

University of Gloucestershire Teaching Excellence Framework Student Submission

“Every student at UoG is here to study and rightly, our members told us that their academic life was really important to them. Our members want to be involved in designing their courses, want help when things go wrong with their studies and want to feel represented by the SU on academic matters which affect them.”

(University of Gloucestershire Students’ Union Strategy, 2021-2024)

As the representative body for students at the University of Gloucestershire, we are pleased to present this report on the experiences and outcomes of our members, past and present. Higher education brings with it so many opportunities and is, for many students, a transformative period central to which is educational experience. In collecting and collating the information in preparation for this submission we have been reminded of some of the excellent practise taking place within the University of Gloucestershire (UOG) which enables our members to achieve.

Delivering on four sites across Cheltenham and Gloucester, as well as at distance, UOG supports a diverse range of students to access a wide variety of programs. UOG Students’ Union has a physical presence on the three main sites, with forthcoming plans for an SU base at the newly developed City Campus. Critical to our mission as a charity is the championing of student voice and the promotion of the interests of our members – we’re grateful to the Office for Students for allowing us to comment so significantly on the educational experience at the University via this submission.

We hope that the insight presented in this report gives a true and accurate representation of the experience of our members. Every effort has been made to ensure that views presented are supported by data, and more information about our methodology and data gathering process is described in the following section. We’re conscious that there will undoubtedly be differences in experience, and that some students will not recognise the excellent practise we’ve sought to highlight. Where this is case, we have attempted to note the differences in experiences and outcomes, without labouring the point that this will differ for all students as a result of interplaying affective factors, which can’t be accounted for when making generalised statements in a report with a strict word limit.

In selecting the topics to explore within the report we identified areas of practise which were either widely felt by large parts of the UOG student population, or deeply felt by a smaller subsection. With this in mind, some parts of the submission relate to positive practise which we routinely encounter, whereas other areas hope to highlight excellence we would be keen to see more frequently.

Finally, many thanks go to those who worked on the compiling and writing of this submission as well as to our University partners for their support during the process.

Approach to Evidence Gathering**Creation of this Submission**

The development of this submission is product of the work completed by the Education and Community Officer, and the Student Voice Team at The University of Gloucestershire Students’ Union. The Education and Community Officer is an elected representative of students, elected via a cross campus ballot, who represents students’ needs and perspectives related to academic affairs, and supports the creation of a sustainable University learning community. The

Student Voice team are employed members of staff responsible for co-ordinating campaigns, leading on advocacy projects with students, and co-ordinating the Student Representative schemes. These two parties work closely together on a daily basis on matters of student representation, education policy and enactment, and raising student voice in University management spaces. Additionally, the Students' Union sought to hire

for this project: their main responsibilities included categorising data points and extracting useful comments from text rich data sources.

Evidence Portfolio

Evidence sources informing the larger dataset for this narrative are a combination of the resources listed in the table below. In total, the dataset comprises 1751 individual fields of data, inclusive of text rich comments and relevant statistics.

1	Mid-module evaluations	Surveys completed by students on the request of their module leaders. These are designed to assess students' views on the teaching, learning and assessment style partway through the course to support adaptations and response to student voices.
2	Course Representative and Course Team Meeting Minutes or Course Development Meetings	Course Reps are elected representatives at each level on each taught course at the Institution. They are expected to meet with their Course Leaders a minimum of 3 times a year. Practise and recording of these meetings vary between subject communities. Some subject communities choosing more structured 'development meetings', and others using them as a Q+A or feedback and response casual session without agenda or formal minuting However, the intention is that they are spaces for student representatives to take the views of their fellow students to Academic Subject Leaders, Course Leaders and Support Staff with the view of receiving a response or helpful guidance for students.
3	National Student Survey Data 2018-2022	This pre-existing dataset has been useful to chart our current trends and capture more general satisfaction responses. We were interested to draw parallels between locally gathered data and the data displayed in this larger survey.
4	Responses to Students' Union Feedback Tools	The Students' Union also has its own online feedback tools. From 2017-2021, this tool was called SIMON. Students were required to submit their demographic information and details of their level and course before offering feedback on all aspects of their University experience. However, the system was relaunched in Sept. 2021 as VOICE IT. This system captured student demographic data immediately upon login, and now allows for differentiation between ideas for improvements and action, and straightforward feedback.

