

## Teaching Excellence Framework: Student Submission

### Futureworks

#### SECTION ONE: APPROACH TO EVIDENCE GATHERING

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On behalf of the Futureworks student body, this submission has been conducted and written by Macy Lomas of BA (Hons) Digital Illustration with Animation (Year 2), and Emily Marshall of BA (Hons) Game Art (Year 2).

Macy is our Principal Student Partner; she has an extremely active involvement in the proceedings of Futureworks. Her role is vitally important in ensuring the student voice is represented and heard throughout both the staff and managerial circles within Futureworks, having the opportunity to attend the School Committee, Academic Board and Industry Advisory Group meetings. Emily is one of our Student Partners, whose role it is to gather feedback from the students on her course and discuss any information during both Student Partner meetings and in our School Committee meetings in which Programme Leaders, the Head of School, Student Services and Facilities are present.

***We can confirm we were made aware of who our TEF contact was. We can also confirm that Futureworks did not unduly influence the content of the submission and we, the students, had complete control over the writing of, and the information included in this document, maintaining its independence.***

The wider student representation structures are as follows:

##### Student Partners

- Each of our 9 courses volunteers a Student Partner for each class. It is their role to collect feedback from their classmates and attend Student Partner meetings, which are held once a month, to deliver this feedback and discuss between all Student Partners across the school.
- All Student Partners have the opportunity to attend their School Committee meeting. Each of our three schools hold these meetings once per semester. Student Partners can deliver the feedback given from peers and discuss it with staff. The staff that are usually present in these meetings are: the Head of School, the Programme Leaders for each course, Student Services and Facilities.

##### Lead Student Partners

- In the Student Partner body, a representative for each school is elected to become a Lead Student Partner. It is their responsibility to represent their schools as a whole.
- Alongside attending School Committee meetings, Lead Student Partners also have the opportunity to attend Academic Board meetings to deliver any feedback and input. The staff usually present in these meetings are: Programme Leaders, Heads of Schools, Student Services, the Vice Principal, the Principal and external independent members from other institutions.

## Principal Student Partner

- The Principal Student Partner is voted for by the students at Futureworks from a list of volunteer candidates.
- It is their responsibility to organise the Student Partner body as a whole. They will schedule meeting times, set the agenda, and chair the discussions during these meetings, alongside the other responsibilities listed previously.
- In addition to this, they can also attend the Industry Advisory Group meetings. In attendance at these meetings are professionals from outside companies who ensure that the practices at Futureworks are relevant to current industry standards. The Principal Student Partner is invited to discuss or add input into these meetings.

## Creating the TEF Student Submission:

All 9 degrees on offer at Futureworks have been, in varying quantities, represented through the creation of this submission.

The courses included in this submission (and their abbreviations for reference) are as follows:

### School of Film, Television & Media:

BA (Hons) Independent Filmmaking (BAIF)

BA (Hons) Post Production for Film & TV (BAPP)

BA (Hons) Visual Effects (BVFX)

### School of Art & Design:

BA (Hons) Digital Animation with Illustration (BDAl)

BA (Hons) Games Design (BAGD)

BA (Hons) Game Art (BAGA)

### School of Sound & Music Production:

BSc (Hons) Game & Interactive Audio (BGIA)

BSc (Hons) Audio Engineering & Production (BAEP)

BA (Hons) Music Production (BAMP)

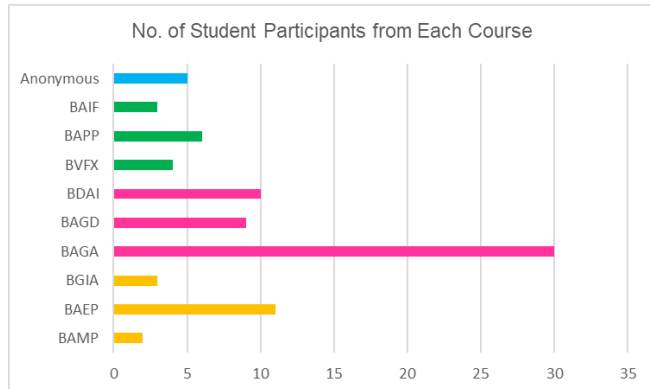
In working with Futureworks to create this submission, the writing of this document was completely voluntary, and there was no coercion or pressure to complete it. We agreed upon face-to-face meetings with the Student Records Officer and we were provided with the 'Guidance on student submissions' handbook, NSS Data from the last 4 years, an example template, and feedback collected from the internal student survey formatted into a spreadsheet. These meetings enabled us to also ask any questions relating to the TEF and request any data that was not originally provided to us in printed format. We then organised meetings independently between ourselves (the writers) to complete a draft of this submission that was then shared with Futureworks to update them on our

