetabled session which runs alongside the academic curriculum. It is led by academic teams and focuses on three strands of development: academic, personal and graduate (i.e. employability). In 2021, an internal survey (n=100) found 96% of students valued GA for assignment support and time spent with their programme lecturer[26]. To understand our students' starting points, we developed our Academic Skills and English Task (ASET), which all students are encouraged to do on entry to HE studies. ASET test results are used to tailor the content of the academic strand of GA for each cohort. Student feedback, generally informally through lecturers, is also used to tailor content, ensuring that students receive additional support in developing the academic skills they need most.

The other strands of GA and their relationship to Educational Gain, and ASET's importance to our achievement of positive outcomes will be discussed in the Student Outcomes section below.

We have an institution-wide action plan on inclusive practice, developed as part of Pillar 1 of the Learning and Teaching strategy. This spans initiatives to enhance students' sense of belonging on campus, data-led interventions with targeted students, and the creation of race equity training for all staff across the University. The University also enhanced its assessment policies and practices in September 2021 to include more inclusive and supportive language in assessment briefs and feedback, using a wider range of formats, case studies, stakeholders, and geographical contexts. We communicate the assessment brief in multiple ways, using standard templates, including a vodcast from the module leader. The second phase of this work is developing an inclusive curriculum framework during 2022-23, based on academic scholarship and consultation with staff and students. This resource is being co-created with student curriculum consultants, who are also exposed to pedagogic research during the process. We ensure that the latest scholarship and policy in the sectors we serve inform our curricula through building reviews of relevant academic literature into our programme validations and periodic reviews. Additionally, given our unique and diverse student body, we are particularly informed by pedagogic research and inclusive practice research.

Our approach to personal tutoring is a further way that we provide tailored 1-1 support for students, who receive at least a tutorial per semester and one following publication of results. In 2021 we revised the tutorial system to align with pillar 1 of the Learning & Teaching strategy; following student and staff feedback, we now focus more on goal setting, engagement levels and support requirements. In semester 1, this includes an assessment of potential barriers to study and engagement with support services and extra-curricular activity. During semester two, progress and career planning take priority, followed by a final meeting to support students as they move into their next level of study or employment. Our students place huge value on the teaching and support we provide. This comes across in every survey, from the open comments on the NSS, where staff are mentioned positively, to the Spotlight on Great Teaching Awards, where 145 academic staff (55%) received at least one nomination in 2022[27].

Academic support

We offer comprehensive academic support through our Centre for Academic Skills and English (CASE). This service is open to all students and apprentices who can access up to 30 minutes of support weekly. This is offered to all students, regardless of academic attainment, and is taken up by students across the ability spectrum and academic disciplines[28]. The sessions are student-led, with Academic Development Tutors handling queries concerning academic skills (e.g., breaking down assignment tasks, assignment planning and language) while Academic Librarians support research and referencing queries. Support is available both face-to-face and via Teams. In 2021-22, there were 3,727 individual bookings for this service. Students are exceptionally satisfied with this service with 97% of respondents saying the appointment was helpful (2020-2022 survey data; n=931)[29]. In semester two of 2021-22, we also started a maths and statistics service staffed by maths coaches from the UoW.

In addition to the universal provision of 1-1 academic support, we have services to ensure specific groups of students can get the most out of their academic study. We know from the work of the Student Engagement team and learner analytics that when a student is not engaging or attending, this is often a consequence of health, financial or family circumstances rather than a reason relating to the programme or teaching (of those who provide a reason (n=244, 2021-22 academic

year), 33% cite health, 17% cite financial or work concerns, and 7% cite family circumstances[30]). Therefore, we provide substantial wraparound services to support our students, including disability support, counselling, a nurse, and financial support. Our well-being services provide 1-1 counselling appointments and in-class well-being support through GA. In 2021-22 they experienced a 24% increase in demand compared to 20-21, and a 56% increase in the number of sessions attended.

We provide significant financial support to our students, 79% of whom come from households with income below £25,000 (2018-19 – 2021-22 data; UK-domiciled undergraduates only)[31]. This includes our KickStart scheme, which provides students with funds to buy materials to help with study or to buy food on campus. To respond to the increasing financial pressures that students are under, we also offer free breakfast on campus and substantial hardship funds. We know that the majority of our students work alongside their studies and so we timetable teaching in substantial blocks on campus, usually 2-3 full days in total, rather than spreading teaching throughout the week. This allows students to organise childcare more efficiently, reduce transport costs, and to take part-time work, as well as allowing time for work placements. The strength and success of our support services is evident in disability and Free School Meals TEF workbook data, where continuation and completion are particularly strong and student feedback on academic support is particularly positive.

Learner analytics and student engagement

Data demonstrates that our students are very engaged with their programmes. This engagement is a consequence of excellent pedagogic practice. We monitor attendance regularly and follow up with students who are not attending to provide 1:1 and signposting support to get them back on track. Between 2018-19 and 2021-22 usage of the VLE has increased significantly and has not dropped back as teaching returned to primarily face-to-face delivery. As can be seen in figure 3 below, access to campus, as measured by average ID card swipes into buildings per day (required for all buildings), has increased since the return to face-to-face teaching, as expected. Access per student has reached over 92% in semester one of 2022-23 (those who have not necessarily accessed campus are students out on placement, or are on our online-only programme)[32].