		Both of these systems could be used by Course Reps or Subject Student Co-ordinators to enter feedback representative of a group, as well as by individual students.
5	Subject Student Co-ordinator (SSCs) Focus Group	At the beginning of this project, we held a focus group with our Subject Student Co-ordinators to introduce TEF and ask them for some initial thoughts on a selection of questions related to the TEF indicators. Questions were developed by the Education and Community Officer with the Student Voice Team and were shared with SSCs, who subsequently sought feedback from their subject communities. We used the data from this session to support the ongoing thematic analysis.

To collect data types 1 and 2, the Education and Community Officer approached the Director of Quality Enhancement at the University, as well as all Undergraduate Course Leaders, requesting access to minutes of Student Representative meetings, course development meetings, or details from mid-module evaluations. The intention of reaching out to all Course Leaders was to ensure that students from all levels on each individual course could be represented. However, we did not receive responses from all programmes, perhaps creating an overall limitation to the breadth of this dataset. However, we are encouraged by the fact that data from the following Schools is represented, reflective of 90 courses from multiple subject communities.

School	Number of Programmes Represented in Dataset
Education and Humanities	11
Arts	12
Creative Industries	17
Natural Social Sciences	14
Health and Social Care	10
Sports and Exercise	8
Computing and Engineering	7
Business	11
TOTAL	90 Courses

Working with the University

The relationship between the University and the Students' Union was introduced early in the TEF process. Conversations between the Student Contact and members of the University Executive were used to highlight the University's expectations for their own submission, common themes for discussion and shared views on areas of excellence.

The Education and Community Officer met with members of the University Executive and the Academic Development Unit to discuss potential data gathering methods, and to ask for support in reaching out to Course and Academic Subject Leaders. The Education and Community Officer holds places on significant committees where TEF had been a routine item of discussion. To

support impartiality of this process, the Officer would offer a verbal update on progress and ask for any questions from attending members.

Throughout the data-gathering and drafting process, the designated University Contact was available to the Student Contact to ask questions, seek further support in data gathering and fact checking. In addition to ad hoc conversations, regular meetings were scheduled to check progress, share analysis and signpost any additional data. Drafts were shared and any questions were asked as part of developing our own contribution upon request.

Resources (SE6)

Students at the University of Gloucestershire access their learning resources in a variety of ways, and access to these resources plays a significant role in students' wider academic experience. For the purpose of this chapter, we will be focusing on physical and specialist learning environment and virtual learning resources as areas of excellent practise. Although high quality learning resources are important and frequently available, there may be instances where challenges arise in accessing them.

Learning Environments

The most recent NSS data (2022) indicates a positive correlation between Subject Communities with access to subject specific spaces and a greater satisfaction with learning resources. Photography, Game Technologies, Film & TV, Music & Sound, Teacher Education, Nursing, Social Work & Social Care, Environmental Sciences, and Psychological Sciences all reported scores above NSS benchmark for satisfaction with learning resources, including facilities supporting learning. Students have frequently commented on the accessibility and flexibility of spaces as part of a positive learning experience: an encouraging 45% of our mixed data set across the institution praise the 24/7 access to the wide range of facilities, including libraries, labs and editing suites.

The response to the quality and access to these resources was particularly prevalent during the Pandemic, when Schools made varying provisions and adaptations to ensure students had continued access to software, such as the Adobe Creative Suite, and facilities like editing suites or labs.

"It was really helpful to have dedicated support from the technician team who aided the students attending lab sessions online [during the Pandemic]."

"The repores and solutions to the use of software during COVID when students have had to change to working from home have been so useful"

"The media/editing suites have been kept open in line with social distancing and travel measures throughout the Pandemic"

BA Television Production Course Representatives

In addition to the wide range of spaces, there is a developing focus on the design of learning spaces to positively impact students' creativity, wellbeing and academic success. Well-designed spaces aim to provide students with opportunities to connect with peers and develop specialist knowledge regarding their disciplines. For example, the SU consulted with a mixture of Student Subject Coordinators (SSCs) and Course Representatives as part of a collaborative project with the Head of Libraries to ascertain what students want and need from a learning space to help them

feel comfortable and creative when studying. Students reported that they valued the range of learning spaces available, allowing them to study independently or work in a more relaxed and collaborative atmosphere. In response, and with clear focus on student choice, the institution has recently opened The Global Lounge: a flexible learning space conducive to learning and studying comfortably and collaboratively. The space features a range of seating, for independent and group study, and kitchenette facilities to make the environment comfortable for longer study periods.

