

1. Provider context

A University at the Centre of our Community: Strategic Environment and Impact

In 2021 Leeds Beckett University committed to the second phase of its strategic planning cycle, building on the first cycle from 2016-21. This evolutionary step increased our focus on local impact, expressed through our overarching aim:

To be recognised globally for the positive difference we make as an inclusive anchor with the people, organisations and diverse communities of the Leeds City Region.

Our role as a Leeds “anchor” shapes our outreach and educational portfolio, by providing courses that support the needs of our local community; underpins our focus on research and innovation where we are a national leader in Knowledge Transfer Partnerships that directly support the ambitions of local employers; and shapes our role as a responsible employer who seeks to recruit locally, to purchase substantially from local suppliers (increasing their contribution to the local economy) and act as a local leader in carbon reduction. We are increasingly linking our economic impact as a purchaser to the direct experience of our students, using procurement contracts to support the development of placement opportunities.

A study conducted for the University by London Economics, focusing on data collected for 2018/19, shows our overall economic impact on the UK economy as £1.43 billion, £820 million of which is directly attributable to our teaching and learning activities. The Local Government Association, in its latest review of Leeds City Council, cited the city’s Anchor work, which we lead, as being of high national significance.

A Stable and Inclusive Environment: Size and Shape of the University

Our academic portfolio is predominantly focused on a broad provision of full-time courses, with a growing number of higher and degree apprenticeships in areas which directly support both the needs of local employers and the professional needs of the region. We have significant relationships with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies with 286 of our courses carrying accreditation from 72 organisations.

Data provided to accompany the TEF outcomes workbook shows that the size of our overall student population has been stable between 2017 and 2021. But there have been changes to its composition (all quoted numbers are headcount and, except where otherwise stated, based on entrants only):

- A marginal reduction of 150 full-time first-degree numbers (-1%).
- But an 8.2% drop in full-time first-degree numbers as a percentage of total student numbers.
- A growth of 600 postgraduate taught numbers (+5.7%).
- A growth of 5.7% in postgraduate taught as a percentage of total student numbers.
- A slight growth of 5% in transnational education.
- Transnational education accounts for 15% of overall provision (based on overall student numbers, not entrants).
- FT undergraduate international student numbers have remained stable. postgraduate taught international student numbers have grown by 19.8%.
- Overall international numbers account for around 10% of the overall student body.

In terms of demography (all number headcount):

- New entrants’ tariff remains relatively consistent. There has been a slight rise in the proportion of entrants arriving with Access qualifications (4.5% or 260) with a similar fall in mid-range A level entrants (BCC/CDD and higher, a 5.7% decrease or 310). There has also been a slight

decrease in higher-tariff BTEC entrants, including those with a mix of BTEC and A level qualifications (3.3% or 180).

- The proportion of entrants who were eligible for free school meals has risen by 4.7% (260).
- Entrants from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 remain relatively constant at around 38% of the overall cohort.
- The ethnic mix of the University has shifted very little in overall balance with around 73% of the student population identifying as white.
- A similar picture emerges in terms of age on entry (around 86% under 21) and gender balance (52%/48% female/male).
- The number of students with a declared disability has risen slightly, from 10% to 13.7% with a corresponding drop of 3.3% for those declaring no disability.
- Numbers of entrants identified within the lowest two quintiles of the Associations Between Characteristics of Students (ABCS) measure have increased by 240 in the period, representing 31.5% of entrants in 2020/21.
- Similarly, entrants from TUNDRA quintiles 1 and 2 have risen slightly (2.6%) and represent 31.8% of entrants in the same period.
- 41.8% of entrants identify from socio-economic backgrounds of “intermediate occupations”, “routine and manual occupations” or “never worked or long-term unemployed”.
- 55% of our home undergraduate entry has a city/region home address and underpins a large commuter cohort.
- Our surveys suggest some 67% of our home undergraduate students undertake part-time work to sustain their studies.

In summary, the key characteristics of Leeds Beckett’s undergraduate student body are:

- economic hardship combined with a lack of family experience of higher education.
- a high proportion of commuting students engaged in part-time work alongside study.

These important aspects of our student demography have a direct impact on course identity and student engagement, and underpin our work on continuation, completion and progression, as subsequent discussion will indicate.

Part-time and Degree Apprenticeship Provision: Supporting Employers in our Region

At undergraduate level, Leeds Beckett University has always focused predominantly on the delivery of full-time courses. Where we have had part-time provision, this has largely been aimed at supporting the needs of regional employers who sought part-time “in company” provision for their staff and needed such provision to be accessible, both in terms of timetabling and locality.

The structure of our overall part-time provision (as expressed within the TEF “Size of Provision” workbook) is somewhat skewed by the legacy of a suite of *ab-initio* modern foreign language courses which operated in the early 2010s as part of a “languages for all” offer, aimed both at existing students and as evening-class provision for the local community. This largely operated on a module-by-module accretion basis and had, in many cases, very lengthy progression routes (acquisition of a terminal award not being a direct aim of most participants). The provision is now in the process of running out. Overall numbers are diminishing year-on-year as we now only provide support to those continuing students who require it.

Part-time new entrants on full degree courses have now, largely, been replaced by degree apprentices. DA provision has grown from a low base but is now developing strongly within the Schools of Built Environment, Engineering and Computing, Business and Health. This provision

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was subject to a full Ofsted inspection in November 2022, at which time the University was rated “good” overall, and in all 5 of the separate inspection categories. TEF metrics show performance against benchmark is improving strongly, and as expressed currently within our institutional Self-Assessment Report and Individual Learner Record returns, is at or above national benchmark levels in all areas. Our recent Ofsted report reflected that: “[m]anagers work well with employers to ensure that programmes meet the needs of the local, regional and national economy to provide and retain well-trained, well-qualified and competent employees.”

In addition to DAs, we have just under 100 part-time students, annually, who are registered within the University for awards that are made by professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Marketing. There are historical issues with the recording of the final award for these students within our student records system, and, thus, they do not always register as timely completions within the HESA return. This has a negative impact of around 14% in terms of continuation and completion for this category of students (all within the Business and Management subject area) but does not reflect the overall success in completion and progression for this cohort.

Developing a Supportive Environment: Academic Structure and Management

At the start of the 2016/17 academic year, we took the decision to re-focus academic activity within the University away from the existing faculty structure towards a more devolved school structure. Our nine academic schools are based on cognate subject mixes, ranging in size from under 1000 to nearly 4000 students:

- Leeds School of Arts
- Built Environment Engineering and Computing
- Leeds Business School
- Carnegie School of Education
- Events, Tourism and Hospitality Management
- Health
- Humanities and Social Sciences
- Leeds Law School
- Carnegie School of Sport

In the definitions used by level 2 of the Common Aggregated Hierarchy of subject definitions, some subject areas span more than one of these schools.

To underpin this structure, we created new academic leadership roles of head of subject and course director, both to emphasise the responsibilities and accountabilities of senior colleagues in the delivery of teaching and to better focus support for student learning. Heads of subject report directly to their dean of school and form an integral part of the senior leadership team at school level. Both heads of subject and course directors work together in facilitated network meetings across the University which share good practice and plan the management of wider educational challenges or opportunities.

