

## 1. Context

Our vision for students, set out in a challenging and progressive Strategic Plan<sup>i</sup> is that whatever their background, they can achieve their full potential and go on to have fulfilling careers and lives. It is based on our Values of ambition and enterprise and achieved in a friendly, collegiate environment where the positive transformation of student lives is our core purpose. Through Education and Student Experience commitments within the Strategic Plan, and underpinning policy framework (University policies and regulations (UPRs))<sup>ii</sup>, we deliver outstanding and distinctive education that develops students' skills for life. We work in partnership with our student community, professional bodies and employers, to deliver flexible education with clear career pathways. A Hertfordshire student embodies the University's Graduate Attributes<sup>iii</sup> and is professionally focused; globally minded; sustainability driven; digitally capable and confident; inclusive and collaborative; evidence based and ethical. These attributes ensure that they stand out in the workplace, enhancing their career aspirations and conferring high employability.

We welcome a diverse community of over 30,000 students from more than 140 countries across seven Schools of study<sup>iv</sup>, with state-of-the-art facilities and highly qualified academic staff sharing a wealth of lived experience. In 2021/22, undergraduates (of whom 84% were home students) made up 53% of our student population. Our students are immersed in an environment enriched with world-class research, and a multitude of opportunities for unique engagement with business, industry and the public sector. According to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021, the University is the top ranked post-92 university and is in the top 25% of UK universities in terms of research impact. We are designated one of the UK's 20 University Enterprise Zones. Our track record on supporting student achievement and social mobility is impressive. More than half of our students are from a Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) background. Three quarters of those in one of our largest Schools (Health and Social Work) are mature students. A significant proportion of them are first generation into Higher Education. We estimate (from the 'Parental Education' question of our Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student return, and our own registration data) that 52% of new UK domiciled undergraduate students are the first in their family to attend university. The University holds an Athena Swan (Bronze) award and was one of the first universities to gain the Race Equality Charter Mark Bronze award in 2015, with renewal in 2021.

Our Access and Participation Plan (APP) and strategy aims to mainstream our approach to widening participation and we are ranked 16<sup>th</sup> in England for social mobility<sup>v</sup>. Many of our students come from non-traditional routes into Higher Education and our average tariff at entry, for those with scoring qualifications, over the three years from 2018/19 to 2020/21 is 107.8 UCAS points. We are the lead partner in the Aspire Higher Uni Connect programme for Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, and Northamptonshire. We also have a vibrant consortium partnership with the four Hertfordshire Further Education (FE) Colleges: over 17,000 students have progressed to the University from the Consortium since its foundation in 2000. Through the Consortium we offer a range of extended and foundation degrees for those wishing to study locally or with insufficient grade profiles to gain entry at degree level and provide unique progression opportunities from further to higher education. Outcomes for these students are consistently excellent. In 2020/21, 79% of students who progressed from the Consortium went on to achieve 'good' honours degrees.

Our Degree Apprenticeship strategy and provision ensures we deliver accessible, high quality programmes that allow learners to successfully progress throughout their course and beyond into

wider career opportunities. We currently offer 10 programmes, with 880 apprentices studying in business, health, construction and engineering disciplines. Our recent OFSTED inspection graded the quality of education as good and highlighted our highly relevant curriculum which is designed in conjunction with employers.

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics demonstrate the impact of our institutional drive on positive outcomes for disadvantaged, BAME students and those with a declared disability. This has been achieved through strategic focus on supporting our students and powering their potential. Together, our Graduate Attributes<sup>iii</sup> and Student Charter<sup>vi</sup> cultivate an environment where we enhance graduates' social mobility, employability and develop students with the knowledge, skills and attributes to succeed in their chosen profession. Our qualifications ensure students benefit from sustained employment and salary premiums above expectations, when compared to their entry tariff. We have taken deliberate steps, over a prolonged period to develop a strong culture of employability and enterprise within an inclusive student-staff partnership approach to deliver these outstanding results. This extends from our Teaching and Learning Principles (Herts Learning) embedded in every programme; to systematic support for academic and pastoral wellbeing; partnerships with employers and focus on employability within and around the curriculum; and flexible pathways and programmes of study. Academic Schools work in partnership with well-resourced teams of experts in our Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre (LTIC) and Centre for Academic Quality Assurance (CAQA), under direction of the PVC Education and Student Experience, to enhance learning and teaching excellence across the institution.

Underpinning all that we do is an institutional commitment to student-staff partnership working, which is pervasive, pioneering and wide-ranging, as evidenced throughout this submission. Reflecting our institutional approach, we engaged in a fully open and collaborative approach to the TEF. Student representatives were an integral part of our TEF steering group. We discussed and supported them in understanding our data and they provided feedback to support the drafting of the institutional submission in addition to preparing their own independent submission.

## **2. Student Outcomes**

**2.1 Our student outcomes data shows excellent rates of continuation and completion across all of our full-time provision with outstanding results in Education and Health related subject areas and for Apprenticeship learners. This is reflected across all years and all student characteristics (SO2).**

These excellent outcomes are also evident through other measures of student success. Our record on supporting equality of opportunity and students' potential for social mobility is impressive, evidenced by the percentage of those from under-represented backgrounds achieving a 'good degree'. Awarding gaps have been eliminated between students from high and low socio-economic backgrounds (82% of students from both POLAR4 quintiles 1&2 and from POLAR4 quintiles 3-5 achieving good degrees in 2020/21) and between students who report a disability and those who do not (81% of students in both groups achieving good degrees in 2020/21). Awarding gaps have also reduced in other areas including a 12pp gap between White and BAME students in 2020/21 compared to a 20pp gap in 2018/19, and a 3pp gap between young and mature learners in 2020/21 compared to a 6pp gap in 2018/19. Apprenticeship outcomes exceed benchmarks and are

outstanding across several programmes with at least 90% of learners on our Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship achieving 1<sup>st</sup> class degrees over the past 2 years.

There are a small number of subject areas where full time continuation or completion rates are below benchmark. These are mainly in embedded Initial Year extended studies (to support access to HE) where students may go on to other provision, or in withdrawn Humanities Modular and Joint Honours provision. Ongoing internal monitoring and quality review processes, including student feedback, revealed that these modular types of programmes, typically with small numbers of students, were logistically and educationally challenging (e.g. in terms of timetabling and course coherence) and did not provide an ideal study experience, particularly in terms of student belonging. These programmes have been discontinued and replaced with either single honours awards or specific Combined awards (BA/BSc Hons in A and B), to provide greater identity and structure for students, and these show improving continuation and completion, though this is not yet apparent in the TEF data set as it includes this historical data.

TEF continuation and completion data mis-represents the performance of the University's part time students as it suggests that we are delivering below benchmark quality for part time student degrees. We have a range of flexible part time short course provision, particularly Health CPD courses. There was no expectation that these learners would continue after completing but, over the years, such courses have been coded in various ways to reflect clarification in HESA coding frames. We believe this provision should not be included in our TEF part time population.

When we recalculate the TEF data to remove this standalone short course provision from the student population, indicators for both PT continuation and completion improve dramatically, with (i) our overall **PT Continuation** rate improving from 61.3% to 79.3%, i.e. **13.9% above benchmark** (638 students on short course provision removed from the denominator of 2,480); and (ii) our overall **PT Completion** rate improving from 47.7% to 70.4%, i.e. **6.5% above benchmark** (1,534 students on short course provision removed from the denominator of 4,030). As a result, the University can confirm that it is **delivering outstanding outcomes for our part time students**.

**2.2 The progression rates for all of our students are also excellent and, in some areas, such as Allied Health, Medical Sciences, Geography and Performing Arts they are outstanding (SO3).** Other measures demonstrate the extent to which we add value for our all of students in terms of long-term employability. The recently published Longitudinal Earnings Outcomes (LEO) data for median earnings for full time first degree students expressed against their entry qualifications, show that 5 years after graduation, Hertfordshire is ranked 35<sup>th</sup> in the sector on this measure. At both 3 years and 1 year after graduation, we are 38<sup>th</sup>. Our rates for females at 3 years after graduation are especially good as we rank 16<sup>th</sup> in the sector, with even higher rankings in areas such as health and social care, allied health professions and nursing and midwifery<sup>vii</sup>.

