



TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK: 2023 STUDENT SUBMISSION

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CONTEXT

We are grateful to be given the opportunity to provide a Student Submission to capture and showcase the student experience at Loughborough University. Our Student Submission has been produced by Loughborough Students' Union (LSU) on behalf of the undergraduate students we represent. LSU has worked in close collaboration with the University to ensure our submissions are complementary, and we truly believe our working relationship has flourished in doing so. We have, however, worked independently to gather the evidence used within the submission and have not been unduly influenced. Within our submission, we utilised multiple data sources and collection methods (consisting of a survey, focus groups and previously collected data such as the National Student Survey and Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) minutes). These have all been collated to support the creation of a well-rounded submission.

Our TEF Student Survey (conducted in November 2022) gained answers from



We asked students the extent to which they agreed or disagreed (on a five-point Likert scale)

with 16 statements ranging from teaching quality to study environments. Most responses came from Part A students (34%) followed by 24% of responses coming from each of Part B & C,

There was varied student engagement in the survey from different disciplines. For example, most respondents were from Mechanical, Electrical and Manufacturing Engineering (Wolfson), Psychology, Business and Economics, Computer Science, Creative Arts, International Relations, Politics and History and Mathematics.

We do not believe there is any reason why the response rate was higher for some disciplines, and it is likely a function of the sizes of different Schools and Departments. The students in Schools that are not well represented in the survey are, however, still represented through the focus groups which operated in conjunction with the survey.

To develop our qualitative responsive, we also facilitated



These focused on three themes: 'Teaching, Assessment and Feedback', 'Academic Support and Services' and 'Student Outcomes' and attracted a wide range of students from different Parts, Departments, and backgrounds. The comments gained from these focus groups have been used to validate the survey results and to add further context.

Alongside the above data, we have looked at the key changes made to the student experience recorded within SSLCs and their minutes, which Schools share with us routinely. These evidence the feedback that departments and Schools have received through the Course Rep system and, in conjunction with the focus groups, has enabled us to track where and when feedback had been acted upon.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Teaching Practices:

Within our 2022 TEF Student Survey, the key elements and themes students identified as good quality teaching were: organisation of materials before lectures, reviewing resources, engaging delivery of lectures, diversity of sources and materials and maintaining standards across modules.



Creative Arts and Computer Science were extremely happy with the standards of teaching, with 88% and 79% respectively agreeing that teaching on their course was consistently good whereas for Business and Economics students this reduced to 52%. In our 'Teaching, Assessment and Feedback' focus groups, two students from Business and Economics highlighted how the consistency and quality of teaching could be improved across modules and that there was limited standardisation of teaching within their School. These students did highlight, however, the support the University give inexperienced lecturers helped to enhance their standard to the required level.

Differences were also observed between levels of study. Part A respondents were the most positive about the consistency and quality of their teaching, with 79% responding positively, relative to 63% of Part B and 71% of Part C students. During the focus groups, most students stated that they have witnessed a marked improvement in teaching quality and consistency this year. This may explain the higher positive responses from Part A students in comparison to Part B and C.

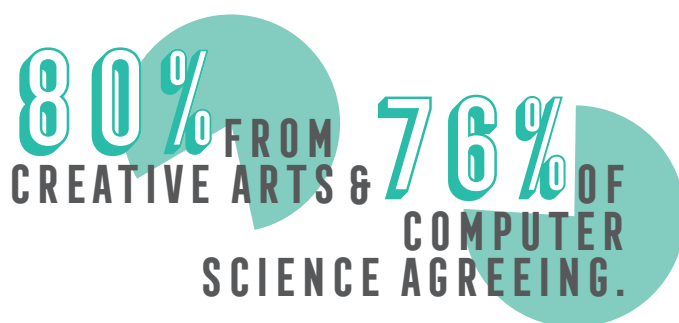
The focus groups also highlighted some positive aspects:

- The mentoring of new and inexperienced lecturers has helped to improve their teaching. Students viewed this as a way of assuring the quality of teaching whilst also developing staff.
- A student [redacted] appreciated that many lecturers used different styles of teaching and believed these kept sessions engaging.

- A student [redacted] stated how both the organisation and materials produced by the Department were both consistent and helpful. This corresponds with students' responses to the question as to whether the 'University provides the resources I need to reach my full potential', where 88% of the respondents (of the Mathematics students) responded strongly agree or agree.