The Impact of the Structure: Evaluation and Response

Within this devolved and collaborative academic structure, we coordinate monitoring and enhancement using key processes, informed by performance metrics, to drive academic development and enhancement.

- All courses are subject to annual monitoring and review which focuses both on standards (through external examiner and, often, PSRB engagement) and quality. We use a range of metrics which have evolved in line with (and now directly mirror) the OfS B3 thresholds and TEF benchmarks.
- Course directors lead the formulation of reports and action plans within our annual monitoring and review process, using the key TEF metrics (and related benchmarks at CAH Level 2) to evaluate course performance, alongside data which provides further reflection on the standards

of delivery (such as external examiner and PSRB reports). Use of TEF data at subject level allows for analysis of performance over four years, mitigating the impact of annual fluctuations in outcome.

- These reports support continuous action planning. Where a course is identified as falling significantly below expected benchmarked levels of performance, we ask for an enhanced action plan, which in turn supports further monitoring and discussion.
- TEF data are further used to inform our annual process to assure “good standing” at course level (which has replaced the longer periodic cycle of assurance monitoring). This process evaluates all courses on a basis like that used in annual monitoring, but which additionally includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of action planning and a longer-term view of the impact of actions.
- We take action where we believe a course is in danger of breaching baseline thresholds, is presenting a downward trajectory in performance over a sustained period or is raising any concerns from an external examiner or PSRB. Any report from external examiners which raise questions of standards or process are shared with the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) and the relevant dean of school, who is accountable for making a full response to the issue. Such responses inform the good standing process.
- Course-level reports are synthesised at school level and support the development of an Institutional Action Plan which is monitored by Academic Quality and Standards Committee and reported to Academic Board and the Board of Governors through an Academic Assurance Report, which is presented at each meeting.

Our Philosophy of Teaching and Learning: The Education Plan

The Education Plan (along with other plans which drive the outcomes set out in the overall University Strategy) is now in its second iteration (2021-26). The Education Plan embodies our academic philosophy, and aim “to be recognised globally as an outstanding and accessible university that supports its diverse student community to achieve excellent outcomes.”

This aim is expressed through four objectives:

- To create a flexible learning environment which supports all learners to enter highly-skilled employment.
- To develop teaching and learning alongside research and innovation, ensuring that we present a coherent academic environment with each aspect of our work supporting the other.
- To maintain a stimulating academic portfolio which attracts students of the highest calibre and maintains market share.
- To provide all of this within a supportive and collegiate academic culture, which builds confidence and trust between educators and students.

Our Education Plan also establishes the concepts of the Learning Pathway, the Student Support Framework and the Employability Implementation Framework.

- The Learning Pathway maps the journey our students take across the lifespan of their course and emphasises their development as independent learners and critical thinkers. Each level of study is seen as a stage in learning (a “step” on the pathway) with focus on increased support at the early stages of a course leading to increased independence.
- The Student Support Framework rests upon the consideration that a student requiring support should be able to approach anyone within our structure and be guided to the appropriate locus of support (in a managed fashion). We also firmly believe that support mechanisms should not

simply react to problems, but should, rather, seek to help our students mitigate them before they occur.

- The Employability Implementation Framework links closely with the Learning Pathway (which places emphasis on contextualisation of learning at level 5) and sets out, from the first days of an undergraduate course, to embed career-readiness in all students. A major consideration in this respect is to ensure that an understanding of employability is built into all aspects of learning and is not seen as an adjunct to a core curriculum.

Supporting Teaching Enhancement: Developing Excellent Academic Practice

At the outset of our strategic planning cycle for 2016-21, the University built on the foundations of an existing mechanism for Developing Excellent Academic Practice (DEAP) which had been implemented by our Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) for several years. This activity expanded from an annual conference to become a quarterly cycle of workshops with a summative, or plenary, conference each year, focusing on a single theme and providing opportunities for colleagues both to share good practice and to engage in discussion and debate over areas which raised particular challenges for them.

The first stages of this activity focused on the levels of the Learning Pathway, allowing for discussion to take place in tandem with the implementation of (and response to) the Education Plan. Once this cycle of activity had run its course, the annual DEAP activity has acted as a springboard for a number of pertinent themes, focused on the enhancement of learning and teaching, and providing opportunity for colleagues to share, and reflect upon, their practice. In more recent years, this activity has sat beside a “CLT Associates” programme which has provided an opportunity for fixed-term fractional secondments to colleagues in academic schools and professional services. Associates focus on project work with CLT (and supporting one another) leading to a series of outcomes, in the form of staff development and material for wider dissemination – both within the University and across the sector. Associates work on issues associated with the annual theme of DEAP, as well as addressing issues at school level, or within a particular aspect of provision, such as degree apprenticeship delivery.

Excellence at the Heart of the Curriculum: Our Approach to Educational Gain

The University’s approach to educational gain is to ensure that we are both systematic and purposeful in the educational and personal development of our students, over and above the knowledge that they acquire as a part of their degree course. At undergraduate level, this is represented (through the Learning Pathway) as supporting the development of our students from “receptors of information” to become independent thinkers who engage critically with their subject and are fully aware of the academic and professional contexts within which they work.

This underlying principle has informed course development and delivery since 2016, supporting course teams to design and deliver courses that empower our students to achieve:

- Subject knowledge and independent learning skills (academic and critical thinking development)
- Personal development and collaborative working skills (student confidence, communication, networking, and interpersonal skills)
- Professional development and accreditation (work readiness)

Our Education Plan embodies our philosophy that maximising educational gain for all our students requires coherent learning pathways that empower students to navigate a route into, through and beyond their course and into graduate employment. This approach fully engages with the consideration that students arrive at the early stages of their course from a wide variety of

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backgrounds and experiences and should be supported to make the best-possible progress to surpass the minimum standards expected of them.

With so many of our courses carrying PSRB accreditation, we are alive to the professional contexts within which our students learn, and so ensure that skills development is an integral part of our academic curriculum. We also support the concept of developing readiness for employment from the very outset of study, engaging new entrants in a Career-Readiness Survey that can support their personal development as well as enabling the University to ensure appropriate guidance is in place as our students progress through their courses.

We support the embedding of educational gain concepts within our courses with a suite of advice and guidance which empowers academic staff to develop their pedagogy. CLT delivers an extensive programme that provides opportunities to participate in L&T research and innovation, access tailored support and resources, engage in networks, gain formal teaching recognition and work on specific course enhancements. All activities and resources are directly related to the Educational Plan and support our approach to educational gain; for example, our Course Design Principles, Inclusive Assessment Guide and Taxonomy of Assessment Domains.

We also ensure all courses are fully inclusive by carrying out evidence-based interventions to make improvements for particular student groups. All course teams are required, annually, to use the institution's Inclusive Course Design Tool (ICDT) to systematically reflect on every aspect of their course and to identify any element that may disadvantage particular student groups. Where areas are identified, CLT works with course teams to make evidence-based interventions.

2. Student experience

Teaching and Learning as the Heart of the Student Experience

Our TEF metrics demonstrate that the University achieves typically very high outcomes in the measures used to evaluate the experience of our students, with some outstanding examples at subject level. As with many other providers, this is particularly demonstrable in years one and two of the reported outcomes (2019 and 2020) and, while the impact of Covid-19 affected performance in 2021 and 2022, this was very much in common with the overall higher education sector. Areas of particular challenge in the latter two reporting years were satisfaction with learning resources and evaluation of the student voice, and these will be discussed in greater detail below.

