

Optional student submission template for TEF 2023

1. Approach to evidence-gathering

1. Your role in representing students and how it fits in with wider student representation structures your university or college

City, University of London SU (SU) is an independent charity that works in partnership with City, University of London (City). The SU is a student-led organisation, whose leadership comprises of both sabbatical and part-time elected student officers with the support of a professional staff team to ensure we are positively impacting on the student experience. One of the SU's objectives is to be seen as the recognised representative channel between students and City; as such, we welcome the opportunity to provide insights about City students' views to inform the TEF panel's assessment.

Due to their duties and responsibilities of their respected roles, the evidence to support this submission has been gathered by the SU's elected Deputy President – Education (Policy and Quality) **student contact 1**, with the support of the SU's Representation and Democracy Manager **student contact 2** and the Insight Coordinator.

In addition to working as a team of four to lead the SU for a year, deciding its direction, acting as a trustee, and representing the voice of over 20,000 students in high-level decision making to the University and SU, the Deputy President – Education Lead works with City to ensure courses are of a high quality, students achieve successful outcomes and there is an ongoing value to their qualification. Further, there are two parts to their role – quality and policy. The quality remit relates to the academic qualifications at City, how good they are, and how they equip students for society. The policy remit looks at how the rules of the institution support students to succeed, whatever is happening in their life. This officer also attends University Senate committee, which is the academic authority responsible for the maintenance of academic quality and standards.

The Representation and Democracy Manager leads a team who support Student Leaders (SU Officers, 50-member Assembly and over 700 Programme Representatives) to take action on the issues that matter to them. This post is at the heart of students bringing change to City to ensure they have the best possible university experience.

The Insight Coordinator coordinates, develops and delivers membership research and insight activity across the SU including the Student Check-In calls project and our Annual Survey.

2. Who else has been involved in creating the submission

In addition, the SU's Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Communications and Business Development, President and two remaining sabbatical officers have been involved in completing this submission. The Deputy Chief Executive oversees the various membership services teams within the SU, including Advice, Communities and Representation and Democracy. The Head of Communications and Business Development leads the Communications & Business Development team, they are responsible for being insight experts on current student opinion. The SU's Advice Manager has also provided insight to this submission. The Deputy President - Career and Employability lead contributed towards Section 3: Student Outcomes. This officer works closely with City's Career Service and the wider Student Development Team at City who deliver volunteering, City Buddies, and City experience. They also liaise with the University's VP Education, Director of Registry and Student Services, Head of Careers and has a seat on the University's Education and Employability Board, the board responsible for making recommendations to Senate and Senior Leadership Team as to the enhancement of educational provision, embedding employability and the student experience in all aspects of our offering.

3. If you have used pre-existing evidence sources, explain what they are and how that information was collected

In 2019, City SU launched new strategic plan steeped in research to guide our work between 2019-2022. In creating this plan, the SU listened to our members through surveys and a number of

focus groups. Out of the strategy, four priorities were born, and one of which, was ensuring the SU provided 'A platform for driving improvements'. As a result, the SU said 'We (would) pride ourselves on being the experts in collating evidence for change, demonstrating what works in tackling the issues that matter to you. Whether it is addressing the cost of catering on campus or responding to course module evaluations, we will speak for all students at City on the problems that matter. We will empower you and your Student Leaders to make a difference to the challenges you face'. Consequently, an action agreed in the strategy committed the SU to having its 'finger on the pulse of student opinion, using a range of creative approaches to gather insight to understand and act on the issues that matter to students. To support this action, the SU employed an Insight Coordinator. This period also dovetails with the adjustments made to learning and teaching practices following the 2020 Covid pandemic. As a result, the SU have completed over 25 pieces of in-depth pieces research to understand City student's views. A number of these research pieces relate to the student experience and student outcomes and have assisted in finalising this submission including:

Evidence	Evidence description	Date
Student Representative Review Paper	This report details the review of City's student representation system completed in 2018/19. The review undertook rigorous research methodologies including 8 student focus groups; 2 surveys and a Staff focus group.	August 2019
Disabled Student Experience Report	This report explores the disabled student experience through surveys and 15 interviews with disabled students on support services and academic experience.	May 2020
Check-ins Report 2020	The Student Check-ins project is a wellbeing and insight project delivered by the SU. This report presents the student experience in Term 1 based on the SU's calls to students. The SU called 2513 students in October 2020.	October 2020
Student Voice Report Term 1 2020/21	The Student Voice Report is a termly report capturing the academic experience of term 1 in 2020/21. It analyses Programme Rep feedback using the collation of 56 Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC) minutes.	January 2021
Check-in Calls Report Term 2	This report presents the student experience in Term 2 based on the SU's check-in calls to students. The SU called 2570 students in February 2021.	February 2021
Access and Participation Plan (APP) Student Submission Report	City SU conducted five focus groups with students from backgrounds underrepresented within higher education including BAME students, mature students, disabled students, and students from Lower Participating Neighbourhoods (LPN). These focus groups supported the SU's Student Submission on City's Access and Participation Plan Monitoring Return to OFS.	March 2021
Student Voice End of Year Report 2020/21	This Student Voice Report analyses Programme Rep feedback using the collation of SSLC minutes from term 2 in 2020/22.	June 2021
Term 1 Wrapped Survey Report	The Term 1 Wrapped survey was published at the end of term 1 of 21/22 and aimed to capture student feedback on their academic and wider student experiences in term 1. There was a total of 488 responses from students.	February 2022
Student Voice Report Term 1 2021/22	This Student Voice Report analyses Programme Rep feedback using the collation of 81 SSLC minutes from term 1 in 2021/22.	March 2022
Term 2 Check-ins Report	This report presents the student experience in Term 2 based on the SU's check-in calls to students. The SU called 1549 students in February 2022.	March 2022
Student Voice End of Year Report 2021/22	This Student Voice Report analyses Programme Rep feedback using the collation of 85 SSLC minutes from term 2 in 2021/22.	July 2022
Micro-Placement Programme 2022 Evaluation Report	The Micro-Placement Programme (MPP) Report evaluates the delivery of 20 micro-placements that occurred in summer 2022. A survey was completed by students who participated in the programme.	August 2022
Term 1 Check-Ins Report	This report presents the student experience in Term 1 based on the SU's check-in calls to students. The SU called 705 students in November 2022.	January 2023

4. Explain any extra evidence-gathering that was conducted for the student submission

We will be evidencing a plethora of insight reports compiled by the SU in this submission. Although no intended extra evidence-gathering was conducted for this student submission, our Term 1 Student Check-in's report will be used as supporting evidence to reflect the recent experiences of City students. The Check-ins took place in November 2022 and focused on first year students. The SU made 2503 calls to students and completed 705 check-ins with students.

5. For both pre-existing and extra evidence-gathering, give details about the range of students and courses that they cover