While our progression levels are broadly excellent, we are aware that in some subject areas our graduate level progression does not meet our aspirations. In response, we have reviewed the curriculum and introduced additional, targeted provision for these groups to support their progression into graduate level roles or further study. Some examples, supported by external examiner (EE) or PSRB commendation, of this provision include:

- Career and placement modules have been embedded within Mass Communications, Literature, History and Languages programmes: *"The staff engage in innovative methods of teaching... 'Competencies in Career Development' was a great new addition to the provision. These work experience modules offer great opportunities to your students and they will greatly enhance their career opportunities post-graduation."* (Humanities EE 2021/22 Report)
- Business Administration students (288 in 2021/22) all study a compulsory enhancing employability module to support their application for placement or internship at the end of their second year *"I would commend the course team on working to ensure that modules taught are current, contextualised and provide appropriate assessments to develop students practical and employability skills."* (Event and Tourism Management EE 2021/2022 Report); *"The curriculum is very well-designed and I believe it is conducive to excellent employability results."* (Accounting and Finance EE 2021/22 Report)
- Since 2017 all Psychology students (445 in 2021/22) have undertaken 120 hours of work experience during their second year which provides an opportunity to explore how psychology is relevant to a range of work settings. They also take part in Graduate Routes and employer sessions to support them in finding, making and excelling in applications. *"The visiting team commend the programme team for their commitment to developing and embedding an employability and career focus within the provision including the development of the 'psychology work experience' module, the additional careers advice for students, and opportunities to engage in valuable work experience in an applied psychology environment"* (British Psychological Society, PSRB Validation Feedback, 2019)
- Engineering courses were redesigned in 2019 using a 'Conceive, Design, Implement, Operate' (CDIO) approach to deeply embed practical application and professionalism in the curriculum. Final year students undertake a specific careers module which includes employer and careers sessions to gain graduate roles. *"A practical based curriculum that meets the needs of industry and develops employable engineers. Good support for Industrial Placements, including the encouragements for students to use this experience to gain Eng Tech Registration and Membership"* (Institute of Mechanical Engineers, PSRB Validation Feedback, 2021).

**2.3 In addition to the data evident in our student outcomes, our courses provide intellectual stimulation, stretch and challenge and this, alongside our tailored support for students, means they achieve well beyond what is expected of them in terms of their Educational gains (SO1, SO4, SO5). We explain our approach to supporting students to achieve the Educational gains described later in the Student Experience section.**

We define **Educational gains** in line with our ambition to transform our students lives. This means that, whatever our students' background, we aim to power their potential to succeed through providing opportunities to develop their employability, global perspectives, and learning skills for life. It embraces the **cognitive** (academic), **affective** (motivations and values) and **behavioural** (skills and personal development) domains of learning. We measure Educational gains using data that supports evidence of personal development; values and self-reflection on learning; improved work-readiness and the development of employability skills; along with evidence of Value Added.

Central to our concept of Educational gains is the way in which all programmes provide opportunities for students to develop **Graduate Attributes**. These were established in 2011 and refreshed in 2020 following consultation with our students and alumni, an extensive review of both employer and Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) expectations, and

consideration of national and global drivers such as the UN Sustainability Goals and World Economic Forum on Skills 2030. The purposeful way in which we engage students in teaching, learning and assessment activities fosters their Graduate Attributes inside the curriculum.

All programmes make clear to students how particular Graduate Attributes will be specifically developed within each module and across their period of study. For example, in relation to the 'Digitally Capable' attribute, students are encouraged to self-assess their skills at the start of their course through the JISC Discovery Tool and then supported at programme level and through extra-curricular activities and LinkedIn Learning resources. Our Student Technology Mentors have designed and developed online courses to further enhance some of these skills. The JISC Digital Insights Survey, (conducted annually since 2019), offers clear evidence of our impact in developing student digital capabilities both within and beyond their courses. Over the last year there was an increase of 13pp in students agreeing that they had guidance on the digital skills needed for their course and a 14pp increase in students agreeing that they are assessed in their digital skills.<sup>viii</sup>

Beyond the curriculum, students have the opportunity to evidence and reflect on the development of their Graduate Attributes through the Go Herts Award which recognises their achievement and helps them to articulate their personal and professional development. The award is included on students' official award transcripts and celebrated publicly at graduation.

**2.3.1 Educational gains within the cognitive domain** are most evident by examining Value Added (VA) scores as an indicator of academic progress. Degree attainment is closely related to a student's entry qualifications and subject of study. Through statistically calculating an 'expected' percentage of students who would achieve a 'good' degree based on the last five years of UK graduate results, it is possible to determine if a given cohort achieved what was expected of them based on their entry qualifications. If a cohort achieves this percentage, the VA score is 1.0. If the VA score is greater than 1.0, the cohort achieves better than expected and if the VA score is below 1.0, the attainment is below what was expected<sup>ix</sup>. VA scores therefore demonstrate a measure of 'distance travelled' and can be considered as one way to measure cognitive gain. Our VA scores are outstanding and have improved each year (2018/19:1.05; 2019/20:1.21; 2020/21:1.26) indicating better than expected results for our students, based on their entry qualifications.

The VA metric is used in the Guardian league table rankings and, on this measure in 2021, the University rose from 75<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> place. The data is equally positive when considering students in different demographic groups with VA scores showing year on year improvements for **all** groups. Some of these are presented below. It is particularly pleasing to see increases in areas where VA scores have improved from below 1.0 in 2018/19 (indicating attainment below expectation) to well above 1.0 in 2020/21 demonstrating better than expected performance, for example in POLAR4 quintile groups 1 & 2; for Asian and Black students; and students from Other ethnic backgrounds.

Value Added Score		2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
POLAR4 Quintile	Q1 & Q2	0.94	1.12	1.19
	Q3-Q5	1.16	1.3	1.34
Disability	Disability declared	1.1	1.25	1.26
	No disability declared	1.05	1.2	1.26
Ethnicity	Asian	0.96	1.16	1.23
	Black	0.79	1.04	1.16
	Mixed heritage	1.01	1.16	1.15
	Other ethnic background	0.91	1.14	1.14
	White	1.23	1.34	1.38

In addition to the VA score, **cognitive development** is also evident through Grade Point Average (GPA). The University introduced GPA in 2017 as an alternative way for students to demonstrate their achievement beyond the traditional degree classification method and support them to compete in the international job market. GPA is detailed on students' transcripts and indicates both progress during their studies and as a final measure of achievement at the end of their studies. For each module a student attempts, a 'Grade Point' (0-4.50) is awarded alongside the numeric grade (0-100) for the module based on the GPA scale recommended by Advance HE. The GPA is then calculated as a weighted average of these Grade Points, based on the modules that contribute to the student's programme of studies. All credit-rated modules of a student's programme count towards the GPA score, and hence it is possible to see students' progressive performance.

The table below shows the average overall GPA scores at levels 4 to 6 (L4-6) with colour coding and data referencing indicating cohort progressions; Yellow: students starting in 2017 with GPA 2.63 in L4, GPA 2.72 when they were in L5 and 3.28 when in L6; Orange: students starting in 2018 with GPA 2.59 in L4, 2.99 when they were in L5 and 3.18 when in L6; and Green: students starting in 2019 with GPA 2.87 in L4, 2.95 when they were in L5 and 3.07 when in L6. The figures have been calculated by dividing the sum of the GPA for that level in that year by the count of students in the population. It is evident that student achievement increases through each year of study.

	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
2017/18	2.63	2.66	2.78
2018/19	2.59	2.72	3.19
2019/20	2.87	2.99	3.28
2020/21	2.70	2.95	3.18
2021/22	2.54	2.75	3.07

**Our students can demonstrate educational gains within the cognitive domain as a result of our innovative approach to curriculum design which enables inclusive curricula and personalised learning, coupled with a commitment to the provision of excellent teaching and assessment through Herts Learning, along with tailored academic and Personal Tutor support (see Student Experience section).**

**2.3.2 To understand Educational gains in the behavioural and affective domains**, we asked our final year students to reflect on how their level of development had changed since they started their course. Whilst it is commonly accepted that educational gain is difficult to measure, one important factor is learners' confidence levels. In this regard, the survey helped us to understand educational gains through our students' observations on their skills, values and personal development, and evidenced that our students feel they have made significant gains in every area, completing their courses feeling highly confident about the skills they have developed. We asked three groups of questions: first, relating to personal development, self-reflection, and values; second, relating to skills development generally; and third relating specifically to employability skills. Using a 4-point scale, we asked students to state their perceived level of development at the start of their course and their perceived level of development in November 2022 in their final year of study. There were 1,210 responses to the survey, representing 34% of the Level 6 2023 NSS student population<sup>x</sup>.