NSS outcomes are key performance measures for the effectiveness of our Education Plan and its implementation at course level. NSS data inform our annual monitoring and review process and support our annual strategic planning discussions with senior leadership teams within each of our schools. Courses with performance below benchmark (particularly where sustained over a period of time) are required to produce enhanced action plans and to report on their implementation through successive reporting cycles. Where we see performance above benchmark, this is actively disseminated through our enhancement activity in the form of workshops and presentations forming a part of our annual cycle of activity in support of the University's Developing Excellent Academic Practice programme.

A firm principle of our approach to the enhancement of our students' experience (and their educational gain) is that the fundamental foundation of that experience lies in the excellence of teaching and learning, emanating from excellent course design principles and supported by a focus on pedagogy and practice. We focus all enhancement activity within the core curriculum of each of our courses, and do not seek to supplement this curriculum through more generic provision. We recognise where course content is dictated and constrained by external factors (significantly,

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PSRB accreditation) and encourage course development teams to consider the context within which students learn (and are taught) as an important aspect of delivery.

The experience of part-time students at Leeds Beckett is often difficult to evaluate, where cohort sizes are very small, tending towards the over-weighting of responses that are neither positive nor negative (3, on the LIKERT scale of 5 utilised by NSS). We have recognised, however, that overall, part-time students have tended to feel less engaged with their courses than full-time students and have a more fragmented experience of teaching since their focus is often predominantly at module level. We have adopted this learning in the design of our degree apprenticeship provision, which is now our major part-time mode for undergraduate study. We expect to see our new approach bear fruit as that area of delivery expands, and largely replaces part-time degree provision.

The Teaching on my Course: the Foundation of Student Experience

The essence of the Learning Pathway is that courses should be developed to support the transitions students encounter at each level of learning, with the overall aim of developing their self-confidence and independence, alongside a sophisticated critical awareness of the educational environment they inhabit. Such an approach seeks to build a firm foundation for learning in the first stages of a course, thus enabling the development of independent learning and an understanding of the nature of self-directed research towards the end of the course. Approaches to teaching, and the support of learning, are integral to this approach.

Metrics for this area show that the University achieves typically very high outcomes with some outstanding examples at subject level. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was that, while the University showed a steady improvement in performance up to 2020 (the second year of reporting in this TEF cycle) there was a drop in performance in 2021 and 2022, broadly in line with the sector. Fluctuation in outcomes has been more marked in those areas that depend upon specialist space or practical facilities, or where there is extensive placement activity, as the table below indicates (we do not have reportable metrics for one subject for all years of the measures):

Teaching on my course	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Art	79.6%	82.7%	62%	83.1%	78.3%
Dance	93%	87.5%	84.2%	75%	77.9%
Drama	100%	96.9%	81.8%	N/A	N/A
Music	80.2%	81.3%	82.7%	75.3%	84.1%
Education	81.2%	71.4%	83.5%	77.2%	67.6%
Teacher Training	95.6%	90%	86.2%	78.6%	80.1%
Architecture	90.2%	87.5%	75.6%	84%	82.1%
Physiotherapy (Allied Health)	92.9%	94%	95.5%	94.6%	86.2%
Psychology	79.8%	80.4%	84.4%	80.5%	75.3%

The lockdown in 2020 had an immediate impact in areas where access to studio and workshop facilities was prohibited at a time where students were at an important stage in the preparation of summative assessment (although outcomes for the year show that measures put into place to mitigate the impact of lockdown ensured there was no adverse effect on achievement).

Although, during this time, students in clinical and STEM environments remained largely unrestricted in their access to specialist space, access to physical and specialist resources for those in non-clinical or professionally relevant subjects (such as fine art, film, dance and music) remained an issue well into 2020/21. Additionally, all placement activities became more challenging and stressful during the subsequent two years of study. During 2021 and 2022 it became apparent that

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students in general felt less positive about their time at University, despite the mitigation and levels of support offered over the period.

Subjects responded to these challenges in ways which were aimed at increasing the sense of community amongst our students, enhancing their engagement with their courses and building links to the outside world. These included:

- Opportunities for students at different levels to work together, students at the early stages of performing arts courses, for example, performing in the summative assessed work of final-year students.
- Involvement with industry professionals in project development and delivery (often leading to work experience and employment).
- Extensive engagement with external guest speakers.
- Innovative tools for student feedback which enabled real-time responses to curriculum delivery.
- Focusing on diversity within the curriculum, ensuring that emphasis was given to all voices, and supporting community and cohort identity.

Student feedback on many of these measures has been positive, a typical response from the architecture 2022 NSS survey being: "... the lecturers and tutors are very understanding of our situations and they are very happy to help. They've tried bringing in a lot of experienced people from the industry. I also liked that they b[r]ought in a student mentoring scheme."

In subjects where access to specialist space or materials was less of an issue, performance below benchmark is less easy to characterise, but still points towards a lowering of engagement and community:

Teaching on my course	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Economics	84.5%	78.7%	87.5%	71.1%	70%
Law	82.5%	73.8%	82.7%	81.2%	75.2%
Geography	84.9%	76.1%	82%	80.7%	83.7%

In some cases (geography and economics, for example) this may be as a result of relatively low cohort sizes and the inevitable impact in percentage terms of changes in viewpoint of relatively small numbers of students. Law, however, which can be deemed significant in cohort numbers (600 across the four years in question) shows that 3 years of performance above benchmark can swiftly be undermined by two years of more challenging outcomes. Colleagues teaching on law courses are alive to these issues and have introduced a number of measures to ensure the best possible support for students. These include:

- Immersive learning supported by specialist space and tutors.
- Free access to Oxford University Press' Law Trove service.
- Introduction of a new course structure at level 4 in September 2022 designed to increase deeper engagement and build in time for students to synthesise and process learning.
- Introduction of a standardised workbook template across all undergraduate modules, incorporating seminar instructions. The consistency supports intuitive navigation around the resources which are available on the VLE.

Developments have also focused on the delivery of teaching to retain the best aspects of the flexibility that the move to more online delivery facilitated:

- Timetabling includes all aspects of teaching, including pre-recorded lectures to support time planning.
- Sustained delivery of pre-recorded lectures to support inclusive flexibility in learning.
- Development of large-group sessions to build module community and act as a bridge between lectures and seminars.
- Focus on seminars as a safe space for discussion, questioning and confidence building.
- Provision of “drop-in” sessions to support discussion of issues relating to learning.
- Enhancement of academic delivery with practical modules that simulate the workplace and support the development of graduate skills.
- Practical support and guidance for course teams working on major modifications to course design.
- Development of an online journal.
- Purchase of artefacts to support “object based” learning.

Students have responded well to these measures, and to the support provided by the subject team during the Covid-19 pandemic, one NSS 2022 response saying that: “[m]y course specifically handled COVID well; lecturers uploaded newly recorded lectures each week, we had extra sessions put on our timetable to supplement our virtual learning experience, and our library put on ‘virtual study cafe’ sessions for students who found it useful to study with other people.”

