Buckinghamshire New University's (BNU) submission demonstrates an outstanding student experience combined with very high-quality student outcomes. Both result from the sustained pursuit of a strategic vision for an education based on professional skills, embedded in a richly supportive, feedback-oriented learning community, and founded on an excellent learning experience.

1   Provider Context

1.1   Our Impact 2022[1] strategy has driven significant enhancement over the TEF period leading to a dramatic rise in overall satisfaction (from 101st in 2019 to 15th in 2022 in England – derived from National Student Survey (NSS)[2]) and a sustained rise in average league table position (101st in 2019 to 77th in 2022[3]), including the Whatuni University of the Year[4] (54th in 2020 to 11th in 2022).

1.2   Our success is built on a distinctive and highly successful style of vocationally-focused education, and a supportive environment which prioritises excellence in feedback and nurturing academic support. Employment and work experience are increasingly integral to our students' learning journey. Above all, we aim to stretch and challenge our students, building strong partnerships with employers to provide meaningful preparation for the world of work, including real-life industrial manufacturing projects, clinical placements, work experience in film studios and prestigious design awards.

1.3   We are an anchor institution for our region, and deliver education and training in vocational subjects that are essential to the security and well-being of the UK (e.g. nursing, social work, policing); fund our cultural wealth (e.g. graphic design, fashion, film & TV); and support business growth, the built environment and logistics (e.g. law, business, aviation, computing, engineering). 74% of taught students are studying courses accredited by PSRBs[5].

1.4   We believe in making our vocationally-focused style of education accessible to those on non-traditional pathways, and have worked closely with employers to expand our degree apprenticeship provision which now accounts for 13% (n=1098) of our taught population.

1.5   Our vocational focus means that many of our undergraduate students come to us without standard level 3 qualifications. We attract a high proportion of mature learners (BNU: 29% age 21-30; 42% age 30+; Sector 19% and 14%), the majority of whom (71%) are returners to education (just 11% having followed an A-level entry route; half of all learners followed 'other' non-standard entry routes[6]). Our expanding subject portfolio has led to a shift in our market and consequently an increased average entry tariff, with 36% of students now entering with a tariff of >112 compared to 31% in 2019[7].

1.6   Our historic mission has been to widen participation, and inclusivity continues to drive the University's vibrant and diverse community. A large proportion of our learners return to education later in life and come from underrepresented ethnic minority communities and areas of disadvantage. We rank 17th in the Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide Social Inclusion index (2023); 67% of registered students (2022/23) are first in their family to attend university[8].

1.7   Most of our students are from England with 27% from the local region and a further 34% from the Greater London area[9]. We have above average representation of Black (BNU:18%; Sector: 8%) and Asian (BNU:14%; Sector: 12%) learners.

1.8   Within the region, many learners come from areas of high deprivation in High Wycombe,

Aylesbury and Slough. 50%[10] of our registered full-time undergraduates are from the 40% most deprived areas in England.

1.9 BNU confidently demonstrates outstanding student experience and very high-quality student outcomes across its diverse course clusters and student populations: all core metrics exceed or are within benchmark. This is particularly notable for members of our significant mature, part-time, minority ethnic, and low socio-economic status learner community.

1.10 Our strengthening financial position over the TEF period has enabled substantial investment in learning resources leading to a significant rise in satisfaction, confirmed by internal student feedback surveys ratings of very high quality and on a trajectory towards outstanding.

1.11 In partnership with our sector-leading Students' Union (SU, ranked 2nd – NSS 2022, non-specialist HEIs[11]), we have created The Big Deal. Specially funded by the University (c.£650k pa) this enables the SU to deliver free access to co-curricular activity including skills workshops, certified training, employability activities and subject-focused societies.

1.12 This submission has been developed with the support of a working group including Students' Union representation. Contributions are from academic Schools, Directorates and sub-contractual partner providers. The University Council has been sighted throughout with final approval by the University Executive.
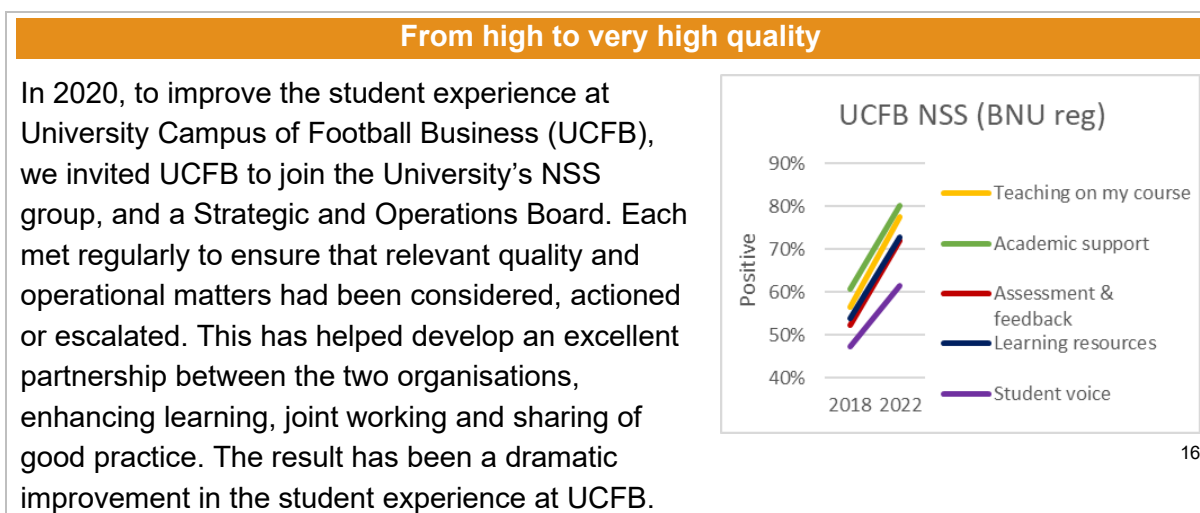
Geographical context

1.13 Buckinghamshire is notable for a substantial socio-economic divide. It combines relatively low levels of deprivation as measured by the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)/ 7th least deprived out of 151 Local Authorities nationwide), with urban areas such as our campus locations in High Wycombe and Aylesbury that witness high levels of multiple disadvantage, particularly food poverty and unaffordable housing. In 2021, High Wycombe was identified as the 'Hunger Capital' during a survey where one in seven people reported going hungry[12].

1.14 To support the employment prospects of our students we align our portfolio with the regional skills strategy, and its prioritisation of growth in digital skills, health and social care and the creative industries, including the introduction of technical qualifications.

1.15 16% of our graduates enter the local labour market in High Wycombe and Aylesbury. 22% work in Slough and Heathrow and 19% work in London[13].

1.16 Investment in our campuses supports the local and regional economy with the University's Gross Value Added estimated to be approximately £1bn per annum[14]. Our principal campus in High Wycombe, and satellites in Uxbridge, Aylesbury, and Pinewood Studios, have benefited from significant investment from regional development funds and the Office for Students (OfS), e.g., £2m OfS funded digital health facility at Aylesbury; £1.6m LEP-funded teaching facility at Pinewood Studios[15].

Partnerships

1.17 Around two-thirds of our registered undergraduates are taught by partner colleges, reflecting our belief that strategic, valued and high-quality education partnerships expand the reach of our vocationally-focused style of education, thereby bringing benefit to more students.

1.18 Some of our partners also work with other awarding institutions and some are registered directly with the OfS. Others are new to the sector with OfS registration as their ultimate goal.

1.19 We are committed to only developing partnership activity that leads to an excellent student experience and high-quality student outcomes. This can take some time to be evidenced in

publicly available data, especially in lagged metrics and can lead to some different levels of satisfaction and outcomes between taught and registered student populations.

1.20 This submission includes students registered at BNU and taught by our partners. We believe that partners benefit from the collaborative relationship and support offered by BNU. The predominant data sets referenced are for all registered students. To demonstrate the quality of a BNU education, and where relevant, the taught student population is also referenced.

