

# Liverpool Hope University

## TEF Submission January 2023

**Liverpool Hope's Students' Union has requested that this statement is added to the report.**

*'Liverpool Hope Students' Union has a unique relationship with Liverpool Hope University. There is a constant dialogue between LHU and LHSU, facilitated by weekly meetings between senior university staff and sabbaticals. As a result, both collaborate in many areas directly relevant to the student experience, these include decolonising education, improving inclusive practice as well as promoting the importance of the student voice. We are clear that working together best suits the needs of our unique student community and is essential to offering the best possible, personalised student experience. This ethos of working collaboratively has continued throughout the TEF 2023 process. Ideas and thoughts have been discussed, and while both submissions remain independent, they are incredibly supportive of one another's content'. Hope SU, January 2023*

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## 1. Introduction to Liverpool Hope University

Liverpool Hope University is a liberal arts teaching-led, research-informed and mission focussed institution and the only ecumenical Christian University in Europe, supporting students of all faiths and none. These foundational principles, together with the mix of students and courses, makes the University distinctive and informs its educational mission.

Hope's philosophy is to provide a personalised experience for every student within a strong community that nurtures, supports and stimulates scholarly advancement. The Mission and Values of Hope underpin a 'kind, generous and gracious fellowship' where all may flourish inspired by excellent teaching and research<sup>1</sup>. As the smallest of the 12 institutions in the North West region, with around 5,700 students (4,370 of whom are undergraduate)<sup>2</sup>, Hope has the advantage of knowing its students 'one by one'. The University is thus able to offer a personalised learning experience that is rooted in innumerable day-to-day conversations between students and staff. Large plenary teaching sessions are only used when necessary, small group seminars and tutorials being preferred.

The University's academic portfolio reflects its origins and the student cohorts that study at Hope. Core academic subject areas, including Education and Teacher Training, English, Fine Art, History, Philosophy, Theology, Politics, Mathematics, Psychology and Music are offered alongside Creative and Performing Arts, Social Sciences, Health and Sports Sciences and Science disciplines. In line with the mission, Hope has expanded its portfolio of professionally accredited courses including Social Work and Sport Rehabilitation.

50% of Hope Undergraduates study towards a professionally accredited award <sup>3</sup> .
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The institution offers both single honours and joint honours degrees (65% study single honours and 35% joint honours)<sup>4</sup>. In choosing a joint honours degree a substantial number of students opt to maintain their interest in a broader range of academic material. The proportion of Hope students selecting this route is significantly above the UCAS national average of 9%. Every subject at Hope has a distinctive, unified, year-long, 'benchmark-linked academic essential core, which every student must study regardless of their single or joint honours status.

Hope has a distinctive cohort shape, with a significant majority of female students. The University has a growing number of students from black and global majority backgrounds. A significant number of students have disabilities<sup>3</sup>, almost 8% above the national average<sup>5</sup>. In line with its mission, Hope is proud that the student body includes a significantly high proportion of those from the poorest areas in the UK (Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) quintiles 1 and 2)<sup>6</sup>, and from Participation of Local Areas (POLAR 4) Quintiles 1 and 2, where participation is the lowest. Hope welcomes 50% of its students from non-A level routes<sup>6</sup>. The University is an inclusive and diverse community that consistently exceeds its benchmarks for recruiting students with a disability, or from areas of high deprivation and low participation<sup>7</sup>. The success of the Access and Participation Plan<sup>8</sup> has helped to ensure the success of students in these groups at Hope.

The Liverpool context is particularly significant. The majority (57%) of the student body comes from the North West, with 37% from Liverpool itself<sup>9</sup>. Of 317 Local Authorities, Liverpool is the third most deprived in the country; in terms of employment it is the fifth most deprived Local Authority, and the third in relation to health deprivation and disability<sup>10</sup>. TEF benchmarking does not fully account for the extent of deprivation that Hope students encounter, as Hope is at the extreme end of the bottom quintile.

Hope also attracts a significant proportion of students (15%) from Northern Ireland<sup>9</sup>. Northern Ireland has higher levels of multiple deprivation than the rest of the UK<sup>11</sup>. In August 2022, Independent Member of the Legislative Assembly Claire Sugden wrote to the Minister for the Economy asking for immediate help to enable students to continue their studies. She is quoted as having said: 'Students from Northern Ireland are at a serious disadvantage compared to their peers from other parts of the UK. Many are finding it impossible simply to pay rent and living costs from the loans they receive – even those receiving the maximum amount currently possible'<sup>12</sup>.

Over the past five years 72% of the students at Hope are from the North West or Northern Ireland<sup>9</sup>. These students require additional support to continue their studies and advance into graduate employment within the Liverpool and Northern Ireland context. This is above and beyond what can be accounted for within our benchmarking because of the clearly evidenced extremes of deprivation.

Prior to the pandemic years, student satisfaction at Hope was consistently rated outstanding, and always above its benchmark, scoring 77% in NSS 2022 for overall satisfaction, in line with the sector. This puts the institution fifth in the North West ahead of the two 'red bricks' and five significant Post-92 universities. Amongst the 12 North West institutions, Hope ranked in the top three institutions in seven out of nine of the NSS categories. It was also ranked above the sector average in these areas<sup>13</sup>.

This University is a small institution and intentionally tailors a personal, face-to-face learning experience for its distinctive community of students; so the impact of COVID has been especially significant for students. This is why Hope returned to on-campus teaching in September 2021, when most other institutions were mostly or partly teaching online. The University's NSS 2022 metrics demonstrate the benefits of this early return.

## 2. Student Experience

There is extensive evidence of the excellence of the quality of teaching at Hope. The current TEF metrics demonstrate consistently its very high-quality performance in teaching, materially above benchmarks since the last TEF and prior to COVID. This is made possible by the emphasis that Hope puts on proactive staff development (See 2.7, page 10).

### 2.1 Teaching

Hope's approach to teaching is driven by its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy<sup>16</sup>. The strategy is underpinned by 10 principles that provide an agreed vision for learning and teaching across the University and are integrated into the enhancement of student experience.

The Hope metric for this outcome is 82.4%, marginally below the benchmark<sup>4</sup>. Since the last TEF, and prior to COVID, performance in this metric was consistently outstanding and materially above NSS benchmarks (Figure 1). Arguably, the current metrics reflect the impact of the pandemic years rather than the otherwise outstanding quality of teaching at Hope.

Evidence of recovery from the impact of the pandemic is seen in Hope's NSS 2022 data, this cohort having experienced a more 'normal' experience during the final year of their studies. Full recovery is anticipated in the coming years, when students who have experienced face-to-face teaching during all three years of their studies, are surveyed.

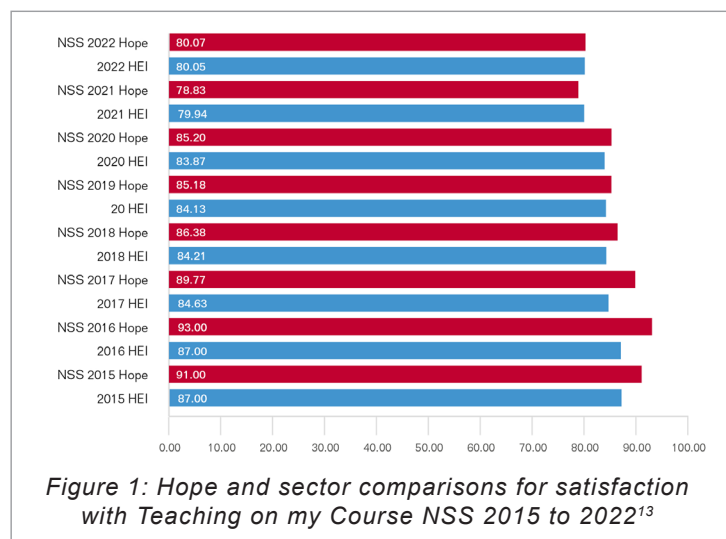


Figure 1: Hope and sector comparisons for satisfaction with Teaching on my Course NSS 2015 to 2022<sup>13</sup>

Hope is committed to being wholly inclusive and meeting the needs of every student. The University values consistency and quality of student information and prescribes a standard set of baseline information that must be available on every Moodle. This ensures that key information is readily accessible and that subject differences are minimised for joint honours students.