Figure 3
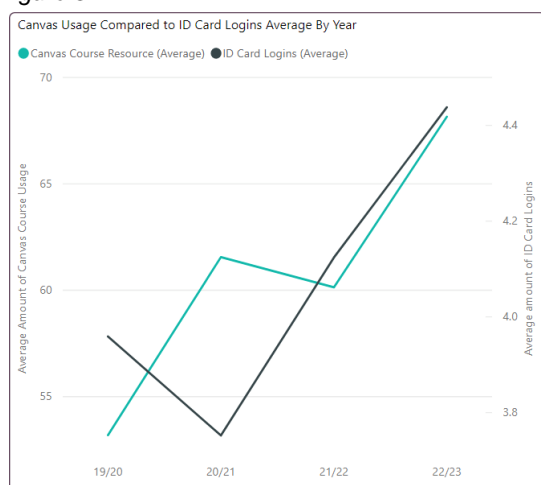
Learner analytics is an integrated element of how we tailor support for students to engage with learning and ensure that they progress on their programme. Our approach uses data from various sources to measure a students' engagement with the programme, alerting students if their engagement is low or suddenly drops, and congratulating them when their engagement is high. Students who received the positive message about their high engagement particularly praised how it makes them feel valued[33]. Students receive one of six engagement ratings: none, very low, low, partial, good, or high. We are particularly innovative in combining this system with a student engagement team who proactively follow up with students who are flagged as having low engagement, reconnecting them to their academic teams, or triaging access to well-being, academic skills support, or hardship services. This system has been in place since 2020 (initially as a pilot, running institution-wide from September 2021). We have robust analysis to show that with every increase

in engagement rating (e.g., from low to partial), average module marks increased by 13 points, and we also have compelling evidence that low engagement early in the programme predicts likely withdrawals. Our analysis of the impact of our learner analytics and engagement work for the first-year cohort in 2020-21 shows that students who had a successful intervention (e.g., at minimum a conversation with the engagement team) increased their engagement by nearly 1 rating, e.g., from low to partial[34]. As these students' progress through levels of study we expect a substantial impact on our continuation and completion metrics.

Employer engagement

Employer engagement in the curriculum is well-established across all disciplines. This includes live projects, placement activities, and involvement in programme and module design and assessment. All these employment-focused inputs enable us to create outstanding academic experiences for our students; students and employers frequently tell us that one of the benefits they gain from the University is the ability to take theoretical and academic content and apply it to employment-focused practice to an exceptionally high level[35]. In addition to curriculum-specific links we have an institution-wide Employer Board, who share their expertise and contacts, contribute to developing new curriculum areas and provide updates on innovative industry practice.

We have many examples of employer engagement with teaching and assessment from across our curriculum: a selection follows. Our FdA Professional Cookery students are taking a module with a live project undertaking development work on sugar reduction and evaluation for a food manufacturer, Classic Cuisine Ltd[36]. Their assessment involved presenting to a product development team from industry on their product solutions. Additionally, level 6 BA Culinary Arts Management students work with Quorn to design, develop, and deliver innovative new food concepts. Across the Hospitality and Tourism Department, the suite of UG Hospitality programmes were revalidated in 2020 to develop a strong digital and financial focus throughout, requested by industry partners to support the needs of their future workforce. For example, Tourism students completed a live project directly linked to the Commonwealth Games, Hospitality students completed projects in partnership with Compass Group and Aviation students have undertaken industry projects directly linked to an educational visit to Istanbul airport.

In summer 2022, we played a vital role in the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. The University hosted Team Scotland, including over 300 athletes and performance staff, in addition to a range of VIP guests, events and nearly 80 young elite athletes on the Team Scotland 'Achieve' programme. Sports Therapy students used the event to meet their placement requirement for accreditation with the Society of Sports Therapy, accruing over 540 hours of contact with elite athletes. In addition to this our Creative team supplied 31 students to do hair and makeup within the Edgbaston athlete village for those competitors across the games period. Students were prepared via their programmes and more specific supplementary training. This was all in collaboration with the Hired team and provided paid opportunities to gain unique, paid work placements linked to a global sporting event.

Physical learning resources

The University has invested £150 million in new campuses, equipment and resources; our facilities are nothing short of world-class. Facilities include state-of-the-art sports, catering and aesthetics clinics, a trading suite and more recently the health suite located within our £44 million Moss House Skills and Simulation suite. This resource uses advanced technology to provide real-life clinical scenarios in a safe environment to prepare health students for moving into real life clinical practice placements. Camden House is home to the new engineering, computer science and digital

hub, offering facilities for video and audio production, e-sports, engineering, and sustainable construction, and has a robotics lab. Academics and students are involved in the design of new facilities; for example, our gym and sports facilities in Moss House (used for teaching as well as recreational activities) were co-designed with teaching staff, who ensured they were fit for academic purposes.

Our new Engineering and Construction facilities are being co-designed with industry and with input from students. This is a significant investment of £3m in modern Engineering, Digital and Cyber Security suites at Camden House and more than £23m to refurbish the James Cond building, a 100-year-old derelict former print works, into a futuristic learning environment for modern and sustainable construction, opening September 2023. This will prepare students for emerging green skills; for example, retrofit and modern construction methods. The Centre will have a vocational focus and will bring college and HE students together to establish effective ways of implementing Design for Manufacture principles aligned to net zero principles. Our engagement with Greater Birmingham & Solihull Institute of Technology (which we have supported from its initial inception in 2016 to full licensing in 2020) and discussions with employers, wider stakeholders and students, we are focusing our delivery on the pathways aligned with emerging digital technologies. Students have access to industry-standard equipment to develop skills aligned to Industry 4.0, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Mechatronics.

Our College of Food has a national and international reputation for the quality of its restaurant and the outstanding standard of its chefs. Our graduates have gone on to win Michelin Stars, MasterChef the Professionals, and to reach the highest levels of the profession. Our public restaurant and café are the first step in that journey for our students - who all work in the restaurant as part of their programme - gaining experience of producing extremely high-quality meals to paying customers. The restaurant has AA College Rosette Highly Commended and Hospitality Assured (2022 national winners) accolades. Students also have access to industry-standard kitchens, with fitted visual display screens and online access, enabling real time research on online recipes, videos, and social media content to support their dish development and concept innovation. Industry-leading chefs judge these competitions, with students either participating, watching, or contributing as assistants. This exposes students to some of the top chefs nationally, who often recruit them for placements or jobs.

There is a range of analytical and evaluative equipment within the Food Science Laboratories which supports the Bakery and Patisserie Technology degree, as well as specialist confectionary ingredients provided through links with Bakery Industry. Food science laboratories are used across the Food and Nutrition programme enabling students to evaluate food safety and hygiene and the shelf life of foods. The Sensory Suite allows students to analyse and flavour profile a range of different foods, and the developmental kitchens support students' skills in creating cuisine and experimenting with healthy recipes with the aid of professional chefs.