Across the past four years, external examiners have responded very positively to the teaching environment of the University, the innovative and creative approaches to learning and teaching being praised, as well as the range of authentic assessments which benefit graduates applying for roles in their chosen industry

Assessment and Feedback: Flexibility and Inclusivity

Assessment (and its related feedback) is always an active area for development and debate across the University. In 2020, courses had to respond, very swiftly, to the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic and consequent lockdowns, and this had a direct impact upon assessment strategies. This has, in many areas, signalled a reassessment of assessment strategies and approaches, some changes to assessment patterns becoming consolidated within particular courses. However, as the subsequent discussion of continuation will outline, the University still feels a need to consider more widely the impact of failure at modular level on a student, particularly at the start of their course, and ways in which this may be responded to in a way that goes beyond simply repeating work (or granting an extension to a published deadline, where mitigation is sought in advance).

Inclusive practice is a core part of the Education Plan and has been a prioritised workstream for several years. It is now a key course design principle with supporting inclusive assessment and practice guidance and new resource pages. Pan-university academic educational development workshops and events have explored inclusive assessment and practice in depth. In addition, there has been a raft of collaborative activity focussing on ensuring that our curriculum is as inclusive as possible and embraces a global dimension that supports all our students to enhance their multicultural awareness.

Metrics within the area of assessment and feedback clearly demonstrate that the University typically achieves very high outcomes in this area. We have been consistent in our achievement of benchmark at institutional level, with particularly pleasing outcomes in 2020 and 2021.

At subject level, our overall outcomes against benchmark show some challenges within architecture, biosciences and sport and exercise sciences

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However, these present a more mixed picture across recent years and taking subject splits into account (with some smaller subject areas not reportable in some years):

Assessment and Feedback	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Architecture	77.3%	70.3%	67.7%	67.6%	66.3%
Building	72.9%	59.7%	60.6%	59.9%	62.1%
Planning	67.5%	N/A	69.2%	N/A	77.1%
Biosciences	N/A	65%	64.3%	N/A	N/A
Sport and Exercise Sciences	65.6%	74.2%	73.2%	67%	70.8%

Outcomes indicate that access to specialist facilities, and a higher propensity towards online provision, during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic had a detrimental impact upon student satisfaction, although student outcomes for the period would indicate that we successfully mitigated these aspects of students' experience. As one architecture student reflected in 2021: "it is tough to complete work when there are time restrictions or space restrictions in facilities such as broadcasting place's studios for architects. Also, the resources for architects outside studio are limited and it would be useful to have more accessibility to computer resources for portfolios. With the remote access for architecture students, although it is a good alternative, it is not efficient due to the slow interface."

Strong performance has been seen from:

- Business and Management
- Performing Arts
- Computing
- Engineering
- History
- English
- Health and Social Care
- Politics
- Sociology
- Medical Sciences
- Nursing and Midwifery
- Psychology

Examples of subject and course-based initiatives include:

- Developing level 5 modules to focus on real-world processes and reports.
- Development of specific forms of assessment which support creative and critical thinking.
- A move from written to oral assessment with a focus on the job interview.
- Increased use of online examination and testing, some of which provides immediate feedback in formative tasks.
- Development of feedback exhibitions to improve student belonging.

NSS student responses to the ways in which courses adapted during Covid-19 have been largely positive, as one history student reflected in 2021: "[t]he way which the course/university has adapted to the changes needed to be made due to the COVID-19 pandemic were well made and clear. The staff have always been available for any help and to answer any questions I may have had. The course has engaging content and assignments."

All external examiners are asked to respond specifically to questions relating to the standards of assessment at the University, both in terms of the setting of assessment briefs, and their marking. Responses for the past three years have indicated very high levels of satisfaction and assurance in this area:

Percentage of Examiners confirming positive response	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
The threshold academic standards set for our modules/awards are appropriate and achieved by students, meet the applicable national academic standards	100.0%	100.0%	99.8%*	100.0%
Students awarded qualifications have had the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold that are reasonably comparable with similar courses or subjects in other UK institutions	100.0%	99.8%^	100.0%	100.0%
The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are reliable, rigorous and fairly conducted	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

* Negative Report Question for one course. Full Response and Action plan provided to Examiner.

^ Negative report Question related to one Module. The matter was resolved satisfactorily with the External's agreement.

Typically, external examiner feedback has focused upon the constructive and detailed feedback and feedforward provided by staff. They recognise that staff are very aware of students' needs and saw this as helpful in supporting student progression.

Academic Support: Structured and Timely

At University level, we have a clear and structured approach to ensuring students have multiple options to develop academically, both to support their academic outcomes and to feed into their work-readiness. In line with our Learning Pathway, we aim to support students to become independent learners and critical thinkers by scaffolding support as they move through the course, with increased opportunity for independent research in their final year. Through the Student Support framework, we place strong emphasis on module and course teams as the "front line" of support, with our academic adviser network forming the second line of more general advice at course and subject level (and providing a space where more general issues around teaching and learning can be discussed). Academic advisers are allocated to a specific group of students and remain with them over a sustained period. Our Centre for Learning and Teaching provides support for academic advisers in the form of initial online training and discussion fora to help share ideas and raise issues.

Course teams work in partnership with Library Academic Support to embed specialist academic skills teaching and online content into our courses. This is tailored to cohort needs, subject and level and aligned with the requirements of specific module assignments. Customised guidance on topics such as finding information, critical thinking and academic writing is therefore available to all courses (474 sessions in 2021-22 and 170 sessions already arranged for 2022-23 by the beginning of November).

This guidance and instruction is supported by a series of Skills for Learning open workshops (3202 student bookings in 2021-22), website guidance, one-to-one appointments (498 in 2021-22) and online academic skills modules (6,613 student users in 2021-22). Feedback for the online modules is consistently positive, with students marking them at an average of 4.5/5 for usefulness in the 2021-22 Library User's survey, and particularly praising their clear exposition of what is required for continuing academic development at particular levels. The Students' Union also praised the modules for inclusivity, with students able to revisit core guidance throughout their studies, while

using quizzes and other exercises to test their understanding before applying it in their assignments. These self-selected opportunities allow students to further develop a skills area for personal development, to support their academic outcomes or with a view to their future employability.

Metrics in the area of academic support demonstrate that Leeds Beckett typically achieves very high outcomes for students at institutional level, with particularly strong results in 2020 and 2021 and some outstanding examples at subject level. We have sustained performance against benchmark during the period of the pandemic, reflecting the sustained effort the University engaged in to provide support and reassurance to our students at this time. This extended towards the introduction of “no-detriment” amendments to our Academic Regulations, to reflect the impact of the sudden changes to delivery upon students across all levels of study, the widespread implementation of mitigation arrangements for all students in 2020 and 2021, and the introduction of a Digital Access Fund, to supplement the Student Hardship Fund and with a specific focus on students who faced challenges in engaging with online provision.

At subject level, where particular challenges are apparent, we see a typical mix of the impact of access to specialist facilities having a particular effect on student satisfaction (and effect, again, belied by actual outcomes during the period) alongside issues with placement activity. In other areas, results fluctuate more between survey years with some particular drops in performance having a negative impact that overweighs stronger performance in other years. In all cases, these reductions in outcome have been picked up as a part of our annual monitoring and review processes and have led to increased action planning (and the scrutiny of action planning at both school and university level).