Evidence	Range of student and course details
Student Representative Review Paper	The review undertook rigorous research methodologies including 8 student focus groups with 76 Programme Reps; 2 surveys with Programme Reps and the wider City population and 1 Staff focus group with 25 key stakeholders.
Disabled Student Experience Report	This research focused on the experiences of disabled students, conducting surveys with a response rate of 50 students and fifteen 30-minute interviews in the summer of 2020/21.
Check-ins Report 2020	In total 2513 students responded as part of the Term 1 calls. There were higher responses from students studying in School of Health Sciences (SHS) (22%) and returning students (51%) and lower call rates from students in their final year.
Student Voice Report Term 1 2020/21	The Student Voice Report draws its data from 56 SSLC minutes from across programmes in Schools and departments including: Academic Programmes and Professional Programmes; Nursing, Midwifery and Radiography, Speech and Language, Optometry courses; Executive Programmes; Computer Science, Engineering and Mathematics courses; and Economics, Journalism, English, Sociology, Music and Politics courses.
Check-In Calls Report Term 2	In total 2570 students responded as part of the Term 2 calls. There were higher responses from students studying in SASS (25%), home students (94%) and year 1 (51%), and lower call rates from students in the Bayes Business School (12%) and European students (2%).
APP Student Submission Report	Students from backgrounds underrepresented within higher education including BAME students, mature students, care leavers, disabled students, students from LPNs.
Student Voice End of Year Report 2020/21	The Student Voice Report draws its data from over 50 SSLC minutes from across programmes in Schools and departments including: English, Psychology, Music and Economics courses; Academic Programmes and Professional Programmes; Nursing, Radiography and Optometry courses; Executive Programmes; and Engineering and Mathematics courses.
Term 1 Wrapped Survey Report	The Term 1 Wrapped survey had a total of 488 responses from City students. Most respondents comprised of undergraduate students, first year students (28%) and from courses in the Bayes Business School (28%).
Student Voice Term 1 2021/22	The Student Voice Report draws its data from 81 SSLC minutes from across programmes in Schools and departments including: Academic Programmes and Professional Programmes; Nursing and Optometry courses; Computer Science, Engineering and Mathematics courses; Economics, Politics, Psychology, Journalism, Sociology and Music courses; Business Management, Accounting and Finance courses.
Term 2 Check-Ins Report	In total 1549 students responded as part of the Term 2 calls. There were higher responses from students studying in SASS (25%), home students (69%) and first years (48%), and lower call rates from European students (8%) and final year students (18%).
Student Voice End of Year Report 2021/22	The Student Voice Report draws its data from 85 SSLC minutes from across programmes in Schools and departments including: Academic Programmes and Professional Programmes; Nursing and Optometry courses; Computer Science, Engineering and Mathematics courses; Executive Programmes, Actuarial Science, Business Management, Accounting and Finance courses; and Economics, English, Journalism, Music, Sociology and Psychology courses;
MPP 2022 Evaluation Report	A feedback survey was completed by 16 students who participated in the programme on the completion of their MPP placement.
Term 1 Check-ins Report	In total 705 students responded as part of the Term 2 calls. There were higher responses from students studying in School of Health and Psychological Sciences (28%), home students (85%) and White students (19%), and lower call rates from International students (85%) and students studying in the School of Communication and Creativity (5%).

6. How you worked with your university or college on the TEF and any support you received

The SU work in partnership with and have a strong working relationship with City colleagues. The strength of the working relationship was demonstrated during the process to complete the TEF student submission. Conversations with University, regarding the TEF, began in summer of 2022. We were advised how we could get in contact with the University's TEF contact. Then University colleagues from the Student & Academic Services department would reach out to the TEF Student Contacts to highlight training that could be of use ahead of the drafting stage and relevant newly

published articles related to TEF, and to check in to ensure we had access to any data that we needed.

In the Autumn, the University's Head of Quality and Academic Development put on training session for both student contacts to support the development of knowledge and understanding of top-level guidance from OfS and the University's metrics and data. This was very helpful.

Once the 2022/23 academic year begun, the both student contacts were invited to a bi-weekly TEF/SU meeting; this meeting was very helpful because all contributors to the University's TEF submission were present, and this helped to resolve queries and provide additional support where required. This was in addition to the support provided when requested via email.

With regard to the mutual sharing of drafts, the University regularly kept us up to date with regard to when they would be able to share their draft and they shared it with us on the promised date. This gave us enough time to understand narrative of their submission.

The SU discussed with the University how they are setting out to define educational gains that will be measured in the submission. This coordination of content on City's educational gains has informed Section 3 of the student submission.