Learning Resources

Learning Resources can make a substantial difference to the teaching and learning experience, as they act as a supplementary tool to enhance the wider course content. Through the SU's online feedback tool (SIMON), 114 pieces of feedback regarding Course Specific Resources were gathered during 2019/20 data with 44% of students choosing to comment on resources working well for them. 48% of students from our mixed data set valued having access to a rich set of resources via Moodle, our open online learning platform, and other online sources. A further 20% of students appeared to request more and/or better access to these course-specific resources. While this perhaps indicates some inconsistent practise within the institution, the demand for even more specific resources perhaps indicates the excellent contribution they can make to students' experience of their course.

A stand out example of excellence regarding learning resources is students' consistent reference to being able to access PowerPoints prior to lectures. Students have reported that the uploading of content in good time supports students to effectively prepare for classes. More than this, however, this good practise fosters a sense of inclusion for students with disabilities or additional educational needs: earlier access to pre-reading and assignment briefings can help students feel ready and prepared to confidently approach their classes.

"PowerPoints before the lecture are really helpful to prepare"

Course Evaluation Illustration

"Pre-reading was helpful in enabling students to engage with lecture"

Course Evaluation Illustration

"Support in lectures with my additional needs. Copy of PowerPoints is always available."

Mid Module Evaluation, Social Work and Social Care

Relationships (SE5, SO5)

89% satisfaction: "I feel part of a community of staff and students"

NSS 2022

"I'm not a number I'm a student here. The staff are reliable, friendly and helpful and I know that I can depend on them. I've relied on them thought my course and they have always been there for me and supported me."

Journalism and Communications

In this section we explore relationships at UOG, how they impact the delivery and engagement with learning, how the learning environment is enhanced by them, and how they support students to

achieve positive outcomes. We believe there are elements of best practise relating to personal tutors, distinct benefits borne out of smaller class sizes and an overarching sense of community at the institution.

Whilst fostering a strong sense of a learning community is a challenge for the whole of the HE sector, overall UOG achieves an NSS result (2022) above the sector average for “I feel part of a community of staff and students”. There are a number of Subject Communities (Performing Arts and Production, Marketing, Events, Hospitality and Tourism, Strategy, Enterprise, Leadership and Management, Education and all Subject Communities in the School of Creative Industries) scoring c. 70% for satisfaction on this question. The contextual data suggests this could be attributed to the support of lecturers and engaging content, with a quarter of the full text comments from the NSS22 serving to illustrate this.

“I honestly feel that the staff at the university go above and beyond to ensure that students have a positive experience. I have had such a fantastic time here on the ECS course and could not have done so well if not for the support of all the staff involved.”

BA Early Childhood Studies,

“Supportive tutors and a family feel to the course.”

Performing Arts & Production,

“Very helpful and supportive staff with a genuine interest in their students.”

BA Film Production,

Alongside academic colleagues who directly support the delivery of learning and teaching, UOG has a range of auxiliary services which contribute to a feeling of community. A good example of this is ‘Your Future Plan’ (YFP), the University’s career service, who engage students in both actions integrated into the curriculum and alongside it. Students reported in the NSS that **“University staff support such as YFP and Helpzone are brilliant” (Sports Therapy,**

To further improve the quality of this service, YFP have introduced the Careers Studio as part of their offer for the academic year 2022/23. This service sees students engage in a peer mentoring system where trained students share their relevant careers or placement focused knowledge with other students via regular drop-in sessions. Likewise, the institution achieved 85% satisfaction overall for the optional NSS question “My institution offered activities and resources designed to prepare me for the next step in my career”, up from 73% in 2021.

Personal Tutors

The University has a robust and well-established personal tutor system, supported by the Academic Development Unit. This system assigns each student an academic within their school of study to provide support for the student’s academic study, readiness for their future career and to supply academic advice in relation to regulations and administrative processes.

Where students make full use of their personal tutor it provides a significant resource. In feedback from a Media student noted that: **“Personal tutors and lecturers listen and seem to genuinely care about student issues”** whilst a nursing student said: **“Support from my personal tutor is incredible.”** It’s clear that students who fully utilise the PT system deeply value the personal, close nature of the relationship where this is working well and that the availability of PTs is highly prized; even being noted as a reason to choose to attend UOG by a Natural and

Social Sciences Course Rep meeting. In our dataset collected for this submission, of the references made to personal tutors 80% of respondents commented positively.

The overall quality of the interaction between PTs and students is underpinned, in part, by the use of the Tutor Portal which enables access to Learner Analytics and a student's personal information. Made up of module attendance, VLE engagement and assessment submission information this gives PTs access to predictive indicators to help inform bespoke intervention to improve student outcomes.