Academic Support	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Creative Art and Design	85.6%	88%	72.2%	87.1%	76.3%
Education	73.1%	68.2%	78.6%	67.3%	59.8%
Teacher Training	94.1%	87.8%	88.4%	79.3%	76.2%
Materials and Technology	91.6%	80%	80.1%	68.7%	82.5%
Economics	84.1%	72.3%	76.7%	50.7%	55.8%
Law	78.6%	67.1%	71.3%	69.1%	65.4%
Sport and Exercise Sciences	77.8%	82.4%	83.6%	71.6%	71.6%

The overall impact of such connected interventions is to grow student understanding of core academic concepts in a meaningful way, directly tied to the requirements of their courses and linked to specific assignments to encourage engagement, but with more general support also available as required. The outcome is to enhance academic attainment, confidence and skills, as well as other priorities such as employability and progression.

The elective online academic skills modules used to support transition, progression and academic development across all student levels are:

- *Study Ready* is a short pre-arrival module for UK-based students to prepare for HE study.
- The *International Students' Academic Introduction* module is a new intervention to orientate new international students to UK academic conventions pre-arrival.
- *Study Smart* supports all new students in their first year with the transition to university study, with a customised version available to support apprentices.
- *Second Year Study Smart* supports students with the transition to second year, with a focus on building on feedback and independent learning.

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- *Final Year Study Smart* supports the transition to third year, and in particular work on final year projects and dissertations.
- *Study On* is the standard Library, IT and key academic skills induction for new taught postgraduate students.
- *Academic Integrity* is a short module and quiz on academic integrity, good academic practices and referencing.

Examples of course-based initiatives include:

- The development of modules which help to discuss and build resilience.
- Course based clubs and societies, such as a Journal Club.
- Work on developing online communities in MS Teams.
- Other initiatives to use software platforms to increase inter-student communication.

Students have responded positively to the availability and approachability of staff throughout the years where the Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on physical resources and contact time, as one Sports student reflected in 2019: “staff are always friendly and enthusiastic about the topic being taught which is really good and helps aid engagement. They always offer opportunities to speak one-on-one if needed.”

External examiners have highlighted the commitment, dedication and pastoral support shown by staff at the University to ensure students have been kept aware of all situations through the pandemic period and ensuring that progress and awards have been achieved with rigor and robustness.

Learning Resources: Accessible and Consistent

The University’s teaching estate is spread between two campuses, one within the heart of the City of Leeds (where six of our nine schools are located) and one (with extensive student accommodation) in the suburb of Headingley, providing a home for the Carnegie Schools of Sport and Education, and our School of Events, Tourism and Hospitality Management. On each location, our philosophy in allocating space to our schools is to create an academic “home” for each, with an identifiable sense of place for students in that school. This is a continuing endeavour, which is reaching the end of its first phase in 2024. We have dedicated library provision on both sites.

As the Covid-19 pandemic was having greatest impact across the UK, the University was in the most significant stages of two major developments in teaching and research space (one on each campus), an investment of over £90 million which has provided a new teaching and research building for the Carnegie School of Sport and, in the heart of Leeds, a new home for the Leeds School of Arts, including performance and cinema space which will become an important resource for the arts community of the City. Both buildings came into use towards the end of the periods of lockdown and so, unfortunately, were not completely available to students in those schools completing their NSS surveys in 2021 and 2022.

Library buildings are open 24/7 for the majority of the year, providing access to a variety of study spaces and a wide range of physical learning resources, as well as to IT, including laptop loans, and in-person services, academic skills workshops and specialist support for disabled students. Library and IT support is available 24/7 during term time from our Advice Service, with phone and chat options available through the night. Library Services take a digital-first approach to the provision of learning resources, as evidenced in our Information Resources Strategy, and provide access to electronic reading lists to link students directly to the resources they require. Academic librarians work closely with course teams to ensure that students have access to and can exploit

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good quality learning resources and that they develop their academic and research skills in order to succeed academically.

Restrictions in access to library buildings resulting from the pandemic had a significant impact on our students. Enabling access to electronic learning resources and eBooks was a priority during this time and the University allocated additional funding for eBooks to support students. Additionally, library advice and support was delivered online during the pandemic, including skills webinars, one-to-one appointments and specialist advice. While online support for these services remains in place, it has now been fully supplemented by face-to-face options to enable greater student choice.

As discussed above, access to IT devices was an issue for some students during the pandemic, particularly those from low-income households. In response to this, the University provided additional funding, through a Digital Access Fund (managed by our Student Hardship Fund team in Student Services), to support the purchase of suitable equipment by students. This was managed in collaboration with an existing University supplier, so we could be sure that students were purchasing suitable devices (particularly where courses required specialist software). We did this by setting up a voucher scheme with the supplier, so students did not receive the cash directly. If there were delays with delivery from the supplier, we reimbursed students on the production of a receipt for a qualifying device. In 2020/21 we made awards to 781 students, spending £390,500. As students began to return to campus in 2021/22, we saw demand drop and made awards totalling £51,472 to 106 students. Having responded to this specific need during the pandemic, this issue is now addressed through the Hardship Fund, which has the benefit of supporting students financially more broadly, as well as enabling them to select and buy a device that best suits their specific requirements. The Hardship Fund was doubled in 2022/23, to just over £3m, as part of our response to the cost-of-living crisis.

Metrics in the area of Learning Resources show that our students' satisfaction with resources is very high and was consistently well above benchmark prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, with some outstanding examples at subject level. Student anxiety at the time of the pandemic, combined with access to specialist resources in non-clinical or professionally-accredited environments, played some part in a lowering satisfaction in more recent years. This was even evident in those areas where we exceed benchmarks, where a move to a greater proportion of online teaching and learning led to anxiety over IT resources:

Learning Resources	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Business and management	91.2%	90.5%	92.7%	75.2%	81.5%
History	87.7%	93.3%	89.8%	71.8%	83.8%
Media Communications Culture	84.8%	93.9%	88.3%	74.6%	86.6%
Journalism	89.7%	93.8%	100%	85.9%	88.9%
Law	93.4%	84%	87.2%	76%	84.2%
Geography	99.1%	97%	82.9%	75.8%	97%

In all cases, this has seen a rise in the most recent results (reflecting the experience of these students at levels 4 and 5, but providing reassurance that matters are settling down more as practice returns to pre-pandemic approaches and becomes more consolidated).