7. How you maintained the independence of the student submission

We maintained independence of the student submission by not sharing it with University colleagues until a week prior to the submission deadline, and not before it was in its penultimate draft stage and had received final comments and contributions from the SU's Deputy Chief Executive and Sabbatical Officer team. When we did have questions, which would help us in completing the draft, we sent questions or the relevant section/s over to University colleagues but never the complete submission – this aided us in maintaining independence.

8. Please confirm that the university or college did not unduly influence the context of the submission

We can confirm that City, University of London, did not unduly influence the content, context or drafting of this submission. And we, the SU's student contacts, had the final say over its content.

2. Student experience

SE1 How well teaching, feedback and assessment practices support students' learning, progression and attainment

The Student Voice Report is a termly report produced by the SU offering analysis of student feedback from across City. The data in these reports is primarily drawn from the following sources: Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) minutes, Student Experience Committee (SEC) feedback and the SU's Advice Service's case management system. City's SSLCs are responsible for engaging with students; considering their views on the quality of programmes; seeking views on strengths, areas for improvement and responding to issues raised. Since 2018, the SU has produced six reports, and each report intends to reflect the student voice and feedback within one term in an academic year. Feedback specifically to teaching was prevalent in the SU's Student Voice Reports from Term 1 and Term 2 in the 2020/21 academic year and the Term 1 and Term 2 reports from the 2021/22 academic years (*range of students the reports covered above*).

Over the past three years, pandemic conditions have changed teaching and learning at City. Our Student Voice reports highlighted that students are more receptive to online teaching delivery facilitated by lecturers that is engaging, interactive and allows open discussions with staff and students. Most students signify that face-to-face teaching allowed for an easier environment to engage with the lecture than online learning. Teaching methods that incorporate examples and case studies to explain concepts and assist their teaching were found to be most informative for students and showcased best practice in some programmes referenced in our reports across the Schools as noted by the feedback. In Bayes Business School, Programme Representatives reported *"the materials are exciting and new and have depth to them. There is a sense of difficulty*

with the material, but the lecturer breaks these topics down well so that they are easy to understand and are interesting”.

However, feedback, namely in the academic year 2020/21 and following the inception of the pandemic, highlighted difficulties in online learning due to a lack of interaction (disengagement in breakout rooms, lecturers reading off slides) and technology issues arising in lectures. Additionally, in the same report students across all five Schools were concerned about the lack of interaction between students and between staff during live lectures. It was generally felt that improvements could be made in facilitating interaction and encouraging engagement in breakout rooms and other interactive exercises. Students also flagged the difficulty of asking questions during tutorials and lectures, especially questions pertaining to pre-recorded content and would benefit from more dedicated Q&A time with lecturers to discuss and understand asynchronous material. That said, students did register very positive feedback for interactive sessions with high engagement, as demonstrated by Programme Representatives who described *“they enjoy working together in breakout rooms and continuous assessment activities and in effect learn better talking to classmates”*.

Student feedback on the quality of feedback and assessment practices has been positive. This is demonstrated in the APP Student Submission Report from 2020/21. In the five focus groups conducted with students from backgrounds underrepresented within higher education including BAME, mature, disabled students, and students from LPN's for this report, students were positive about assessment mitigations implemented including a No Detriment Policy, and extension of the period for which you could submit Extenuating Circumstances without evidence.

However, the Student Check-ins report 2020 presented a different picture when it comes to exams, tests and assessments. In that report, we found there is a large section of the students who were not concerned about assessments (37%) and are clear about what is expected of them (32%). Comments included *“Feedback isn't clear & tailored”*, *“Feedback is very general and copied and pasted. Not individualized feedback (generic for everyone)”*, and *“Marking has been very poor as some pieces of coursework hasn't even marked”*.

Yet, in the Wrapped survey which was published at the end of term 1 of 21/22, 69% of students were satisfied with the University's Assessment and Feedback. This survey which was intended to capture student feedback on their academic and wider student experiences received 488 responses. Most students who completed the survey were undergraduate students, 28% of respondents first year and mostly students from SASS (28%) and the Bayes Business School (28%). This survey also reported assessment and feedback related experiences including requests for assessment guidance and materials, past papers and feedback quality assessment wait time.