progress before we made any final amendments to the submission. This draft was also shared with all members of the Student Rep team who were able to validate, comment on and suggest amendments to the submission.

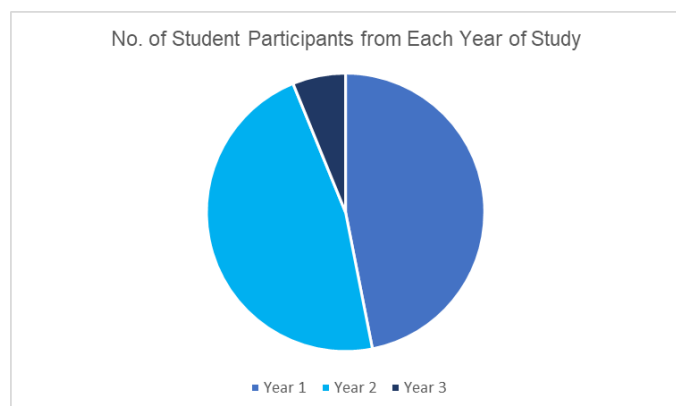
The evidence gathered for this submission was taken from multiple sources, as follows:

- National Student Survey Data (NSS) from academic years 2019 through to 2022.
  - Internal data regarding student progression and completion rates.
  - Internal Student Partner and School Committee meetings.
  - In-Class anonymous Post-It-Note feedback sessions, in which students could write feedback on sticky notes whilst no members of staff were present.
  - An online feedback form that was available and advertised to all students at Futureworks from 8/11/22 until the 9/12/22, where most of our data was collected. This survey involved 4 questions:
- 1) Please tell us your experiences and feedback regarding teaching in the classroom.
  - 2) Please can you tell us how you feel about the facilities on offer here at Futureworks.  
(Equipment, Library, etc.)
  - 3) How well do you feel Futureworks is encouraging and supporting you in preparing for your future career in creative media?
  - 4) Any other comments or feedback you want to give about Futureworks?

A breakdown of the participation in this survey:



Course	No. of Students
BAMP	2
BAEP	11
BGIA	3
BAGA	30
BAGD	9
BDAI	10
BVFX	4
BAPP	6
BAIF	3
Anonymous	5



Year of Study	No. of Students
Year 1	38
Year 2	38
Year 3	5

Of all 418 currently enrolled students (as of 11/1/23), a total of 81 students responded to the survey.

A significantly higher proportion of Art & Design students responded to our survey as compared to the other schools, and thus we were able to comment more on the feedback from this cohort of people in comparison to the other two schools. Furthermore, we are aware that due to the lower number of participants from other schools, the responses given by those students may not fully reflect the wider opinions of that particular school.

## SECTION TWO: STUDENT EXPERIENCE

### Academic Experience and Assessment:

Most recently, the quality of teaching at Futureworks has achieved the highest scoring section on the 2022 National Student Survey at 90.29% (pictured below). In most cases, each category of the NSS has been improved upon from the previous year.