Given that the University had no experience of online delivery at the start of the pandemic, it adapted remarkably quickly to the challenge of remote teaching and learning. Academic staff were trained to make full use of the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). A tool kit relating to educational technology was provided and 'Advotechs' were appointed to champion online innovations. The University extended its laptop/dongle loan scheme to ensure that all students had access to the appropriate technology. A move to stable and accessible online teaching and support was achieved using the Zoom platform enhanced by Panopto and Otter for inclusivity.

The case study below demonstrates the University's commitment to inclusive teaching:

#### Case study 1: Introduction of an inclusion checklist for academic courses.

**Objective:** To direct new policy and standard practice across the University in relation to the learning environment, teaching, assessment, and feedback.

**Activity:** A Community of Practice (COP), led by the Student Union, worked collaboratively to develop an Inclusive Practice Checklist. This baseline provided the key expectations for good practice, in inclusion and associated removal of barriers for disabled students.

**Outcome:** The checklist has been standard practice at the University since the 2020/21 academic year. Its implementation has led to a significant reduction in the number of students requiring Learning Support Plans (LSPs), this number falling from 959 prior to the development of the inclusion checklist to 769 after. As many adjustments have been enshrined in standard practice remaining LSPs are highly personalised to individual student needs.

The NUS has since reported that challenges of the pandemic were disproportionately focussed on students who have weak wifi, inappropriate hardware and those living in crowded households<sup>14</sup>. Hope's student community includes some of the most disadvantaged students who were arguably most impacted.

The extent of the University response in maintaining the standard of teaching during the pandemic was recognised by the students (NSS 2022): *'Learning was quickly and effectively adapted to fit an online delivery, and the standard never slipped. Tutors were always there to support students through the hardships the pandemic presented us'*.

*'It has been a very tough university life for many; however, the university's community feel never was lost'*.

Hope is a campus-based community, where face-to-face teaching is the norm. Incidental, informal, day-to-day interactions with academic staff and peers are no less important than formal teaching sessions in shaping the students' personal experience. During the pandemic, this aspect of the 'community of learning' was the most difficult to replicate virtually. Loss of personal contact is also known to impact student's ability to manage their studies, reducing their motivation and engagement<sup>15</sup>. Feelings of social isolation and decline in wellbeing were particularly pertinent to the cohort when forced to adapt to virtual teaching arrangements. This is not only reflected in the metric but has also significantly contributed to Hope's overall student experience metric in teaching.

Many teaching practices were changed to meet the needs of students during the pandemic. See the case study below:

### **Case study 2: Using online platforms for learning in the Creative Subjects.**

**Objective:** To offer effective assessments through online platforms to replace live performances in creative subjects during COVID restrictions.

**Activity:** Creative subjects, where loss of practise learning spaces was particularly difficult to compensate, developed digital platforms to support students off campus. Students worked collaboratively through virtual debates, combining pre-recorded and live work to create a challenging but rewarding learning environment.

**Outcomes:** The subject team were recipients of the Hope Learning and Teaching Prize in 2022. The external examiner in the subject area (2022) acknowledged the positive impact of the initiative saying *'There is breadth and depth of approaches, and some very exciting work has emerged in spite of the challenges posed by COVID-19. Students are given the opportunity to explore different modes of assessment which helps them succeed in their studies'*.

Students also appreciated the changes saying in the NSS (2022) *'The university did a brilliant job at adapting to the pandemic and providing a course that offered us a challenging, yet entertaining workload that kept us feeling productive and creative.'*

## 2.2 Assessment and Feedback

The University is proud of its outstanding performance, including during the pandemic years. Hope is nearly 4% above its TEF benchmark of 72.6%<sup>4</sup>.

Hope understands assessment to be a learning tool, that supports continuity, and enhances students' skills and employability. The University has a well-established assessment strategy linked to the 'core' elements that is informed by the ten principles that underpin its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy<sup>16</sup>. There is a common assessment pattern

across most subjects in the University which ensures that the volume and nature of assessment is consistent, challenging, fair and comparable across all disciplines. Staff are encouraged to develop innovative forms of assessment but this is underpinned by standard structures for course information, booklets and VLEs to ensure a continuity of experience.

Emergency regulations were implemented in 2019/20<sup>17</sup>, followed by transitional arrangements<sup>17</sup> during the following two years to offer students support and space to produce their best assessments. This included a reduced assessment load including cancellation/ altered format of examinations where possible, a longer academic year, a high degree of flexibility in relation to mitigating circumstances and a no detriment approach to award classification. The use of Emergency Regulations ensured that students were not disadvantaged by the rapid onset of the COVID pandemic and enabled any impact of industrial action immediately before that period to be ameliorated.

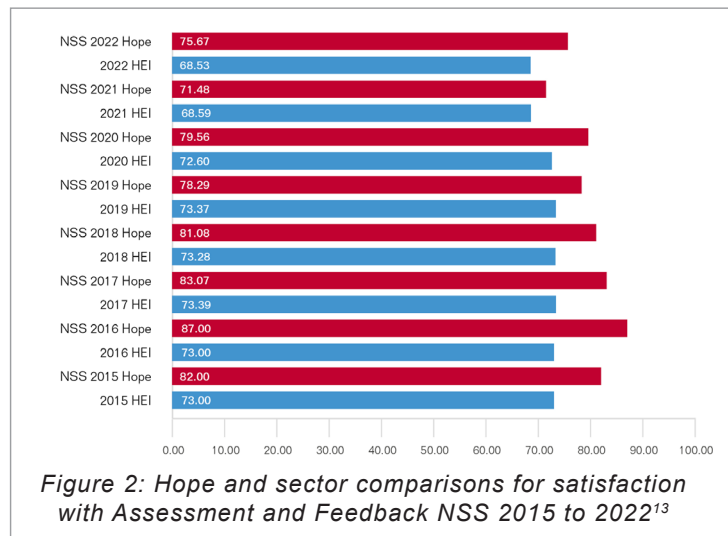
Hope's TEF assessment metric indicates that mitigations were successful in ensuring this aspect of the student experience remained outstanding, despite the extremely challenging circumstances. See examples in the case studies below:

### Case study 3: Support for students preparing for their final year dissertation.

**Objective:** To reduce the gap between second year and third year research skills and ensure that students feel well prepared to undertake their capstone research piece.

**Activity:** In 2021 the University began to offer paid internships for students preparing to enter the final year of their studies. Running in the traditional summer break the students undertook a research project devised by a member of academic staff. Over 100 internships have been undertaken in the last two years. At the end of their experience, students share and celebrate their work at a poster session where they receive feedback from the PVC Research and their supervisors.

**Outcome:** A survey carried out after the internships demonstrated that before the internship 30.8% of interns were confident or very confident about their forthcoming research. This rose to 92.3% after the internship. Students identified their personal development in time





management, critical analysis, literature reviews and research processes.