1.21 Throughout we provide assurance of our strategic approach to developing high-quality partnerships and provide illustrative examples of how quality is evidenced.
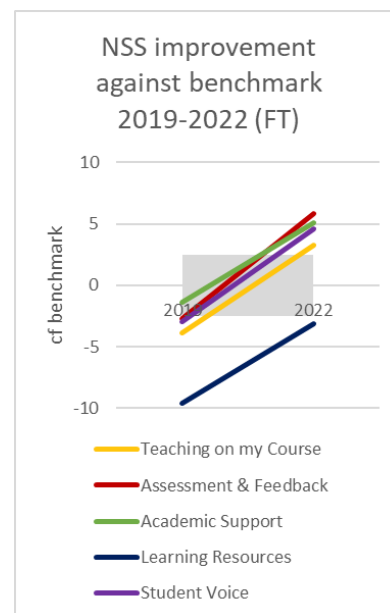
From high to very high quality

In 2020, to improve the student experience at University Campus of Football Business (UCFB), we invited UCFB to join the University's NSS group, and a Strategic and Operations Board. Each met regularly to ensure that relevant quality and operational matters had been considered, actioned or escalated. This has helped develop an excellent partnership between the two organisations, enhancing learning, joint working and sharing of good practice. The result has been a dramatic improvement in the student experience at UCFB.

UCFB NSS (BNU reg)
- Teaching on my course
- Academic support
- Assessment & feedback
- Learning resources
- Student voice

2018   2022

[16]

Apprenticeships

1.22 We have been successfully developing and delivering higher and degree apprenticeship provision since 2018. Our vision for apprenticeships aligns to employer demand, local and regional priorities, and attracts existing employer partnerships and new business via procurement through public sector frameworks. Awards are offered at Level 5 (e.g. Nursing Associate), Level 6 (e.g. Police Constable) and Level 7 (e.g. Advanced Clinical Practitioner). Our largest areas of provision are health, policing and social work.

1.23 We work with employer partners to encourage diverse recruitment. 65% of apprentices are female; 32% are minority ethnic; 73% are aged over 24; and 10% of our learners have a declared disability. Furthermore, 57%[17] of apprentice learners are the first in their family to go to University.

2   Student Experience

2.1 We work collaboratively and cohesively in the interests of our students to provide an outstanding student experience.

- Our students develop confidence and self-efficacy as a result of our approach to learning, teaching and assessment [SE1, SE5, SE7].
- Our confident, highly experienced and qualified staff create an outstanding learning experience and environment [SE4, SE3, SE6].
- Data and evaluation inform our practice, e.g., learner analytics enable targeted support and evidence of its impact [SE1, SE2, SE5, SE7].
- Real world experience and opportunities inform teaching, learning and assessment [SE2].

2.2 Our philosophy is enshrined in an innovative staff framework, the Bucks Academic Framework (BAF), which was shortlisted in 2019 for the Times Higher Award for Outstanding Contribution to Leadership Development. It helps staff and their line managers to evaluate performance, recognise success and address shortfalls. Our annual Performance Development Review (PDR) evaluates evidence provided by academic staff of how they meet the expectations of the BAF. Where colleagues need further support and development, this is reflected in PDR objectives. Excellent performance against the BAF is a prerequisite for academic promotion.

2.3 The BAF has helped drive success since it was introduced in 2018/19. Clarifying expectations of all academic staff in relation to teaching, assessment and feedback, academic support and student voice, its use has led to sustained improvement in these aspects of the student experience.

2.4 Driven by the BAF, we have progressively refined our practice, ensured the relevance of our education, and engaged students so that they rise to the challenges of their programmes.

2.5 The impact of our approach has been the creation of an outstanding student experience, as evidenced by the dramatic rise in student satisfaction (NSS) despite the suppressing impact of the pandemic.

NSS improvement against benchmark 2019-2022 (FT)

- Teaching on my Course
- Assessment & Feedback
- Academic Support
- Learning Resources
- Student Voice

Student Voice

2.6 At the heart of our approach to improving the student experience is the student voice [SE7]. We benefit greatly from formal and informal feedback from all students; our staff value student opinions, and we ensure that our students can see how feedback is acted on. Student engagement is embedded throughout our education philosophy leading to continuous improvement to the experience and outcomes for students.

2.7 Student voice (NSS 2022) is above benchmark and 8% above sector average, placing us comfortably either in the top decile (taught) or top quintile (registered) of all HEIs (n=150).[18]

2.8 Questions 24 (Staff value students' views and opinions: 76%) and 25 (It is clear how feedback has been acted on: 62%) are in the top decile for taught and registered students.

2.9 We also examine students' views on feedback using other mechanisms. In 2022, optional NSS question[19] B12.4 (Within my course, I feel my suggestions and ideas are valued) saw BNU satisfaction at 79% versus the sector average of 60%. Our internal Mid-Semester Student Survey (MSS)[20] (2022/23; Semester 1) also found that 84% of students consider they have the right opportunity to provide feedback, with 84% feeling their opinion is valued.

2.10 Heads of School meet regularly with their student 'School Officer' (employed through the SU) working collaboratively to address any issues and improve experiences, as well as to discuss effective and good practice. Academic managers act on feedback received *"I am very happy that my head of school… is regularly involved in what my year/course rep has to say and does act on requests for change when possible"* (School of Computing 2021/22 MSS).

2.11 There is full student representation on all University and Council-chaired committees. During this TEF period we introduced a new Council-led Student Experience Committee. Students are actively involved in quality assurance and enhancement opportunities, e.g. Academic

Integrity panels and programme validations. University staff, including Executive team members, participate in the SU Student Rep Conference. The University Executive also meets regularly with the SU Executive, supported by monthly 1:1 meetings between Executives and Sabbatical Officers, to discuss and action student experience issues.

2.12   We use student surveys strategically, monitoring their use to prevent overload, sharing results with staff via Tableau, and communicating responses to students. During 2020 we were able to gain student feedback within weeks of changes to the learning environment during lockdown.

2.13   Recent examples of responses to students following feedback include:

- Increasing the frequency of inter-campus bus services;
- Providing additional specialist printers in the art and design studios;
- Launching Panopto lecture capture and captioning tools; and
- Recruiting a new academic liaison librarian for our Aylesbury satellite campus.

2.14   Students can also raise issues through our Resolution Team whose remit is to identify local, early resolutions where possible, and to capture and respond to lessons learnt.

Academic experience and assessment

2.15   Our excellent teaching, feedback and assessment practices [SE1] support learning, progression and attainment. Strong student-staff relationships ensure we can tailor teaching and learning tasks to individual need.

Teaching

2.16   Our teaching approach encourages innovation and active learning, enabling students to develop skill and confidence, challenge concepts, and seek assurance and feedback.

2.17   Small class sizes (averaging 22 students in all teaching sessions in 2020/21[21]) promote immersive and highly interactive teaching, focused on practical and employment-related learning, including simulation. This is reflected in a steadily improving student-staff ratio of 15.4, having fallen from 17.5 in 2018, placing us 48th out of 131 Universities (Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide 2023).

Business Consultancy in Practice
Business students complete a consultancy module as part of their programme. Working with local corporate clients (e.g., Wycombe Swan Theatre), students complete projects focused on marketing, communication or human resource management. In Semester 1, students learn to pitch their ideas in order to 'win' business and, in Semester 2, they showcase their project work at an exhibition with clients and University staff. Assessment centres enhance research skills and students receive a reflective report which includes an assessed LinkedIn profile, CV and action plan. As a result of the module, students have gained highly-skilled employment with clients: *"If I didn't do the Consultancy in Practice module in my second year, I wouldn't have got any exposure to HR and any initial experience, which is how I got hired by my current employer"* (an alumnus).

2.18   NSS 2022 shows that satisfaction meets or exceeds benchmark for all scales and questions except for Learning Resources, placing BNU either in the upper or second quintile of all HEIs (n=150). 79% of all students, 82% of mature students and 86% of students in IMDQ1 agree that the range and balance of our teaching approaches helps them to learn, compared to the

sector average of 70% (NSS 2022 B7.2).[22]

2.19 Our internal survey data confirm the high regard students have for our teaching. 93% of our students agree that staff are good at explaining things (341/367) (MSS 2022/23 S1[23]); 88% that teaching staff often make the subject interesting (322/366); 87% that the course is intellectually stimulating (321/369); and 89% that the course challenges them to achieve their best work (327/367).

Commended Nursing Simulation

Simulated practice benefits skills development, reflection and critical thinking. Nursing and healthcare students practise technical skills in a safe and supportive environment, using simulation manikins programmed to act like humans, and 'moulage' – the process of applying mock injuries for training purposes.