Section Name	% Agree	% Agree: previous year	Sector-wide % Agree
A. The teaching on my course	90.29	84.41	80.05
B. Learning opportunities	89.8	85.49	79.37
C. Assessment and feedback	82.94	81.18	68.53
D. Academic support	88.24	87.06	73.88
E. Organisation and management	78.43	78.82	69.88
F. Learning resources	78.17	75.1	80.9
G. Learning community	71.18	72.35	68.22
H. Student Voice	77.06	70.83	66.54
I. The students' union (association or guild) effectively represents students' academic interests.	61.64	45.45	52.55
J. Overall satisfaction	87.06	86.75	76.29

Overall, Art & Design students responded most positively in our internal survey to the delivery of their course content and engagement in their learning. The general opinion amongst this cohort was that their courses were appropriately challenging, the content was interesting and relevant and that the delivery of the content and feedback was always of a high standard. Many specific tutors were listed for their positive involvement in lessons and approach to student feedback. Praise was given for engaging students, providing support when required and creating a positive classroom environment. They are further commended for their approachability and passion for their subject. Feedback can also be gained outside of the classroom via class-specific Discord servers in which students can upload their work and tutors/students alike can help to give constructive criticism – many students continue to find this extremely beneficial. In some select cases, students felt that the key objective of the lecture was lost due to disorganisation or straying off-topic. Students on the BAEP course voiced their praise for the quality of teaching, commending the dynamic method and the balance between presentations and practical learning. They praised tutor-to-student interaction, believed their tutors were very knowledgeable, and that their one-to-one feedback was particularly valuable. For the School of Film, Television & Media, there was an exceptionally mixed response. Students on the BVFX course gave positive remarks on the quality of teaching, commenting on the great classroom atmosphere and the competent and effective teaching by their tutors. 6 students out of 37 on the BAPP course responded to our TEF questionnaire; their feedback was overwhelmingly negative, remarking that the quality of teaching was poor and unorganised, and the overall classroom atmosphere was uninspiring.

For many courses, the structure of classes usually begins with a presentation or interactive lecture of course content delivered by the tutors. These resources, along with recordings of the lectures, are

readily available on the VLE for online access and can be viewed/referenced easily – many students find these resources extremely valuable when they miss a lecture or wish to revise content in their own time. This is usually followed by a practical session where students are free to work on their assignments and tasks with tutors readily available to give instant feedback and support. Many students find this to be extremely beneficial to their learning and progression, feeling as though they receive a more personalised experience. Overall, students felt that the smaller class sizes were extremely valuable as it allowed them to gain more one-to-one feedback from their course tutors inside and outside the classroom.

Regarding assessments, there are two types of submissions used by Futureworks:

- A 'Formative' submission submitted mid-term, which is usually not graded and provides detailed feedback from the tutors about the current progression of the students' work.
- A 'Summative' deadline which is the final, graded hand-in for all tasks set in the module.

Assignments are usually set at the start of term, with a final deadline near the end of the semester, though there are some programs with modules that run across the entire academic year. There are mixed opinions about assessment deadlines; some students feel overwhelmed by the workload in a one-semester module, others feel as though having one-semester modules aids their learning as they can concentrate and focus more. We acknowledge it is difficult to find a happy medium that satisfies every student. The content required for each assignment is clearly labeled through the module handbooks which are easily accessible via the VLE, however some students felt as though more clear instruction should be given at the start of the academic year as to what is required in the final hand-in, and that more examples of previous student work would be beneficial in showing students what they should be aiming for.

As this TEF submission covers the last four academic years, we felt it was important to comment on the impact of COVID-19 on students learning and their opinions on how this was handled by Futureworks. Understandably, the pandemic was an unprecedented time, and the effects of it are still being felt today. We are basing this section of student opinion from the NSS free comments from the previous three academic years, where COVID was the most prevalent for those who attended the Futureworks at the height of the pandemic. Overall, there is a mixed opinion on how online-learning was received with students. Many felt that their Futureworks experience greatly suffered, that lesson structure was poorly organised and that there was a lack of networking events and the absence of a creative studio-like environment that is so crucial to many of our courses and the industries they belong to. Many felt as though the tuition fees for their course were not worth the money due to these disruptions. It has been acknowledged by some students that this perhaps couldn't have been helped and that it was a particularly difficult time for both students and tutors alike. On the other hand, others felt that Futureworks adapted very quickly to the pandemic, and that their response seemed intelligent; deadlines were extended and facilities were available for students to use.