A survey of staff confirmed a significant impact on student research skills, with 70% of student work showing improvement because of the internship scheme<sup>3</sup>.

#### Case Study 4: Focussing assessments on 'Real World' Scenarios

**Objective:** Development of career-related, 'real world' assessment for Sport and Physical Education students.

**Activity:** Sport students often envisage working in a coaching role in a school or youth setting. Having listened to the student's feedback requesting 'real life' assessments the subject team developed a final year assessment incorporating planning, risk assessment and running coaching sessions. Collaboration with a local primary school meant that pupils, rather than peers, participated in the sessions.

**Outcome:** Completion for this group increased by 6%<sup>3</sup> following introduction of this intervention.

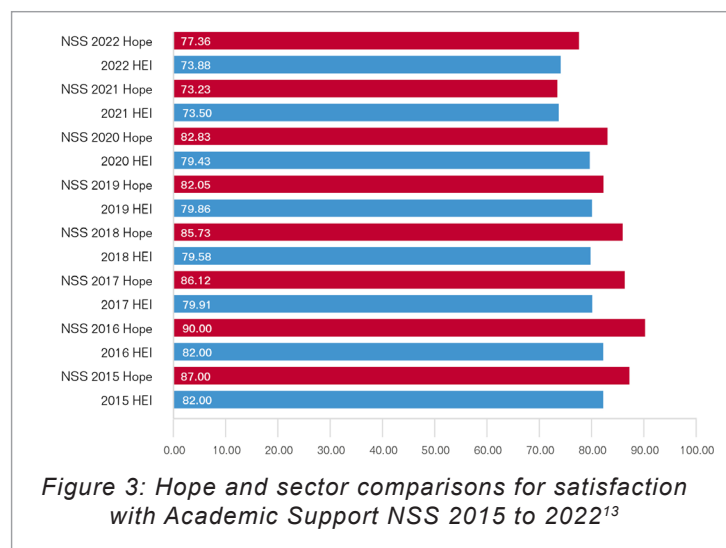
The PE Coordinator feedback (2018) stated, *'This initiative is fantastic for the students as it enables them to gain more subject knowledge, behaviour management tools and self-confidence'*.

Student Voice meeting minutes record state *'Coaching practicals are working really well. Far better than in previous years as they have had the opportunity to teach/coach children which makes it far more like the real world and therefore far more beneficial.'*

### 2.3 Academic Support

Hope's TEF metric for Academic Support is 79%; 2% above the University's benchmark<sup>4</sup> and just missing the outstanding classification. Prior to the pandemic, the University was more than 2% above its benchmark in every year since the last TEF exercise (Figure 3). Hope remained above its benchmark in 2022, but a small decrease in the 2021 score has deflected the overall outcome from 'outstanding'.

Hope takes great care of students. Each student is treated as an individual.



The University has established norms for contact hours that apply to all courses, for example, in the first year, there is a minimum requirement for 12 hours of contact per week. This is divided between six hours of traditional lectures, four hours of seminar or workshop activity and 2 hours of tutorials in small groups.

Every student attends tutorials with a named tutor each week: Hope is committed to a personalised learning experience and the Hope tutorial system is at the heart of this. Every first year student meets

their named personal tutor twice a week in a group of about 10. This ensures that every student has two hours of personal and direct contact with a tutor in their field of study each week.

In addition, the University runs sessions in January to support students who may find the return to University after the Christmas break difficult. This week of activities is termed 'refreshers' and runs alongside 'get back on track' academic support.

Student Engagement Officers provide a one stop shop to support specific groups of students with academic, social, financial and pastoral aspects of settling into University life.

Literature identifies factors that put a student at risk of discontinuing their studies. This evidence has been used alongside learning analytics to create a bespoke online personal tutor hub which uses a traffic light system to identify risk factors that might put a both a pre and on-course student at increased risk of discontinuing their studies<sup>18</sup>. The information in the hub enables a set of personalised, supportive interventions to be put in place by the tutor.

In 2021/22, tutors identified 226 Creative Arts and Science students as being 'at risk' of non-continuation requiring tailored interventions.

72% of this group subsequently remained on course following interventions by the tutors.

During the pandemic, the University maintained academic support by email or video chats. Students received a weekly newsletter to provide a trusted route for information flow and tutors maintained or extended their individual availability for students and continued to follow up students at risk. Hope acknowledges that the lack of face-to-face contact during the pandemic led to a small decline in the metric. However, measures were taken to minimise disruption to the academic curriculum. This was particularly important for practical-based subjects where innovative solutions had to be found. See case study 2, page 4.

The University monitors attendance to identify and support students who are experiencing difficulties. Students who miss a tutorial are contacted by their tutor and if attendance falls below the University guidelines, a team of counsellors provide advice and guidance.

The institution has a strong history of outstanding academic support, performance in this aspect has been impacted by factors relating to COVID.

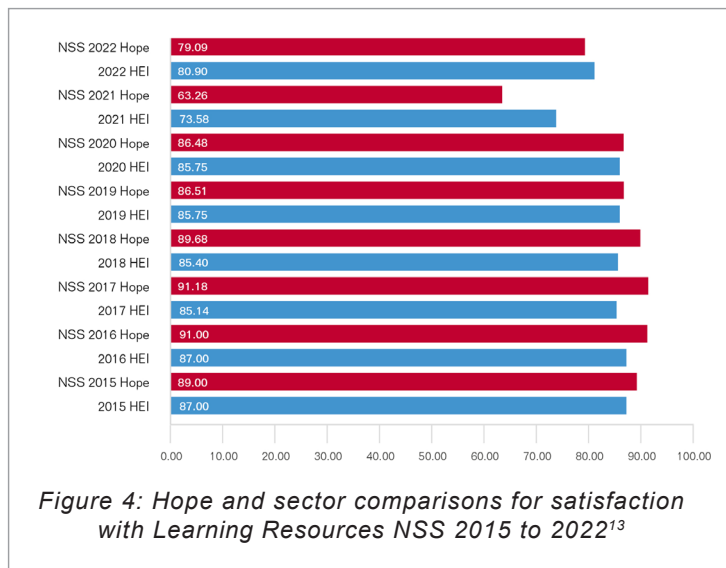
'The support during the pandemic was incredible. Staff are always there to help and support students. Our voices have always been heard' (NSS 2022)

## 2.4 Learning Resources

The learning resources TEF metric for Hope is 79%<sup>4</sup>. This is 2.2% below benchmark, but remains in silver with a lack of statistical confidence. This is not reflective of performance in this indicator.

From 2016 to 2018 NSS metrics for learning resources were outstanding and materially above benchmark (Figure 4). The impact of the sudden move to virtual, off-campus learning on this metric therefore cannot be underestimated. The sudden fall of 23% in 2021 has without doubt reduced both the overall metric score and the confidence with which we sit within the 'silver' classification.

At the onset of the pandemic, the University took considerable steps to use online learning resources to replace face-to-face teaching. Prior to this, and reflecting the personalised approach to teaching, online learning was largely considered 'a supplement to face-to-face teaching'<sup>19</sup>. Moving teaching and learning practices on line should be a gradual and informed process; however, on this occasion the transition was rapid and enforced. Although Hope very quickly invested in learning technologies it was difficult to keep a positive balance between the demand and the requirement for training staff and students in the use of often unfamiliar technologies.



The 2020/21 metric clearly indicates the difficulties students experienced with the enforced changes. Given the shape of Hope cohort, this result reinforces the value students placed on the personalised pedagogical approach.