Assessments:

Within our 2022 TEF survey, students were asked whether they have been set 'clear expectations on what is required for each academic assessment'. **71% of students strongly agreed or agreed that they were, with**



Within our focus groups, we received several comments concerning the types and nature of assessments and the expectations set for students. Below are the comments where there was consensus amongst students, across all disciplines:

- Many individuals from Parts B and C highlighted how the guidance and expectations they received on their course decreased as they progressed through their course to allow more individuality in their work. They liked how this academically challenged them and gave them independence over their learning.
- Many students praised how lecturers dedicate a lecture to assessment preparation allowing them to review past papers, go over marks schemes and ask lecturers questions which they found incredibly helpful.

Feedback:

In 2021 and 2022, NSS scores responses saw assessment feedback scoring lower than most other questions. Within our 2022 TEF survey which, unlike the NSS, was open to all undergraduates from part A to part D, 49% of students strongly agreed or agreed that 'the feedback they have received helps to improve the quality of their work'. Many students were concerned that they do not receive personalised feedback on exams. This possibility has been discussed during many University Student Surveys and Action Planning meetings, which all have included student input.

The University also held an Assessment and Feedback Conference in September 2022 to discuss and identify students' needs regarding feedback which included a student panel session led by LSU. Further, the School Reps meet with the PVC Education and Student Experience regularly and the University has worked hard to ensure the student voice is heard on this topic. Thus, it is hoped there will be improvements and more positive comments on feedback in the coming years. One School Rep quote stated the following about their regular meetings with the PVC:

"The meetings we have with the Pro-Vice Chancellor are invaluable because they ensure that issues students are facing are prioritised, and that the voices of students are truly heard with the senior leadership of the University"

Pandemic responses:

It has been difficult to assess the data and results regarding the University's response to the pandemic, as many students who experienced the most significant Covid restrictions have now graduated. We believe this is reflected in the 55% strongly agree/agree rate to the question regarding how well the University 'managed the transition from in-person to online teaching'. However, most of these responses were from Part A, B and C, consisting of students who would not have experienced this transition. On the other hand, and despite their low response rate, Part D students who, most likely would have experienced the University's first response, had a 59% agreement rate.

There was much more evidence to suggest that students were happy with how well the University 'managed the transition from online back to in-person teaching'.

Following a significant push this academic year to improve student feedback, some very positive comments were made during focus groups:

- Students from Business and Economics praised the fact that they had the chance to undertake mock exams which allowed them to gain feedback on their answers. They also felt this helped when transitioning back to in-person exams.
- Students highlighted how helpful Web PA (a peer rating system) is on group coursework as it allows students to highlight who has provided input into group projects.
- In Architecture, Building and Civil Engineering (ABCE), students mentioned how their coursework feedback had been a lot more helpful and constructive than their exam feedback. This is highlighted within the SSLC meeting minutes and stemmed from the School creating 'more regular feedback slots for students' coursework.'
- The feedback students received was said to increase in quality as they progressed throughout the years.

Whilst this seems low, Loughborough was highly praised and won University of the Year 2020 after being nominated by the students. Within this award, the University was applauded for its response to the pandemic and for upholding learning and teaching as a priority.

In our focus groups, we asked students more generally about the pandemic and how they viewed the University's response:

- All students concurred that the mock exam hall sessions the university ran prior to the first in-person exams after the pandemic were helpful. This ensured students felt safe and familiar with the way the exams would operate.
- Dual delivery (in-person and online) and the length of time this was sustained for was also praised by many students. This made students feel safe in the smaller classrooms and allowed those who were ill or isolating to access sessions in real-time.

- When asking about how the campus was kept safe during the pandemic, students highlighted the role of the on site Testing Centre and the mandatory test-per-week to permit the use of the University Facilities.
- Creative Arts and Maths students were incredibly happy with the University response, reflected in their 80 and 81% strongly agree/ agree rates to this.

Technology was an aspect of the University's Covid-19 response that was highly admired by all students. During the focus groups students recognised the significant efforts made by the University during the pandemic to create learning environments within students' homes:

- Students highlighted how well the chat feature in Microsoft Teams was utilised during the pandemic. Using this feature, especially for individuals who may be anxious to ask questions, still allowed students to gain the same support as they would receive as being in the classroom.
- There was also praise for the use of online office hours and the effort made to replicate the same support. Students stated how there was little to no disruption to the support they received when they transferred to online learning.
- International students specifically highlighted how dual delivery helped their learning. Due to travel restrictions and differences in isolation laws, this significantly helped as they could still access the same level of learning as every other student.