Since the end of the COVID pandemic, Futureworks has encouraged students back to face-to-face teaching, and have removed online lectures almost entirely. Returning students were pleased to be back in the classroom environment. Face masks and hand sanitiser are still available around the building, and it's encouraged to take a test when a student is unwell with symptoms. The impact of COVID on extra-curricular activities was significant, therefore a Discord server was created to allow

students to communicate with other schools and join societies. Since then, Futureworks has run numerous events to make up for the lost time during the pandemic, including student socials, cross-course 'Open Feedback' sessions and a Graduation Ceremony for graduates between 2020-2022 to celebrate their successes. Futureworks also runs Continuing Development Week activities, where students can join multiple free workshops to learn the equipment and skills from other Schools, for example, Life Drawing classes and 48-hr Film Challenges. One reoccurring point from our research has indicated that students wish for there to be more cross-course collaboration integrated into their studies so that they have the opportunity to work with and get to know students from other schools. We acknowledge that this is being trialed and addressed by Futureworks in the form of these 'Open Feedback' sessions.

#### Resources, Support and Student Engagement:

In relation to both physical and virtual resources, our survey found that most students felt happy with the facilities on offer at Futureworks and thought they were relevant to their studies. This aligns with the 'Learning resources' section of the 2022 NSS which achieved a total of 78.17%, a slight increase from the previous year.

At Futureworks, students have access to industry standard equipment to prepare them for future careers. In addition to this, a variety of relevant, course-specific professional software is accessible at home – a dedicated section on the VLE lists all the software available to students at home and details how to access these with relevant links and step-by-step processes to download them.

All equipment, studios and classrooms are placed on a booking system online where students can easily book what they require for a set amount of time. Students from the Schools of Sound & Music and Film, Television & Media have ready access to a range of professional studio spaces, editing suites, and other industry standard equipment – these spaces are also actively encouraged to be used for students' independent projects outside their coursework. Some students feel they struggle to book these facilities during the busier times of the academic year (particularly towards deadlines), however we feel this is realistically unavoidable. Futureworks tries to accommodate students towards end of year academic deadlines by increasing their opening hours, and thus the opening hours of studio spaces - aside from this, we struggle to see how unavailability can be avoided. The School of Art & Design have access to a large quantity of Wacom Cintiqs and other graphics tablets to aid their work – these have proven exceptionally popular with students - praise was given for the availability of these tablets and there has been no mention of any struggle to book out this equipment.

Floor 2 has a 'Drop-In' centre so students (particularly those in the School of Art & Design) have access to PCs outside of their timetabled lectures. Students have also recently been made aware that they can request to sit in a currently occupied classroom to work on their projects so long as they have the tutors' permission and there is an unoccupied computer: this has proven beneficial as there is always somewhere for students to have access to a computer if the Drop-In area is full. A double-monitor setup has also been introduced across the School of Art & Design classrooms; this has been extremely positively received by students, with many requesting this change also be implemented into the Drop-In area.

It has been made evident to us that Futureworks strives to improve the accessibility of equipment and facilities. This is particularly noticeable with our library which has added a new booking system so that students can now borrow and return books. Futureworks students also have access to the UCLan online library, though when asked, many students were unaware of this. Some students commented on the size of our physical library being quite small, though we feel this is understandable for a small, independent institution.

The most pressing issue raised within the facilities feedback was from the School of Film, Television & Media, where recently there was a major concern with Apple Macs failing to work for an extended time period. While this has been recently resolved with the delivery of new computers, this has had a negative impact on students regarding their progress and ability to access facilities on the Media courses due to the amount of time this took to be resolved. In relation to this, some students commented on the speed with which requested improvements are seen implemented at Futureworks - many feel that although improvements are being made, they are not necessarily being made quick enough so that results can be seen during their time of study. Many students feel as though the pipeline from the requested improvements to the implementation of the improvements should be quicker due to the smaller size of Futureworks, however this is not often the case.

The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is a great portal for students to access all the resources from each module and keep up to date with deadlines. Other information including timetables, module handbooks and general news are also available for access at any time. Some have requested that the organisation of the page be improved, as they found it difficult to locate these files (particularly timetables) - this is currently being investigated based on recent feedback sessions.