The University responded positively to challenges by introducing innovative initiatives to support learning. See an example in the case study below.

### Case study 5: Introducing digital technology in the Humanities

**Objective:** To enable students to experience and appreciate the use of technology in the growing field of digital humanities.

**Activity:** The History subject team offered Level H students the opportunity to undertake a virtual reality (VR) mode project. Students who elected this option created the design and content for a tour of an historic building.

**Outcome:** The cohort (29 students) were offered a choice of assessment modes, including the VR project and a more traditional essay. Half of the cohort chose to undertake the VR design project. Grades were comparable to those who undertook the essay, however the impact extended beyond the assessment outcomes. History course evaluations were administered to the whole cohort of students in 2021. Comments included *'the opportunity to do the VR assessment ... is something new, and especially what happened last year with COVID it's a refreshing change.'* With the student's permission their work will be added to the public website of the historic building<sup>3</sup>.

The availability of the University library and other learning and study spaces were impacted by Covid. Hope re-opened these spaces at the earliest possible opportunity recognising that many students lacked a private study space for prolonged periods which is particularly relevant given the makeup of the cohort with respect to IMD.

The University's NSS learning resource metric improved by 16% in 2022, to just 1.8 points below the benchmark<sup>13</sup>. Hope had planned to start major work on a new state-of-the-art learning and teaching space for students (IQ Building). This major investment had to be delayed until after the pandemic,



as did refurbishment of a new centre for Geography and Environmental Science. Both of these initiatives would have been excellent learning resources for students during the period of the TEF.

## 2.5 Student Voice

The TEF metric for Student Voice at Hope is 73%, 2.1% above the benchmark, moving it towards outstanding. The confidence level for this category is 72.7%<sup>4</sup>.

NSS data is available from 2017. Hope is proud that its performance has been outstanding every year, other than 2021 (Figure 5).

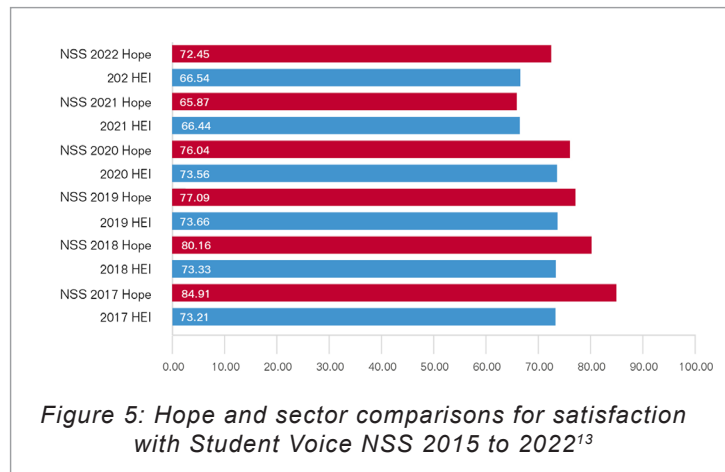
Working in partnership with students is central to offering the best possible personalised student experience. Hope takes a tiered approach to this, so that student voices are heard in all aspects of university life. In Schools and Departments continuous dialogue focusses on elected, trained course representatives. Centrally, the Students' Union represents student views on all major decision-making bodies. Additionally, a Student Sounding Board, including representatives from across the University and the Students' Union, acts as a platform for gauging student opinion and consultation on wider internal and external issues.

Student partnership has been significant in the development of this TEF submission, see the SU statement on page 1.

When Student Voice meetings had to be moved online, they were held more frequently to ensure a swift response to concerns. However, as in other areas, the loss of personal contact 'by chance' interactions potentially negatively impacted the metric during students enforced absence from campus.

The University also listens to its students through the annual process of 'course evaluation' and NSS surveys. Reflection on the outcomes of these surveys are fed back to students and form part of the annual monitoring process for Schools and Departments.

Hope's Students' Union runs the prestigious annual Hope Star Awards. This event celebrates staff who the students vote as having provided outstanding academic and pastoral support. These awards are particularly prestigious because they are run by the Student Union, with staff nominated by students for outstanding academic and pastoral support.



With the exception of one pandemic year, student voice indicators are outstanding and above the benchmark.

The case study below demonstrates how students are listened to in relation to curriculum development.

## Case study 6: Listening to students to ensure inclusivity in the curriculum

**Objective:** To fulfil our commitment to fully inclusive curricula.

**Activity:** An increasing number of students identify as members of the LGBTQ+ Community. A second year 'Gender and Sexuality in Fine Art & Popular Culture' course has been redesigned to reflect the radically changing landscape in gender politics and representation, the increased visibility of transgender identities, the rise of #metoo movement and awareness of intersectionality.

**Outcomes:** A course survey sent to 54 students in 2022 demonstrated a positive student response to these changes, citing '*Open discussions which were inclusive (not just focusing on feminism that only approaches white women's problems)*' and '*Helped me to understand a lot more and question my own ideas. It's been a learning experience within a learning experience, especially the seminars. The open discussion aspect was really enriching and helpful.*<sup>4</sup>'

## 2.6 Joint honours students

The NSS does not offer repeat questions for both of the subjects studied by joint honours students. This means that the answers in the survey become more separated from the student experience for this group. Thus, at Hope, where 35%<sup>3</sup> of students are feeding back on two subject areas using one survey, it becomes particularly difficult to be confident that the NSS outcomes accurately reflect the complete picture: experiences in one subject are overlaid onto another by default.

Hope's metrics in relation to Student Experience are outstanding, or moving towards outstanding, when contextualised within the impact of the COVID restrictions on the distinctive cohort.

Case study 7 demonstrates how Hope ensures that joint honours students receive parity of assessment and feedback with single honours students to enable successful completion:

## Case study 7: Development of a University-wide standard mark scale with associated assessment descriptors.

**Objective:** Parity of assessment and feedback for joint and single honours students, closing the gap in good degree outcomes between cohorts.

**Activity:** In 2018/19 the University adopted a standard grade point marking scale linked to indicative descriptors for use across all academic disciplines. All students, regardless of academic discipline, now have a consistent baseline of academic expectations relating to knowledge and understanding, subject specific/professional practice skills, argument, analysis and reflection, communication skills, presentation and referencing. Feedback was similarly focussed on the universal descriptors and is therefore more easily translated across disciplines by joint honours students.

**Outcome:** The gap in good degrees (1st and 2.1) for joint and single honours students, between the years 2018 and 2020, reduced from 10% to 3%<sup>3</sup>.

## 2.7 Staff Development

Hope has a culture of supporting and valuing excellence in learning and teaching underpinned by continued professional development, a teaching focussed promotional route, a network for

collaborative working and sharing of ideas and practice, and institutional and student-awarded prizes to recognise outstanding practice.

**2.7.1 Learning & Teaching Days** take place at both whole University and School level several times a year. University days enable academic, professional services staff and students to meet together as a community, discussing significant aspects of University life including Access and Participation, Learning and Teaching Strategy and Inclusive Practice. All staff are expected to attend.

84% of staff at Hope have a teaching qualification, placing us 13th in the UK<sup>31</sup>  
69% of Hope staff are Fellows of Advance HE, 16% Senior Fellows and 1% Principal Fellows<sup>33</sup>

In a recent survey 30% of staff are External Examiners in other HEIs and 43% are editors or on the editing board of scholarly journals<sup>3</sup>.