Academic Challenge:

We gained consistent feedback during the focus groups that students were challenged academically by their degrees (via many methods).

82%
OF STUDENTS STRONGLY
AGREEING OR AGREEING
THAT THEY FELT
*'their degree challenges
them academically.'*

It is noteworthy that the highest strongly agree/ agree response rates were from Departments and disciplines which utilise a large amount of

technical equipment and software. For example, Wolfson, Creative Arts and Computer Science had extremely high agreement rates of over 90%.

Both the University and students pride themselves in how degree content is stimulating and creates links to the present and real world. These links provide personal and professional development opportunities, as illustrated by this student:

'I had received a [redacted] law lecture which was quite difficult, and I thought to myself there was no point in this lecture and that I would never use this in the future. However, on my first day on site of my placement I was in a meeting which directly allowed me to use the knowledge I had learnt from this lecture to create a solution to the problem.'

*- Commercial Management
Quantity Surveying Student, [redacted]*

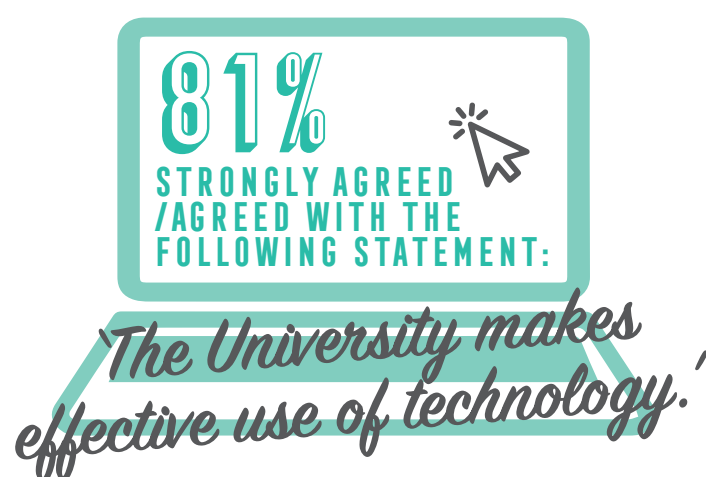
During the focus groups conducted, many students commented on how they appreciated the challenging nature of their degree and how it helped to enhance their learning:

- Engineering students consistently were impressed with the software and programmes they had access to and believed it was extremely unique to be using these in their first year.
- Many students highlighted how the lectures they received were fast-paced and engaging, with many students stating how they must continuously test their knowledge and understanding. The ReVIEW (i.e. recording) feature of lectures and access to lecture resources were seen to be incredibly helpful in this respect.
- A student [redacted] highlighted how they were grateful for the opportunity to develop skills in essay writing and journal reading, which was something they did not expect to receive when first joining the University.
- Students from Psychology suggested how the opportunities for them to do their own credible research in their final year were not only academically challenging but highly rewarding

[redacted]

Use of Technology:

The University has worked very hard to gain funding from multiple organisations to enhance technology and ensure students have the technological resources to excel in their degree. This does not go unnoticed by students, and many have highlighted how state-of-the-art technology has enhanced their learning immensely. The use of technology was critical during the global pandemic; it allowed virtual learning to take place and created learning environments for all students across the globe.



There were clear differences between those disciplines and programmes which depend more on technology versus those which are theory/essay based. For example, the agreement rate for Computer Science was 88% whereas for History, Politics and International Relations it was 54%. Feedback from many social science students suggests that there is room to use more quiz platforms to test their knowledge and to increase engagement during lectures, which they believe would enhance their learning.

The following feedback on technology was obtained from the focus groups:

- Students from all disciplines highlighted how helpful ReVIEW and the ability to access lectures afterwards was. This was helpful for many reasons, helping with note taking and understanding and helps when reflecting on content for revision.
- Many students emphasised the importance and helpfulness of quizzes and the use of interactive learning tools. These were felt to be key for quick knowledge checks and for students and staff alike to identify shortfalls in students' knowledge.