In relation to student engagement, (and as detailed more thoroughly in section one) Futureworks encourages students from all schools to join the Student Reps team and attend monthly meetings to deliver feedback within their classes. From there, the notes taken from each meeting are delivered to the Head of Student Affairs and the School Committees to discuss further action required and to gather possible ideas to organise social events.

As a collective, the Student Rep team have felt that it can sometimes be difficult to get members of their course to give feedback. It was noted in our survey that students felt there should be more sessions where they had the opportunity to give anonymous feedback – which is possibly the reason why the Student Rep team sometimes have difficulty retrieving feedback from their peers face-to-face. We feel this point has been addressed and acted upon by the School of Art & Design through the organisation of in-class post-it-note feedback where students had the opportunity to write down their feelings about Futureworks anonymously.

Student engagement from the Schools of Sound & Music Production and Film, Television & Media has been lackluster in comparison to that from Art & Design, as evident from our internal student survey. We acknowledge that this is partially the responsibility of the students themselves to be willing to input feedback, however we believe it is imperative that all students have as equal representation as possible. This is not the case currently. We strongly wish for there to be more cohesion and communication between all three Schools: the implementation of the post-it-note feedback sessions for the School of Art & Design was very successful, and we highly encourage that this approach be

undertaken by members of staff of all three schools so that student feedback is balanced and regulated and does not favour one cohort of students over another.

### SECTION THREE: STUDENT OUTCOMES

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#### Positive Outcomes:

Overall, students feel well supported and prepared for life in the creative industry. It is evidently clear that Futureworks strives to prepare students for this through the teaching of core skills - content is consistently reviewed and adjusted according to the current industry standards and further informed by the Industry Advisory Group. Students are given the skills to build a professional portfolio they'll require when interviewing for job applications, and module assignments are constantly linked to industry workflows.

Students on the BAGA degree responded most positively to this section in our internal student survey, particularly praising the organisation of talks from outside companies and current industry professionals which have given them valuable insight into the industry. Many agreed that they are confident their course has encouraged professional growth and the skills taught are exceptionally relevant and provide a good choice of different career paths within the industry. Responses to our internal survey from students currently studying on the BAPP degree were mainly negative – they feel inadequately prepared for life in the creative industry after Futureworks. They noted that networking events such as the Bolton Film Festival are advertised and encouraged, however some students couldn't afford to attend or travel to this. There seems to have been a possible communication issue as Futureworks claims to have paid for students to attend. This sentiment is not shared by the other Film, TV & Media courses, who feel they are being well prepared by Futureworks. Students from the School of Sound & Music Production also feel they are being well prepared for the industry, though some students believe there should be more talks and opportunities geared towards the BAEP and BGIA courses, as many feel they are currently most suited to the BAMP course.

It is noted that one of Futureworks' strongest aspects is their numerous links to multiple companies across the UK, some of whom have offered opportunities for graduating students with many gaining jobs post-graduation. For example, second year BDAI students receive an assignment from a commercial animation house *Kilogramme*, in which they are tasked with pitching their project idea and portfolio to industry clients. This is a fantastic opportunity for BDAI students to receive feedback from professional employers and understand what clients are looking for in the creative industry. Most recently, Futureworks became both an *Unreal Engine Academic Partner* and a *Sony PlayStation Academic Partner* – this was received well by students who felt the links to these industry giants will benefit their education and provide them with opportunities not readily available to all universities.

Based on the most recent Graduate Outcomes Survey, most students entered paid work for an employer after completing their studies. The second highest result was graduates continuing to develop a professional portfolio, and there was a high majority of students that were working at a high-skilled marker. From this survey it's clear that a large number of graduate students were well-prepared for the creative industry as they have achieved great success and employment after completing their studies at Futureworks.