**2.7.2 Communities of Practice (COPs)** are a university-wide initiative that provide a space for sharing and enhancing practice, engaging staff and students in developing new ideas and pedagogies. They are channels through which to inform strategy and cover a wide range of key pedagogical areas (case study 1, case study 14). There is an expectation that all academic staff will be active members of at least one COP. The impact of the COPs was recognised in 2018 when the University won an Advance HE Collaborative Award for Teaching and Learning. (CATE), a national award which recognises and celebrates collaborative work with a demonstrable impact on teaching and learning. One of the CATE reviewers commented *'The COPs approach is a wonderful example of an institution-wide approach to student learning.'*

**2.7.3 Recognition of Excellence:** Hope's promotion criteria and academic annual performance reviews require staff to demonstrate a commitment to both teaching and research. Hope has a very high participation rate for its peer observation system in which colleagues share examples of good practice. The annual Learning and Teaching Prize and the Hope Star Awards enable the recognition and sharing of good practice.

**2.7.4 Research** unequivocally enables a richer student experience. The Hope Teaching, Learning and Assessment strategy requires teaching at Hope to be research informed, ensuring that learning is up-to-date and relevant.

At Hope 74% of staff have, or are currently completing, a Doctoral Qualification, this is against a sector average of 54% and places Hope 17th in the UK<sup>20</sup>. 96% of research active staff (those with significant responsibility for research) were submitted for the REF 2021 exercise. This high level indicates an inclusive and broad-based research culture which underpins excellent teaching.

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## 3. Student Outcomes

### 3.1 Continuation

Hope's continuation metric is 89.4%, against a benchmark of 89.9%<sup>4</sup>. This has continually improved since 2018/19. The continuation rate of Foundation students, who are particularly important to

Hope's mission (see Educational Gains, section 6, page 21), is clearly outstanding, 3.7% above the benchmark. Continuation for Joint and Single Honours students is similar<sup>4</sup>, which reflects the success of the interventions to 'level' the experience for this group (case study 5, page 8). The University is particularly proud of its initiatives to support transition into Higher Education, particularly in the light of its distinctive mission and cohort shape.

Examples of interventions to support student continuation are shown in the case studies below.

### Case study 8: Early Low Stakes Assessment

**Objective:** A high proportion of Hope's students do not come from the 'traditional' A-level entry route which can mean they have less experience of academic writing and assessments. It is frequently reported in the pedagogical literature that summative assessment with a significant element of formative feedback advantages student learning.

**Activity:** First year students at Hope receive their first assessment task within four weeks of arrival. This low stake piece aims to provide students with an opportunity to explore their discipline with the safety of knowing that the task carries only a small weighting. Academic tutors clearly explain in their feedback how the students' performance can be improved to meet the expectations of the academic discipline. This approach scaffolds the students' understanding of the academic culture in each of their subjects.

**Outcome:** Above and beyond the confidence building and scaffolding of learning, students who require additional support with academic writing can be quickly referred to academic writing mentors, a group of experienced senior students who are trained to support students at all stages of their academic life.

The external examiner for Philosophy (2022) recognised the impact: *'Tutors' feedback to introductory assignments that carefully inducted students into good scholarly practice, integrity and rigour of thought, and the informed application of emotional intelligence. This trend is to be encouraged'*.

### Case study 9: Early Residential Field Work

**Objective:** To enhance students' sense of belonging to the Hope community.

**Activity:** Previous in-house research at Hope had reported that early residential events accelerate students' engagement and sense of belonging (Walsh et al 2015)<sup>21</sup>. All first-year students are required to undertake a fully subsidised visit to the University field centre at Plas Caerdeon.

**Outcome:** There is clear evidence of the benefits for student transition to the Hope community both from the earlier research and from student feedback.

NSS 2022 *'[the] Caerdeon trip was a great bonding experience for the course, made the course [team] ...closer and the overall university experience from that point has been more of a community feel.'*

## 3.2 Completion

Hope's overall completion metric is 87.5%, which is 0.6% above a benchmark of 86.9%<sup>4</sup>. This is a positive achievement given the nature of the student cohort.

A significant proportion of Hope students are disabled, and it is central to the University's ethos to support disabled students to succeed. The completion metrics for this group are outstanding, 3.5% above benchmark.<sup>4</sup> This is reflective of the successful implementation of personalised learning support plans (case study 1, page 3) and other specialised interventions.

Part-time student completion is also outstanding, 14.9%<sup>4</sup> above benchmark. This group are particularly important to the widening participation agenda, opening access to higher education for groups who might otherwise be excluded.

The following case studies highlight initiatives that enhance completion:

#### **Case study 10: Ensuring success for students with autism**

**Objective:** To establish a support network to champion students and ensure that the campus met their academic and pastoral requirements.

**Activity:** A weekly Neurodiversity Group is a joint initiative with the Students' Union.

**Outcome:** Students meet with other students, take part in activities, and develop friendships in an environment that feels safe and comfortable.

As a result of recommendations and input from this group the University has heavily invested in a sensory room. Other University initiatives include a specific early arrival day for students with autism to help them feel less overwhelmed than could otherwise be the case.

#### **Case study 11: Experiential learning opportunities for Social Work students prior to placements.**

**Objective:** To ensure that Social Work students have experienced the challenges of real-life placement scenarios prior to entering a professional environment.

**Activity:** The University invested in a simulation (SIM) suite in 2018 which is used by the Social Work team to provide experiential learning opportunities for all students prior to placement. In a safe, controlled environment the students take part in scenarios based on the lived experiences of service users and carers followed by a structured debrief and reflection. The regular involvement of service users provides a unique perspective that is central to the student experience.

**Outcomes:** This innovative opportunity is recognised in the Social Work TEF metrics in all three areas which are outstanding<sup>4</sup>.

*A graduate in 2019 commented 'The SIM suite offered a great learning experience which had a lot of benefits. I was able to share the experience with my peers and tutors in order to gain feedback on my practice, learn new assessment techniques and to also offer service users real advice and support. The suite is something I remember as it had a positive outcome from us as learners and unique from other universities.'*

#### **Case study 12: Building resilience for Initial Teacher Training students**

**Objective:** To ensure that Teacher Training students are supported to build the resilience necessary to be teachers.



**Activity:** Teacher Education recognised that undertaking placements in schools requires students to be resilient. The University now employs a resilience mentor who works with students who are identified as needing additional support. This system complements the training mentorship scheme for ITT students, which ensures that every student has a highly trained mentor for each placement.

**Outcome:** All of the TEF metrics for the ITT programme are outstanding<sup>4</sup>.

OFSTED (2022) commented that the resilience mentoring enables trainees *‘to successfully complete their course or to progress to the next year’* and *‘demonstrated the provider’s commitment to supporting trainees’ mental health.’*

### Case study 13: E-learning profiles to support teacher trainees

**Objective:** To give greater autonomy and ownership of learning to students on teaching placements.

**Activity:** To support trainees’ organisation and application of knowledge the trainees and mentors utilise a shared platform, E-Profile, where learning and formative tasks can be stored for ongoing reference, supporting transfer of learning into the new context of their subsequent placements. The platform, launched in autumn 2021, also supports monitoring of the trainee’s learning across the partnership to allow timely/early identification of trainees requiring additional support and effective data driven interventions i.e. individual support plans.

**Outcome:** Each student can track the areas of their practice where focus is required from the beginning of their studies until graduation and beyond. This is a comprehensive record of an individual learning journey that students can use to shape their personal development.