Where we saw significant issues was, again, in those areas where practical or specialist space remained unavailable for large proportions of time or where placement activity was affected. Analysis of results over time suggest that these are not systemic issues and that satisfaction levels

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will build once those completing the NSS have had full access to facilities during their entire course (we do not have reportable metrics in all subject areas for some years):

Learning Resources	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Fine Art	85.2%	91.5%	82.7%	75.3%	79.8%
Filmmaking	80.6%	80.7%	87.1%	57.1%	70.2%
Dance	96.9%	97.2%	88.1%	86.1%	93.9%
Performing Arts/Performance	100%	100%	96.7%	89.7%	74.4%
Education Studies	86.5%	84.4%	87.5%	65.7%	58.5%
Primary Ed (QTS)	93.8%	93.3%	89.9%	70.2%	79.8%
Health and Social Care (Health Studies)	N/A	N/A	89.3%	72.6%	72.4%
Sociology	89.8%	92.7%	88.9%	58.0%	73.1%
Architecture	91.2%	87.3%	83.3%	50.7%	67.4%

Again, however, this was by no means a universal issue, as this comment from a music production student reflected in NSS 2020: “[p]lenty of facilities including necessary software. Plenty of equipment available to hire at the help desk.” Similarly, from this architectural technology student, the same year: “[t]he facilities made available are of a high level which has helped me advance my learning and gain a better-quality education and allow me to explore different learning methods and software.”

Learning Resources and Part-time Students and Apprentices

The Library’s digital-first approach to the provision of learning resources is of particular benefit to part-time students and apprentices (alongside the availability of 24/7 library access and support). Part-time students are often studying outside core hours and away from campus, so our flexible approach allows them to engage with and exploit services when needed. As well as 24/7 access for most of the year, our library buildings remain open long hours during holiday periods such as over the Christmas vacation. In addition, a range of online support is available for students to support their learning, including self-paced online academic skills modules and interactive webinars which are recorded for students unable to attend at the time. One-to-one appointments are available both virtually and in person with academic skills tutors and academic librarians and are arranged at time to suit the student.

The Student Voice: Structured and Responsive

The University maintains a close working relationship with our Students’ Union (SU), with whom we share the co-ordination of student representation and feedback at course level and beyond. The SU oversees the appointment and training of course and school student representatives who attend course committees and school fora, which are held periodically (usually three per year). We currently have just over 960 representatives at course and school level; additionally, the SU has instituted the part-time paid role of School Academic Representation Assistant, to provide school-level support to representation and community-building activity in a sustained manner. Course committees are chaired by the course director while school fora are chaired by a nominated student representative, and attended by the dean, most usually with the Senior Leadership Team (generally consisting of heads of subject and senior administrative managers).

Our principle, in responding to feedback from our students, is to address issues as locally as possible, in the first instance, using module leaders and course directors as the primary locus of response. More widespread issues can be raised within course committees or through School Fora, from which running action logs are kept and reported periodically to Academic Quality and

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Standards Committee. These logs, in their turn, inform the University's action planning, which responds to more general, or systemic, issues, such as changes to the Academic Regulations.

Senior leaders from the University meet regularly with SU officers and senior staff in one-to-one meetings. Additionally, we hold periodic meetings of the Students' Union (and) Senior Management Liaison Group (SUSMLG), which is chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor: Academic and includes senior representatives from student-facing professional services. In recent years, SUSMLG has become more project oriented, focusing particularly on supporting the achievement of SU officers' objectives for the year.

Students' Union officers (usually the President and Vice President for Education) are full governors of the University, as well as full members of Academic Board and Academic Quality and Standards Committee. A report from the Students' Union is a standing item on the agendas of all these bodies and forms an important part of our regular discussion around the lives of our students (both within the University and, more widely, across the Leeds community). A recent example of the ways in which this level of engagement has influenced University policy is the Board of Governors' approval of a proposal from the Vice Chancellor to provide immediate support to students who are concerned about the current cost-of-living crisis. This has seen a subsidy to ensure that those rents we control do not rise in line with inflation (hedging issues around fuel costs), a doubling of the Student Hardship Fund, and provision of food options in University catering ensuring that everyone can have access to two meals a day at the cost of £2.

Metrics in the area of the Student Voice indicate that the University has typically very high outcomes, with some outstanding examples at subject level. In a large number of cases little can be demonstrated in terms of systemic issues, despite some reduction in satisfaction around the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, which is taking a little while to recover (as students still completing the survey have still had a hiatus in their experience of teaching and learning). Areas where we see some challenge in reaching benchmark are typical in their relationship to specialist space and/or placement activity (we do not have reportable outcomes for all areas for all years included in the overall measures):

Student Voice	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Creative Arts and design	71.2%	76.1%	56.8%	75.3%	58.8%
Education	71.0%	61.5%	78.3%	64.0%	52.1%
Teaching	84.6%	80.7%	78.9%	66.3%	66.4%
Materials and Technology	83.2%	69.7%	72.5%	49.5%	68.3%
Architecture	81.8%	68.8%	69.1%	69.3%	65.0%
Biosciences	N/A	70.0%	83.3%	N/A	N/A
Medical Sciences	N/A	N/A	N/A	67.1%	56.3%

Where we have exceeded benchmark overall, a similar pattern of satisfaction emerges:

Student Voice	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Business Studies	65.4%	74.4%	77.2%	66.2%	62.8%
Management Studies	81.0%	54.9%	56.2%	66.4%	51.1%
Computing	80.7%	78.3%	76.8%	73.6%	84.9%
English	74.5%	79.8%	66.9%	73.6%	73.1%
History	79.8%	94.8%	89.7%	83.3%	86.5%
Media Studies	76.3%	84.7%	81.1%	68.5%	74.4%

Student Voice	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Journalism	83.0%	82.2%	90.7%	90.8%	73.8%
Politics	79.1%	83.3%	68.7%	73.3%	75.5%
Mental Health Nursing	81.2%	89.6%	56.7%	55.6%	55.1%
Psychology	81.8%	78.3%	79.9%	73.9%	58.6%

By and large, these are areas which suffered less in terms of access to specialist space and facilities, and where course teams were able to engage with students effectively within a virtual teaching environment.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, course teams rose magnificently to the task of completely re-shaping their academic delivery to accommodate new ways of teaching, learning and assessment. At the same time, the University worked clearly and consistently in ensuring we engaged with our students, with regular communications which responded to issues emerging, either through the Students' Union, or directly (via email or social media, or through our representation systems). One measure which we reflected upon which demonstrates the effectiveness of this communication is that the level of complaints across the University remained steady over the course of the pandemic with very few issues directly relating to the Covid-19 situation itself.

Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Number of complaints	40	48	39

Between March and the end of the academic year in July 2020, we received 16 complaints relating to Covid-19. Most were resolved directly by Schools and a small number were referred for formal investigation. A streamlined version of the Student Complaints Procedure was developed prior to the March lockdown in anticipation of complaints related to measures taken by the University in response to Covid-19.

Many NSS comments reflect the positive learning environment of the University, and the willingness of staff to help with issues as they emerge, as this adult nursing student reflected in 2022: "... university staff are generally very easy to contact and are supportive of students, and try to assist students to achieve their best. Student wellbeing comes first [...]. Staff have tried their best to get us through the course, despite the challenging circumstances the pandemic caused."

3. Student Outcomes

Supporting Excellence through the Curriculum

TEF metrics relating to student outcomes show that the University achieves typically very high outcomes in all areas except completion, which will be discussed in more detail below. We have particularly strong outcomes in the progression of our students to a graduate outcome, the movement in timescale of the Graduate Outcomes Survey demonstrating our long-held belief that many of our graduates take a little time to confidently enter the graduate labour market and to flourish professionally. Outcomes from the Longitudinal Education Outcomes survey also support this view.