Overall, 88.5% of students rated their **personal development, self-reflection and values** 'Good or Excellent' compared to 56.3% at the start of their course. The figure and table below show improvements in all areas; and our students strongly indicate that their feeling of confidence has grown alongside their self-reflection and self-awareness. There are perceived marked improvements in areas covered by the University's Values and Graduate Attributes. Although the smallest increase is in 'appreciating equality, diversity and inclusivity', scores for this value were already rated very highly at the start of the course and it is the highest overall scoring of this set of statements (94.4%), reflecting individuals' and the University's commitment to, and excellent performance in, inclusivity.



	Confidence	Self-Reflection	Self-Awareness	Adapting successfully to changing situations	Interpersonal (social skills)	Applying ethical & professional values	Understanding your contribution to community	Social responsibility	Cultural & Global awareness	Appreciating equality, diversity & inclusivity
Current % Good or Excellent	81.8	92.2	91.7	86.9	85.7	94.2	78.8	91.2	88.1	94.4
Start % Good or Excellent	39.3	53.9	55.6	51.1	51.9	60.9	47.4	64.5	61.6	77.1
Percentage point difference	42.5	38.3	36.1	35.8	33.8	33.3	31.4	26.7	26.5	17.3

The results are equally excellent across different demographic groups. For example, in personal development, self-reflection and values, the average scores across all questions show:

Average scores for Personal Development, Self-Reflection and Values	Starting Level (Good/Excellent)	Current Level (Good/Excellent)	Difference
<b>All students</b>	<b>56.6%</b>	<b>88.6%</b>	<b>32.0%</b>
BAME students	56.5%	90.1%	33.7%
White students	56.3%	87.1%	30.9%
POLAR quintiles 1&2	55.2%	89.2%	34.1%
POLAR quintiles 3,4&5	55.9%	86.6%	30.7%

These results mirror those from NSS optional questions relating to personal development and confidence (which we included in recent years, apart from 2021).

NSS optional questions associated with personal development		% Agree			
		2019	2020	2021	2022
B1.1 The course has helped me to present myself with confidence	UH	81.05%	81.23%	-	74.50%
	Sector	78.97%	78.18%	-	71.71%
B1.2 My communication skills have improved	UH	85.97%	86.56%	-	82.43%
	Sector	83.92%	83.44%	-	78.71%
B1.3 As a result of my course I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems	UH	80.56%	79.12%	-	72.63%
	Sector	78.70%	77.86%	-	71.54%

**2.3.3** In terms of **key skills development**, feedback was again very positive. Overall, 87.4% of Level 6 students described their skills level as 'Good or Excellent' compared to just 43.3% at the start of their course. The figure and table below show improvements in all areas and particularly where we are focussing on developing educational gain for our students, such as in exploring real-world problems, understanding national and international perspectives, and in speaking clearly and effectively. The results are equally excellent across different demographic groups.



	Researching skills (library)	Researching skills (other)	Thinking critically and analytically	Reading and comprehending academic material	Writing clearly and effectively	Exploring complex real-world problems	Engaging in academic discussion	Understanding national and international perspectives	Taking responsibility for your own learning	Speaking clearly and effectively	Analysing numerical and statistical information	Being innovative and creative
Current % Good or Excellent	89.8	86.5	90.5	89.7	93.1	89.3	84.1	80.4	94	89.1	77.8	84
Start % Good or Excellent	31.5	31.5	39.5	40	44.4	45.8	40.7	41.7	55.9	52.9	41.8	53.7
Percentage point difference	58.3	55	51	49.7	48.7	43.5	43.4	38.7	38.1	36.2	36	30.3

**Personal development, reflection and the consideration of values is supported through our Personal Tutoring Framework, development within the curriculum of our Graduate Attributes, and our commitment to student-staff partnerships and enables our students to demonstrate and recognise the development of key skills and education gains within the affective and behavioural domains (see Student Experience section).**

**2.3.4** We have strong evidence that our students have **gained employability skills and feel prepared for their future careers**. In our Level 6 survey, 87.1% of students consider that they have 'Good or Excellent' employability skills compared to 50.8% at the start of their course and



reported improvement across all measures. Looking at the individual responses in this section, it is particularly pleasing to see that students perceive the greatest improvement to be in important life skills of self-reflection to contribute to ongoing improvement and acquiring skills to help get a job. Across different demographic groups, the results are consistent and very positive.



	Self-reflection to contribute to ongoing improvement	Acquiring skills to help you get a job	Preparing and making a presentation	Applying initiative, enterprise and creativity	Solving problems that contribute to workplace	Planning, organising and managing time	Applying digital skills [for the] effective completion of tasks	Working effectively with others
Current % Good or Excellent	90.6	75.3	88.4	86.1	89	86.4	88.7	92.5
Start % Good or Excellent	47.2	34.4	51.2	49.4	53.4	51	55.5	64.6
Percentage point difference	43.4	40.9	37.2	36.7	35.6	35.4	33.2	27.9

Against our benchmark and the sector overall, our outstanding NSS results evidence the value our students place on the opportunities within the curriculum to build employability skills to support their future careers. The additional questions we opted to include in the NSS 2020, 2021 and 2022, also demonstrate that, compared to the sector, our students are more much more satisfied about their opportunities to plan their careers.

NSS questions associated with skills to support employability		% Agree			
		2019	2020	2021	2022
Q.7 My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt	UH	82.17%	83.30%	82.11%	79.84%
	Benchmark	81.74%	81.62%	76.39%	77.76%
	Sector	80.95%	80.77%	76.30%	77.07%
Q.22 I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course	UH	85.60%	86.21%	77.57%	78.46%
	Benchmark	84.92%	84.29%	76.06%	77.15%
	Sector	83.77%	83.57%	74.65%	75.80%
<b>Relevant optional NSS questions</b>					
Response rates for optional questions	UH	-	35%	37%	37%
	Sector	-	9%	11%	13%
Q7.5 Practical activities on the course have helped me to learn	UH	-	73.24%	83.31%	79.00%
	Sector	-	73.11%	79.15%	73.53%
Q15.1 My Higher Education experience has helped me plan for my future career	UH	-	80.88%	68.79%	73.03%
	Sector	-	76.94%	69.50%	70.62%
Q15.2 My institution offered activities and resources designed to prepare me for the next step in my career	UH	-	75.66%	70.13%	71.66%
	Sector	-	73.09%	64.28%	67.74%

Q15.3 The skills I have developed during my time in Higher Education will be useful for my future career	UH	-	89.67%	84.63%	85.20%
	Sector	-	87.04%	82.29%	83.27%

**The development of Educational gains in employability skills is achieved through curricula designed and informed by research, industry and the professions, embedding of our Graduate Attributes and our integrated support from the Careers and Employment Service, alongside our investment in specialist learning spaces, enabling our students to demonstrate improved work readiness and confidence in these skills (see Student Experience section).**

**2.4 In line with our strategic oversight and monitoring of teaching excellence, we take a holistic approach to evaluating the effectiveness of our approach to supporting our students' Educational gains and outcomes (SO6).** This is carried out through the work of the Student Performance Monitoring Group (SPMG); as part of our innovative Continuous Enhancement Planning (CEP) process; through programme Periodic Review; and in partnership with the Hertfordshire Students' Union (Herts SU) using their own survey and focus group data.

The CEP process comprises School-based enhancement activities and a 'live' action plan owned by programme teams and considered at specified intervals. It is a risk-based process in which individual programme action plans, informed by core metrics and qualitative evidence, are closely monitored by Associate Deans of School (Academic Quality Assurance), along with Associate Directors in CAQA. The process emphasises the need to demonstrate measurable impact, and effective actions are shared at annual School enhancement events with cross-university sharing facilitated by CAQA and LTIC.

SPMG considers all University-level student entry and performance-related data, including data relating to collaborative provision and apprenticeships. It reports to Academic Board and makes appropriate recommendations at institutional, Academic School and course level, to promote equality of learning opportunities for all. SPMG members meet with Deans and senior staff in Academic Schools annually to develop actions.

Both CEP and Periodic Review processes require programme teams to consider: (i) trend data from NSS results (overall and by student characteristic, where available) for all scales of the survey; (ii) trend data from our additional NSS questions which include questions on personal development and employability and skills; (iii) value added data (including data by ethnicity); (iv) feedback on placement learning; (v) feedback from External Examiners; (vi) feedback from employers and professional bodies; and (vii) direct student feedback. The Level 6 Educational Gains Survey ran for the first time in 2022/23, and our intention is to refine and repeat this annually and to incorporate its findings into CEP Action Plans and the Periodic Review process.