Small Class Sizes

Beyond the PT system, UOG programmes make good use of their small class sizes to develop meaningful relationships between students and lecturing staff. Students comment routinely on this allowing for **“a personal teaching experience”** (Geography student,) and how this environment leads itself to “personal relationships with tutors” (Education student,

Many students express positive views on the frequency with which they are able to have 1-2-1 interactions with lecturers outside of scheduled teaching or personal tutoring sessions. A student in the School of Creative Industries commented that **“[Academics] are also happy to give 1-2-1 tutorials to give specific advice about students work and if they are having any difficulties.”**

The Response to Covid-19

The role that robust relationships played during the Covid-19 pandemic in supporting students to access their learning is a significant indicator of how valuable this practise and culture is to the success of students at the institution.

For example, students in the Performing Arts subject community had to adapt their manner of learning and assessment considerably during the Pandemic, yet students continued to speak favourably about the way in which academics had **“helped to make students feel comfortable in University”** and had been **“extremely supportive”**. Another student in BA Journalism reiterated how the existing relationships continued during the period impacted by Covid-19 by stating **“We are very much individuals and not a number, which is especially important when we are learning online.”** What is clear following the Pandemic is the need to continue to rebuild and strengthen relationship which were almost entirely moved to being online for a significant period.

Within our data set a range of students suggested that small class sizes made interactions between peers and with lecturing staff feel less challenging to initiate and that students felt more able to access support due to this.

“Lectures are personal and one-to-one. Always helpful don't feel like you're just a face to lecturers, they actually know you. Teaching is full of useful info.”

Magazine Journalism and Production,

Student Voice

As part of the SU strategy and ethos, we enable students to offer their feedback and shape their educational experience, with the belief that this is critical to the success of learning and teaching. There are five school at the University (Business, Creative Industries, Education and Humanities, Natural and Social Sciences and Sport and Exercise) who scored above 80% in the 2022 NSS question “I have the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course” with the same schools all achieving over 70% on “Staff value students' views and opinions about the course”.

In partnership with the University, the SU supports a range of feedback tools such as Voice It and Change It alongside an established Course and Subject Community level representative scheme. The combination of low-level feedback opportunities, alongside partnerships with representatives, allows students to play an active role in their programme of study. To support and enhance this as an area of ongoing and developing excellence, Student Voice (and its associated mechanisms) will continue to be a key strategic aim for the SU, and forms a part of the new University Education Strategy which launched in 2022.

Experiential Learning (SE2, SE3, SE7)

Experiential learning is perhaps one of the strongest areas of excellence for the University. Upon immediate view of our collated dataset, the commentary surrounding the integration of industry knowledge and experiences as part of the course design stood out as well received aspects of the learning experience. This section speaks to the concept of experiential learning, focusing on students' experiences of industry-led teaching and learning opportunities, and will illustrate excellence by drawing attention to case studies from subject communities.

For the purpose of this narrative, experiential learning can be defined as a process whereby students are 'learning by doing' and engaging with the environments, processes and practise of their respective disciplines. This type of teaching and learning serves to support the ongoing development of criticality and the ability to solve problems, which acts as a useful mechanism in supporting work-readiness. As indicated in the University submission, 32% of students are on courses accredited or approved by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies across the 7 Schools, meaning that these students have access to courses with strong industry links, governed by professional standards (Quality Assurance Agency, 2020). However, students on non-PSRB courses are also given opportunity to engage with industry, and are exposed to teaching and learning experiences that can engender a sense of work-readiness upon progression and prompt students to develop their skills. Students are prepared with the skills and attitudes to enter confidently into various fields, as demonstrated in the following comments from students in the School of Arts.

<p><i>"The professional practise module...[was] very in depth and taught us practical aspects of becoming a professional artist. Being taught by practising professionals is a large benefit"</i></p> <p>BA Fine Art Student,</p>	<p><i>"The ethos of the course and the way the course aims to project you into the industry is clear from the first day. The advice and knowledge of the industry is extremely helpful in all aspects."</i></p> <p>BA Photography Student,</p>
<p><i>"We have learnt how to market ourselves as successful illustrators...and [have been given] the opportunity to get advice from professionals on how to get from where we are to where they are"</i></p> <p>BA Illustration Student,</p>	<p><i>"[The course] allowed experimentation with a wide range of disciplines within the graphic design umbrella. Freedom of ideas and use of other disciplines made me feel ready for the different pathways."</i></p> <p>BA Graphic Design Student,</p>

We could see this as a particular educational gain for students as they begin develop their confidence and aptitude to enter the workplace. This impact is additionally reflected by the above benchmark results for students in the Schools of Education and Humanities, Health and Social Care, Business, Creative Industries, and Sports and Exercise, whose students feel their course provided them with the opportunities to apply what they had learnt, according to the NSS.