Continuation and Completion: Consistent Engagement and Activity

We very much regard continuation and completion as closely inter-related matters, so will discuss them here together. We have held continuation after the first year of study, in particular, as a key indicator of educational quality in both phases of the current strategic planning cycle, as can be evidenced by the gradual, but steady, improvement in outcomes to a level where we have now

exceeded benchmark. It is, however, without doubt that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis, is yet to be fully realised in this area.

Our approach to supporting our students to continue through their courses effectively and to complete them in a timely manner, is an essential element of the Learning Pathway and Student Support Framework, discussed at the beginning of this submission, and further in this section.

Continuation:

The University has maintained a particular focus on continuation for the entire period of the current strategic planning cycles, continuation being a key performance indicator in both stages of the Education Plan. Over this period, we have seen a steady improvement in overall continuation, subject to some fluctuation at subject level (and with some subjects demonstrating consistent challenges, in which case they have been asked to produce a specific action plan, through the annual monitoring and review process, and subject to enhanced monitoring).

In all cases, subjects have met the overall TEF benchmark in at least one year, and generally seen increased performance year-on-year, with more fluctuation where cohort sizes are relatively small.

Continuation	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	Benchmark
Business and Management	84.0%	88.0%	92.0%	89.8%
Performing Arts	85.0%	81.0%	89.0%	89.0%
History	87.0%	93.0%	97.0%	92.5%
Law	81.0%	87.0%	92.0%	91.8%
Politics	86.0%	95.0%	90.0%	92.5%
Sociology	83.0%	78.0%	90.0%	90.0%
Geography	94.0%	87.0%	98.0%	94.9%
Architecture	86.0%	84.0%	91.0%	89.0%
Sport and Exercise Science	83.0%	89.0%	88.0%	87.6%

There are two sets of separate issues which can contribute to non-continuation.

- In-year withdrawal - students who leave us during the year due to personal circumstances.
- Academic failure - including partial progression and trailing of reassessment.

In-Year Withdrawal

In-year withdrawal has fluctuated slightly over the last three years (interestingly, being at its lowest at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic), numbers have remained more even than percentages, due to varying overall cohort sizes:

2019-20		2020-21		2021-22	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
394	6.8	316	5.8	390	7.8

Of the 7.8% who withdrew during the year 2021-22, it is worth noting the top reasons given for withdrawing (gained from around 50% of the students who answer the question). These are:

1. Health
2. Chose the wrong course
3. Other personal reason
4. Gone into employment

The University is consistently supportive to students who raise health issues during their course, and we introduced a range of enhancements to process (and additional regulatory support) during the Covid-19 pandemic, with online reporting and a lowering of evidence thresholds for support. At

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the time of the major period of lock-down, in 2019 and 2020, we enabled mitigation for entire cohorts of students, removing the need for self-reporting, and this was shown to have a positive impact on both withdrawal and failure.

With respect to the advice and guidance provided by applicants, we take seriously our commitments to the requirements of the Competition and Marketing Authority and are scrupulous in ensuring the most accurate information is always available in a timely manner. Additionally, and particularly in subjects where personal aptitude is as important as academic ability (in the School of Arts, for example) Schools have introduced additional aspects to open and visit days, as well as such enhancements as interviews as a part of the selection process.

There is a strong financial element to reasons 3 and 4 and we would expect financial factors to play an increasing part in such decisions over the coming year. This has, in part, prompted the measures the University has recently taken to alleviate some aspects of the cost-of-living crisis for our students (as outlined above) and we remain in close collaboration with our Students' Union as to other measures which may help to support our students through this difficult time.

We also know, through our work in support of the Access and Participation Plan, that continuation is variable dependent on the circumstances of individual students. Students coming to University from lower Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) categories along with ethnicity and care background demonstrate discernible differences on evaluation with those in category 3-5. These are specific areas of analysis and redress to which we are committed through our Access and Participation Plan for 2020-25.

Academic Failure

The notion of transition is central to the undergraduate experience. We recruit students from a very wide range of educational backgrounds, with only around 9% having a profile entirely dependent on A levels. Understanding the experiences of our students prior to University and providing the appropriate support to them is at the core of our work.

The emphasis we maintain through the Learning Pathway (and which is crucial to supporting continuation) is on the management of the transition into higher education and through the first year/level of study. In this respect, successful induction is indicated by continuation into the next level of study, and not before.

This takes time to develop. We began our journey in 2017 with a 'translation exercise' which allowed courses to make minor modifications to focus upon support at level 4, and to think about ways in which immersive induction might better support students. Since then, through the Developing Excellent Academic Practice (DEAP) programme, we have widened understanding of the concepts, focusing in later stages upon contextualisation (at level 5) and independence (at level 6). Alongside work in individual projects and innovations, course development and modification has enabled greater engagement with the concepts of the learning pathway.

Our learning from the development of the Access and Participation Plan has been that the concept of the pathway needs extending, back into students' experiences at school, to level 2 (GCSE) and 3 (A level, BTEC and equivalent qualifications) and forward into their first years of employment and the development of a career pathway. In each instance, though, the question remains the same: "how does the individual student learner understand the next steps along the pathway and the ways in which their confidence needs to develop to engage with learning at that level (and how best can we support them)?"

This work has been supported through discussion within our quarterly Developing Excellent Academic Practice Fora, and through individual projects funded by the Centre for Learning and Teaching. It has also been the focus of research within our Centre for Learning and Teaching. We have also established reports which indicate the numbers of students passing assessments at their first attempt, which are used to aid the diagnostic analysis and discussion of performance in our annual monitoring process.

Examples of initiatives at course level which have focused on this development are:

- Introduction of measures, operating over and above taught sessions, to help students consolidate learning and access additional support. Including the opportunity to participate in social events and, in some areas, residential.
- Introduction of a mentoring scheme whereby Level 4 and 5 students are partnered with Level 6 students.
- Development of more detailed and extended induction programmes to support students in transition to Level 4 study with a focus on improving student engagement with the course team and building relationships with academic advisers.
- Trials using a proportion of module assessment to promote engagement. First-year students are allotted a small amount of the overall mark within selected modules to reflect both attendance and preparedness (via active engagement in seminar discussion).
- Proliferation of diagnostic and/or formative assessment early in the first semester to lead into formal summative assessment.

Completion

The University recognises the complex relationship between continuation and completion, which remains a challenge which we continue to confront, but a challenge which takes some time to work through the system. It is evident that improving continuation will, itself, have a positive impact upon completion, and our most recent outcomes would indicate this to be the case, seeing an improvement of 8.6% for 2019/20 entrants, up to 80.2% and only 0.8% below benchmark.

However, continuation outcomes include those students who do not progress within their courses but repeat (wholly or in part) their current level, and it is amongst those students where we see our most significant challenges in terms of retention. Over the period of the TEF metrics, students who undertook a full repeat year had lower completion rates (52.6%) than students who either repeated part of a year (72.7%) or did not repeat (82.5%). Students who did not complete were more likely to have repeated some of their study (25% repeated) compared to those with positive completion outcomes (12% repeated). Repeat rates overall have been declining.