Digital learning resources
Our excellent digital resources[37] are supported by a team of educational and web developers, who ensure that staff and students can make the most of the tools available. For example, our Specialist Hair and Media Make-Up team trialled the use of Talis Elevate in 2019, supported by our Learning Services team. This allows students to engage with images, videos and journal articles and leave comments for tutors before attending their seminars. The platform increased student sociability, which gave more time to analyse, discuss and learn in the classroom. This led to us winning a national Library Teaching and Learning Award for the use of this software and its

adaption to virtual learning[38]. The software and related CPD for staff have now been rolled out for use across the institution. Significant investment has also been made in the University's IT infrastructure.

In October 2020, a new project was launched based on student feedback on their experience of using digital tools on our VLE. This work resulted in a new combined VLE area designed to support students from the beginning to the end of their assignment process, called the Assignment Life Cycle. This aimed to improve the student experience as all relevant information would now be more readily accessible (and in one place). At various stages, the creation and evaluation of this has included consultation with students and teaching staff. It was launched in September 2021 and has been used well by staff and students, with 75K views – a 34% increase from the previous toolkits in 2020-21. Students appreciate that all the information is in one place, it is interactive, and because it uses a life cycle approach, they can find information relevant to the stage they are at. In describing it, the top 3 words were "helpful, informative, and easy"[39].

Inter-professional learning and teaching are particularly driven through new technologies such as the anatomage table which is used by staff across sport, nursing, physiotherapy, health within anatomy and physiology (A&P) modules across the range of programmes. The tables allow students to interact with 3D images of preserved digital cadavers, to provide a clear visualisation of body organs and systems that brings the complex subject of anatomy to life. The accurate details and rich content draw students' interest and attention leading to more effective learning. Students appreciate working in small groups to gain a deeper understanding of anatomical processes in preparation for their A&P exams and the application to real-life practice placements. We have a 360-degree immersive technology video room which allows small teams of students to work together and inter-professionally to navigate their way through complex scenarios, preparing them for working in integrated teams during their placements and in practice. Health technicians, working alongside nursing, health and physiotherapy academic teams, are also creating a bank of 'Mixed Reality' scenarios that use immersive video technology plus physical equipment that can together replicate many different learning environments, for example, the back of an ambulance, an intensive care unit, prison cell or road traffic accident scene.

Student Feedback and Continuous Improvement
Our learning environment and academic support complement our excellent teaching. Winning the 2022 WhatUni Student Choice Award for Student Support is evidence of how strong this support is; out of hundreds of student reviews, we received the highest average score (4.39/5) of any UK university[40]. We understand our students' needs very well, treat them as individuals and provide a comprehensive and easy to access range of services. From the reviews that students provided, we know that a key strength is the support that students receive from staff across the institution, which encourages them to feel that they belong to our community.

Our open-door policy means that student feedback is usually acted on quickly and informally. We have academic staff for each department available every day on campus, and staff offices are clearly signposted. Consequently, we have a low number of formal complaints   as any concerns can usually be resolved easily at an early stage.

In addition to informal engagement, there are formal mechanisms for gathering feedback. We have a Guild of Students with representation on formal committees up to Corporation. There is a formal student representative system, with Subject Boards providing feedback at programme and department level, and feeding into the Board of Studies, which is University-wide. In addition, staff

at all levels across the University work co-operatively with the Guild, including working with them to gather the views of specific groups of students, and monitoring the demographics of who engages. Actions from formal groups like Board of Studies are followed up quickly and communicated to students via lecturers if the action is at a programme level, or in institution-wide communications if the action is broader.

We have developed and piloted a standardised online mid-module review form for all module leaders to use which includes questions about assessment, GA, library resources and any potential barriers to submitting assessment. They also capture key strengths and areas for improvement. Once the questionnaire has been completed for a module, the module leader then closes the loop with a response by way of a vodcast or live recorded presentation back to the students. This is a direct response to students asking for more information on how their feedback is acted upon. Taking this approach has significantly increased the responses to the Mid-Module Review form with 858 responses in 2021[42]. It also enables quick improvements to be made to modules during their delivery.

We develop action plans in response to formal feedback. For example, after the 2021 NSS, we identified areas for improvement including FdSc Health and Social Care, where we had identified from NSS comments and student feedback that there were inconsistencies in teaching on modules across the course. In 21/22, a robust action plan was put in place to address consistency issues, and as a consequence, NSS scores for 'teaching on my course' increased from 75% in 20/21 to 94% in 21/22 and Academic support increased from 75% to 90%[43].

Our largest programmes are in the Creative Industries department, which has averaged 19% of our student cohort over the TEF period. This department contains two undergraduate courses FdA/BA (Hons) Specialist Hair and Media Makeup, and FdA/BA (Hons) Aesthetic Practitioner, which are our only courses in the 'Creative Arts and Design, Performing Arts, and Allied Health split indicators on the TEF workbook. The pandemic had a significant impact on these programmes as close contact services are essential to substantial parts of the programme, and Government regulations prevented any close contact for nine months, allowing it only under very restricted circumstances for a further six months, with frequent changes in guidance.

Limitations of this nature did impact significantly on NSS data from these cohorts and can be seen below (table 1). Without SHMM and Aesthetics our NSS performance in 2022 would be above our 2021 performance, and above or in line with benchmarks in all student experience measures. As can be seen in our student submission, when surveyed in November 2022, 85% of students agreed that they had the right opportunities to provide feedback on their programme (n=264), reinforcing, along with our award of University of the Year based on student feedback, that our NSS in 2022 was not typical of feedback from our students.

Table 1[44]

	Teaching	Assess & Feedback	Academic Support	Resources	Student Voice
Current	72.2	72.8	70.7	77.9	66.5
Without SHMM and Aesthetics	80.4	75.3	78.8	80.8	73.5
Benchmark (FT year 4)	81.5	75.0	77.8	80.4	74.1

Distance from benchmark	-1.1	+0.3	+1.0	+0.4	+0.6

Thematic analysis of 2022 NSS comments from students on these programmes shows that 81% of negative comments related to Covid issues, including the impact of remote or online delivery on students' ability to practice their skills[45]. We made substantial efforts to mitigate this for students, from posting clay to home addresses to enable them to complete sculpture modules, to amending the institution's academic calendar so that more face-to-face teaching could be scheduled. However, as our cohorts on these programmes are the largest in the institution, they had a very significant impact on our 2022 NSS. We also saw a reduction in response rates for the NSS in 2022 compared with previous years, from an average of 71.3% from 2019-21 to 53.4% for full-time students[46]. We are working hard to increase response rates for 2023.