Learning Resources and Environments:

The learning resources within the University were also highly rated by students alongside many of the student support services provided to students across campus. When asked if the 'University provides the resources I need to reach my full potential',



The feedback from the focus groups was highly positive and many students stated how they felt the resources for their course were above and beyond their needs:

- Most students felt that lecture slides were good and helpful, but some individuals stated this was only when updated regularly and consistently.
- All students agreed about how good and valuable the library and their services were, especially the reading lists given by lecturers.
- The availability and accessibility of the Careers Network were praised highly by students. Students believed this helped with their personal and professional development as well as with CV writing and interviews.
- The University's student services website was also applauded by many students for its good design and extremely detailed information to help with money management, stress, and signposting to mental health services.

We received an overwhelmingly positive response to the survey question about 'whether the university creates supportive environments in which to study', with

88%
OF ALL RESPONDENTS
STRONGLY AGREEING
/AGREEING WITH
THIS STATEMENT.

There were multiple areas of strength highlighted in the focus groups which echo the findings from the survey. Wolfson School and Computer Science respondents had the highest agree rates (>90%), supported also by extremely positive students from these disciplines in the focus groups.

The focus groups highlighted many incidences of positive support from both lecturers and wider University staff:

- In every focus group, personal tutors were highly commended for their continuous support throughout students' University experiences. This emphasises the key link between academic and pastoral support.

'My personal tutor was helpful, open and available to help with other coursework or challenges. They have also had a great contact network and know where to signpost individuals which has helped me significantly. It's great to know we have members of staff always there to help and support.'
- Mechanical Engineering Student

- There was also considerable praise for the well-being week delivered by the Wolfson School. This echoes the 90% agreement rate to this question from this School in the survey.
- A student was vocal about the availability of study spaces and how they helped with their studies. They also highly commended the good accessibility to buildings and software, especially over the holidays.
- Support centres such as the Academic Language Support Centre and the Maths Learning Support Centre also received praise for their specific subject support:

"The Maths Learning Support Centre has really helped me as I do Engineering, and a lot of the content is very maths based. Coming to University, I thought I was okay at maths, however, there are still some concepts that are still very tough. The MLSC is there after every lecture in case I need a little bit of extra support'.

- Automotive Engineering Student

Inclusivity of campus:

Asking students about the inclusivity of the University campus proved to be a much harder task and whilst the survey indicated a healthy

87%
OF RESPONDENTS
STRONGLY AGREED
/AGREED THAT THE
CAMPUS IS INCLUSIVE,

the focus groups provided us with less information. This was due to a lack of confidence from students about the meaning of inclusivity.

When asking about the inclusivity during the focus groups, the few responses we gained were from international students who reported feeling well-supported when studying here:

- One comment suggested how international students found it difficult to adapt to British teaching styles and that support services were not advertised as much as they should be. They did also follow with the fact that once they found the services, they were supported in the right way.
- As noted earlier, many international students praised the use of technology, the level of support, and the inclusivity of lectures during the pandemic which allowed them to participate in lectures and did not impact their ability to learn when being away from Loughborough.

Feedback Opportunities

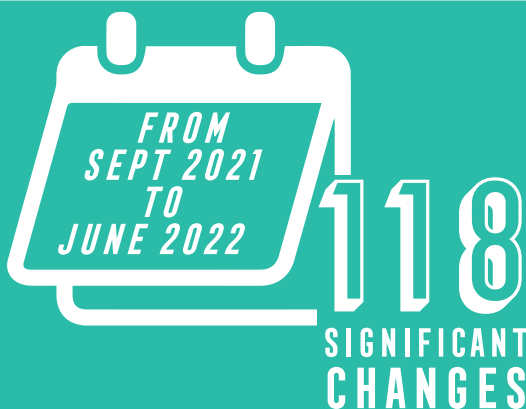
When students were asked in the survey about whether they have opportunities to provide feedback to the University and whether it is acted upon, we received mixed results.

80%
OF RESPONDENTS
AGREED

that they were given opportunities to provide feedback and this was consistent across the disciplines, whilst

<52%
AGREED 'THE UNIVERSITY
LISTENS TO MY OPINIONS'.

Students can share feedback in a wide range of formats to the University whether this be through the NSS, the University surveys or via University forums. However, showing students their comments have been acted upon is clearly more challenging.



were made in response to feedback and issues raised through the Course Rep system across different disciplines. A few examples of these changes include:

- More regular feedback slots were provided for students' coursework in the ABCE School. The students in this School were also positive in the focus groups about how constructive and helpful the feedback they received was.
- [redacted] feedback sessions on Friday afternoons were implemented as a 'wrap up to the week'. During the focus groups, Wolfson students praised the support they received from academic staff through the initiatives the School organise across the year.