Facilities Supporting Experiential Learning

A consistent theme in student feedback is that of the different learning environments and facilities that enable students to embody professional characteristics whilst still developing their skillset. Across courses, students have opportunities to attend Moot Court, deliver and edit journalistic broadcasts, or engage with healthcare simulations in attempt to ground learning in professional and industry-focused environments. Being taught in purpose designed spaces conducive to simulating 'real life' events, and interacting with industry-standard resources, has been seen to contribute significantly to the academic experience (SE3): students can apply their developing skills and knowledge an environment where it is 'safe' to make mistakes, but with the rigour and expectation of real-world situations. While traditional lecture-style sessions take place at the institution with attention to theory, the opportunity for high quality praxis enables students to immediately apply what they have learnt and engage with practical and reflective learning.

"Students appreciate the amount of practical work there is. There is a lot of practical equipment to help students learn and modules help students to feel inspired by the work they were creating."

**BA Television Production Course
Representatives,**

"Instead of sitting in a classroom, you get the opportunity to go out and physically learn and apply knowledge. There's an excellent rapport and great, relevant fieldwork."

Geography Students, NSS Feedback,

Students in the School of Arts; Creative Industries, and Computing and Engineering courses have excellent access to a wide range of technical and purpose designed facilities, as well as access to trained technicians, as part of the industry-informed learning experience. Of note, is the access to specialist lab and studio spaces within the School of Arts, with 59% of all free text comments made by students in this School making specific reference to the positive access to studio and spaces (NSS 2019-2022). Likewise, the recent funding to expand the School of Computing and Engineering facilities which "will provide students with a learning space that resembles as closely as possible the environments they will experience in real-life scenarios while working in industry" (University of Gloucestershire Website), demonstrates continued investment from the institution in providing more specialist spaces for students to grow and develop industry-based knowledge and expertise. Ensuring students have access to high quality technical kit and software can serve to reinforce the theory and classroom-based content, resulting in students with well-rounded understanding of their disciplines.

Teaching and Learning Features Supporting Experiential Learning

While hands-on access to resources and spaces proves a positive aspect of the learning experience, it is clear that the design of teaching and learning also goes some way to support 'learning by doing'. Students have reported feeling as if they can apply their learning, and are well immersed in industry-practise. Moreover, students have a developing understanding of how to interact with people and processes in industry, and have an increased ability to realistically review their potential. This is particularly stand-out in the School of Creative Industries, with an 80% student satisfaction rate for courses providing them with opportunities to apply what they have learnt, and some courses scoring 100% satisfaction on a number of occasions prior to this.

“There is an emphasis on industry, and I feel there have been experience that have really prepared me for finding opportunities after University”

“There’s a broad range of topic explored as well as more focused topics – makes me feel confident going into industry”

“The course provokes stimulating work, as well as industry-level standards and opportunities...plans and steps to progress have been outlined and developed in all areas of study”

BA Film Production Students,

The proximity of lecturers to industry practise perhaps supports a culture whereby the learning environment aligns with the daily activity and mirrors ways of working in particular professions. Additionally, these links are conducive to the introduction of various guest speakers, with industry experience and expertise, to course curriculum. The integration of guest speakers and beneficial networking events contributes significantly to students’ work-readiness. There are opportunities to gain a new perspective on postgraduate routes, and means to begin developing beneficial networks. Of the data relating to the presence of guest speakers within our collated dataset, 54% of comments referenced their positive impact for learning. A significant number of the comments that didn’t respond positively to guest speakers in fact requested more of them, with there being exceptions where guest speakers did not relate directly to the assessment brief.

“Guest lectures are interesting and provide good insights into different aspects within the industry. We’ve expanded our networks through the guest lecturers and panels”

**BA Music Business Course Reps
Course Rep Meeting,**

“Really great to have guest speakers - they were very inspirational. It’s been interesting to hear different routes into the writing business, even if they aren’t specific to the course or the stands of the course I am especially interested in.”

**BA Creative Writing Student, Mid-Module
Evaluations,**