**Our high rates of successful continuation, completion, progression and excellent long-term employability outcomes, as well as the Educational Gains students achieve, can be attributed to a strategic focus on how we tailor and deploy highly effective approaches to provide an outstanding student experience as outlined in the remainder of this submission.**

### **3. Student Experience**

**3.1 Our effective and innovative approach to curriculum design ensures student engagement and success (SE2).** In feedback and focus groups, post-Covid, students have told

us they value a campus experience which provides a degree of flexibility and choice, creating more accessible courses and empowering their learning. Our community-created Herts Learning principles are set out in our Learning and Teaching Policy (UPR TL03)<sup>ii</sup> and recognise the value of offering versatile ways to connect with learning around the busy, complex lives of our diverse community. The principles **prioritise student learning** through **coherent design** that offers **choice for personalisation** where appropriate while focusing on **building strong communities** and **harnessing technology** to support these aims. Our approach to curriculum design is cited as an exemplar of good practice in the recent JISC publication “Approaches to curriculum and learning design across UK higher education”<sup>xi</sup>. Through Herts Learning we embed adaptability into every programme, supporting students to balance study with other responsibilities and engage with a wide range of extra-curricular activities and work experience opportunities to prepare them for successful careers. We believe this approach provides us with the right framework to foster student enquiry, critical thinking and curiosity, support our goals to eliminate awarding gaps and drive student success. A key feature is that students are partners in enhancing their experience, and their input, alongside **research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement contribute to an outstanding academic experience for our students (SE3)**, leading to excellent outcomes.

**3.2 All of our curricula are informed by research, business and the professions.** We have a focus on employability, deploying a range of pedagogic approaches from real world simulation to live industry projects and workplace learning. These learning and assessment activities stretch students and we set high expectations to ensure they develop as creative, professional and enterprising graduates. Student experiences are enhanced through external input in the delivery and/or support of programmes (e.g. guest speakers; alumni mentoring or buddying schemes; seminars or workshops with professional or industry partners; industry-based dissertation projects or projects linked to professional partnerships and organisations etc.).

We aim to ensure that guest speakers are leaders in their fields and representative of our diverse student body and thus act as role models for our students. For example, Professor Jim McManus (OCDS, FFPH), Director of Public Health for Hertfordshire teaches on programmes within the School of Life and Medical Sciences and Health and Social Work. Dr Grace Ononiwu CBE (an alumna of the University, recognised in the Powerlist 2020, and the first Afro-Caribbean person to hold the role of Chief Crown Prosecutor and now Director of Legal Services for the Crown Prosecuting Service) regularly shares her experiences and insight with Hertfordshire Law School (HLS) students. Alumnus Harry Woodgate, who won the Waterstones Children’s Book Prize (2022) for the Best Illustrated Children’s book is a visiting lecturer on the Graphic Design and Illustration courses, focusing on design and illustration in contemporary social and political contexts.

We are ranked as the top post-92 university and in the top 25% of all UK universities in terms of research impact (REF 2021); 78% of the University’s research has been ranked as ‘world leading’ (4\*) and ‘internationally excellent’ (3\*) while 90% of our research impact has been classified as ‘outstanding’ (4\*) or ‘very considerable’ (3\*). A strong spirit of enquiry and innovation to tackle global and societal challenges defines our research culture and feeds directly into teaching and learning. Validation and periodic review panels require evidence of research-rich teaching including setting out how the curriculum and assessment incorporates students’ engagement in research and inquiry. For example, undergraduate geography students annually undertake glacial research

in the Arctic with our glacier scientists (9 students in 2022) with their work then featuring in peer reviewed journals. History students have the opportunity to join the Oral History team, run currently by Prof Tony Shaw and former BBC producer Andrew Green. Students have collected oral testimony from a wide range of people, including choristers who performed at the Queen's Coronation in 1953, helping develop interviewing skills and contributing to national projects.

Research professors are full members of teaching teams on UG programmes, inspiring students with their latest research. The research-informed nature of the curricula is enhanced through the involvement of postgraduate research students in teaching and assessment activities. Mandatory engagement in the first module of our PGCert in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCert LTHE) ensures that research students are fully supported to have confidence and be competent in their teaching. The personal achievement of gaining Associate Fellowship of the HEA also supports their employability within academia following completion of their doctoral studies.

Pedagogic research is supported and promoted via the University's Educational Research Network. The network enables pedagogic researchers from all 7 Schools plus staff from LTIC and CAQA to share practice, identify collaboration opportunities and support publication in pedagogic journals including our own online journals 'Blended Learning in Practice' and 'LINK' (published by the LTIC and the School of Social Sciences, Humanities and Education respectively).

**3.3 Employer and PSRB engagement with, and input into, 100% of our programmes of study ensures that students acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes that enhance their personal and professional lives.** All programme development teams must demonstrate that experts from business and the professions contributed to programme design and that they are working with employer or professional engagement groups to ensure involvement in and currency of the programme. This may be through the School's Professional/Industrial Advisory Group. Overall, 81% of our UG students study on PSRB-approved courses and 80% of our single honours students graduate with a degree that is professionally accredited. All Schools offer extra and co-curricular opportunities and qualifications (research/consultancy work, peer mentoring, City & Guilds awards, Microsoft qualifications, pilots' licenses, standalone short course credit, etc.) to complement students' core studies. At our partner colleges, Work Based Learning is a distinctive feature and is routinely identified as good practice by External Examiners, who praise the use of live briefs and continual engagement with employers embedded throughout this provision.

PSRBs recognise and value our outward, industry-facing approach for example: the College of Radiographers commended "the embedded involvement of experts" (2022); and the Royal Aeronautical Society praised the "contributions from a dynamic set of Industrial Advisory Group Chairmen and their active involvement in a number of industry focused MEng, MSc and BEng final year project" (2021). Our students' work is praised by industry bodies. For example, Creative Arts students won categories and had work selected at major industry awards associated with our subjects in 2022: Rookie Awards (Digital), Golden Short Film Festival Italy, TIGA Awards (Games Industry), D&AD Awards (Design and Digital Advertising), New Blades (Model Design).

The range of engagement with professional practice and input from business and industry experts is extensive across all Academic Schools, for example:

- Mathematics, physics, astrophysics and aerospace engineering students work collaboratively on a space mission design project module judged by an industry professional who also mentors the students on their projects.
- Herts Propeller is a unique design agency based within the School of Creative Arts (CTA) to undertake commercial work, drawing on the combined talents of students and graduates.
- Final year Film and TV students receive an in-curricular skills-based workshop from Sky Studios Elstree to support their career planning and applying for opportunities.
- Level 6 Law students work in our award winning<sup>xii</sup> Pro Bono Law Clinic as part of their Clinical Legal Education module (130 students since the clinic opened in 2019) and students can volunteer as Clinical Assistants (level 4) and Student Advisors (Levels 5 and 6) shadowing lawyers giving verbal advice, or interviewing clients themselves and carrying out research to produce a letter of advice (220 volunteers since the Clinic opened).

**3.4 Reflecting the institution's vocational history, work-based learning and placements remain a core part of our offer to students.** In 2021/22 over 5,000 students joined a placement (a 67% increase on the 3,000 in 2016/17). We offer familiar professional opportunities in Health and Education alongside sandwich placements in disciplines not traditionally associated with this form of work-based learning, such as Creative Arts and Humanities; innovative self-employment placements support entrepreneurial students with business development ideas; and there is also provision for overseas placements.

In the summer of 2022, we launched the Herts Internship, offering summer internships to students and recent graduates. Over 1,500 students and graduates are currently employed by the University, with 350 current students working in partnership roles to support teaching excellence and learning enhancement across the University. Around 150 students are employed by Herts SU in part-time work including as research and marketing assistants and graphic designers. We have invested in five, 10-week, fully funded internships to close the gap in graduate level progression for Asian females, Black males, and Asian males in support of our APP targets<sup>xiii</sup>.

**3.5 Our high profile and highly accessible Careers and Employment Service (CES) offers personalised advice and guidance to all students** with approximately 250 appointments per week. CES offers support during study and for up to four years post-graduation. The Career Studio is staffed by 25 Career Coaches who are current students trained to provide first point of contact and peer to peer support on a range of topics related to career and enterprise development. Qualified colleagues from CES provide specialist support, signposted via the Career Coaches. A range of events, workshops, webinars and schemes are run through the year, including an annual Inclusive Futures Fair run collaboratively with 6 other universities and attracting more than 100 employers and 403 Herts students in 2022. In 2021/22, 4,193 bookings were made for events and 3,357 one to one appointments were attended. Support is also available at any time via sector-leading online services which attract over 30,000 active users and provide just-in-time support, resources, virtual meetings with careers advisors, and online courses to prepare students for work placement.