- In Social Sciences and Humanities, more quizzes were implemented to check knowledge during lectures after feedback was received. This point was also raised in the School of Business and Economics SSLC which prompted the rollout of Vevox on more modules across the School.
- In the focus groups, students from the School of Business and Economics praised how they received a dedicated lecture on assignments and exams. The latter sessions covered examination content for students to work through problems similar to those likely to be included in the exams.

The most positive responses concerning feedback opportunities were from the department of International Relations, Politics and History. After every SSLC meeting, the chair shares feedback on what changes are being implemented with all students. This closes the feedback loop which is welcomed by students and something that Schools across the University may benefit from improving.

QUOTES FROM OUR SCHOOL REPS ABOUT HOW IMPORTANT THE SSLCS INCLUDE:

"SSLCs are extremely useful as a forum for productive discussion and debate to occur between staff and students, all with the sole goal of improving the academic experience of students. It's great that student representatives' views are respected and taken into account in decision-making to the extent that they are, and the product of that is clearly seen in the way teaching and assessment is continually being improved and updated. These meetings also give students confidence in their lecturers' methods and styles, since they know they have been rigorously looked at and worked upon by both students and staff."

"SSLCs are the perfect concept to bring about dynamic institutional changes. They provide a seamless communication channel between students and staff allowing everyone's voices to be heard. This allows for a quicker feedback loop ensuring an enhanced student experience and environment for learning."

STUDENT OUTCOMES AND EDUCATIONAL GAIN

WITHIN OUR SURVEY WE ASKED STUDENTS WHETHER THE UNIVERSITY *'supports their personal and professional development'*:

83% AGREED IT DID.

Noteworthy to mention here is that there was a high correlation between those who agreed with this statement and those who were involved in Loughborough Students' Union activity. This was also evidenced in the focus groups and students tended not to differentiate between what the University and LSU offered. Nevertheless, whether it be Union activity, which is highly supported by Loughborough University's senior leadership, or University activity, students indicated they gain personal and professional development during their time here.

During their time at Loughborough, students can take part in a wealth of extra-curricular activities supported by LSU such as volunteering, fundraising, team leadership and entrepreneurial skills.

These opportunities have not only helped students' personal and skills development but have also contributed positively to graduate outcomes.

Recently, the University and LSU also worked in collaboration with each other to run a workshop with the School Reps about the University's contribution to educational gain. During this

session, we asked students about what skills they felt they had developed whilst at University to help them personally, academically and with their careers. These students spoke about how their organisation, communication, and problem-solving skills had been enhanced and their confidence and perseverance strengthened by opportunities such as placements, group projects, presentations and networking events run by both the University and Union.

During the focus groups, a high proportion of respondents claimed that the placement opportunities and support Loughborough provide were unmatched compared to that available to friends at other universities. Some key observations students shared were:

- The Personal Best initiative received praise with students believing the skills it developed helped them both academically and vocationally. Students felt that they wanted this scheme to run throughout all years of their degree, as opposed to just in Part A. In 2017, both students and LSU had significant involvement in the development of Personal Best through their representation on the project management board and running collaborative workshops with the University.
- Within the English Department, there was overwhelming praise for the 'micro internships' offered to students, with students regarding these as an exceptional opportunity to develop workplace skills.
- A large proportion of the focus group comments centred around the opportunities provided to students to develop key skills such as leadership, management, and people skills. These included opportunities such as group projects and volunteering opportunities such as Hall Chair.

'Being part of the Hall Students' Federation as a Hall chair helped immensely with the development of both personal and professional skills. This taught me how to be on time for meetings and gave me a leadership role which allowed me to develop and meet people of all different cultures. It can be intimidating coming in from a completely different country, however, having the opportunity to be a part of a Hall Committee and to help organise freshers has played a massive part in my University experience and has helped develop my skills.'

- Sports Management Student

STUDENT AND STAFF PARTNERSHIPS

- The support to graduates provided by Careers Network was seen to be invaluable to students, particularly for those who are not transitioning directly into employment. Graduates praised the safety and support they felt from this service and welcomed that they could still benefit from this help 5 years later.