OFSTED (2022) commented that *‘There are clear systems in place to assess trainees... The e-profile provides an ongoing narrative of trainees’ progress throughout the programme. Leaders adopt a holistic approach. They draw on information from different sources to accurately assess whether trainees are on track to become effective teachers.’*

### Case study 14: Collaborating to decolonise the curriculum

**Objective:** To embed inclusion in University strategy with a focus on decolonising the curriculum.

**Activity:** The Posthuman Pedagogies Community of Practice (COP), which includes staff and student groups including members of the Black and Global Majority Student Network, produced a set of recommendations relating to inclusion at Hope. Amongst the recommendations were clear actions related to use of space, web design, decolonising the curriculum using specific toolkits and awareness.

**Outcome:** An action plan has been developed from this paper which is currently moving through the Committee cycle to ensure implementation through University Equality and Diversity Policy and Objectives.

Network of Hope students studying at Holy Cross Further Education College are included in the overall student outcome metrics. The impact of the pandemic has been particularly marked for the Holy Cross cohort and this is reflected in the 6% drop in their completion rate in 2019/20<sup>4</sup>. Benchmarking

cannot accommodate the extreme impact of caring, employment and other external forces on this group. Mature students home schooling children, in caring roles and living in crowded, sometimes multi-generational family homes were particularly disadvantaged by a lack of clear educationally purposed facilities such as libraries and computer spaces. The impact of COVID on their students contributed to a reduction in the overall University metric.

### 3.3 Progression

According to TEF metrics, 61.5% of Hope students progress to graduate level employment or further study. This is 3.4% below the benchmark<sup>4</sup>.

The University has taken substantive steps to support students gaining graduate level outcomes in recent years, including a series of interventions detailed below and in case studies.

The metric does not accurately reflect the impact of the distinctive cohort shape at Hope and should be viewed with the context of the mitigations detailed below.

**3.3.1 Joint Honours students and POLAR4 classification:** A significant proportion of Hope students elect to study a broader range of disciplines rather than focussing on a single honours award. Cross disciplinary thinking is essential to many 'real world' issues; Pigden and Jegede (2020) note that many of the greatest global challenges, including "global warming, human migration or world peace, will require complex problem solving drawn from differing paradigms and disciplinary discourse"<sup>22</sup>. Forming graduates who can address real world issues by working across discipline boundaries is an important part of the Hope mission and so the institution is fully committed to offering joint honours awards (See case study 7, page 10).

However, undertaking joint honours studies is not without its challenges. Pidgen and Moore (2019)<sup>23</sup> reported that students who enter HE with lower tariff points, or from areas of low participation, are less likely to progress to a highly skilled graduate employment. These barriers to progression are magnified when the student has a joint honours award and is even more pronounced when the subjects combined are non-STEM.

This gap in progression outcomes for students from the lowest participation POLAR 4 Quintiles is particularly significant for Hope graduates; 45% of joint honours students are from POLAR 4 quintiles 1 and 2. In addition, 34% of the student cohort are studying joint honours awards in non-STEM subjects<sup>15</sup>.

The student body at Hope includes a high proportion of joint honours, non-STEM, students from the lowest POLAR 4 quintiles. These groups are less likely to progress to graduate employment. Interventions to support Hope students in gaining graduate employment are pivotal to our 2020-25 Strategy for Enhancing Student Employability<sup>24</sup>. Nevertheless, the challenges faced by the Hope cohort are not accommodated in the benchmarking.

**3.3.2 Change from DLHE to GOS:** The change from the Destination of Leavers survey (DLHE) to Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) has potentially adversely affected Hope's progression metric. GOS response rates at Hope, as is the case nationally, are lower than those derived through DLHE. This is particularly significant as the GOS is highly unrepresentative of an already small cohort.

The under-representation of graduate professional courses included in the Hope GOS outcomes,

including those from Initial Teacher Training (ITT) and Social Work is particularly concerning. These students make up 18% of the GOS population at Hope but 45% of these students did not respond. Students from these cohorts who did respond were in graduate employment or further study (82% and 96% respectively)<sup>25</sup>. The last DLHE survey, dependent upon an 80% response rate, showed the University to have a professional employment or further study rate of 85.3%, of which 96% of ITT students and 88% of Social Work students were in graduate level employment<sup>26</sup>.

If Hope's response rates for the Graduate Outcomes surveys were similar to those achieved in the DLHE, they would be more reflective of the student population and the University's positive progression indicator would increase.

**3.3.3 Non-graduate level employment, SOC Codes 4-9:** A significant number of Hope graduates gain employment in roles that are either preparatory for professional employment or are related to professions. For example, employment as teaching assistants or as 'early years' practitioners. 60% of females at Hope who graduate from education or social science related courses, have gone into non-graduate SOC 4-9 roles<sup>25</sup>. These include classroom assistants, child care and community care roles. Many of these graduates are gaining experience prior to commencing a professional role or have an intention to commence employment in a role that meets their career goal. These jobs are not labelled as 'highly skilled' although a degree qualification is required.

A significant group of Hope graduates are in employment that requires a degree but in a professional role which does not count towards SOC codes 1-3.

The University recognises the many potential barriers to progression into graduate employment and has a number of initiatives in place. The case studies below provide examples of some of these interventions in place:

#### **Case study 15: Developing Graduate Competencies in Education-related subjects**

**Issue:** A significant proportion of Hope graduates enter professional roles that are considered as non-graduate SOC 4-9.

**Activity:** Early Childhood subject team and the Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network have developed the Graduate Practitioner Certificate (a level 6 qualification) which runs alongside the single honours degree. This provides access to leadership roles within the children's sector and progression to postgraduate academic or professional programmes. It is aligned to UK practice requirements and aims to strengthen a graduate-led Early Childhood workforce to improve outcomes for children.

**Outcome:** The uptake in the first cohort who will graduate in summer 2023 is 45% and work is ongoing to expand to as an opportunity for combined honours students and related Social Science and Education disciplines.

**3.3.4 Overall Unemployment Metrics:** Hope's student unemployment rate decreased from 6% for those graduating in 2018/19 to only 4% in the following year<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, in 2020 86% of those leaving Hope felt that their activities post-graduation were meaningful<sup>26</sup>. The University has a number of initiatives to improve progression. See case studies below for examples:

### Case study 16: Revision of the Student Employability plan

**Objective:** To develop and implement the Enhancing Student Employability Plan 2020 - 2025<sup>36</sup>

**Activity:** The Student Futures Unit engaged in University wide and external discussions to develop and implement a strategic approach that meets the needs of both employers and students. Key features of the development of the plan included

- Consultation with a School-wide Student Employment Action Group to ensure that the needs of all students were considered within the Plan. The group was tasked with sharing employability enhancement ideas and good practice.
- Conducting a Career Readiness survey to provide a better understanding of initiatives that would make the greatest impact for students at different stages of their journey.
- An audit of the proposed strategy by the external company RSM.

**Outcomes:** The Strategy was successfully implemented across the University in 2021. The 2021 audit by professional body MATRIX commented that Hope offered *'a friendly, welcoming, and professional service that goes the extra mile to provide the students and employers with the opportunity to explore their specific needs'*.

RSM's audit considered Graduate Outcomes results and concluded *'it is clear that the Graduate and Professional level employability rate is increasing, which indicates that the activities and initiatives of the University are having a positive impact'*.

### Case study 17: Improving progression to graduate employment for business graduates

**Objective:** Enhancing the academic, practical, and personal skills that met the needs of today's employers and increased opportunities for students and as a result improve the progression metrics.