"Simulated learning is included in module teaching and learning strategies and is part of a formative learning process and a summative assessment process" (NMC (2019) FDSc Nursing Associate programme approval[24]).

The University's Technical Manager was highly commended at the 2019 Times Higher Education Awards and shortlisted again in 2020. The simulation team also featured in Universities UK MadeAtUni campaign[25], highlighting 100 individuals or groups based in universities whose work makes a life-changing difference to health and well-being.

2.20 NSS data for the period 2019-22 demonstrates improving student perception: Staff have made the subject interesting (5 percentage points (pp) improvement against benchmark); are good at explaining things (+4.5pp against benchmark); and the course is intellectually stimulating (+8.3pp improvement against benchmark).

2.21 The 2022 AdvanceHE Student Experience Survey[26] confirms that teaching staff motivate students to do their best work (5pp above sector average); regularly initiate debates or discussion (10pp above sector average); and enable learners to explore their own areas of interest (10pp above sector average).

2.22 Finally, our excellence in teaching was recognised within the Whatuni Awards 2022. Reflecting direct comments from students, rather than metrics, these awards saw BNU placed second for 'Lecturers and Teaching Quality'[27] (a rise from 17th in 2020).

Assessment

2.23 Our approach is to ensure that students are exposed to a variety of authentic, formative and summative assessments that, wherever possible, reflect industry and 'real world' practice.

2.24 NSS 2022 shows that student satisfaction with the University for the theme of assessment and feedback is significantly above benchmark for both taught (7pp) and registered (5pp) students. For our taught provision, we significantly exceed benchmark on questions 9 (fairness), 10 (timeliness of feedback) and 11 (helpfulness of comments) whilst, for registered provision, we significantly exceed benchmark for questions 10 and 11. Indeed, for question 10 (timeliness of feedback), our analysis places the University in the top decile among all HEIs (n=150) for taught provision and second decile for registered provision.

2.25 At Level 4, we ensure that assessments have a strong formative component, with regular

feedback to students, supporting the development of academic skills and of knowledge and understanding of their subject.

2.26 During 2017/18, we reformed the assessment diet at Level 4. Moving from a heavily exam-based regime to one with greater assessment variety designed better to support the prior experience of mature learners and those entering with 'other' tariff, whilst maintaining academic rigour. We consequently saw a marked improvement in Level 4 to 5 progression, from 73.2% in 2016/17 to 83.5% in 2021/22. The improvement trend is seen predominantly for BTEC and 'other' tariff learners, and mature learners, rather than for young learners and those with A-levels[28].

2.27 At Level 5, in order that students deepen their subject understanding and build their skill- and knowledge-base, our assessments introduce greater challenge through incorporating more demanding problems, drawing on research and including a focus on real world scenarios.

2.28 At level 6, students take significant responsibility for their own learning and we assess their ability to research and complete major summative assignments, often on strategically or commercially relevant topics. Assessments are often tailored to reflect industry-practice. In art, design and performance-based subjects, for example, students focus on their own specialist area and a choice over assessment options provides students with increased independence to direct their own learning. Feedback is delivered in an easily digestible way, ensuring detail but also providing feed forward comments. *"Throughout the curriculum design students have a great deal of autonomy in terms of how they can respond to assignment briefs, providing a chance for them to develop and communicate their own sense of artistic identity or focus"* [External examiner (EE), Dance 20-21 RF]. Assessment and feedback are consistently above benchmark in the School; 87% (and 100% of Dance students) responded positively in 2022, 14.6pp above benchmark (NSS 2022).

2.29 Assessments at Level 6 also explicitly focus on skills for the workplace, with students working collaboratively to develop self-confidence along with team working, presentation and time management skills. For example, Film and Television students network with industry professionals as they develop a professional CV tailored to their own areas of interest and career aspirations. Assessment of industry-related practice is embedded through key partnerships with the sport and culture industries. As this approach has been embedded, student feedback has improved significantly, from 63% finding their course intellectually stimulating in 2019, to 79% in 2022[29] (NSS Question 3).

Sharing of Good Practice: Collaborative assessment summit (2018)
Following a University summit on collaborative assessment, which reviewed assignment briefs, marking schemes, feedback templates and annotation practices, the course team for a Level 5 module in Nursing (NS506 Approaches to Research) changed the assessment regime. They adopted an experiential, active learning approach in which theory is taught in short sessions and then immediately applied by groups working on small-scale research projects, assessed by a group poster presentation. Student achievement improved significantly; 82% of students achieving a grade higher than 50% (2020/21-2021/22), compared to 39% of students doing so under the previous assessment approach, (2018/19-2019/20). Student feedback included: *"We do group research and exchange ideas… I always feel intellectually stimulated, learning new information and skills at the same time"* (2022/23 MSS S1)[30].

Feedback

2.30   We provide stretch to enable all students to develop the knowledge and skills to their full potential. [SE2]. At all programme levels, staff proactively review work before submission and offer guidance. 92% [1130/1223] of registered students said feedback helped them to improve their work (MSS 1 2022/23) up from 76.7% [349] in 2021/22 S2. 89% [273/307] agreed that assessment allowed them to demonstrate what they learned.

2.31   This is important as many of our students enter HE with non-traditional qualifications and we want to ensure feedback enables them to rise to the stretch and challenge of their course. NSS 2022 Q4 shows students are challenged to achieve their best work, with 79% of registered students agreeing (above the benchmark for this question, and an improvement of 4.7pp since 2019).

2.32   Naturally we prize the feedback of our external examiners (EE) on this aspect of provision. *"A notable strength was the manner in which assessment feedback and feed forward was provided. … with comprehensive comments that would support learner development. This was noticeable across all moderated scripts and undertaken by a variety of markers".* [EE Adult Nursing Apprentice WWN 2021-22]. *"The amount of constructive feedback given to students is exemplary. Students can be in no doubt about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. … All comments made on student's work are constructive and practical" [EE Early Years ; AH, 2019]. "The quality of scripts demonstrated engagement with the topics ... The feedback and feed forward was also informative and transparent for students to clearly understand what they did well and actions for improvements going forward"* [EE Law CannonK 2021-22]. For partner students at David Game College (DGC): *"There is evidence of excellent practice ... and should be commended... extensive and purposeful comments in-text to highlight areas of strength and developmental points. The written feedback is excellent and mapped well to learning outcomes."* [EE Integrated Health & Social Care HerronC 2021-22].

Practice informed education

2.33   We believe that experiential learning helps students translate theory into practice. To deliver our enquiry-based and employer-informed approach, we work in partnership with employers to provide students with meaningful industry-engaged opportunities, and develop their work readiness and core competencies, attitudes and behaviours through placements and work experience. Our practice-based teaching benefits from the use of industry standard learning resources and environments e.g., simulated environments.

2.34   89% of BNU taught students agreed that "As a result of my course, I believe that I have improved my career prospects" (NSS 2022 B3.1; Sector 79%). Our students benefit from the industrial expertise of our academic staff. For example, Performing Arts students (NSS 2022) recognise that experienced lecturers are a *"great asset to the course"* noting the opportunity to gain advice on *"entering the performing arts industry".* One graduate[31] said *"I currently work as an assistant editor/VFX assistant editor in film, with recent projects including Maleficent: Mistress of Evil (2019) and Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes of Grindelwald (2018). The Film and TV production course at BNU really helped me understand all the roles available in film and TV and solidified my liking of editing which made it easier to determine my career choice and path to it in the film industry."* (Alumnus)

2.35 Our students also benefit from exposure to the professional work environment via 'live briefs'. These assessment tasks, co-designed by the University and an external industry partner, are prominent across the academic portfolio and often see students matched with industry mentors. The connection these live briefs establish between students and our wider local and multinational corporate network is of particular importance given our student mix, particularly for those whose social capital and exposure to the world of work is limited.

Live briefs in Computing
Final year Computing, Web and Software students (including degree apprentices) are exposed to live briefs as part of their programme, e.g., building a Heritage Trail app for Wycombe Museum) which develops confidence and work-readiness.