SE2 How well course content and delivery engages students in their learning, and stretches students to develop their knowledge and skills

The value of the SU's Student Voice Report is that the analysis of the data we carry out allows us to understand both the academic experience at programme level through Programme Representatives on behalf of their cohorts and how students are generally finding the wider course organisation including engagement, with course content and course delivery. In our Student Voice report End of Year Report 2021/22, compiled from 85 copies of minutes from SSLCs across Schools, the main findings were very positive and included but wasn't limited to:

- Some students reported that the course content is often adapted to student's feedback by their lecturers to make content delivery more engaging.
- Students are engaging with course content by referencing how relevant the information they are learning is to their wider development.
- Students consistently have mentioned the usefulness of course content being applied to real-life examples.

In the Student Voice Report Term 1 2021/22, however, students did share some less than positive comments regarding course content and these comments centred around topics being challenging and new content being delivered at too fast pace.

SE3 How far research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement contribute to the student academic experience

Working in partnership with City, the SU understand how much of a focus it is for professional practice and employer engagement to contribute to the student academic experience to its diverse student body. A majority of its courses are accredited by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and this ultimately impacts positively on the student academic experience across City's six Schools, formerly five.

These experiences were evidenced in the SU's Student Voice Report Term 2 2021/22. In one example a Programme Representative noted that from their personal experience the (tripartite) meetings have been very helpful for all parties involved and they have received helpful feedback regarding making progress with their portfolio. They commented: *"The most structured tripartite meeting so far and gave employers a better understanding of how they can provide support and an understanding of support that the university can provide"*. This student was completing the Legal Practice Course in City Law School. Similarly, a Year 2 Adult Nursing student, studying in SHS described in our Student Voice Report Term 2 2021/22, placement students cited the noticeable improvements in the organisation of placement allocations compared to last term where an appropriate amount of notice was given to students.

SE4 How well the university or college supports staff professional development and academic practice

Across the SU's insight work, student feedback demonstrates how the University supports professional development and academic practice, specifically with regard to digital learning. Prior to 2022, students often fed back issues via our Student Voice Report issues related to technology and accessing Moodle. In the Student Voice Report Term 1 2020/21, analysis highlighted several issues in teaching quality were related to technology and the blended approach, including poor lecturer use of technology, poor use of Moodle, Zoom, and Teams' platforms, and inconsistent implementation of communication methods. Recommendations were set by SU to the University to facilitate training in online and hybrid lecture delivery for teaching staff prior to the academic year. Consequently, in the next Student Voice Report Term 2 2021/22, technology related teaching issues were flagged less than in the previous three Student Voice reports, thus evidencing the work of the University to develop their staff. Similarly, the University updated us that ongoing digital skills training for academic staff had taken place following our recommendation. This included the Learning Enhancement and Development (LEaD) team providing a range of training in online and hybrid learning including: 50 workshops with 220 staff attendances and 66 one-to-one sessions with individual members of staff. The University also committed LEaD continuing to run training sessions for staff in 22/23. The team offer expert services for staff and students with the aim of supporting teaching and learning and providing the best possible educational experience.

There was also similar experiences with regard to Moodle as noted in Student Voice Report Term 1 2021/22. Student's described accessibility issues with Moodle when viewing course materials and navigating their course via the virtual learning platform. Issues include generally inconsistent layouts on Moodle and difficulty in navigating through Moodle pages. The general experience of Moodle improved in the next terms' Student Voice Report and reflected a more user-friendly experience. – *"SHS students reported that their experience on Moodle has generally improved since last term i.e. having available synopses for each modules and weekly guidance for preparation, although accessing resources online remained difficult when navigating through pages on Moodle without a clear layout"*.