Staff expertise and Professional development of staff
Excellent feedback on our teaching is in part a consequence of our support for staff development. We take many staff with industry expertise and develop them to become outstanding teachers. We have a thorough induction and probation programme for new academic staff, including mentoring by an experienced academic, and comprehensive training in the use of our physical and digital learning resources. As our provision spans FE and HE, we learn the best from both sectors to educate staff comprehensively on teaching approaches, and to make sure that our approach is evidence-based.

All staff are observed teaching at least once a year through a formal process using trained observers, and often more frequently through our open-door policy and informal peer observation. Data from teaching observations provides evidence of excellent quality; of all the observations conducted in 2021-22 (n=134), 95.58% of criteria were met or exceeded in the School of Health, Sport and Food, and 98.77% in the School of Business, Tourism and Creative Industries. Particular strengths identified in observations were the ability to connect and engage with students (78% exceeds expectations (EE)), making connections to other teaching sessions (72% EE), and explaining key ideas (63% EE)[47]. The small number of staff who do not meet or exceed expectations for teaching are provided with additional support, mentoring, and further observations.

Professional practice is embedded into everything we do and threaded throughout our curriculum. Academic staff have industry experience, and are required to keep this current by spending a number of days in industry each year through our industry exchange scheme. This approach captures contemporary sector initiatives, trends, and graduate attributes, which are then embedded into the curriculum and triangulated with associated research. In 2021-22 examples include working on the set of Bridgeton (TV production), Towcester Food Festival, Backface 3D digital scanning company, Red Carnation hotels and Aerospace Growth Partnership. Some of our staff also maintain their professional practice whilst teaching with us. For example, many of our sports staff maintain professional practice as coaches or therapists in private practice; food and hospitality staff still work within the hospitality and catering industry; Specialist Hair and Media Make-up staff work in film and TV; and our physiotherapists continue to work in private practice, while our nursing staff work within the NHS. Therefore, students work with staff who have first-hand experience of the industries they are entering and apply this experience to inform programme design and teaching approaches.

All staff have access to comprehensive CPD, with a mix of formal and informal in house and external opportunities. We spent £110,609 on CPD in 2021-22, with over 868 attendances by staff at development activities and a further 296 online training programme completions. 81% of our current academic staff hold a recognised teaching qualification with the remaining staff currently undertaking one[48]. New HE teaching staff all have to complete our PGCert HE if they do not already hold an equivalent qualification. We also support staff to achieve external accreditations such as HEA fellowships - 63 members of staff currently hold one[49].

We support higher-level qualifications, and between 2018-19 and 2021-22, 70 staff were registered to complete Masters-level study with support from us, and 17 were studying at doctoral level (many of whom completed their qualification during the period). As part of this comprehensive package, a   was supported to achieve the Rugby Football Union (RFU) Level 4 (performance) coaching certificate in 2020. This is the highest level of coaching within the sport's framework and made the staff member   in the UK to have gained the award. The experience led to the staff member specialising in performance coaching, away from sport, working with leadership groups. This then transferred into the Higher Apprenticeship (Coaching Professional) programme, new for 2019/20 and developed by the staff member. From this they then adapted the apprenticeship resources into a high-performance in-house leadership training programme for academic leaders across all departments. The programme has now engaged with over 50 staff and delivered over 100 hours of in-house training. Feedback post-delivery   shows that 85% of respondents had already implemented changes in their leadership practice as a result of the training by the end of the 6-week programme; with the remaining 15% having taken steps towards change in the same time period. This approach continues to engage with leaders at all levels within the Schools, seeing a new staff mentoring programme introduced at the same time and an Academic staff coaching programme planned for 2023, using trained peer coaches[50].

Our 2022 Learning and Teaching Conference was explicitly linked to the three pillars of our Learning and Teaching strategy, and showcased our commitment to digital adaptations, including creating purposeful Virtual Reality (VR). It was attended by over 70% of academic staff[51]. The conference explored advancements within a range of sectors, whilst a technology playground showcased a wide range of teaching and learning equipment to enrich classroom experiences or create immersive opportunities through VR, including featuring a session on the uses of robots within the hospitality industry. Workshops took academics through the journey of creating VR content and bringing this into the classroom. Our in-house professional development also includes an annual inclusivity conference (attended by 176 staff in 2022[52]). More informal activities also take place throughout the year including a journal discussion club, industry days, seminars and webinars, often with guest speakers. There is very strong engagement with CPD activity, with all academic staff having taken part in some teaching focused CPD in 2021-22.

Staff recognition and reward
We reward staff for good teaching through formal promotions processes such as professorships, and through staff awards, including student-nominated awards. Over the past 18 months the University has set in place a new academic structure which provides a clear staff progression framework from Graduate Teaching Assistant through to Academic Management roles and then, if applicable, to Senior Management level roles. Furthermore, there is annual opportunity for staff to apply for an academic title such as Associate Professor or Professor, which includes criteria relating to supporting outstanding teaching[53].

Our staff are in demand from other organisations for their expertise in teaching and academic development. In 2019-20 our staff were external examiners at 49 different institutions[54]. We also have staff acting as advisers to professional bodies, employers, and other organisations, which brings back into the University opportunities for our students. For example, our Senior Lecturer in Early Years represents the University as a member of the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network (ECSDN) Strategy Group. This strategic role creates the opportunity to lead on and inform Early Childhood sector policy locally and nationally. One member of the tourism team sits on the Institute of Travel & Tourism's (ITT) Educational Committee, ensuring a clear alignment between academic tourism programmes and industry practices/skills and outcomes (we are one of 8 universities in the UK with an ITT Centre of Excellence accreditation).

3. Student Outcomes

As described above, we understand our student body very well. They are demographically diverse: our UK-domiciled students are overwhelmingly from areas of socio-economic disadvantage, and they usually come to us with non-traditional entry qualifications. We gather opinions and feedback from students frequently on what they need and how they are doing. As a consequence of what we know about our students and their needs, we have built our Student Success Strategy to work across FE, HE and apprenticeship students, focusing on supporting them to progress between each stage of their journey. Our overriding aim is that all our students, whatever their starting point or programme of study, thrive at university, succeed on their chosen programme, and progress to positive and fulfilling future lives and careers.