Student feedback: "*This module provided many opportunities to exercise the soft skills needed to work as a software developer. I've been able to discuss the module in interviews, share a link to the web app and use examples of working in this cross-disciplinary team to answer competency-based questions.*" Another said: "*Soft skills improved a lot and it gave me a foundation on how to handle discussing projects with people who aren't developers.*"

Employer feedback: "*[The student] is extremely adaptable and has shown a real "can do" attitude. He has a great work attitude and will put himself forward for tasks, despite their complexities. His initial role within the company was of a support exec which ensured his product knowledge was sufficient before applying for a developer position. His interview was exceptional, and he even developed and presented a UX project (based on our own product) he had been working on in his own time. Of all the attributes I would say his communication skills, ability to listen and adapt, and energy in the workplace have been key to his success so far.*"

Outcome: Computing received some of the most positive feedback on NSS Teaching (7.7pp above benchmark[32])

2.36 We also work with employers to inform course content, and external examiners comment on how industry-focused modules prepare students for employment. Industry panels ensure current and future content meets the needs of the relevant employment sector. For example, fashion and textiles courses focus on sustainable designs and materials and dance courses incorporate dance science to promote career longevity.

2.37 External examiners note that our practical and vocational offer remains framed by academic theory: *"The 'Mosh Pit' demonstrate an engagement with academic debates at the forefront of the music industry enabling [students] to critique their own contemporary practice."* [Level 6 MC649]. On MC656, the module *"challenges students to engage with current academic debates and encourages them to set their individual – and often practical - interests against theoretical backgrounds. It has been a very notable feature how students have responded to the feedback of the earlier assessments in order to deliver their final module work"* [EE Music Industry 20-21 DH][33].

Experts by Experience: Inspiring service user involvement
In 2020, BNU introduced an Experts by Experience working group to help us develop and deliver courses that support the needs of particular groups of people (e.g., social work). This ensured that the lived experience of service users could influence the education of future professionals who, in turn, could fully understand their needs and expectations.
Example: Module SW523 (Working with Mental Health Service Users) is co-produced by a lecturer and a service user. It uses narrative accounts by service users and includes a 'Time to Change' event to combat discrimination; students run an information stall in the University with service users. Service users of adult and children's services and other specialisms such as mental health and substance misuse services are used in student selection days.
Impact: Our predictive analytics demonstrate that students who undertake this module are 18pp more likely to get a good honours degree (Illume Courses data – based on 6years/n=202).

Research-informed education

2.38   The University has a growing research community which supports enhanced research-informed teaching and collaborative research projects with employer partners [SE3]. The strength of our research was recognised in REF 2021 which showed 44% of BNU research to be world leading or internationally excellent[34].

2.39   Research is embedded in our teaching. For example, in the School of Art, Design and Performance an EU funded engineering WATERSPOUTT design project has led to a successful student project winning an Institute of Engineering Designers (IED) prize. At the end of the TEF period, 87% of taught students agreed "My learning has benefited from modules that are informed by current research." [NSS 2022 B7.4; Sector 77%]. Allied health, engineering, performing arts and sports and exercise science all saw responses above 90%.

Embedded Research
In the Early Years research methods module (PP601), academic staff embed research to support undergraduate student research projects exploring professional practice. This applied research approach has increased student confidence with a significant impact on their professional development on placement and in the workplace.
Our predictive analytics show that students who undertake the module are 24pp more likely to get a good honours degree (Illume Courses data – based on 6years/n=331).

2.40   Our students are also involved in publishing their work, often based on engagement with employers. For example, we work directly with the Ministry of Defence to ensure that our military students, actively engaged on our BSc (Hons) Strength and Conditioning in Tactical Populations, are working on applied research questions. As a result, we have created a three-year longitudinal study examining the impact of strength and endurance training on soldier conditioning, as part of which students are producing published research output.

2.41   Finally, partner providers similarly focus on research to enrich their education provision, through activities such as Research Symposia (London School of Science and Technology, LSST), conference attendance and presentations (UCFB), faculty research awards (Oxford Business College, OBC), and internal research networks (UCFB and OBC).

Outstanding student support

2.42   We have always prided ourselves on providing an outstanding learning environment in which all students are supported and signposted with their academic studies and by excellent professional services teams [SE5].

2.43   The NSS shows that our academic support is of very high quality, with outstanding elements, and overall outstanding in the final year of the TEF period as improvements have bedded in.

2.44   NSS 2022 demonstrates the outstanding nature of our academic support. For both taught and registered provision (full-time, first degree), student satisfaction with the theme of academic support is in the top decile of all UK Universities (n=150), as it is for questions 13 (I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course, 3.3pp above benchmark) and 14 (Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course, 4.4pp above benchmark).

2.45   These results are evidence of strong student-staff relationships. Our teaching and technical staff know our students well and can tailor teaching and learning tasks to their individual needs. Personal tutoring[35] is an essential part of the BNU student experience and makes a significant contribution to the retention and success of our students. Its purpose is to support our students to become autonomous and creative learners; to foster employability, enterprise and leadership skills; and to contribute to a positive and aspirational educational culture. *"Have had an amazing year and university experience. Will miss it greatly but feel the tutors will be around as experts in the field for future support if needed"* [Student feedback; Module evaluation PP601, 2021/22].

2.46   To support students to thrive, regular student check-ins monitor progress, discuss wellbeing and signpost to further support. *"The engagement and interest of the staff towards the students has been excellent and constant ..."* (Aviation & Security student, NSS 2022), *"The lecturers … have always gone above and beyond to support me. I have great relationships with them …. I feel as though I can approach them about anything and they demonstrate time and time again that they really care about their students."* Media and Audio Production student, NSS 2022).

2.47   Centralised support services work closely with academic colleagues and our Students' Union. Central service directorates support all students, including apprentice learners, and provide considerable advice and oversight to our partner providers. Their focus is on transition in, through and out of higher education into graduate level (highly skilled) employment that empowers each student to make a significant contribution to society. Our support is underpinned by the following principles: i) every student is important, working with students as partners to facilitate the co-creation of their learning journey; ii) recognition that each student is unique, and that the individual remains the focus of all activity; iii) fostering relationships and engagement, placing greater emphasis on enhancing student capacity for learning; iv) offering well connected and integrated services leading to co-ordination of support and intervention reflecting a whole University approach; and v) taking a holistic view to enhance the capacity for learning, leading to an enriched, nurturing student experience.

2.48   Evidence of the service quality is provided by optional NSS questions (2022). 77% agree that good advice is available for making career choices (B3.2), 9pp above the average for England. 74% agreed that good advice is available on further study opportunities (B3.3), 6pp above the English average. For B9 (Welfare Resources and Facilities), 77% of students are satisfied, 4pp above the upper quartile, and 15pp above the English average. Similar

remarks apply to question B9.1 (There is sufficient provision of welfare and student services to meet my needs) and question B9.2 (When needed, the information and advice offered by welfare and student services has been helpful).

2.49   We are an early signatory to the University Partnerships Programme (UPP) Foundation Student Futures Manifesto, working with students as partners to reflect on post-pandemic actions to improve students' experience.

2.50   Our Student Learning and Achievement (SLA) service supports the academic endeavour through flexible provision for all learner communities (FT/PT, distance, apprenticeships, carers) via in-person and online sessions. Dedicated academic advice pages on the MyBNU student portal detail the support available; helpdesks at main campuses provide in-person support. Content is embedded within the delivery of core curricula. Relative to population, ethnic minority students are more likely to use this service (c.70% enquiries vs 50% population in last three academic years)[36].

2.51   As a result, students are more confident and recognise the impact, describing increased confidence, resilience, communication skills, critical thinking and problem-solving. E.g. *"Just thought I'd let you know for my latest essay and my first one for the year I got 60% a whole 11 points up from what I was getting last year"* (L5 Art and Design Student); *"I just wanted to thank you very much for your structuring advice. Whatever my mark, I think I have finally understood what all my previous English teachers have been getting at!"* (L5 Nursing Student); *"I have made amazing progress from year one. Starting with 52 and then ended my last essay on higher 2-1 is amazing. I wouldn't have ever thought I'd get a 69 on an essay!"* (L6 Art and Design Student). [unsolicited emails; 2019/20 and 2020/21]. *"Support was great during the 4 years …. as English is not my first language, it was crucial to have the support needed to deliver excellent writing assignments."* [NSS 2022].