**3.6 Collaboration between our Career and Employment Service (CES) and Academic Schools ensures a bespoke approach for each discipline to match the need of their students and prospective employers.** Each School has one or more employability champions

who work collaboratively with CES Career Development Consultants, using and to design discipline focused careers education and employer events. Examples in 2022 include Creative Edge (a creative employer fair); Teaching Fair (for anyone interested in going in to teaching); Get Ahead (themed event for level 6 Business School students); Engineering alumni panel event; tailored workshops on graduate schemes, jobs and NHS applications for Dietetics and Psychology students.

Throughout November, our Assessment Centre Experience (ACE) sessions run for around 2,000 2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate students. More than 10,000 students over the past 7 years have benefitted from this realistic and supportive experience of graduate recruitment activities which includes one to one interviews, presentations and group exercises. Students build career confidence through interactive workshops to write and practice delivery of a short elevator pitch, which can be added to CVs and LinkedIn profiles and they receive individual feedback on each activity. ACE is multi-award winning and secured a Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) from Advance HE in 2020<sup>xiv</sup>. Students report very positively about the experience and the data shows huge impact on their confidence; in 2021 overall, those who felt confident or very confident after taking part in ACE increased by 81% for interviews, 74% for the group exercise and 79% for delivering a presentation.

Supporting student entrepreneurship, within our University Enterprise Zone, we have formed clusters of excellence that respond to national and regional demands, providing students and businesses with access to funding and specialist business start-up, innovation, and growth support. During 2021-2022, the student enterprise team provided 185 one-to-one mentoring sessions to 158 students and alumni; 585 students and alumni attended entrepreneurship events including bootcamps and group workshops; and just over £25k in grant funding was awarded. Students and alumni benefit from business mentoring from our pool of 45 highly experienced business mentors, as well as access to networking and experiential learning opportunities alongside the local business community with whom we work closely. As a result, in the past three years, 189 student/graduate start-ups have been launched.

**3.7** Our employer-informed, authentic and innovative curricula and teaching cultivate active learning and critical thinking, enabling students to develop Graduate Attributes and lifelong learning skills. The result of these approaches means that **programmes embed outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting our students' learning, progression, and attainment (SE1).**

Students recognise the excellence of our teaching practices and rate their educational experience highly. TEF data shows that, for FT and Degree Apprenticeship students, **NSS teaching scores are excellent, and excellent or outstanding for PT students across all split indicators. NSS scores at the majority of our partners are consistently excellent with mean scores for teaching satisfaction for all UK partners between the period 2019-22 of 83%.**

Transforming lives and successful outcomes for all is based on an inclusive approach to teaching. This has been informed by the University's participation in a number of sector-wide collaborative projects including the 'HEFCE/OFS funded project to use Value Added Scores and Inclusive curriculum discussions to drive Institutional change' (2017-19)<sup>x</sup>; the Advance HE funded project

‘Engaging students in meaningful and inclusive cultural change’ (2022)<sup>xv</sup>; our sector leading work on ‘Academic leadership at the programme level to address the BAME attainment gap’; and the design and implementation of our BAME Student Advocate Programme (case studies published in the UUK and NUS report ‘Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities: #CLOSINGTHEGAP’ (2019)<sup>xvi</sup>).

Through these projects and our strong commitment to inclusivity, we have developed extensive materials and resources to support teaching and programme design; engaged over 700 staff in inclusive practice workshops (2017-2019); embedded discussions of inclusivity and race equity within our professional practice teaching programme (PGCert LTHE); and developed an institution-wide action plan to reduce awarding gaps. Our BAME Student Success Working Group (established in June 2016 as a working group of the Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC)) has a purposely diverse membership, with students and staff from all Schools and from professional units within the university. The group leads the implementation of the institutional action plan, ensures that actions are carried out and evaluated, and shares good practice between Schools and from across the sector. The group led the development of Value Added dashboards at programme level, which help inform actions to reduce awarding gaps as part of the CEP process.

Building on the expertise of one of our Associate Professors in Learning and Teaching and winner of the ‘Most Innovative Teacher of the Year’ in the 2018 THE Awards<sup>xvii</sup>, we have embedded compassion-focused pedagogy to support inclusive group work within at least two programmes in every School. Supporting resources and materials help staff diversify and develop their curriculum, improve assignment information and develop more authentic forms of assessment. Our commitment to inclusive practice is evident in our reduction in our Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) awarding gap (27pp in 2009/10 to 12pp in 2020/21).

Our Inclusive Curriculum checklist, embedded within a key staff development module (over 1,800 staff enrolments to date), supports staff in ensuring that their teaching materials are inclusive and accessible, and module attainment dashboards further inform staff of differentials to prompt enhancement at module level. A recent CAQA-led institutional internal audit (2021)<sup>xviii</sup> of the use of the Inclusive Curriculum checklists across modules gave a rating of Substantial Assurance and clear indication that ‘teaching, learning and assessment practice recognised student diversity’.

Programmes with embedded workplace learning and service user involvement within the teaching, including nursing (FT), allied health subjects (FT), and education (PT and FT), show outstanding NSS scores for Teaching. By working alongside service users and carers (health courses) and teachers and pupils (education courses), our students have a real opportunity to fully understand the needs and expectations of the patients and service users they will be caring for and the pupils they will be teaching. Our Economics programme also has outstanding scores and is ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the 2023 Guardian league table. We recognised that Engineering (FT) scores had been below the high levels to which we aspire and, as a result, took a strategic and transformative redesign of the engineering curriculum to embed greater industry relevance and practical application (CDIO approach) investing substantially in innovative new learning spaces specifically designed to enable large-scale group work and extended engineering project modules. We are optimistic that student satisfaction with teaching will improve as a result and this will be reflected in NSS results in 2023 as the first CDIO cohort graduates.

**3.8** Aligned with intended learning outcomes and teaching activities, assessments are designed to stretch and challenge students and enable them to be highly employable upon graduation. **For FT students, NSS assessment and feedback scores are excellent, and outstanding for the two most recent TEF years. For PT students, the scores are excellent, bordering outstanding. Comparable excellent scores are recorded across provision at our partner colleges.**

Review and validation processes require programmes to include varied, authentic assessment to support personalised learning; enhance employability; develop Graduate Attributes; and, where relevant, to meet the requirements of PSRBs. In a 2017 review of assessments, over 55 different types of summative assessments were identified across the University and the range of summative assessments has increased in the past 2 years due to the move away from examinations during the Covid pandemic. This variety in assessment is important in enabling validity, creativity and choice, thereby allowing students to demonstrate their abilities and achievement of learning outcomes in the most appropriate way. Learning and Teaching Specialists from LTIC work with programme teams on assessment design and an 'assessment landscape' is produced within periodic review and validation documentation demonstrating the range and variety of assessments. This is then interrogated by the validation panel.

**Assessment and feedback scores are outstanding for both FT and PT students studying education, and for FT students in nursing, allied health subjects and business courses.**

Where we recognise subject areas with lower than expected assessment and feedback scores targeted support is provided to help programme teams address issues swiftly.

Prior to 2019, our NSS scores for assessment and feedback were below the sector average and some aspects below our benchmark. We therefore identified this as a key priority and took deliberate steps to address shortcomings including: supporting staff to develop and embed authentic assessments; support for group work and group assessments utilising compassion focused pedagogy; the development of feedback commitments for both staff and students; encouraging opportunities for personalisation in assessments (e.g. choice of topic, assessment format, feedback mode); and improving assessment literacy (including clarity of assignment briefs, student engagement with marking criteria, and enhanced dialogue within module/programme teams regarding assessment expectations and calibration of marking). In September 2021, a university-wide Assessment Experts Group with members from each Academic School as well as central teams was established to develop expertise and champion good practice and innovation in assessment across the University. The group formed five sub-groups to progress specific aspects of assessment design and produced a series of new resources, guidance and staff development activities to support our drive to enhance assessment and feedback practices across the institution.

Continued focus on the development of assessment and feedback practice has seen us improve against and then surpass the sector mean in 2022. We are now significantly above our benchmark.

NSS Assessment & Feedback	% Agree			
	2019	2020	2021	2022
UH	70.52%	72.48%	68.29%	70.18%
Sector	73.37%	72.60%	68.59%	68.53%

All assignment details, weightings, instructions and associated supporting materials are set up within the relevant modules on the VLE. With the exception of 'in person' assessments and



physical artefacts, all assignments are submitted online too, and all marking and feedback of assignments is carried out via the VLE, making it extremely accessible for students to see and use their feedback in a timely way. Staff are additionally encouraged and supported to use tools such as audio and video feedback to support inclusive student learning. As a result, the quality of feedback has improved and, since 2021, our NSS scores are above benchmark.