Over the past four years, we have put in place substantial interventions to support all our students to succeed with us[55]. These are already impacting positively on continuation and completion data, some of which can be seen in the TEF workbook. The positive impact is not yet always visible in the external data, which has a long time-lag, but we have internal data, discussed below, to demonstrate the positive direction of travel.

Excellent programme design and pedagogy are at the heart of our approach, and we design in access to support, check-in points, and a graduated approach to assessment[56]. Offering both FD and BA/BSc entry helps us to differentiate teaching for our students' different starting points, thus building confidence, particularly in non-traditional students. We are especially proud that on average 74% of our FD students go on to a top-up degree with us; their attainment of 2.1 and 1st class degrees is very strong considering the distance they have travelled (64% between 2018-19 and 2021-22, compared with 67% for BA/BSc entry students).

A critical goal over several years has been to enhance our students' sense of 'belonging' and 'mattering'. Although both concepts are often used interchangeably, we view 'belonging' as being part of the university community (of a group) and 'mattering' as ensuring each individual student feels valued and supported within our community to optimise their success. Our relatively small size, and the way that staff members know each student individually, makes a significant contribution to students 'mattering'. Evidence can be seen in detail in the students' submission and includes our individual support plans; individual tutorials; diversity and inclusivity approach; assessment choices; large number of opportunities for students to share their individual voice; focus on wellbeing and mental health; and the diverse range of student guild societies. We will build on this approach further in the development of our Student Voice strategy as described in the student submission.

Our continuation and completion rates are very high, and we are particularly pleased that we managed to maintain high levels of continuation during the pandemic, given the disruption faced by students on many of our programmes. Areas where we perform especially well for full time students include disabled students (2.2% above benchmark), students previously on Free School Meals (3.7% above), creative arts (5.4% above), Architecture, building and planning (5.9% above), and allied health (4.7% above). We have also worked hard to close gaps in retention rates for Black and Asian students compared with white students, visible in our TEF workbook data where the performance for Black, Asian, Mixed and Other students is substantially above our benchmark, and broadly in line with the performance of white students. On full time completion the overall trajectory is particularly positive; we have improved each year and are now in line with the benchmark. This improvement is masked in the split metrics, which include the lower performance of year 1 (in 2016-17) in their average. For part time students our small numbers mean there is high statistical uncertainty in the split metrics, but overall we are performing significantly above benchmark (3% above for continuation, 0.4% above for completion).

We know which factors correlate with student drop-out and student achievement at each stage of the student journey, and have used this to inform our approach to learner analytics, student engagement and monitoring. Engagement and attendance at four weeks are the strongest predictors of retention. Other factors that were statistically significant were Index of Multiple Deprivation Decile (IMD), age group, and funding status. As IMD decile decreases, the likelihood of withdrawing increases. Students in the young age group were more likely to withdraw than those in the mature group. Attendance was a stronger predictor than engagement (although both were significant). For both, likelihood to withdraw increases as these decrease. Attainment and Engagement are positively correlated (Pearson, p value < 0.001, correlation 0.630)[57].

Engagement rating is also correlated with academic achievement, as is attendance, with students rated 'very low' or 'low' being significantly less likely to achieve a 2.1 or above. As a consequence of this, we use attendance and engagement data, triangulated with staff insights to target students for extra support and catch them before problems occur. Analysis of the impact of this work shows that, for those students whose engagement was rated 'very low' and who received an intervention, there was a 41% reduction in 'very low' ratings (semester 1 2020-21 interventions; 307 students in intervention group). Interventions have resulted in a decrease in students flagged as having 'very low engagement' in 2021-2 compared with 2020-21[58].

We are working on further improvements to our already strong performance. We know that non-submission (NS) of work is also correlated with higher risk of non-completion. Analysis of our 2021-22 student data shows that 74% of students that had at least one final NS were continuers compared to 99% for those without a final NS. Students with a non-submission are also more likely to be repeating, or to have gone dormant compared to those who submitted all work. We have done significant work to address non-submissions and have reduced the rate from 3611 non-submissions (pieces of work, rather than students) in 2020-21 to 1901 in 2021-22[59]. We did this by creating a system through our VLE to provide support to those students who have not submitted programme work on time. Students receive a prompt from their module leader or tutor if they have not submitted, with advice on extenuating circumstances and resit options. This inclusive system ensures that all students receive current information about the support mechanisms available and can reach out to a tutor for individual support. We expect this to have a positive impact on our 2022-23 and subsequent continuation, completion and attainment data.

As we know that our students arrive with a very wide range of English and written academic skills development needs, we developed our ASET. This is based on research from a doctoral study in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) assessment usefulness by a member of the university's CASE team[60]. The aim is to assess all students' academic literacy, with a specific focus on those skills identified as key by the departments in which the students will be studying. We can then focus on supporting students to acquire and develop these skills during their time with us. The project established the academic skills and language proficiency required to cope with level 4 study. These were then translated into criteria to be used for assessing a text produced by students during a one-hour assessment. Students are marked using a RAG-rated scale which relates to the key areas of task achievement, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, structure of answer and use of source materials. The Advanced ASET (A-ASET) used for level 6 and 7 entry students also considers elements of criticality within these areas. They receive feedback in the form of RAG-rated criteria identifying areas of strength and areas for improvement and a support document which directs them to online programmes that they can take in their own time to help them further develop key academic reading and writing skills. Group tutors receive a report about their group, which includes individual ratings for each student as well as overall ratings for the group. The report also makes suggestions of areas which the group would benefit from working on, meaning these can be built into GA sessions to develop Academic Literacies development tasks focussing specifically on the needs of the group.