2.52   Difficulties in accessing equipment and financial worries can impact badly on learners' ability to focus on their studies. BNU provides financial support schemes for those with low household income, care leavers, estranged students, GRTSB community, refugees and asylum seekers. In addition, our sector-leading student support benefits from our work with the John Smith Group. Through the platform we can deliver funds and equipment into the hands of students within 24 hours.

2.53   We receive valuable student feedback on our financial support[37]: The BNU Student Success Bursary has been rated as important for students in continuing their studies (Very important 95.7%; Important 2.7%). *"The hardship fund allowed me to cover the extra cost of home study. It allowed me to pay extra to my internet provider for a better service to be able to attend classes."* The bursary helped *"to cope with difficult periods especially during my placement"*; *"was a life saver and the university should be proud that they are helping students with their success".*

2.54   Using predictive analytics, we track student engagement and retention. Monthly School retention panels identify leaners at risk of non-completion or poor attainment who are then contacted to provide tailored support.

2.55   Student support and academic staff work together to ensure awareness of students with specific learning needs. Disability, mental health and non-medical helper support meets the needs of those eligible for disability support, those with short-term acute physical or mental health problems, and those with caring responsibilities for someone with a disability.

2.56   University central services support partners to implement University policies such as

personal tutoring, additional learning support, well-being assistance, two-way communication channels, and appropriate learning resources.

Supporting Thames Valley Police staff development
In an innovative approach to Police Professional Development (apprenticeship and degree holder route) some programme delivery is subcontracted to the police force. To support police trainers in their delivery of HE learning and quality expectations, the University developed a bespoke development course for police trainers. Student officers reflect "*all the trainers have been really great*"; "*TVP trainers … help my understanding and took the time to understand my specific learning needs*" (BNU/TVP apprentice student survey 2021).
Programme development away days enable the force and BNU delivery teams to work in partnership and reflect on practice, e.g., introducing changes to assessments in response to student feedback and to meet the specific needs of apprentices (impact data not yet available).

Support at partner organisations
• OBC runs weekly study skills tutorials on topics such as IT, English Language and advanced English writing. Students have a personal development plan to record their current skill level and an action plan for further development.
• Regent College London (RCL) offers innovative Success, Character, Opportunity and Progress Enhancement (SCOPE) sessions. These engage students in extra-curricular topics including academic writing and academic skills development, Thinking into Character (personal development), digital skills, well-being support, body/mind movements and careers and employability workshops.
• RCL students are assigned a Customer Support Officer to signpost appropriate support throughout their studies.

2.57   Quarterly Keep-In-Touch events (KITE) provide opportunities for the University and partners to share and collectively consider education expectations and enhancements.

2.58   Ofsted (interim visit in November 2020) noted the staff development support for those delivering apprenticeships. New staff receive comprehensive induction training and coaching to cover Education Inspection Framework themes and requirements, understanding apprenticeship standards, programme governance, End Point Assessment plans and general management of programmes. Consequently, 84% of apprentices are satisfied with the overall quality of the course (University Apprenticeship Survey 2021/22). 96% of employers (2018) rate the overall quality of apprenticeship as good or excellent.[38]

2.59   Technicians represent a vital part of our educational delivery. BNU is a signatory of the Technician Commitment, championing areas of recognition, career development, visibility and sustainability. Technicians pursue professional registration with the Science Council and are actively involved as assessors. Peer mentoring further supports personal development.

2.60   Staff are also supported to develop innovative practice. For example, a member of our clinical simulation team was supported in developing an innovative dementia simulation, recognised in 2018 in the Student Nursing Times Teaching Innovation of the Year category.

The simulation has been delivered to external networks, bringing income for the University and raising awareness of the team's work.

Outstanding staff development and support

2.61 We commit to "a strong culture of recognition and reward for excellence in staff teaching and support" (Impact 22[1] University strategy), ensuring outstanding support for staff professional development [SE4].

2.62 Our staff are highly qualified and recognised for the excellence of their practice. In the period 2018-21, the University was awarded two National Teaching Fellowships, and a Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE). Colleagues in Nursing also won Educator of the Year at the Student Nursing Times Awards 2021 and were given special recognition for 'outstanding contribution to Nursing Education' at the Zenith Global Health Awards in 2022.

2.63 Consonant with the BAF, 81% of permanent academic staff hold a relevant teaching qualification[39]. Associate (visiting) lecturers (ALs) are employed on the basis of industry experience, but most also hold a teaching qualification (54%) and, if not, are supported to undertake University recognised teacher training.

2.64 Staff (including technicians) are encouraged to work towards AdvanceHE fellowship. 63% of academic staff have AdvanceHE fellowship (43% at fellowship level, 12% senior fellows)[40]. To increase the number of Principal Fellows (PFHEA), 11 suitably skilled and motivated colleagues who are well-placed to achieve PFHEA are being supported towards submission.

2.65 Staff benefit from development at induction and throughout their BNU career. New staff complete a six-week introductory teaching course and new-to-role teaching staff are supported to complete the PG Certificate in Academic Practice / Academic Professional Apprenticeship. Appropriate formal qualifications relevant to role and continuing development are systematically and objectively managed through the PDR process. All staff can apply for staff development funds as supported through their PDR development plans.

2.66 Exceptional performance is recognised through annual University (BNU Impact) and Students' Union awards ceremonies.

2.67 The annual Staff Development Conference provides opportunity for colleagues to learn from and share innovative practice. Recent topics include understanding student experience data; the SU Leadership Academy; Practical Recipes for Student Success; digital skills for the new world; embedding research in teaching; and Virtual Learning Environment accessibility.

2.68 In September 2021, the University's virtual Festival of Learning was themed around accessibility and inclusivity. Excellent practice relating to the introduction of Blackboard Ally (to ensure accessibility of online teaching and learning materials) has been embedded.

2.69 School Enhancement Reviews inform staff development. For example, in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, workshops support colleagues newly appointed to teaching roles; the School of Creative and Digital Industries has benefitted from tailored sessions on the development of assessment and feedback practices; and the School of Art, Design & Performance offers support in relation to enhancing curriculum design for new courses. The School of Health and Social Care Professions attended sessions on building confidence for academic study and developing critical reading strategies for critical writing with the aim of reducing the awarding gap between white and minority ethnic students.

2.70 Staff are supported with the implementation of new University policy or practice. For

example, the introduction of Panopto lecture capture has been supported by training and individual support sessions. For Curriculum23 (our University-wide curriculum change programme), in addition to more than 2500 hours of individual work with programme teams and colleagues, we ran 16 development days, module writing workshops and curriculum development surgeries, culminating in the validation of almost 200 degree programmes.

2.71 During lockdown, BNU learning technologists delivered 400 training sessions, produced video resources for staff self-access (> 5000 views), and user guides readily accessible via the University's intranet. The learning technology team was recognised for their contribution to the institution's online pivot with a Bucks STARS award (2020) and were highly commended in the Bucks Fellowship internal excellence recognition scheme (2021). The University's Ofsted interim visit report during the pandemic noted *"staff spoke positively about the additional training which gave them confidence in teaching online."* (November 2020). University lockdown surveys (1st April and 21st May 2020) demonstrated high engagement with online teaching (increased from 85% to 91% (1:n=496; 2:n=819) with the proportion of students reporting problems accessing teaching reduced from 32% to 27%.

2.72 BNU ensures partner providers recruit staff with appropriate qualifications and take responsibility for their development. At our partner Dancebox, all staff are specialists, holding teaching qualifications from, for example, the Royal Academy of Dance. At UCFB, developmental lesson observations are undertaken by line managers using the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) as a quality benchmark. Academic staff conduct peer observations and share good practice. LSST holds an annual two-day staff development event for all staff to encourage continuous development.

Learning Resources

2.73 Physical and learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning [SE6]. Significant new and continuing investment in resources has made a marked difference to student satisfaction during the TEF period, with satisfaction with the NSS theme of learning resources meeting benchmark in year 4.

Outstanding teaching resource and infrastructure
£11m capital investment in teaching over the TEF period
• Cross-campus NHS compliant clinical simulation, teaching ambulances, virtual reality environments, human performance lab, games art and design workshops, animation suites, film industry prop and prosthetics workshops, a photography lab, psychology lab, cyber resilience centre and VR-equipped engineering design suite.
• Refreshed suite of loan laptops (all campuses)
• Additional external investment from the OfS and Health Education England to enhance healthcare simulation.
• Reflected in the University's rise in the Services and Facilities Spend category of the Times & Sunday Times Good University Guide to 10th in 2022 (from 74th in 2018).