SE5 How supportive the learning environment is, and how far students can access the academic support they need

The Wrapped Report (see SE1) collected insights into the academic experience and wider student experience during Term 1 2021/22. The survey asked students how satisfied they were with

academic support: 76% of students responded that they were pleased with the level of academic support they received for their attainment. With this high satisfaction rating, the report also found:

- Students requested further content to make more direct links to upcoming assessments and exams. Some students felt that academics could provide more guidance on the format of assessment and the content and materials that would be required.
- To support revision and preparation for assessments some students requested essay writing classes.
- Students frequently requested access to past papers and mock questions in order to be able to prepare effectively for exams and assessments.

When looking at the learning environment based on the Wrapped Report, study space provision also received positive responses with (75%) students responding to say they were satisfied with its provision. The majority of respondents (53%) also responded to say they were satisfied with the provision personal tutoring. However, some students were critical of the quality of their personal tutoring sessions, requesting more of a wellbeing focus during the sessions. Other students commented for sessions to be longer and more frequent. Other students reflected on not having had a personal tutoring session yet or that their personal tutor has not been in contact with them.

In the 2019/20 academic year, the SU undertook research to understand and improve the disabled student experience at City. The research consisted of a survey completed by 50 students and a set of interviews completed with 15 students. The positive feedback towards the supportive learning environment and academic support was also echoed in the SU's Disabled Students Experience Report 2020. Responses to statements relating to City's Support Services were overall very positive. Respondents most strongly agreed with the statement "I found my initial meeting with disability support useful" (40%); 19% of students most disagreed with the statement that "I found it easy to find out about the different support services on offer at City".

SE6 How well physical and virtual learning resources support teaching and learning

The retention of tools like lecture capture and the addition of pre-recorded learning materials were seen as successes of pandemic learning. The Student Voice Reports of academic year 2021/22 compiled themes across more than 80 SSLC minutes for each analysis and reported on the experiences of the current blended learning landscape, following a year of online learning; it consistently refers to the availability of Lecture Capture recordings as a valuable resource to support student's learning. Students strongly requested for the continuation of recorded lectures as a resource for reviewing class content at their pace and for revision purposes, featuring also as a recommendation put forward to the university in this report. – *"Reps did say that the lecture recordings were very useful for revision and enabled students to learn at their own pace"*.

Additionally, our Student Voice reports reinforce the positive impact pre-recorded materials has on supplementing synchronous teaching. Reps reported that the accessibility of asynchronous materials like pre-recorded videos in addition to lectures has been helpful although the general expectation from students is that a level of engagement must be maintained so that students can maximise these resources and feel confident in their pre-work ahead of classes. Students highlighted that there should be clear linkage of pre-recorded video content to content covered in class while also minimising content duplication. There were significantly less time-related issues raised on the upload times of pre-materials and lecture recordings compared to in Term 1 Student Voice report 21/22, although Reps noted inconsistencies between modules not following a standardised timeframe of material upload time before and after class.

SE7 How well the university or college engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students

A review of student representation has been successfully completed by the SU and City in 2018/19 academic year. The purpose of the review was to measure the effectiveness of student engagement in decision-making about their experience. The review drew on student and staff views about how the current student representation system is working and the latest practice within the sector. The Executive summary of the findings included:

- There being 729 Programme Representatives in the 2018/19 academic year, with at least one on each course and just under half that number attending an induction training session. This figure has been exceeded or maintained in following years.
- The student representation practice being the same or comparatively further developed than institutions within University of London or those institutions who are considered to have strong student representation systems.
- Most Programme Representatives feeling as though they are able to create real change in their Schools while developing skills for the future.
- Many students, particularly in SASS and SHS, describing that they have had a positive experience with the Programme Representative system.