Since June 2020 we have had a substantial project focusing on closing gaps in outcomes between different demographic groups, following commitments in our Access and Participation Plan. We have worked to reduce the gap in 'good' degrees (2.1 or 1st) between students from different ethnic groups. In 2020 we had a 38pp gap between Black and white students, which we have reduced to 14pp for students completing their degree in 2022[61]. We have done this through undertaking a thorough review of sector-level evidence of what works to reduce gaps, and through analysing our data to better understand the characteristics of cohorts with different outcomes, and where the gaps in performance tend to emerge. We then developed a comprehensive action plan across the whole institution. This has included 1:1 support for students who had originally been on track to achieve a 2.1 but were at risk of falling behind. We have evidence of the impact of this work on positive degree outcomes for students. For the 2021 graduating cohort, analysis suggests that students that engaged with the support offered managed to maintain their average module mark from level 5 into level 6 with only a 0.3 drop, compared to the control group that saw a decrease of 4.9 (on average our students achieve lower marks at level 6 than at level 5). This outcome was statistically significant, and particularly strong for female Asian students[62]. We are using these findings to refine the targeted support for future years of students, expanding the programme to students in level 5 as well as level 6.

There are excellent rates of successful progression for our students, though these are not always reflected in our data, where the particular coding used in the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) is a challenge to our type of provision. In addition, historically we have had a relatively low response rate on the GOS, which combined with being a smaller institution means that based on our most recent year of data, to be in line with the TEF benchmark would only require an additional 75 students to record a graduate outcome[63].

Many of our students (74%) continue to a top-up degree immediately on completing their FD. This means that they are surveyed twice, once 18 months after they complete their FD, and again 18 months after they complete their level 6. In the first survey (which can be seen in the 'other UG' data), a large proportion of surveyed students will have only finished full time study 4-6 months

before they are surveyed. It's possible to see this in the data by considering the 'interim study' marker. Overall, 11.6% of other UG students surveyed indicated that they had a period of interim study, which is their top-up degree with us. If this data had been counted as a positive outcome our graduate outcomes for other UG students would be 48.9%, which is 1.6% above our benchmark[64].

The same issue also impacts on our first-degree progression rates, where surveyed students are a mix of students who have completed a traditional 3 or 4 year degree, and those who have progressed from a FD to top up (36% of Graduate Outcome responses are from top-up students). For top-up students, their previous qualification is listed as 'an undergraduate degree' for the purposes of benchmarking, and so despite being our most disadvantaged students, and having the lowest academic starting points, they are counted twice, and against a benchmark that may not accurately represent a comparator group.

In addition, in a large number of our subject areas the outcomes that students aspire to reach are not classified as graduate roles. In particular, this impacts on our outcomes for 'agriculture, food and related studies', which is predominantly our Culinary Arts degree students. In the SOC codes, 'chef' is classified as Skilled Trades Occupations, which is not a graduate role, regardless of the level of responsibility or the type of restaurant a student is working in. Internal analysis of the 2022 graduate outcomes data suggests that of the 30 students who had graduated in Culinary Arts and were not classified as in a graduate role,   were in chef roles with section leadership and/or product development responsibility at very prestigious institutions including The Ritz, and Carters of Moseley. This is in addition to those students who had already been classified as in graduate roles. Similar challenges occur in several other subject groups, including in education, where many of our Early Childhood Studies graduates go on to work in schools and nurseries, often as teaching assistants, which is not classified as a graduate outcome, unless they are explicitly given the title 'higher-level teaching assistant', despite many performing the same duties. In our creative programmes such as Specialist Hair and Media Make-Up, many students work part time or freelance in the industry to build up a portfolio which can take several years. They therefore often work in other roles to support themselves whilst developing their career.

Our recent graduate outcomes data has been affected by the impact of Covid on the industries we serve. The most recent cohort of students in the data graduated in 2020, into the first part of the pandemic. As the sectors we serve focus particularly on hospitality, aviation, beauty, and film and TV, our students were particularly impacted. As these industries began to open up again, we have started to see a recovery. For instance, the airline industry was significantly impacted by the travel restrictions imposed during the pandemic, with £180bn net losses reported (Cirium, 2022), and an estimated loss of 2.3 million jobs globally, with almost 65,000 job losses in the UK (Oxford Economics, 2022). Airports Council International (2022) expects the industry to fully recover by 2024, with greater prospects arising for graduates by then.

By December 2022, 33/50 (66%) of aviation graduates from 2020 (who are in the most recent (2021-22) GOS as the only programme in 'Architecture, Building and Planning') have reported that they have secured supervisor/manager roles since the end of 2021/start of 2022, as the industry started to recover. We would expect these roles to be classified as positive outcomes in the GOS, placing us substantially above benchmark. In addition, a further 3 graduates have secured critical posts such as ground agents and highly sought flight crew positions at British Airways. It is important to note that graduates are particularly sought for these positions, although they may not be classified as a 'graduate outcome', they do allow swift progression to more senior roles in the industry.

The geography and demographics of our students also presents a challenge for the way that graduate outcomes are coded. Whilst benchmarks do take into account some differences in labour market experience between groups, they do not take account of the multiple and intersectional characteristics of our students, which make their progression to highly skilled employment particularly challenging. There is significant evidence in the UK of labour market discrimination against students from certain ethnicities, or with certain accents (For example, see the Sutton Trust[65]). This is part of the reason we are working with UoW to validate degree programmes where we believe that a Russell Group degree certificate will give our students a competitive advantage in the industries they wish to progress to. We continue to use our own Taught Degree Awarding Powers for programmes (such as those in health professions), where progression outcomes are less dependent on perceptions of institutional prestige.

However, notwithstanding the challenges with how graduate outcomes data is collected, we recognise that most of our students aspire to highly-skilled jobs (whether or not they are categorised as a 'graduate' outcome). Ensuring that our students have the skills for employment is embedded in everything we do, as a key element of our Learning and Teaching and Student Success Strategies. Consequently, we have put substantial interventions in place to improve student employment outcomes. This includes changes to our curriculum offer to meet local skills gaps, providing clearer employment pathways for students, and focusing more on industries where students can have a clearer expectation of a return on their investment. New curriculum areas include health, computing, construction and engineering, all of which respond to regional and national skills shortages.

Our Hired (careers) team has nine Employability Tutors who work with students completing Higher Education and Post Graduate studies. These staff have been recruited with specific industry backgrounds to source and support students with work experience and placement opportunities. Prior to work experience beginning, students attend pre-placement sessions tailored to their programme area to prepare them for industry. Topics covered include employability skills such as work etiquette, safeguarding, CV and cover letter writing.