2.74 Recent NSS data demonstrate a marked improvement in satisfaction rates, particularly in relation to IT resource and facilities (77% 2022; compared to 55% 2019) and access to course-specific resources (79% 2022; compared to 62% 2019). NSS is a lagging indicator; more frequent internal student surveys of all learners indicate very high levels of satisfaction

with support for learning from BNU's libraries (91% agree (MSS 2022/23 S1), up from 77% (MSS 2021/22 S2)); IT resources (90% agree, up from 71%); and finding it easy to access subject-specific resources (89%, up from 71.3%) [1151/1296].

2.75   NSS optional question B7.1 also confirms high satisfaction (85%) with BNU learning materials compared to the average in England (82%) (NSS 2022).

2.76   We therefore take great confidence in the success of our current investment-led approach which has enabled the installation of extensive state-of-the-art facilities (e.g. simulated wards supporting health care students; studio spaces for students in dance, acting and the performing arts; the Human Performance lab supporting sports and psychology students; animation and VFX facilities at our base in Pinewood Studios; a flight simulator; and newly refurbished (c. £1m) materials workshops).

2.77   Classrooms are refreshed on a rolling programme at all campuses. We have installed a new digital health facility at Aylesbury and 'flipped classroom' suites at High Wycombe.

2.78   Partner learning resources are regularly monitored during site visits. For example, at Mont Rose College, students access a simulated healthcare laboratory. Newbury College has a robotics lab and VR specialist resources. At UCFB, performance analysis cameras, software and labs enable the collection and assessment of data on time spent on each sector of the football pitch during performance analysis sessions.

2.79   We know that our learners value the physical resources provided on campus and so the impact of lockdown was considerable. Students were surveyed twice during lockdown (1 April and 21 May 2020) to ask if their needs were met and what more could be done; alongside regular conversations between senior leadership and student representatives. Fully appreciating the unavoidable negative impact on the student experience, and potentially their outcomes, we brought students (taught and registered) back on campus as soon as legally permitted, prioritising those most dependent on our on-campus resources.

2.80   Expedited during the early stage of lockdown, BucksAppsAnywhere, provides free access to many of the software applications used for teaching and studying. This virtual computing environment enabled students not physically on campus to run high-spec software from home. This initiative continues to benefit learners particularly where their own equipment does not have the necessary processing power.

Library and learning spaces

2.81   We have one main library (High Wycombe) and smaller facilities at our Uxbridge and Aylesbury satellite campuses. These provide all students and staff, including sub-contractual partner students, with access to physical and digital library facilities including loan laptops. Our High Wycombe main facility (open 24-7) is set across five floors with open plan collaborative learning spaces, small group study rooms, open access computers and laptop loans. A Study Lounge and casual meeting booths and spaces provide more informal group and personal workspaces.

2.82   MSS internal in-year surveys for library services show higher satisfaction than our NSS metric. Consistently around 80% of responders to MSS (during the TEF period) agree that library resources have supported their learning well rising to 91% post pandemic (2022/23 MSS S1). This is in response to enhancements since the return to in-situ teaching.

2.83   In the early part of the TEF period, the NSS showed significantly lower levels of satisfaction with the library resources than we would expect. We have therefore made significant

investment in the library as well as changes to policy and practice to improve satisfaction.

Investing in library services
Staffing: We have invested in two additional full-time academic liaison librarians to support the enhanced student support programme
E-first policy: We created this policy to benefit those not able to come onto campus and/or for those with print disabilities.
Customer service enhancements: We created a new online chat (libchat) which is highly popular (650 chats logged in the first six months; average rating 3.77 (3 = good, 4 = excellent). Student feedback is also positive; *"So speedy to get a quick answer I was stuck on.";"<Staff member> was great! Fast and very helpful!".* (LibApps 1:1 feedback top rating of 5 given for 25/27 student feedback)"; "*It is so reassuring that we have the library to assist us, I feel more reassured knowing this." ; "I'm very happy that she helped me and quickly respond (to) my problem…"*
Increased student support: We put in place more one-to-one student appointments and information literacy training (often directed towards first generation learners, those with low income backgrounds, care leavers, and GRTSB learners) resulting in significant increase in support hours[41].

Library User Support 2019/20 - 21/22 (Source: SCONUL)
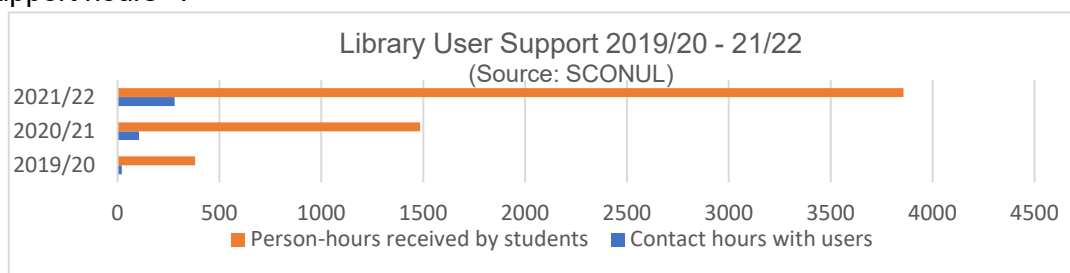
2.84   Particular to our student mix, we ensure that students know how to use the full range of academic resources in a way that they will prepare and carry them into professional life. For example, databases such as CommunityCareInform for social work is the type of platform more frequently available once in employment.

2.85   All registered students can use BNU libraries facilities physically, online and remotely. However, most partners, including Mont Rose College, RCL, LSST, David Game College, and OBC, also have their own libraries and digital learning resources. This is enhanced with additional student support, similar to that provided at BNU. For example, students at RCL receive detailed library and resource guides at the start of study. Each campus at LSST has a Learning Resource Centre with accessible computing resources and access to e-books and physical resources. David Game College has specifically targeted eBooks and open educational resources; supported by training for staff and students to facilitate appropriate use of open educational resources.

3   Student outcomes

Educational gain

3.1   Consistent with our mission and strategic aims, we define educational gain in terms of the acquisition and consolidation of advanced professional skills, which in turn enable:

- greater levels of success in entering and securing graduate level employment or further

study in a student's chosen field;

- greater levels of personal confidence and self-efficacy;
- students to successfully apply knowledge in new ways and to tackle novel problems; and
- students to confidently and successfully deploy their learning in working with others.

3.2   Our tailored approaches ensure that students succeed and progress beyond their studies [SO1]. The three pillars of our approach are i) personal confidence and self-efficacy; ii) application to real world problems; and iii) working with others. These articulate the gains we intend students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to them and their future ambitions. We support students to achieve these gains by ensuring they are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to our students and their different starting points. We will continue to evaluate the gains made and enhance our approach to ensure students are achieving the intended gains [SO4, SO5, SO6].

Personal confidence and self-efficacy

3.3   Learners, particularly those who have experienced disadvantage, often question whether university is a place for them[42], and do not have reliable support networks to help navigate into, through and out of higher education[43]. As a result, they can be almost twice as likely to drop out of study[44]. Our approach majors on embedding personal development and developing a professional identity whilst in study.

3.4   Self-efficacy increases goals, persistence, and effort, thereby boosting performance. Through experience, professional challenge and opportunity, our leaners are supported to recognise and develop the confidence to thrive in the professional environment. Our strategic approach focuses interventions across the student lifecycle, at key moments of transition into, through and out of higher education including developing resilience, monitoring of engagement, promoting a sense of belonging, and helping to overcome real or perceived barriers to success.

3.5   We build personal development content into the core curriculum. For example, in Sports & Exercise Science, personal development is covered at all levels (e.g. Working with a Client, Sport Development Practice). In Business Management there is a focus on personal resilience, self-management, empathy, creativity and problem solving. Live briefs and business speakers further develop these skills and inspire learners.

3.6   Foundation and pre-sessional study builds confidence. BNU 'with Foundation Year' courses support progression into levels 4-6 of higher education. Provision has grown from 52 taught students in 2017/18 to 303 students in 2021/22[45.] A high proportion of learners are minority ethnic (62%), mature (82%) and study across all Schools. Through Foundation study, learners develop their understanding of the discipline alongside the skills to be successful in study. As a result, students are more confident and recognise the impact, describing their increased confidence, resilience, communication skills, critical thinking and problem-solving. E.g., *"I will personally take all the skills learned in my day-to-day life, as well as in my future academic and professional life, too"* (L0 Computing Student, 2019/20).