NSS questions on feedback		% Agree 2021	% Agree 2022
Q.23 Feedback on my work has been timely	UH	67.36%	68.53 %
	Benchmark	65.24%	65.25%
Q.11 I have received helpful comments on my work	UH	70.18%	71.07%
	Benchmark	67.05%	67.09%

As well as providing the weighted marks in each of their individual module assessments (formative and summative), we have developed a live student dashboard ('My Learning') which brings all of a student's marks together in one place giving a holistic and current view of assessment across their programme and encouraging self-regulation of learning. It also means we can provide a 'live' assessment landscape which allows staff to plan assessment across the programme to reduce assessment bunching and overload. This is a key aspect of how we support student learning through effective use of the VLE and our 'Guided Learner Journey' approach.

As partners in a recent QAA funded, collaborative project<sup>xix</sup>, with 7 other universities (2021-2022), we developed 9 attributes which support inclusive assessment, drawing on evidence of where policy and practice changes which had been implemented during the pandemic had contributed to improving awarding and/or continuation gaps. Our commitment to inclusive assessment is evident in the TEF Indicators for Assessment for FT students with excellent scores for all split indicators and outstanding scores for 'students over 31', 'Black students' and 'Non-UK domiciled students'. For PT students split indicators scores are excellent with outstanding for 'students over 31', 'Asian students', 'Mixed race students' and 'Female students'. We are working closely with Degree Apprenticeship programmes to enhance assessment scores from broadly excellent to outstanding.

**3.9 Our teaching and assessment and feedback practices are situated within a supportive learning environment, informed by data, and ensure students have access to a wide range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs so that they remain on course with their studies and achieve the best results (SE5).**

Prior to students' arrival at the University, they can access the 'Getting ready to study at Herts' online course. Developed in partnership with students, the course provides advice about what to expect when starting university; introduces new students to some of our teaching spaces; and guides them through the services available including study support, wellbeing and careers provision. It invites them to reflect on skills associated with our Graduate Attributes so that, even before starting University, students begin thinking about their long-term outcomes. Programme websites on the VLE are accessible as soon as students confirm their place with us so they can arrive better informed about their programme, having made initial contact with tutors and peers. The Herts SU start of term survey 2022<sup>xx</sup>, (RR=1,841) indicates that students felt very well prepared for starting university with 87% of responders indicating that they understood what was needed in order to succeed on their course and 87.5% indicating that they knew how to access their course materials.

Since the academic year 2020-21, the University has made a commitment to ensure that every student, regardless of their mode of study, has a named Personal Tutor who looks after their academic progress and pastoral needs. This is embedded through our Personal Tutoring Framework, implemented at School and programme level in the way that is most appropriate for the particular student body, subject, level and mode of study. As a minimum, the framework ensures that all students have access to regular academic support tailored to their needs; and that they are supported in their academic progress and goals, personal and professional development, well-being and sense of belonging. Through signposting and referral, students can also access specialised provision from areas including Careers and Employment, Student Finance, Counselling, Wellbeing and Disability Services, Herts SU, Study Success/Academic Skills teams.

The Personal Tutoring Framework is supported through the use of our Data for Learning Dashboard, designed and built in-house, and providing up to date student engagement data available to both Personal Tutors and students at any time. The dashboard provides a holistic and easy to understand view of individual student engagement and progress in their studies by pulling together a range of information about attendance, marks across modules, reading and the level of activity within the VLE. It is used to prompt timely intervention through our Engagement with Learning Policy (UPR SA06)<sup>ii</sup> and by Personal Tutors to inform and facilitate academic support conversations. Students have individual insight about their academic progress through their personal version of the dashboard (My Learning).

Our Centre for Academic English provides workshops in Academic Writing, Academic English, and study skills online and in person, as well as one-to-one consultations to support students with their assignments. The Maths Support Service, facilitated by staff and students from the department of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics, provides one-to-one support for any student struggling with numerical problems. Each Academic School also has its own team of staff providing academic support and guidance within the disciplines. Since the launch of our Personal Tutoring Framework, **academic support scores have been consistently above the sector average and TEF data indicates scores at or above benchmark for full and part time students.**

NSS Academic Support	% Agree			
	2019	2020	2021	2022
UH	78.83%	79.82%	73.85%	74.21%
Sector	79.86%	79.43%	73.50%	73.88%

Scores for Academic Support are below expectations for some split indicators for Degree Apprenticeship students; and we have accordingly developed support and guidance for employer liaison tutors who work closely with each apprentice student to ensure they are fully supported during their studies. This is reflected in the very recent Ofsted report (Nov 2022): *“Apprentices learn and work within inclusive environments that are conducive to their ongoing development. They benefit from the support they receive from skilled, expert tutors, and from the high expectations of staff at the university and in their workplaces”*.

We are committed to ensuring improvements where scores are lower than expected for full time students including Health and Social Care and Computer Science and Engineering. We anticipate that the newly formed Academic Support Hub in the School of Physics, Engineering and Computer

Science (SPECS) and the revised support and guidance for Personal Tutors in the School of Health and Social Work (HSK) will address these issues.

**3.10** A significant reason why we deliver such an exceptional student experience is the **outstanding support we provide for staff professional development which ensures excellent academic practice is embedded across the institution (SE4)**. We attract and develop highly talented people and have a committed focus on recognising, rewarding and celebrating excellent teaching. Learning and teaching promotional routes are embedded within HR UPRs (HR07 and HR08)<sup>ii</sup> including readership, associate professorship and professorship titles and our annual Vice Chancellor's Awards reward excellent teaching. We currently have 4 Professors and 18 Associate Professors of Learning and Teaching/Educational Practice.

The University recognises continuous professional development (CPD) as both an entitlement and an expectation for staff, embedded within our appraisal and review process. We articulate the offering of education related CPD at different stages of academic careers as well as identifying tailored CPD for colleagues in specific roles (e.g. the programme leader development scheme). All academic staff are actively engaged in Peer Review of Teaching (UPR HR11)<sup>ii</sup> where we foster a culture of support and reciprocity, leading to excellent practice. Departments including LTIC, CAQA, Library and Computing Services and the Learning and Organisational Development unit in HR offer a wide range of support including virtual and face to face workshops, self-directed e-learning, formal courses, learning networks, coaching and mentoring schemes, and resources to read and reflect on. For example, in 2021/22, LTIC facilitated 140 staff development activities including Herts Learning curriculum design workshops and bespoke sessions to encourage active learning and compassion focused group work, as well as 3,600 engagements in activities to support the use of technologies to enhance learning. Each School hosts learning and teaching focussed workshops and away days including an annual Good Practice Sharing event linked to the CEP process. We identify and provide professional development for staff at our partner institutions via Collaborative Partner Leads (CPLs) as well as through central teams, including an annual Consortium partner conference, and we support partner staff to gain HEA recognition via our CPD framework (currently we have 7 Associate Fellows, 24 Fellows, 9 Senior Fellows and 2 Principal Fellows of the HEA in our UK partners). Our annual Learning and Teaching Conference is a very important arena for sharing excellent practice and attracts over 260 members of staff each year, including staff from our partners. Conference themes focus on institutional priorities and include Postgraduate Taught Experience (2022), Herts Learning (2021), Personal Tutoring (2020), Student-staff Partnerships (2019) and Technology Enhanced Learning (2018).

We expect all lecturers to be experts in their field and to be professionally recognised in teaching. It is a condition of probation that all new academic staff without teaching experience achieve a teaching qualification and Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). As well as delivering our accredited PGCert LTHE, LTIC also supports more experienced staff (both academic and those in student support roles e.g. library information managers, careers staff, educational technologists and Academic Registry staff) to gain HEA recognition at Associate Fellowship, Fellowship, Senior Fellowship and Principal Fellowship level through our accredited CPD Framework (introduced in 2013). According to Advance HE records we have 348 Associate Fellows, 895 Fellows, 106 Senior Fellows. We are very proud of our 14 Principal Fellows of the HEA and our 10 National Teaching Fellows. Our HR data indicates that 73% of Academic staff hold Fellowship of the HEA which is well above the sector average of 46% (Advance HE's Annual

Review of Accredited Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Schemes 2021-22, Oct 2022). This focus on professional development and recognition drives our teaching excellence and has led to enhancements, as shown in teaching related questions in end of module 'Student Viewpoint Questionnaires' (SVQ); 2019/20 = 82.9%; 2020/21 = 84.0%; 2021/22 = 83.1%.