## Education Gains:

Each School across Futureworks has a clear structure that directs students towards their outcomes. The first year aims to introduce the core areas of the course and deliver the key foundational skills that will progress and be built upon across the three years of study. The second year continues this whilst additionally reflecting on the industry requirements. The third year focuses on getting students ready for life in the creative industry beyond Futureworks whilst also giving them more freedom to specialise in subject areas they are most comfortable in - allowing students to determine the best possible outcome for themselves. Most have agreed that they feel very pleased about the multiple career opportunities encouraged by tutors. In many courses, there is a large focus on portfolio building, networking and creating an Honours Project that will define and showcase the skills that the student has learnt during their study.

Many formats of assessment are utilised, encouraging students to practise a wide variety of skills which are essential within the creative industry:

- Portfolios allow students to gain presentation skills and individuality in their work.
- Presentations and pitches build upon communication and interpersonal skills.
- Group projects reinforce teamworking and organisation.
- Written essays bolster analytical academic writing, researching and referencing skills.
- Exams tackle critical thinking and problem solving in a time sensitive environment.

During the year, Futureworks invites a variety of guest speakers to discuss their personal experiences and give advice for aspiring students. The most recent speaker was Louise Andrew, the Head of Art at the highly acclaimed game co-development studio, *d3t*. One other notable speaker, Shaun Browne, visited Futureworks to speak to students about positive well-being and advice for personal happiness within the creative industry. These talks from guest lecturers and speakers are always well-received by students, who continue to find the insight and knowledge imparted to them interesting and invaluable. We hope that Futureworks continues to organise even more of these opportunities for students in the future.

We acknowledge that Futureworks attempts to encourage students to collaborate with other Schools, but this engagement is not mandatory. Students can request help for their personal projects through the Futureworks Community Discord server and are encouraged to share their work with other students through the recently established 'Open Feedback' sessions. Collaborating is a highly positive gain for creating connections between the three schools and making contacts for future projects. There is, however, little-to-no cross-course collaboration required as part of Futureworks modules; some students voiced that they wish this was implemented, others have taken it upon themselves to integrate this into their work themselves.

Futureworks demonstrates the gains of both its students and alumni alike through the promotion of their work - the achievements of the students are highly regarded and celebrated. Futureworks has a very active Social Media presence, particularly Instagram, where it is encouraged for students to share their coursework and personal projects online where they can be promoted through the official Futureworks channels. During Open Days, multiple examples of student work are shown throughout the day to celebrate the success of students and to inform and inspire potential students. The School

of Art & Design students have recently been given the opportunity to send their work to the Head of School to be either promoted through the Futureworks social media accounts or framed and displayed on campus. The School of Film, TV & Media students are often mentioned on the Instagram page regarding their current film productions. We find this to be very rewarding for students - this has a positive impact on building portfolios, gaining an audience and seeing appreciation for their work by their peers and students from across the entire institution. Many events have been organised to further celebrate the achievements of students, for example the School of Art & Design had a graduate show for students who missed out due to COVID, and the School of Sound & Music students are often given the opportunity to play at local venues in front of a live audience to celebrate their music successes – events which are always popular and promoted by Futureworks.

Students who go on to achieve success once completing their studies are praised highly by Futureworks and are credited as alumni across the campus. For example, the School of Art & Design has a graduate panel every year in which past students are invited to discuss their time after graduation and how they secured their career. It is encouraged for students to remain in touch with Futureworks - they have a LinkedIn account where they frequently post job opportunities related to the industry and celebrate the work of graduate students. In addition to this, a Creative Careers newsletter is emailed where they update students on alumni success and additional events that Futureworks is running. Futureworks further celebrates the successes of students through their website; each school has a student work page where examples of work can be viewed, and a student achievement page where current and aspiring students can read about past alumni and their time in Futureworks, passing on their experiences and advice. It has been the general opinion of students that they would like to see more updated examples of current student work on both the website and in the classrooms, but we acknowledge that this has been addressed by the Futureworks in recent School Committee meetings and improvements are in the pipeline.

To conclude, the overall student opinion of Futureworks is very positive, with some areas for improvement based on the feedback we collected, mainly from the School of Film, Television & Media. The vast majority of students feel very prepared for the industries that they aim for through both tutor encouragement and the opportunities provided. We highly commend Futureworks for their experienced and passionate tutors, excellent facilities and dedication to students' learning, independence and professional growth.