3.7   Pre-entry sessions help students prepare for university study through online and on campus workshops (Headstart). Our partners OBC and RCL offer free online pre-enrolment academic classes to potential applicants who will benefit from extra preparation. Buckinghamshire College Group requires students on entry to complete an assessment of learning needs to enable tailored support.

3.8   Students build their professional identify whilst in study. For example, under appropriate supervision, students can assess and treat members of staff, students and the public in our University Sports and Wellbeing clinic. Students in Art, Design and Performance exhibit in galleries, participate in industry competitions, win bursaries and awards, and have even had work displayed in the Victoria and Albert Museum.

3.9   Our successful mentoring, alumni and peer support programmes link students with alumni and professionals giving them support and insights into their areas of career interest. Our partner RCL is one of seven providers in a collaborative 'Many Hands' project funded by the OfS and led by Independent Higher Education which provides a peer-to-peer mentoring service for students seeking early intervention.

3.10   As a result of these initiatives and our wider careers support, learners identify how individual attributes and the knowledge and skills gained through the educational experience support their goals (NSS B12.3: I have learned to explore ideas confidently BNU: 86% agree; Sector 74%). 88% of students felt that their course had helped them to present themselves with confidence, 83% thought that their communication skills had improved, and 83% thought that as a result of their course they were more confident in tackling unfamiliar problems. 81% thought that the BNU offer was designed to prepare them for the next step in their careers.[46]

Application to real world problems

3.11   As evidence from the OfS national learning gain projects[47] and the Gatsby benchmarks[48] indicate, experience, encounter activities and soft skills development (placements, visits, authentic assessment) benefit student transition into employment. Our focus on real world problems enables learners to transfer their learning and knowledge into graduate roles.

3.12   The University Tactical Athlete Performance Centre (TAPC), for example, enhances the education, health, and occupational performance of those who work in extreme environments through the fusion of educational innovation, pragmatic applied research, and the development of mutually beneficial partnerships.

3.13   Co-working innovation hubs at our High Wycombe and Aylesbury campuses provide students with opportunities to work with fledgling businesses. Facilitated by our Computing academic, the "Entrepreneur in Residence", professional tenants provide live briefs for undergraduate students to work on (e.g. how to enhance communication between private healthcare patients and private clinics via digital technology). Student feedback demonstrates self-awareness of the impact of this on skills development: "*The live client brief is a great way for the class to ascertain industry working practices, by having to deeply consider client interview questions to maximise requirements gathering…. the module makes the most effort to be relevant with other modules, enriching learning for year 3.*"[49]

3.14   For the 'BBC Introducing' live brief, Film and TV students collaborate with Music and Events Management students. Bands are filmed in the main studio on campus, material is post produced and then uploaded by the BBC onto their BBC Introducing website. In both 2018 and 19, students filmed for BBC Introducing at the Royal Albert Hall. "*The opportunities to apply what we have learnt to live sound with bands that the university brought in were good. Working with an outside broadcasting team has been a beneficial experience and brought not only new knowledge but also, a greater understanding of the required work ethic of the field.*" [NSS student comment: Music & Audio 2020].

3.15   First year Music and Events Management students apply their acquired knowledge through the design and management of an outdoor event aimed at the local community (e.g.

Winterland community event with fairground rides, entertainers, and refreshments). The students manage successful working relationships with the local authority, health and safety officers, emergency services, performing artists, traders, equipment suppliers and local media. This allows the students to develop their industry specific skills which they are then required to reflect on. One student said, *"It would have been near impossible for me to have already experienced being an event manager for an event that drew in over 3,000 customers... It puts the students on this course a step ahead of those on other event courses across the country, and I imagine it must have a significant impact on the immediate employability of graduating students"[50].* One external examiner said *"Especially strong aspect of the programme is the range of opportunities provided to students to gain practical experience planning and managing events, as well as consultancy experience (wedding planning module)."* [EE ReicL 2019/20]

Working with others

3.16   Evidence suggests that a 'common purpose' leads to better outcomes[51]. Students are able to work better in culturally diverse situations and are better able to lead or operate within a diverse team. Many co-curricular and interdisciplinary opportunities therefore enable students to participate in and build their own learning communities demonstrated by outstanding NSS learning community scores (Registered students NSS Q21; part of a community of staff and students; 5pp above benchmark; Q22 Opportunity to work with others as part of my courses 2.5pp above) and external examiner feedback; *"There have been examples of some students who have invested their time into co-curricular activities which has been evidenced within their work."* [EE Music Business CroneD 2020/21].

3.17   Facilitated by the Students' Union and academic staff, student-led learning continues outside of formal teaching. For example, the Aviation Society organises liaison visits to EasyJet, Gatwick and Heathrow Airports, and events at the Royal Aeronautical Society; the Nursing Society offers drug calculations, anatomy, and physiology study sessions fortnightly, and 'breaking down barriers' sessions; the Paramedic Society offers monthly simulation sessions, CPD opportunities for student ePortfolios and visits to ambulance services. There are also societies focused on education and skills for law students, midwifery students, and music students. In Dance, the year ends with a non-assessed Summer Showcase event in which all dance students participate.

3.18   To reflect the collegiate nature of a professional workplace, there are opportunities for interdisciplinary learning. For example, a joint module between Performing Arts students and Production Design students involved Photography students taking photos for shows and Hair and Makeup student portfolios. Collaboration between Film and TV students and Audio and Music Production students is embedded in the curriculum at Level 5 and supports Level 6 productions. Students from Performing Arts support healthcare simulation exercises and assessments.

3.19   Our learners recognise and value their learning community *"I really feel part of a community. All years get on well together as well as the lecturers"; "Everyone listens to each other and all provide support when needed"; "There have been ups and downs with staff changes/ shifts, but, overall this has been dealt with in a good manner…. I am very grateful to be part of such a friendly and supportive group"* (NSS, Nursing 2022). NSS B12 responses demonstrate a consistently higher than average feedback from all learner populations:

NSS optional questions (2022)	BNU	Eng. sector	BNU Mature	BNU IMDQ1
B12.1 I feel part of a group of students committed to learning	76%	62%	84%	91%
B12.2 I have been able to explore academic interests with other students	76%	56%	80%	83%
B12.5 I feel part of an academic community in my college or university	72%	57%	78%	84%

3.20 Our new curriculum strategy (Curriculum23) introduces Opportunity modules for all learners at Level 4 and 5. These common purpose modules are the distinctive heart of the offer. Through interdisciplinary learning, students will further develop personal skills across a range of subjects.

Graduate level employment and further study (Progression [SO3])

3.21 Our educational philosophy and approach to learning, teaching and assessment is focused to ensure that learners succeed and progress beyond their studies. Our curriculum is underpinned by our graduate attributes and shaped by hallmarks for learning.

Curriculum Hallmarks	BNU Graduate Attributes
• Work and place integrated • Active learning • Digitally enabled • Authentic assessment • Inclusive and accessible	• Deep discipline knowledge and intellectual breadth • Creative and critical thinking, and problem solving • Teamwork and communication skills • Professionalism and leadership readiness • Intercultural and ethical competency

3.22 The drive to improve employability and to build confidence is having a positive impact; 89% responding positively to the question "As a result of my course, I believe that I have improved my career prospects" [NSS22 - B3.1, s=1026 n=400], a 6pp increase on the previous year, above the upper quartile, and a positive indicator for future graduate employment outcomes.

3.23 The three-year aggregated rate of progression (69.4% full-time) is within benchmark and mid-sector distribution for registered; 2nd quintile for taught[52]. Part-time progression demonstrates significant improvement (6.1pp below benchmark in Year 1 to 1.8pp above in Year 3). A number of full-time subject clusters demonstrate outstanding progression: sports and exercise science (6.5pp above benchmark); biosciences (6.1pp); and computing (3.9pp). There is significant improvement in graduate employment rates for those who come from under-represented and disadvantaged groups over the three years of the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS).[53] Many of our partner providers are yet to be represented in the GOS. The main exception is UCFB (67% positive outcomes, 2019).