**3.11** The outstanding student experience is supported by the purposeful steps and **significant investments we have made in our physical and digital infrastructure to create a learning environment for our diverse student body that is personalised, shared, enriching and inclusive, and contributes to our excellent rates of retention, attainment and progression (SE6)**. NSS scores for resources demonstrate the impact of these investments and have been at or above the sector average throughout the last 10 years, even during the Covid lockdown period.

The design of our teaching spaces supports our approach to teaching and learning and is based around best practice in flexibility and adaptability to support changing student and organisational requirements. We have made significant investments in physical resources over the last decade to provide a vibrant campus experience with sector-leading physical and digital learning environments designed to support students' exposure to specialist, industry standard spaces, technologies and resources. Between 2009 and 2017, we invested over £200 million in the campus to provide new informal learning spaces and state of the art teaching facilities including the construction of a new Science Building, one of the largest Clinical Simulation Centres in the UK, and a Law Court building with flexible teaching accommodation and a simulated Law Court. In the past five years, we have invested almost £40 million to upgrade existing rooms and provide an increase in overall general teaching room capacity in excess of 1,000 seats which includes:

- The creation of 25 additional teaching spaces, included a new high spec, collaborative teaching space capable of seating 350 students and providing ultra-high resolution video and sound, to support specialist teaching in creative arts, as well as streaming and hybrid technologies.
- The conversion of existing spaces with advanced technology and specialist equipment to support-the CDIO approach in engineering.
- The construction of a new annex to one of the Learning Resource Centres providing 200 new high-spec general purpose PC lab spaces; plus 4 new specialist cyber security labs for specialist teaching in computer science.
- The construction of a new 'Enterprise Building' which provides a re-configurable and flexible mixture of both formal and informal teaching spaces designed to support degree apprenticeship provision and teaching in business, law, education and the humanities.
- The construction of a new Institute of Sport building containing state of the art technologies and specialist teaching facilities for teaching in sports sciences and sports therapy.
- The provision of new social learning spaces across the campus to support flexible learning.
- Current projects underway include construction of a world-leading Physics, Engineering and Computer Science building, due to open in 2024, and major reconfigurations of our De Havilland campus and Allied Health buildings, representing a further £80 million investment.

To support our Herts Learning principles of offering choice for personalisation and harnessing of technology, we have invested significantly in AV/IT provision to enable hybrid provision and recording of teaching in all teaching rooms. Our policy on the recording of teaching sessions (UPR TL04)<sup>ii</sup> was introduced in 2018 and has been widely praised by students as a valuable support to their learning, for example typical comments in the SVQ include: *"I really liked having the*

*recordings and being able to follow along at my own pace.” (SVQ Sem B 2021/22); “I love pre-recorded lectures... I can watch them at convenient times for me.” (SVQ Sem B 2021/22).*

It is an expectation that all teaching sessions which predominantly feature sharing or transmitting information/knowledge are recorded for students to refer to and re-use as an integral part of their studies. We made lecture recording as simple as possible via automation and as a result, almost all modules provide some recorded material, with over 3 million views by students since 2018.

The design of our two Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) has been informed by an extensive user experience project where the student voice and co-design was integral to the development of new study spaces to meet changing student requirements and expectations. An ongoing annual review process has continued to support our move to more flexible, informal study spaces throughout the campus for individuals and groups, as well as providing options for differing IT requirements including mobile devices and, more recently, to support more flexible forms of learning.

Feedback from our recent OFSTED inspection praised the investment in resources and their relevance to the programme of study and work-readiness: *“Apprentices benefit from high-quality physical and digital resources. Apprentices use industry standard resources to master the techniques that they use in the workplace. Simulation rooms and virtual reality, for example, enable apprentices to perform nasogastric tube insertion and venepuncture safely. Apprentices use the learning resource centre and online resources frequently to help them with assignment writing and to improve their higher-level academic skills.”* (OFSTED, 2022)

We provide a range of services that support student learning and encourage independent study including a personalised timetable for every student, with timely notification of changes through Herts Mobile App. Both LRCs are open 24/7 and 365 days per year and provide a range of spaces for both individual and group study as well as access to our c.53,000 journal titles, c.200 databases, c.415,000 print stock and c.500,000 e-books. In addition to standard computing facilities, the LRCs also house over 100 hi-spec PCs providing access to specialist software. Students can borrow a Chromebook for periods of up to 24 hours; and in 2020, we introduced a long-term PC loan service for students who did not have computer access in their place of residence. During the Covid lockdown, for example, over 200 students took advantage of this provision and around 60 students continue to benefit each year from the service. These initiatives are especially welcomed by commuting students and those at our partner institutions who have the same access rights as students taught at UH.

The LRCs house the Study Success Hubs: drop-in areas for individual study skills, maths support and academic English guidance, which supplement the extensive local School-based provision tailored to subject specialisms. Our online, in-house developed ‘SkillUp’ module supports face-to-face provision of information literacy skills, and is a widely used study support resource, with year on year increases in student engagement since its launch in December 2019 (433,976 views in year 1 to 515,473 views in year 3). It can be accessed as a stand-alone resource or embedded throughout subject-level modules at appropriate points to support students’ academic skills development. Support in the use of information resources and systems is provided to our partner staff on request by the Academic Resources Team.

Hertfordshire is a recognised leader in technology enhanced learning and was the UK’s Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) in Blended Learning from 2005-10. We continue to innovate in this area. Our VLE facilitates a continuum of engagement from campus-based, blended

approaches to fully online distance learning modes. With extensive input from students (2,500 were involved in the pilot), our approach to the use of the VLE is based around a set of pedagogic principles, called the 'Guided Learner Journey' (GLJ), ensuring more personalised routes through learning, higher student engagement with better access for mobile devices, and full integration of reading lists, resources and videos (including lecture capture and flipped classroom). Personalised learning is central to Herts Learning (identified as one of the five principles) and our GLJ approach. There are over 1.6 million VLE page accesses daily and student interaction with their modules feeds through into our Data for Learning and My Learning dashboards, providing insight into student engagement with their learning and supporting students individually through our Personal Tutoring Framework. We believe this integrated approach is highly effective. Final year students reported a 38% increase in their perceived confidence to take responsibility for their own learning since they started their course<sup>x</sup>.

We have effective measures in place to support staff in the best use of the VLE and other learning technologies including online quizzes, collaborative tools, simulations and Virtual Reality. The high level of innovation and expertise of our staff in the use of technology within their teaching is reflected in the SVQ. In 2021/22, 79% of students highly rated the balance of approaches to learning. The mature and embedded use of our VLE is one of the reasons that our transition to fully online learning during the pandemic was smoothly implemented. Staff were confident in their online teaching and students adapted well, providing very positive feedback about their experience and the support they received, as evidenced in the scores for quality of the online provision in the JISC Digital Insights Survey which has been above the sector average for the past 4 years.

Quality of online provision		% Agree			
		2019	2020	2021	2022
Staff percentage rating 'good', 'excellent' or 'best imaginable' (n)	UH	72% (254)	70% (178)	84% (249)	74% (204)
	Sector	54%	60%	62%	63%
Student percentage rating 'good', 'excellent' or 'best imaginable' (n)	UH	92% (475)	89% (434)	68% (832)	78% (502)
	Sector	86%	84%	66%	74%

All of this taken together, **inspires our students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and stretch them to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential.**

**3.12 As evidenced throughout this submission, our deeply embedded approach to engagement and partnership with our students, leads to ongoing reflection on, and continuous improvement of, our students' experiences and outcomes (SE7).**

Within our Strategic Plan we are explicit about our commitment to "working in partnership with our student community to deliver high-quality and distinctive education" and student engagement is key to our culture of shared endeavour. This is primarily driven by the range of mechanisms in place to hear the student voice including well-trained student representatives (over 540 elected in October 2022) who are members of School and programme level committees and are key contributors to the CEP process (actions for programme enhancement must be considered by programme committees). In partnership with Herts SU, we recruit and employ 30 School Community Officers (SCOs) working within the Academic Schools to organise and support the student representatives and work directly with senior managers, namely the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) and Dean of School. Students collaborate with us in the creation and review of courses, support community activities and inform the design of physical and online learning spaces.