All of our programmes are designed to prepare students for life beyond their studies, usually focusing on a particular field or industry. Therefore, preparation for skilled graduate employment runs throughout everything we do, from the design of programmes to progressively developing technical and digital skills and knowledge, to the high number of our students who undertake placements or substantial work experience. Almost all of our undergraduate programmes have inbuilt placement hours, either integrated into the programme delivery (e.g. physiotherapy, nursing, childhood studies) or in the form of a year-long placement (e.g. Culinary Arts Management, Hospitality and Tourism). On average, 153 of our undergraduate students undertook a year-long placement per year between 2018-19 and 2021-22, and an additional 341, on average, completed placement hours on a day release or block placement model. In programmes where it is less common for students to undertake lengthy placements, students are strongly encouraged to undertake work experience.

During the placement, students receive a visit in person or online and complete module-based requirements and reflective assignments to track their experience. This approach allows them to embed their learning, reflect on skills gained and future development required. Employers are asked to review progress and provide students with feedback to support their learning. Many students are offered part time work or graduate opportunities based on their performance on placement.

We also have substantial broader career offers, supporting students to gain work experience, make career choices, and prepare for applications and interviews. In 21/22 our careers advisors saw 318 HE students for 1:1 Information Advice and Guidance Appointments, delivered 117 Employability Workshops in class (tailored to specific programmes) and checked 154 student CVs.

During their time at the University and for 5 years after graduation, students have access to online employability resources on the VLE and HIRED Connect. Students can receive expert advice, complete careers assessments, book appointments with the team and use CV and Interview 360 feedback tools. Resources are regularly updated and provide students with remotely accessible 24/7 support.

To support Level 6 and Level 7 final year students, a VLE page "Step Into Your Future", is available containing resources for graduate schemes, jobs and further study guidance. Students can access resources, employer talks and see upcoming graduate scheme dates. This resource is shared across all programmes and with academic teams, thus having university wide input. All employer talks and networking opportunities are advertised here so students can register their attendance at these events. HIRED track this activity to ensure its impact can be measured and best practice can be shared from the programme.

In addition, we were a partner on an OfS Local Challenge Project alongside other Birmingham universities, known as the 'Transformation West Midlands' (TWM) project, from 2019 to 2021[66]. The project sought to address gaps in Destination of Leavers in Higher Education outcomes, which had identified that new graduates in non-graduate level employment were disproportionately from their home region, with the larger employability gap, particularly from Black and minority ethnic graduates and individuals with a disability. TWM adopted 1:1 progression coaching for recent graduates as the mechanism to uncover the student/graduate coachee journey; it sought to understand better what enables progress and to unpick to what extent coaching alone - or specific events/other interventions - support progress towards a graduate level job or graduate outcome (which also includes entry into postgraduate study).

We also support students to progress academically, whether with us or elsewhere. We offer a range of postgraduate programmes and provide substantial support for students to transition to level 7 study. Our record on the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey is outstanding, ranking in the top quartile across all categories (out of 91 institutions across the sector). We scored 90% or above in 15/26 questions in comparison to the Sector (2/26 questions), Post 92 (4/26 questions) and the GuildHE (2/26 questions)[67].

Educational Gain
The educational gains we intend our students to make are informed by the mission of the university and the starting points of our students. We know the education we offer our students can be transformative, and we want to make sure that we consistently support our students to achieve success in their chosen field. Our approach recognises that for many students 'success' is about achieving a degree and getting a 'good' job. We are keen to ensure that all students benefit from these gains and monitor differential outcomes by demographic and subject group. We see part of our role as to not simply helping students to achieve their ambitions, but also supporting them to develop confidence and self-efficacy and providing them with a clear pathway towards achieving their goals.

We influence our students' path through education at all stages of their time with us, but the key elements are summarised below.
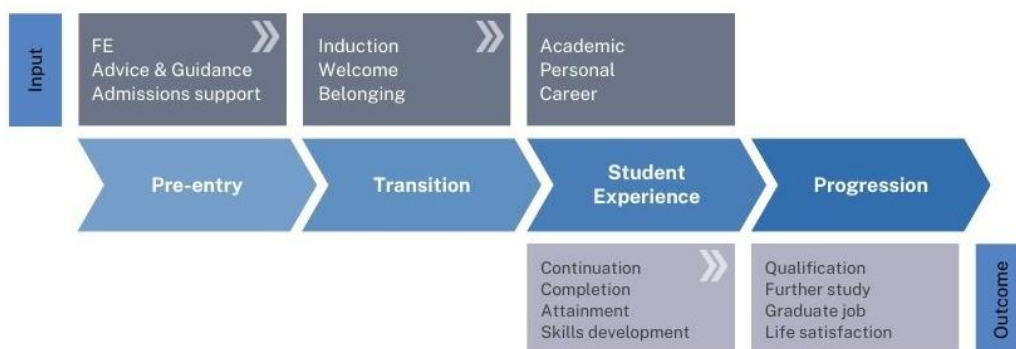
Our work to ensure students achieve the best outcomes begins before they enrol on an HE programme. Our unique FE and HE model allows us to support students to achieve the right level 3 qualifications to be successful on a programme with us. Whilst not all our HE students have studied with us previously, our detailed knowledge of a wide range of qualifications and entry points allows us to provide particularly thorough information, advice and guidance to prospective students, and to make sure they are on the programme that's right for them. We work very proactively with schools and colleges in the local area, and[68] we have recently announced that we will open a sixth form college in 2024, offering A Levels alongside our vocational FE offer. This will provide young people in Birmingham with an inclusive, high-quality pathway to university.

We also work with our international partners to ensure that international students understand the requirements of studying in the UK and are prepared for their programme. We run webinars for international offer-holders and their advisors providing advice on transition and academic support before arrival. We have dedicated support for international students, including an induction programme, academic English support, visa advice, and careers and employability support.

All of these activities focus on the student arriving at the start point ready. Once they begin studying, we have three strands to the learning gains we intend our students to achieve, which align with the three strands of GA. These have been developed with our students and its content is tailored to each cohort's needs as described above. The strands are:

1. **Academic gain.** Whether students gain academic skills and competencies and meet the learning objectives for their programme. Achieving a degree is a key measure of this strand, but these skills also go beyond simply achieving a degree to include an assessment of the academic distance travelled, given the diverse starting points of our students.