3.24 Given our focus on professional skills, employability and working with industry, the headline GO data relating to highly skilled employment need careful examination. Our analysis identifies factors that are not benchmarked and that therefore artificially reduce BNU's highly skilled employment rate, underestimating our very high-quality student outcomes.

3.25 First, we believe more BNU graduates tend not to proceed to further study because of financial pressures. For those graduating in 2017/18 to 2019/20, we see a consistent pattern of activity relative to the sector. Fewer BNU graduates are unemployed (BNU 3-year average 4%; Sector 5%) and more are employed (BNU 86%; Sector 80%). However, at census date, more BNU graduates are working without further study (BNU 76%; Sector 68%), both in full-time (BNU 62%; Sector 57%) and part-time work (BNU 14%; Sector 11%). Conversely, fewer

BNU graduates are studying further (BNU 12%; Sector 19%), particularly striking for full-time study (BNU 3%; Sector 8%). In GO, only the proportion of graduates working in certain SOC categories are classified as highly skilled, whereas all of those in further study are classified this way. Because fewer BNU graduates are in further study at census date, this reduces the University's highly skilled employment rate. Yet we believe the costs of further study, especially full-time, means this is simply not an option for many BNU graduates.

3.26   Second, more BNU graduates opt for part-time work. Of those in work, 24% in the BNU 2019/20 cohort were working part-time, compared to just 17% in the sector. This is explained by students from deprived areas tending to take part-time employment. However, this pattern also reduces BNU's highly skilled employment rate since fewer part-time jobs are highly skilled. At BNU, 82% of 2018/19 and 2019/20 graduates in full-time work were in highly skilled employment, as opposed to 70% of those in part-time work; for the sector's 2019/20 cohort, 80.6% of those in full-time work had highly-skilled roles compared to just 56.8% of part-time workers. The University's highly skilled employment rates therefore outstrip the sector for both full- and part-time work. However, because GO data are not benchmarked by intensity – the extent to which a graduate is in full-time or part-time work – factors like deprivation, which can drive some graduates towards part-time work and away from further study, mean that BNU's highly skilled employment rate is artificially reduced.

3.27   These analyses are supported by two further analyses examining a) graduates reasons for taking their current job, and b) their reflections on their current job.

3.28   Graduates' reasons for taking their current jobs reveal a pattern of personal circumstances influencing many to take work inconsistent with future career plans. We have previously used graduates' reasons for taking their jobs to distinguish two groups – those whose reasons reveal a 'career orientation' and those whose reasons suggest an 'opportunistic' approach, which focuses on the location of work, earning money, and paying off debts. These two groups differ hugely in their highly skilled employment rates. Of 2019/20 career-oriented BNU graduates, 87.1% were in highly skilled employment (Sector 86.1%); of 2019/20 opportunistic BNU graduates, 56.6% were in highly skilled employment (Sector 48.6%). BNU outperforms the sector for both groups. However, we see more BNU graduates in the opportunistic category than does the sector as a whole: in 2019/20, 73.3% of BNU graduates were career-oriented (Sector 77.7%) and 26.7% were opportunistic (Sector 22.4%).

3.29   Our graduates clearly pursue long-term career plans. Of those graduating from BNU between 2017/18 and 2019/20, fewer felt their current activity fitted with future plans (BNU 76.6%; Sector 78.3%), despite more rating their activity meaningful (BNU 86.6%; Sector 85.7%) and more rating their activity as utilising their learning (BNU 72.4%; Sector 70.9%).

3.30   However, we see the benefit of our strategic approach, as over the TEF period the proportion of career-oriented graduates has increased and opportunistic graduates reduced. In the last TEF period, 69.6% of BNU graduates were career-oriented, and 30.4% opportunistic; whilst among 2019/20 graduates, 73.3% are career-orientated and 26.7% opportunistic.

3.31   Our analyses of patterns of future study, part-time working, reasons for taking a job, and reflections on fit with future plans, none of which are reflected in benchmarks, all suggest factors that artificially reduce the University's highly skilled employment rate. They strongly suggest BNU graduates experience challenge over personal and financial circumstances, leading them to prioritise debt recovery and levels of pay over and above the opportunities for career progression and further study. When these factors are understood, we believe the

data show the highly skilled employment rate for the University is excellent[54].

Continuation and completion

3.32   Continuation and completion are very good as a result of our support and approach to Learning, Teaching and Assessment [SO2]; outstanding for part-time provision, and within benchmark for full-time provision and degree apprenticeships. IMDQ1&2 continuation is above benchmark (+1.5pp), as is continuation for Black (+1.5pp) and mature (21-30 year) (+1.6pp) learners.

3.33   Almost all part-time students are BNU taught, with very few taught by our smaller sub-contractual partners. Continuation and completion for part-time students (12% of our undergraduates) is outstanding and significantly above benchmark with continuation being 21.4pp higher and completion 13.6pp higher (4-year aggregate). Part-time students from some groups and identities see exceptionally high continuation compared to benchmark (Asian +28.5pp; Black +25.7pp; ABCSQ1 +30.8pp; and IMDQ1&2 +20.4pp).

3.34   Our model of education supports part-time learners. For example, our nursing and allied health cluster (PT continuation; 29.4pp above baseline), learners value the supportive person-centric approach delivered by practice-oriented teaching colleagues. Through our Institute for Health and Social Care, collaborative relationships ensure that learners are supported and championed in the workplace. We adopt a link lecturer model, increasingly making use of online technologies for communication and simulation of practice.

3.35   School Retention and Engagement panels use Illume data to identify learners most at risk of non-continuation. Predictive analytics inform earlier, preventative action. For example, we know students who are more active on campus are more likely to continue than those who are less active (Illume data: 57% of non-continuing learners, compared to 23% of continuing students have fewer than 50 SALTO card swipes e.g. library, gym, computer rooms, lecture halls etc.). Illume identifies these learners and informs action by personal tutors, including encouragement to also engage with wider University facilities such as the gym and library. We also use analytics to inform course and module reviews.

Using predictive analytics to support students with challenge
Our use of predictive analytics has highlighted a problem that would otherwise not have been identified. We used analytics to examine whether modules in students' Psychology programmes might be early indicators of struggling with the material. Using our Courses tool, we found modules where students with marks in the range 50-59% (or lower) tend to continue, but complete at a lower rate than students with higher grades. **Finding**: Students with marks of 50-59% (or lower) tend to persist but graduate at a rate far lower than students who receive higher grades. The School has therefore restructured the Level 4 to Level 5 orientation programme to better prepare students for the step change in rigor for the two modules in question. They have developed additional, tailored reading lists and summer outreach programmes to help students focus on appropriate preparation for the following year.

3.36   The three pillars of our approach articulate the gains we intend students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to them and their future ambitions. We support students to achieve these gains (they are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to our students and their

different starting points). We will continue to evaluate the gains made and enhance our approach to ensure students are achieving the intended gains [SO4, SO5, SO6].

Future Development

3.37 Our new strategy, Thrive 2028, builds on our historic mission to widen participation and transform lives. It sets a number of ambitious, strategic objectives, that when met will enable the University to thrive in respect of customers, products, people, and environment. Through Thrive 2028 we commit to continuing to measure how we deliver educational gain.

3.38 By September 2023 we will have embedded a more sophisticated approach to measuring education gain which starts at enrolment and continues through to the Graduate Outcomes Survey. We are building an institutional level longitudinal evaluation programme which sets a baseline for these themes at enrolment. Differential progress will be tracked from Level 4 to 5 via MSS, and via the relevant NSS and GOS. At a local level, Schools will evaluate progress using qualitative and context-focused evidence and this will feed into the annual School Enhancement Reviews for ongoing monitoring and identification of intervention.

4   Conclusion

4.1 This submission has demonstrated the outstanding nature of the student experience at BNU, founded on exceptional academic support, an embedded feedback culture and a rich and rewarding learning community. It has been forged from our values and historic mission and from the sustained pursuit of our ambitious strategic objectives. From this we have built an experience with truly outstanding teaching, assessment and feedback, academic support, and student voice. It is an experience that delivers beyond University. Our students leave University with enviable professional skills, built on a foundation of confidence, an understanding of real world problems, and an ability to work with others, ensuring they benefit from very high-quality continuation, completion and progression outcomes.

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