All University committees and working groups including the Board of Governors, Chief Executive's Group (CEG), Academic Board and ESEC, include Herts SU membership. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) chairs a Student Advisory Group which meets approximately 6 times per year to inform the strategic direction of our education provision. The membership of the group enables representation of students from different backgrounds and experiences and includes Herts SU senior representatives and sabbatical officers, the SCOs, a BAME Student Advocate, disabled student representative, a student parent/carer, a mature student representative, the chair of the student LGBTQ+ society, and a care experienced/estranged student as well as senior staff from across the University who are invited to listen and respond to student issues and ideas. Herts SU presents the results of their student surveys and focus groups at CEG meetings and at ESEC. The quality and timeliness of these reports is excellent, helping senior leaders hear the student voice and make improvements for the better. Recommendations are discussed and adopted as appropriate, ensuring that key issues of concern for students receive a full hearing and are addressed as a whole University community. As a result of this embedded dialogue, we have increased the number and type of social study spaces, provided more laptops on 4 or 12 hour loan, changed parking arrangements to better suit our large proportion of commuting students, and extended our free confidential 24/7 Wellbeing service.

Programme and module leaders must gather student views through informal mid-module feedback about their immediate experience on the module and identify any issues which can be addressed rapidly. There must also be plans to respond to the feedback and inform students on how this has been acted upon. Students are then surveyed at the end of each module using a the SVQ administered via their module site. Staff review this feedback and must report on it at exam boards (UPR AS17)<sup>ii</sup>. They must also communicate to students on the subsequent module how they have used previous cohorts' feedback to enhance the module. Module surveys indicate that students do feel that their views are valued as the percentage agree score for the statement "The teaching team value students' view and opinions about this module" was 81% in 2021/22. SVQ overall response rates are typically in line with the sector (17%). The University is committed to increasing response rates, including module teams giving students the opportunity to complete the survey online in class, using tools to encourage participation. Very recent data (January 2023) show response rates to have increased to 25%.

Our score for the student voice section of the NSS is outstanding for FT (UH=72.8%; 70.1% benchmark;) and PT students (UH=78.4%; 69.8% benchmark) reflecting our commitment to listen to, and act on, student feedback. Through multiple means including surveys, student fora, Herts SU research (4,592 student responded to Herts SU surveys in 2021/22) and focus groups (55 students took part in focus groups in 2021/22), we value feedback from our students and this is evidenced in the NSS scores for student voice where we exceed our benchmark:

NSS questions associated with student voice		% Agree			
		2019	2020	2021	2022
Q.23 I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course	UH	87.36%	87.32%	81.29%	81.26%
	Benchmark	84.77%	84.19%	79.10%	79.07%
	Sector	84.73%	84.56%	79.51%	79.28%
Q.24 Staff value students' views and opinions about the course	UH	74.77%	77.39%	71.15%	71.20%
	Benchmark	75.58%	75.32%	67.68%	68.03%
	Sector	75.55%	75.56%	68.60%	68.64%

Q 25 It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted upon	UH	63.35%	63.98%	55.33%	56.87%
	Benchmark	62.69%	62.05%	52.29%	52.91%
	Sector	60.74%	60.56%	51.22%	51.68%

Our partnership approach is nationally recognised and well-embedded, being first showcased by Advance HE in 2014 as part of the HEA Strategic Enhancement Programme - Engaged Student Learning (2014-15). As well as student-staff partnership projects in each School (e.g. student proctors in SPECS and CTA, a shadow Student Board in HLS and peer-assisted learning tutors in HBS), central departments have developed student-staff partnership schemes to enhance the educational experiences for our students. In 2017 we co-designed with a student, our BAME Student Advocates scheme to work with Academic Schools and professional units advancing race equity. We employ 14 Advocates each year and their work has contributed significantly to reducing the awarding gap. They are key members of our BAME Student Success Working Group, and the student-staff partnership work of the group was celebrated nationally through a 2021 Advance HE Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence<sup>xxi</sup>. Since 2017 we have annually appointed around 20 Student Technology Mentors (STMs) to support staff in their use of the online learning environment and the implementation of the Herts Learning and Guided Learner Journey principles. Our STMs conduct module site reviews using the Inclusive Curriculum Checklist, provide Digital Accessibility guidance, support the development of student/academic staff Digital Capabilities, inform the design of our Data for Learning dashboards, and offer staff a critical student perspective on module site design. Last year, our STMs supported staff training with over 1,000 academic staff engagements and 478 one to one sessions. Their excellent work has been showcased by JISC Change Agents Network<sup>xxii</sup>. Both the BAME Student Advocates and the STMs are featured as case studies within the 2022 Advance HE Collaborative Development Funded project 'Developing best practice for engaging students to enable and support inclusive changes in HEIs'.<sup>xxiii</sup> We also employ widening access and student success ambassadors to support our school outreach work and over 250 student ambassadors each year to support open days and events for prospective students.

We are particularly proud of the deeply embedded partnership approach to support teaching excellence. It ensures we maintain one of our core values (Student-Focussed) at the heart of all we do and shapes our strategic and operational decision making. The ethos we foster, as well as the various structures and fora we have in place facilitate open and robust conversations, enable us to respond rapidly and in unison to educational enhancements as well as challenges. For example, our rapid response to Covid was fully collaborative and involved students in every decision including the implementation of our Safety Net Policy, provision of IT equipment, remote access to specialist software and review and distribution of additional hardship funding.

In conclusion, our approach to teaching excellence starts with understanding our students' experiences and facilitating a vibrant learning community which enhances their sense of belonging. Our innovative and strongly embedded focus on employability, employer engagement, flexible and personalised routes to learning with targeted support for students where needed, has delivered outstanding outcomes for all. As a university, we are immensely proud of our achievements in 'transforming lives'. When linked to our student demographic, our student outcomes are even more noteworthy. Through our core mission and values, we work in close partnership with professional bodies and business partners to offer an inclusive and challenging education that provides our students with opportunities to succeed and achieve their aspirations. Our student-staff partnership



ethos ensures success in supporting all students, particularly those from underrepresented backgrounds, and has delivered outstanding results which our students and employers value.

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- <sup>i</sup> <https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/our-leadership-strategy-and-plans/our-strategy-vision-and-culture/shaping-our-strategy>
- <sup>ii</sup> <https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/our-leadership-strategy-and-plans/our-governance-and-leadership/university-policies-and-regulations-uprs>
- <sup>iii</sup> <https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/supporting-our-students/student-charter/graduate-attributes>
- <sup>iv</sup> <https://www.herts.ac.uk/study/schools-of-study>
- <sup>v</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1035185/Scorecards.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1035185/Scorecards.pdf)
- <sup>vi</sup> <https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/supporting-our-students/student-charter>
- <sup>vii</sup> <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/a-new-world-of-leo/>
- <sup>viii</sup> 2022 JISC Digital Insight survey results, 502 student responses
- <sup>ix</sup> <https://closingtheattainmentgap.co.uk/value-added/>
- <sup>x</sup> Educational Gains Survey 2022, Education and Student Experience Committee, Jan 2023, unpublished, ModernGov committee repository
- <sup>xi</sup> <https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/8967/1/approaches-to-curriculum-and-learning-design-across-uk-higher-education-report.pdf>
- <sup>xii</sup> <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/solicitors-and-volunteers/get-involved/lawworks-pro-bono-awards-2022>; 2021, 2020 and <https://www.hertschamber.com/inspiring-hertfordshire-awards/awards-2020>
- <sup>xiii</sup> <https://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/supporting-our-students/widening-access-and-student-success/accessagreement#:~:text=In%20our%20latest%20Access%20and,and%20outcomes%20for%20all%20students>
- <sup>xiv</sup> <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/cate-team/assessment-centre-experience-team-university-hertfordshire>
- <sup>xv</sup> <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/membership-2021-22/member-benefits/collaborative-development-fund-2022/inclusive-institutions-enabling-and-supporting-culture-change>
- <sup>xvi</sup> <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/black-asian-and-minority-ethnic-student>
- <sup>xvii</sup> <https://digital.timeshighereducation.com/THEawardswinners2018/html5/index.html>
- <sup>xviii</sup> Audit of the use of the Inclusive Curriculum and Guided Learner Checklist, Academic Standards and Audit Committee, May 2021, unpublished, held in ModernGov committee repository
- <sup>xix</sup> <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/membership/collaborative-enhancement-projects/assessment/developing-a-set-of-inclusive-assessment-design-attributes-for-use-across-the-he-sector>
- <sup>xx</sup> Herts SU Start of Term Survey, Education and Student Experience Committee, Nov 2022, unpublished, ModernGov committee repository
- <sup>xxi</sup> <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/cate-team/bame-student-success-working-group-including-our-bame-student-advocates>
- <sup>xxii</sup> <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/news/the-power-of-student-partnerships-in-digital-transformation-13-jun-2022>
- <sup>xxiii</sup> <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/membership-2021-22/member-benefits/collaborative-development-fund-2022/inclusive-institutions/engaging-students-to-enable-inclusive-cultural-change#outputs>