However, it was agreed there were still significant advances to be made to create an effective student representation system. As a result of the findings the following recommendations were proposed:

- 1) High-quality Student Representative System at City, that supports City's student satisfaction KPI and the SU strategic priority 'A platform for driving improvements.'
- 2) Review of wider democratic and representative structures within the SU and University to ensure that our diverse Student Voice is truly represented and heard.

Following the completion of the Review, the testament with which the University engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes, is evidenced by the recommendations from the Student Voice 21/22 Term 1 report that has informed Learning, Teaching and Assessment Principles for 22/23 which were subsequently agreed by Education and Employability Board. Additionally, the University informed the SU that the new City strategy would also take forward the above recommendations beyond 22/23.

Lastly, the impact the above student engagement work has been exemplified in the Check-ins Report Term 1 2022/23 where we found 94% of students called, felt a part of a community at City. Many students reported the impact of campus activity on their sense of community and belonging at City through SU events and activity, societies as well as, and crucially, through course-based activity.

3. Student Outcomes

Positive Outcomes

SO1 How well the university or college supports its students to succeed in and progress beyond their studies

The Check-ins project is a wellbeing and insight project delivered by the SU. The SU conducted the Check-ins in Term 2 of the 2021/22 academic year, calling 1549 City students to gather insights on the student experience. Students who received a check-in call were the highest from home students (69%), students from SASS (25%) and first year students (48%), and the lowest were from European students (8%) and final year students (18%). 70% of students reported that they felt supported at City during their call while 6% of students felt they did not feel supported. Students strongly linked how supported they felt with the timeliness of communications from academic staff and tutors. City students also recognised the impact of accessing multiple initiatives within Student and Academic Services such as Careers Service, City Buddies peer mentoring scheme and City Cares in supporting them to achieve good outcomes. Students who felt unsupported mostly owed this to poor communication and delayed response times from some wider university services and module leads. This percentage was slightly higher in Term 1 2022/23 Check-ins data: 73% of students felt supported in their first term, with most students satisfied with communications from the University having generally been "*clear*", "*informative*" and "*regular*".

The impacts of COVID-19 have been significant on the student experience. In the first year of online learning in 2020/21, the SU collected substantive feedback on how students were finding Covid mitigations put in place as measures for the best outcomes for City students. Feedback gathered from five APP focus groups conducted in the pandemic on different under-represented communities showed mostly positive views of an easier extenuating circumstance process without

having to submit evidence, availability of Hardship funds and Digital Inclusion Fund, and the security of the No Detriment policy being implemented for the year.

Students recognised that all of these mitigations had to be backed by heavy lobbying from the SU and that challenges of online learning in the COVID-19 environment meant that it wasn't an easy academic year for most students. Our Student Voice Reports captured in the academic year 2020/21 some of the main experiences that pandemic conditions had presented on online learning and the student experience including but not limited to:

- The online teaching environment being a challenging one to have live interaction with high disengagement in breakout rooms and cameras off. The demographic profile of City students often meant that students would be joining lectures from shared living spaces.
- Screen fatigue and student isolation were common issues among students during the pandemic.
- Despite subtitle provisions for pre-recorded videos being standardised university policy, not all lecturers followed this accessibility requirement for students consistently.

SO2 How good students' rates of continuation and completion are

The SU facilitated five APP Feedback focus groups for its student submission in 2021 including for BAME students, mature students, disabled students, and students from LPN's. Students were mostly aware of the activities involved in closing continuation gaps and supporting successful progression throughout the student lifecycle. The main findings were:

- CityBuddies scheme supports continuation which has made a positive impact on students in numerous ways including helping them to transition from sixth form to higher education, the matching process of mentors/mentees allowing them to build relationships with other like-minded students and providing guidance as a first point of contact. Students told us that the difficulties in maintaining effective contact throughout the year as mentor and mentee could limit receiving the full benefit of this scheme. – *"CityBuddies allowed for a smooth transition from sixth form to university for first years [...] Mentoring is great for making useful student contacts with someone who is familiar with the university."*
- There are several bursaries and grants available to students prior to joining and during their time at City, including the City Cares, City Education Grant and Sanctuary Scholarships. Generally, students who received financial support spoke positively about the bursaries available at City. Following feedback, the criteria for bursaries available should not be exclusionary after certain years of study or may result in students being unable to access support. – *"The hardship funds don't consider people who may be struggling on slightly higher household incomes."*