**Activity:** The Business School recognised that development of corporate links with regional and local business was key to increasing progression opportunities for students. This initiative has been in place since 2020, the impact on progression is expected to be reflected in the metrics in 2024. The initiative included:

- Appointment of an Employment Opportunities Manager to bridge the gap between academic theory and practice bringing real businesses into the Business School to enhance the curriculum.
- Establishing an Executive Business Advisory Board with external business leaders to support the academic provision and give students and alumni access to guest speakers, mentors, placement opportunities, mock interviews, collaborative events with Liverpool Chamber of Commerce among others and live student projects in SMEs.
- Developing a credit bearing Skills Passport which documents the skills the students acquire that sit alongside their academic journey, with a focus on ambition, confidence, and resilience as well as more generic business skills such as teamwork.
- An industry week to give students the opportunity to visit businesses and explore how learning is applied in practice and also to see the breadth of job roles available.
- Networking opportunities for students at the annual Insight to Business Awards and dinner which is purely for undergraduates (the only example in the North West). The awards consist of 2-week industry placements with partner organisations.

**Outcomes:** An employer who provides one of the internships commented *'The students that have come to us in the past have been invaluable and we have really enjoyed working with them'*.

**3.3.5 Proportion of disabled students:** Hope has a significant proportion of disabled students, which is well above bench mark. The progression metric for disabled students is 5.8% below the benchmark<sup>5</sup>. The 2021 AGCAS Report by Allen and Coney<sup>27</sup> highlights that whilst students with any disability are less likely to be in full time employment (53.2% compared to 60.4% for students with no disability), the impact on employment is particularly significant for those with autism (36.4%) and those with two or more conditions (42.4%). Hope's internal data for 2021/22 shows that 5% of students report social communication or autistic spectrum disorder whilst 9.6% of students have two or more disabilities<sup>4</sup>. These groups are 24% and 18% less likely to gain full time employment than non-disabled students respectively.

Disabled students are less likely to be employed, including in graduate employment, for a number of reasons. Graduate success relates to job satisfaction, work life balance and many other factors; disabled students may have alternative priorities to non-disabled students when making career decisions and a greater understanding of barriers to employment is required.

A high proportion of Hope graduates report social communication or autism spectrum disorder or have two or more disabilities. Both of these groups are known to be significantly less likely to enter full time graduate employment.

**3.3.6 The Liverpool Context:** In Liverpool, public sector employment is 24%, 7% higher than the national figure<sup>11</sup>. A 37% real term reduction in central government grants between 2009/10 and 2019/20<sup>28</sup> has seen a local authority spending cut of 16% since 2010.

In Liverpool 57% of graduates are employed in publicly funded sectors, 11% higher than the UK average<sup>28</sup>. Significantly, Liverpool Hope has more graduates employed in public service roles than other universities in the city<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, Liverpool Hope graduates have been particularly impacted by the reduced employment opportunities in the public sector in the city.

Hope has many graduates employed in public sector services. Real term cuts in local authority spending which has decreased opportunities for employment in this area have particularly affected Hope students looking for professional employment opportunities in the local area.

**3.3.7 Northern Ireland cohort:** Hope has significant proportion of students from Northern Ireland. It is significant that the University's progression rates for students from England are 3.2% below the progression benchmark, whilst they are 4.8% below the benchmark for Northern Irish students<sup>4</sup> (See page 2).

The latest graduate employment figures for students who have studied at Northern Irish universities are 79.4%<sup>29</sup>, which is higher than the employment rate for students from English Universities. The linked 2018 report on graduate destinations goes on to detail that graduates from Northern Ireland HEIs are more likely to be in employment than students who studied elsewhere in the UK. Significantly, only 34% of Northern Irish students who studied outside the province were employed in Northern Ireland, compared to 88.6% of those who graduated from Northern Ireland HEIs.



Northern Irish students, who return to the province are much less likely to be in employment than those who graduate from local HEIs in Northern Ireland. 54% of Northern Irish students who studied at Hope are in graduate employment in Northern Ireland<sup>4</sup> and whilst this is better than the average for Northern Irish HEI graduates from outside the province it has contributed to a reduction in the Hope metric.

Recognising these challenges, the University has responded with a variety of initiatives.

**3.3.8 Development of a Student Futures unit:** Hope recognises the importance of encouraging students to consider their future at all stages of their educational journey and have restructured UK recruitment and the careers team into a single Student Futures unit. This team directs the progressive development of strong links with schools, FE colleges, community groups and industry stakeholders and engages employers at every stage of the student lifecycle from potential student to Alumni. Networking events with Liverpool business leaders explore how collaboration can ensure the needs of local industry are met through courses that produce students with the relevant skills and experiences.

Hope recognises the advice of external stakeholders that create a pipeline of talent to make sure students make the most of the academic side of their potential, but also realise the skills they will need to translate that potential into success.

**3.3.8 Co-design of curriculum:** Hope uses a process of co-design to develop academic courses. This day-long event is required for every course and brings together employers, placement providers, students, academic staff from across the University who work together to produce a curriculum outline. This outline is then developed into a full curriculum by the academic subject area (see case study 16, page 17).

Following one co-design an external examiner commented positively on the changes to the curriculum that *'focus on real world issues and on students' understanding of how they relate to psychological theorising.'*

### **Case study 18: Improving progression to graduate employment in the Humanities**

**Issue:** The School of Humanities recognised there were few direct vocational routes for their subject areas and that students were unaware of the transferable skills that they had acquired across their university career.

**Activity:** In addition to the usual career events and guest lectures the School developed a graduate employability website to encourage student aspiration and increase engagement with the University careers service. The site went live in September 2020 and included links to internships, advice on career paths with a section on 'Careers for ....., ' covering each of the disciplines. Students are reminded that they have key skills such as creativity, commitment, curiosity, and critical analysis. Curriculum redesign which was implemented in September 2022 included introducing:

- Creative writing final year course which integrates practical guidance on becoming a published writer
- English Language second year course includes professional contexts in linguistics where students can explore language in a legal environment or develop teaching skills through TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)

- Media and Communications students have practical journalistic and media skills embedded in the curriculum.

**Outcome:** Progression in humanities, in particular English and History is significantly above benchmark reflecting the emphasis the subject team have placed on progression outcomes over a number of years. The TEF metric for History is 68.1% against a benchmark of 56.8%, this is a 'gold' outcome. The metric for English subjects is 4.8% above benchmark, again a 'gold' outcome<sup>5</sup>.

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## 4. The Network of Hope

The University also teaches through its Network of Hope partnership, based in a small number of sixth form partner colleges in what were initially 'cold spots' for HE or areas where communities may be unable to travel due to work and family commitments. In the period of the TEF metric the Network included two FE colleges, in Bury and Blackburn. These students are included in Hope's metrics.

Each college has a university centre at which there is substantial support available from college staff for academic and pastoral issues. This provides the students with a clear identity and focus. Support for student well-being and careers is also provided by Hope.

The targeted 'blended learning' courses are predominantly joint honours, and education related. Network of Hope students typically come from areas of high deprivation (61%), low participation (43%) and have non-traditional entry routes (89%). 88% are female, 16% are from black and global majority backgrounds, 88% are mature on entry<sup>4</sup>.

The Network of Hope cohorts are included in the Hope TEF metrics despite the students being formally registered with the partner institution. The small size of the cohorts makes it difficult to establish clear trend in the student experience metrics.

The student experience at the Network Colleges should not be directly compared to those studying at Hope as responsibility for academic support and learning resources is shared with the partner college. In addition, the Network of Hope provision is a balance between virtual and face-to-face learning not usually seen at Hope Park campuses. Student outcome metrics for continuation between Hope Park and Network students are equivalent<sup>15</sup>. In the Network of Hope this reflects continual improvement in continuation rates since 2016. The distinct shape of the Network cohort makes this achievement particularly significant and reflects support initiatives which have been expanded in recent years.