2. **Career and skills gain**. Whether students have acquired the skills, contacts and experience to progress their careers now and in the future. Over time this will encompass an assessment of students' acquisition of skills and competencies based on graduate attributes, including vocational skills development. Initially, we are using survey-based career readiness questions and students' industry experience.

3. **Personal gain.** To what extent students have developed the resilience, self-efficacy and confidence to succeed in education and beyond. We have some interim measures of indirect outputs, including through increased engagement scores. Developing substantive measures of direct outputs and outcomes will take place over the next 12 months.


We support students once they have achieved a degree with us to ensure that they can use their qualification to fulfil their aspirations. This includes providing alumni with access to our Hired careers service for five years after graduation and providing support and transition activities towards postgraduate study. We also employ a number of our own graduates as Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) on our undergraduate programmes as they not only have the relevant academic qualification for this role but also can act as positive role models for our students. Many of these GTA's have progressed to Associate Lecturer roles with us.

Our approach to educational gain goes beyond measuring individual interventions to a more sophisticated feedback loop, informed by learner analytics. Our student success evaluation strategy focuses on regular data analysis of critical points in a students' journey to see whether students are making expected progress between points, both individually and as a group, and to assess the impact of the interventions we put in place. We use TASO's standards of evidence in the evaluation work we produce.

For academic gain we have a measure of 'value added', that is, distance travelled from entry qualification to exit. We use this in particular to measure differences in value added scores between demographic groups. Results shows that we provide considerable 'valued added' to many of our student groups, in particular disabled students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, white students and female students[69]. We monitor differential degree outcomes particularly closely, and have had considerable success in reducing these in recent years, helping more of our students to achieve their intended degree outcomes. We used evidence to come up with a holistic plan to close degree awarding gaps, having realised they were preventing us from achieving the scale of educational gains we wanted for all our students. We took evidence from what had already shown promise in the sector (for instance, the UUK report[70], and Kingston's work[71]), carefully analysed our own data, and produced a detailed action plan, triangulated with feedback from staff and students. As a consequence of the work we have been doing towards the plan, the gap between Black and white students reduced from 38pp to 14pp between 2020 and 2022, and the gap between Asian and white students reduced from 25pp to 12pp[72]. Our 'value added gap' between Black and White students has improved by 20% and the gap between Asian and White students has improved by 16% (comparing 2021 to 2020 graduates[73]). We continue to work on reducing the gaps in value added and outcomes further, using regular data check-ins to monitor progress.
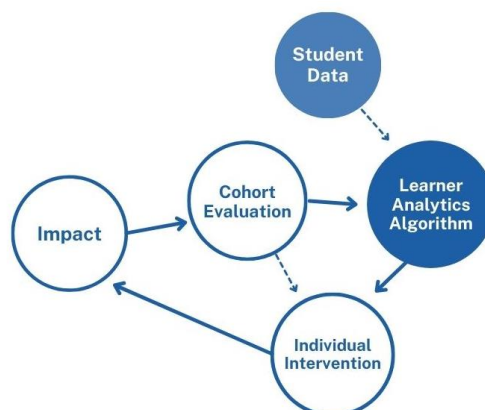
ASET is a key element of our measures of learning gain for our students. From analysis of ASET scores from the 2020-21 entry cohort, we can see that their level 4 and 5 average marks correlate with their ASET grade. For both levels, ASET score has a statistically significant correlation with

average module score. However, the correlation is weaker in the second year that students have a result (and less significant) suggesting that there is less of a relationship between ASET result and programme work marks as the student progresses with us. This is the result we would expect, as over the programme of their study with us we support all students to develop and improve their English and writing skills[74]

For career and skills gain we use a career readiness survey students complete each year to measure changes in work readiness and career plans. We have three measures of career gain; one based on responses to 'I have gained skills from work experience which are transferable to the industry and/or occupation I wish to work in', one based on the level of work experience undertaken and one measure of job readiness, which students are asked at the start of each year. Students are scored each year based on their response, with the average gains for students over the programme of their degree being 7.2 for the 2020-21 graduating cohort, and 7.0 for 2021-22 (both out of 100)[75]. We also monitor the take-up of work experience and placements as an interim measure, with targets to increase the number of students undertaking significant work placements as part of their programme. We are currently undertaking a project to identify metrics to assess students' acquisition of graduate attributes to allow for a more sophisticated measure of career and skills gain.

We are monitoring personal gain indirectly through student engagement scores. We have demonstrated above that we have impacted on students' engagement with their programmes through our interventions, and that this is directly linked to retention and achievement. We are currently working on a more direct mechanism to evaluate the impact of these gains, on measures such as confidence, resilience and life satisfaction, based on a more holistic map of the personal gains students can expect to make from HE study, informed by feedback from our students.

We are just beginning more qualitative work to understand why some of these projects are having an impact, and to explore what more we could do. We are in the process of conducting a research project into 'belonging', exploring what it means to belong for White, Black, and Asian undergraduate students, through focus groups. It is anticipated that the primary research for this project will be completed by October 2022, with findings published early in 2023. This will inform our student success strategy and our approach to educational gains.

We've shown how we design and deliver our programmes with students and their outcomes in mind. We are industry and skills focused to ensure students have the best experience to prepare them for successful careers, and we have an abundance of support interventions to ensure student success regardless of their background.

We've made significant changes to our curriculum offer over the last three years to strengthen our provision and the outcomes of our students, embedding the transferrable skills they will need for the future. We have won a number of high-profile national awards and gold standard accreditation from industry organisations for our work. The pandemic had a substantial impact on our delivery and the industries we serve were arguably the hardest hit; nevertheless, our students achieved their qualifications, were satisfied and since the recovery we have seen students getting their intended jobs.

Students are genuinely at the heart of all we do, and their voice is a central part of our learning and teaching strategy. They help us better understand their diverse needs and the challenges they face. We have shown how the hard work we have undertaken to really understand our students

and the gains they experience from engaging in HE programmes have positively impacted our delivery and, subsequently, their outcomes.

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