SO3 How good students' rates of progression to skilled employment, further study or other positive outcomes are

Our Term 2 Check-ins project of 2021/22 completed 1549 check-in calls to a wide range of students from different demographics (see SO1), asking about their confidence in employability. 71% of final years felt confident about the steps they need to take to find a job or further study postgraduation, an increase of 14% from 2021's figures. 40% of all students we spoke to had used the careers service at the time of the call and the reasons for not accessing the service yet was due to busy schedules or not wanting to think of the future yet.

Feedback from APP focus groups highlight that the Micro Placement Project (MPP) programme's support skills development in sought after skills by employers including in leadership skills, communication skills and decision-making skills. The MPP's had provided students with networking opportunities in career interests and increased their confidence for post-graduation. This student feedback resonates with our own MPP delivery of 20 four-week MPP programmes in summer 2021, in which students found the experience had supported them in networking and professionally developing.

One of the SU's strategic priorities is providing students with opportunities to develop their professional skills through our student leaders. The Programme Representative system at City, University of London operates in partnership between the SU and the Schools, to ensure that student input on quality and enhancement is heard at City. In 2021, our Student Leaders Survey surveyed 125 students who took positions of Programme Rep, Society Committee member, Executive Committee member or Student councillor; overall 41% of student leaders agreed that their role has made them more employable.

Educational Gains

SO4 What educational gains the university or college intends its students to achieve, and how relevant these are to its students

City's Education and Student Strategy (2016) is committed to support students to thrive and be successful, academically, personally and professionally. Three kinds of educational gains to deliver to students are institutionally rooted at City: work readiness; personal development; and academic gain. In the academic year of 2021/22, reflections from the student body in the Student Voice reports (based on 81 SSLC minutes in Term 1 and 85 SSLC minutes in Term 2) identified employability development as a priority area for student's progression. Reps raised different ways of career engagement that will help students prepare for graduate jobs and develop the right professional relationships to enable them to do so including: having access to a variety of organisations relevant to their field, more targeted Careers email alerts for different student communities including for disabled students, organising company insight days, paid projects and internships, and facilitating networking events with alumni. It is evident that work readiness features a significant part of students' expectations for their time at City, to help them achieve the best outcomes after they graduate.

SO5 How well the university or college supports its students to achieve these gains

The University deliver several projects to support City students' work readiness. Focus groups facilitated as part of our APP student submission in 2021 with different demographics of under-represented students included students from LPNs. Interestingly, this group of students were the most engaged with City's activity in improving progression rates into skilled employment and further study, particularly in accessing MPPs. Students recognised the value of completing MPP placements on their CVs and their skills development in sought after areas by employers. Students agreed that this experience equipped them with greater confidence and provided a stepping board for future job opportunities that would otherwise be difficult to find independently.

City SU were the largest receivers of MPPs in its first delivery during summer 2021, hosting a total of 20 four-week MPP students. Our evaluation that additionally reports the impact of the MPP scheme and has highlighted students felt and recognised that:

- their placements with the SU were an insight into a professional environment,
- their projects delivered impact and allowed them to develop essential soft skills,
- the overall experience enabled them to develop professional relationships and facilitated networking with other students and wider staff.

SO6 How far the university or college evaluates and demonstrates the gains made by its students

We understand that the University have taken a rigorous approach in measuring student's educational gains with the use of annual Graduate Outcomes data, a detailed APP evaluation, through Annual Programme Evaluations and Periodic Programme Reviews.