As mentioned previously, the continuous opportunities and support for placement students were frequently highlighted in students' feedback:

- The placement portal in the School of Business and Economics was praised for helping to find placement opportunities. Other students felt such a portal would also be beneficial for all Schools.
- One student emphasised how -

*'One thing I love about Loughborough is that you can do a placement year with pretty much any degree'.
- English Literature Student*

- Meetings with placement tutors throughout the year were appreciated and seen to be supportive and helpful in guiding students from education into employment.
- Many commented on the mental health support that placement tutors provided and how tutors constantly checked not only on students' academic progress but on their well-being in the workplace.

Many students furthermore commented on how resourceful the modules they study have been to the graduate workplace and their future employment.

*'I received a lecture about line managers which really helped to shift many students' perspectives about the stereotypical manager and instead gave us the qualities to become great managers ourselves'.
- Management Student*

- Another student from the School of Social Sciences and Humanities has highlighted how one of their lectures, 'Atlantic World', has been particularly relevant to their graduate job in a museum as it has given them the foundational knowledge to succeed in their research.

Our Course Rep system facilitates meaningful staff and student partnerships, through which students are empowered by the LSU to raise feedback with members of their School/ Department. This system triggers vital changes within academic Schools to make the student experience the best it can be. In 2021/22, there were over 118 significant changes made across our nine Schools which illustrates the real and positive influence the Reps have. These meetings also invite praise and positive feedback from students about staff members to recognise those who go above and beyond. The students undergo training with LSU to support them in their roles, which helps them to envision the situations they may encounter but also allows them to develop important skills for the future.

Our Peer Assisted Learning scheme is another successful staff and student partnership. Student volunteers facilitate weekly Peer Assisted Learning sessions to support other students' learning on specific modules, helping them with their revision, and understanding of more challenging concepts, referencing, and formatting.

**THIS
partnership
HAS BEEN VERY
EFFECTIVE WITH
students
ATTENDING THE SESSIONS
INCREASING THEIR MODULE
GRADES BY UP TO
20%**

University staff members are constantly in communication with these volunteers about any changes or issues they need to be aware of to best support the students.

UNIVERSITY AND UNION PARTNERSHIP

We continue to nurture the strong foundations of our partnership that were present and reported in the previous TEF submission. The University remain committed to providing opportunities for students to be represented on formal committees at all levels within the University, and to working in partnership with us to ensure that the student voice is key to university decision-making. We continue to facilitate **a buddy system** where members of the University Senior Leadership Team are paired with LSU Executive Officers and Community Leads. A notable example of our partnership approach to student voice is that in 2021, LSU were given the opportunity to lead the consultation and writing of a new Code of Practice for SSLC meetings. More recently, the University has involved LSU closely throughout the long and important process of forming a new University strategy to 2030.

The annual Loughborough Academic Awards promote integration between staff and student volunteers and are an opportunity for both the PVC Education & Student Experience and the Academic Experience Executive Officer of the LSU to reward exceptional work by key individuals throughout the year. These awards range from: student committee of the year to the PVC's unsung hero of the Year to SSLC Staff member of the year.

The rapid and devastating emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic could have been a cause of significant tension and disruption to our relationship with the University. It is a testament to the **strength and flexibility of our partnership** that we worked together more closely and frequently than ever to ensure that students were supported and that the quality of the academic experience was maintained as best as possible. The pandemic taught us a lot about how formal and informal partnership work can complement each other. An example of this is that the Learning & Teaching Working Group that was established to deal with urgent Covid-19 matters (comprising of University and LSU members), has been retained so that we can continue to work together more dynamically on the ground, for the betterment of the student experience.

We have also been grateful to maintain a constant dialogue with the University regarding the ongoing UCU industrial action and how to navigate this and minimise the negative impacts on the student experience. A recent development is that we now attend **tripartite meetings with the University and UCU** where we can play an equal and proactive part in conversations regarding future strike action.

The students we represent are proud to be Loughborough students with many using words such as 'inclusive, community, supportive and family' to describe their journey. Our students are continually rewarded for their invaluable contribution to society, whether it be our

£300,000

YEARLY FUNDRAISING TOTAL (2021/22)

OR OUR

*Platinum Jubilee Community
and Business award*

FOR VOLUNTEERING CONTRIBUTION TO THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

These experiences bring the University, the Union and the students together, in which one student proclaimed there would be 'no University without the Union'. To conclude, we are confident that alongside providing an outstanding academic experience, Loughborough also provides opportunities for graduates to leave with a sense of fulfilment and everlasting memories and creates lifelong personal and professional connections between them and Loughborough throughout their lives.