The completion metric for Network of Hope is nearly 11% below the benchmark. The fluctuations in the data reflect not only the small sample size but also the circumstances of individual students who have to balance personal, professional and academic life. In particular, COVID negatively impacted on this cohort, the completion rate dropped by 6% in 2019/20 compared to the previous year with an increasing number of students requiring additional time to complete their awards<sup>4</sup> (See section 3.2 page 12).

The significance of the Network initiative is reflected in the progression metric, 4% ahead of the Hope cohort overall<sup>4</sup>. Students in this cohort undertake a degree with the purposeful aim of enhancing their careers and are strengthened as graduates by a range of skills developed from experience in the work place. This is clearly reflected in the metric.

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## 5. Educational Gains

Educational and learning gain is core to Hope's mission and vision. The Mission Statement includes the following commitment:

'Liverpool Hope University welcomes all who seek a sound higher education. It is deeply committed to a culture of research and scholarship, and to preparing its graduates to serve the common good. Its educational philosophy is based on the triune quest for Truth, Beauty and Goodness.'

- Truth translates to traditional in-class learning
- Beauty gives a window on the world
- Goodness underpins the concern for social justice that is expected of all Hope graduates<sup>1</sup>.

In this context, educational gain is about development as a rounded person with appreciation of social justice in a global context.

In practical terms this means all undergraduates are part of a weekly tutorial system that introduces them to concepts of their chosen subject within an environment where they are encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their own learning and for contributing to that of their peers. These sessions require the construction of a portfolio of engagement which has equal standing with other pieces of assessment across the year. Students who fully embrace the tutorial and portfolio requirements consistently outperform others.

### 5.1 Development of rounded graduates

**5.1.1** At Hope we see a 'rounded graduate' as the ultimate success; someone who has broadened their mind, vision and knowledge and is ready to take an active role in society for the good of the global community. This is demonstrated by 57% of Hope students progressing to work in public service roles.<sup>9</sup> Student feedback supports the success in this endeavour. *"This course has helped me to be a better person and to take into consideration people around me of all different needs. It has been super engaging and I have learnt a lot about myself and others around me."* (NSS 2022)

Hope has a number of initiatives to focus on the wider development of students:

**5.1.2 Service and Leadership Award (SALA):** The University offers a Service and Leadership Award, which is available for all students to take alongside their academic studies, giving them the opportunity to 'stretch' themselves and to become more rounded graduates. The award challenges students to engage with issues of social justice and to serve the community through a variety of voluntary projects. Students who undertake this award have a significantly higher academic achievement than those who do not.

Since the scheme began in 2014 the proportion of good degrees achieved by the 286 SALA students has been, on average, 19% above that achieved by non-SALA graduates<sup>3</sup>.

**5.1.3 Community Forum:** Hope established a community forum at the start of Covid so that students could help support vulnerable groups in the community. The level of participation and commitment by students has led to this community incentive continuing to thrive, with the University getting involved in ever broader community projects.

**5.1.4 Student Service Awards:** In academic year 2021-22, the Student Service awards were created. These provide students with paid project work based at Hope alongside participation in a careers support programme including development of a professional development plan and a personal statement. There were 29 awards in the first year of this scheme with roles including social media development, market research, volunteer project coordinator and software developer<sup>3</sup>. A June 2022 student who took part stated *'I found the award very insightful and helped develop many of my characteristics and skills.'*

**5.1.5 Global Hope:** These projects address social justice and involve students working with close partners from around the world including South America, Africa, India and Sri Lanka. Students are accompanied by Hope staff and undertake service and community work in collaborative projects. The University contributes to the costs of these initiatives as a recognition that Global Hope supports the University's mission. A student commented (January 2017) *'Global Hope changed the way I looked at the world and helped develop my thinking in my degree. It inspired me to be more proactive in seeking a profession and gave me more confidence to travel.'*

## 5.2 Degrees with foundation year

The mission statement's assertion that the University 'welcomes all who seek a sound higher education' is demonstrated in the introduction in 2018 of undergraduate degrees with a foundation year. This was driven by a commitment to education for students of all demographics, backgrounds, educational and life experiences. The learning gain for these students is seen by measuring the progress of these cohorts to those who enter at first year.

The first cohort in 2018-19 consisted of 57 students had an average 56.9 ( $\pm 14.6$ ) UCAS points this compares to an average 112 UCAS points for Hope first year students. 46 students entered year one of their degree course. Subsequently their average grade at each level of study increased; in the first year 57.2%, second year 59.1% and third year 60.4%. The cohort graduated in Summer 2022 with 6 first class, 34 second class (25 at higher second and 9 at lower second), 4 third class/diploma or certificate and 2 students have not yet completed their studies. These outcomes are mirrored in subsequent cohorts<sup>3</sup>.

The Foundation year has become more popular, with 274 students in the current cohort. Since its inception 400 students have continued into the first year. The foundation approach allows students to discover the subjects that best meet their aims and interests, and since 2019/20 131 have changed courses before entering first year studies<sup>3</sup>.

An Enhanced Learning Block accounts for 50% of learning on the foundation year. It focusses on academic, study and life skills and is taught across the different disciplines, allowing greater depth of discussion and contextual application to key topics. Portfolio assessments allow the students to receive feedback throughout the year so they can track their performance and quality of their work.

The value of this block is confirmed at an end of year student survey (sent to Foundation year students from 2018-22, 67 responses from 499 recipients) about academic and personal development. The most frequently valued academic developments were skills based, especially academic writing and referencing, using resources, preparedness for academic life and work and being able to share their opinion. Personal achievements focussed on confidence and mental preparedness, more independent and developing passions and abilities. Students comments also recognised the support they had received *'the tutors were great, they made the classroom environment fun to learn'* and *'the teachers were welcoming and friendly, you could go to them for anything'*.

A Foundation student who graduated in 2022 from BA Business Management with a 2:1 described

her experience: *'The foundation year was the catalyst for what was to become the best four years of my educational life... I truly believe this it enabled me to find new skills that I could utilise in my degree proper. My first year of my three-year degree I noticed that the students who came straight from doing their A levels "appeared" to be at a disadvantage I felt I was one jump ahead'.*

Hope is proud of students and celebrate their achievements and development into global citizens who reflect the benefits of Education identified by The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018<sup>30</sup>) to *'equip learners with agency and a sense of purpose, and the competencies they need, to shape their own lives and contribute to the lives of others.'*

To conclude Educational Gain at Hope is most clearly explained by the Interim Head of the Hope Business School:

*'..... metrics, however important, are only a part of the gains students make and we subscribe to the adage that not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted.*

*We believe that to grow intellectually, morally, socially and spiritually we need to constantly ask questions and seek answers. This is why we believe in the extraordinary power of curiosity as the key to learning, seeking out new information and opportunities.*

*Set alongside a deeply nurturing and supportive learning environment, we are able to welcome students from under-represented groups, who may not have performed as well as they would have liked in the past and give them a home. A place for students to feel relaxed, safe and willing to take risks, expanding their sense of belonging and enhancing their self esteem.*

*A curious mind knows no limits.'*

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## Conclusion

Liverpool Hope is very proud of the personalised academic experience it provides for all of its students.

Given the high proportion of students from areas of high deprivation and low engagement with H.E, the proportion of students with one or more disabilities and considering the number of students studying joint honours, the University believes that their students' achievements more than demonstrate its mission to provide education for all. This can be attributed not only to the levels of excellence it achieves in teaching but also in the commitment of all staff to provide the best educational experience for each and every student.

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