This impact is heightened where students repeat study at level 4, the impact of repeating lessening dramatically at later levels of study:

First enrolled	2013	2014	2015	2016
L4 repeaters: completion	46.1%	49.0%	45.8%	44.9%
L5 repeaters: completion	81.3%	77.5%	74.5%	75.6%
L6 repeaters: completion	91.6%	94.1%	92.7%	92.6%

The reasons behind non-completion are very similar to those behind withdrawal and non-continuation. However, over the period covered by the TEF metrics, the proportion of non-completions through academic failure has decreased by 7.3% (from 43.1% over all non-completions to 35.8%). Over the same period, non-completion due to other, non-academic, reasons has increased by 4.6%, with 6% leaving the University to go into employment. Non-

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completion due to non-academic reasons accounts for around 500 students each year (9% of total headcount), with a further 200 or so being classed as “dormant” and subsequently withdrawn from our records.

First enrolled	2013		2014		2015		2016	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Academic	502	8.6%	504	8.0%	459	7.6%	377	7.0%
Other withdrawn	435	7.5%	510	8.1%	538	8.9%	486	9.0%
Suspended/dormant	227	3.9%	215	3.4%	245	4.0%	190	3.5%
Continue or qualify	4,654	80.0%	5,049	80.4%	4,808	79.5%	4,329	80.4%

Since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have dealt with a significant number of requests for mitigation, based on circumstances which have had a detrimental impact upon a student's performance, with 26,246 requests from 11,230 students in 2020/21. We have already responded to this growth in concern by streamlining the process for dealing with such requests through the introduction of an on-line system, which also enables frequent reporting of their volume. This work continues to better understand responses to such requests which might go beyond the simple deferral of a submission deadline, or opportunity to repeat work without penalty, and to adapt our regulatory approach to ensure students in real difficulty receive appropriate support in a timely manner.

Work which is also already underway in ensuring that course development and delivery is increasingly aware of the transitions students experience throughout their courses will continue to have a positive impact upon course completion. At the same time, we have sought to use entry profiles to enable us to best understand the levels of challenge that students will face in their academic pathways through the University.

At course level, work has focused on engagement and the development of our academic community:

- In Business and Management, all students are now timetabled in cohorts, which has helped build relationships between students and improved the sense of course community so students feel more connected and likely to stay and support one another to be successful. Level leaders have been appointed in some courses to look after and take responsibility and ownership for the cohort to track them, understand their needs and support them.
- While we continue to develop a University-wide solution, schools have implemented their own approaches, with rapid response from course teams and consequent planning between course directors, level leaders and module leaders.
- Accounting and Finance have refigured academic advisor hours and created an engagement team who reach out to students who are not attending regularly to see if they need any help or support so our systems are proactive rather than reactive often when it is too late. This has informed developments more widely across the Business School.
- Business and Management have introduced a semester-long module at each level so that the tutor could stay in touch with the group throughout their studies again enhancing a feeling of belonging. The module also provides peer mentoring, resilience workshops and study skills. This, in turn, has led to a teaching excellence project bid to explore 'From A to B-Longing: Feedback Exhibitions to Map and Improve Students' Journey Towards Belonging'. This research will help academic teams/subject groups gain a deeper understanding about how students feel, think and behave when it comes to adapting to the challenges of being at

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university and draws together the expertise of academics, professional services, our students and the Students' Union involved in this.

More widely, our course development teams, in focusing their work in the later stages of undergraduate courses, have consciously sought to implement measures which can increasingly build confidence, resilience and independence in students.

Other examples at subject and course level include:

- Introduction of a more rigorous induction/orientation week at Level 5 to help students get more benefit from placements.
- Use of original design briefs written by industry collaborators.
- Support for core teaching through the expertise of visiting lecturers, who bring a depth of experience and industry relevance to learning.
- Development of a programme of live events to enable students to undertake projects within industry settings.
- Establishment of internship with key partners at Yorkshire Sport Foundation, for five Level 5 students.
- Enhancement around placement activities, whereby the placement team are fully engaged with a 6-week programme for level 5 students, and regular signposting takes place for graduate recruitment and placement events to Level 4 and 5 students
- Modification of the content of Level 6 modules, to link the critical study module in Semester 1 with students' specialist design project in Semester 2.
- Focus on students' personal and professional development, preparing them for their eventual presentation through application and interview processes.
- Support for major project preparation by providing students with design briefs to begin research over the summer.

We continue to monitor these two aspects of achievement in tandem and to respond to what we are certain will become more challenging times.

There is a common, structural, aspect to both continuation and completion, which remains at the heart of the next stages of development in these areas, which is the identity and integrity of our academic courses (and the impact these factors have upon our students' experience of their courses). Work currently underway is exploring ways in which we can (in some areas) make delivery more structurally coherent so that students experience a course (or a level within a course) rather than a linked series of modules. Our Students' Union has done some valuable exploratory work in the social and social-education aspects of this experience and we aim to develop both aspects of this approach into a coherent blueprint for course delivery which will enhance student belonging, increase our ability to identify issues at an early stage, and enhance our overall support for our students.

Progression: Structured and Course-Based Development

The University's Employability Implementation Framework forms a fundamental aspect of our Education Plan (2021-26) and has developed an approach, common to other areas, which provides central support for course and school-based activity which responds to the different needs of students across the whole academic portfolio. We firmly believe that such activity is best situated locally and is an integral and structurally-embedded aspect of course delivery. By ensuring that employability is a central component of our curriculum, we also ensure that our diverse professional development initiatives and cross-disciplinary opportunities become visible as a value-added proposition of the broader student experience.

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A core part of our careers provision is to ensure that we are proactive in the labour market, that our services are informed by the external landscape, and that we are actively seeking employment opportunities which resonate with our students and graduates. We aim to be alive to the graduate needs of our region and to capitalise upon our role as an anchor institution to ensure we understand those needs and support our students to understand the regional skills requirements and to develop themselves to fulfil them. This approach means that we must remain very data driven and such developments as our Career Readiness Tracker provide us with an unprecedented data set (including student career aspirations) that will enable us to conduct 'supply and demand' analysis to inform proactive engagement with labour markets (sector and region).

Leeds Beckett delivers typically very high outcomes for our students in the area of progression to a graduate outcome, exceeding benchmark in all four years of available data and with a response rate of over 50% on each occasion. We recognise the challenges the sector faces and the need to build response rates further, and much of the work outlined below is aimed at maintaining as close a relationship as possible between our employability team, final year students and graduates, in order to surmount the difficulties of keeping in touch over the 15 months between graduation and survey. Where denominators are small there are typical year-on-year fluctuations and, of course, some benchmarks in some areas also fall below the overall requirements of the B3 thresholds (psychology, for example) and we are alive to these issues. The overall ethos of our engagement in pursuing higher outcomes is focused on engaging the whole academic community to support the ambitions of our students, from the very beginning of their courses.

The University has made significant investment in the Business Engagement, Careers & Employability Service which is focused on providing quality careers education, and consultancy support across all core stakeholders – students, graduates, staff, and employers. In so doing, we seek to provide impactful careers education which resonates across all, meeting stakeholder requirements and expectations through moving away from 'blanket' (or generic) employability education to stakeholder informed initiatives and professional development. To this effect we have developed services which are cognisant and responsive to our distinct student characteristics, providing bespoke support to challenge progression gaps, including:

- Recruitment of a specialist APP careers consultant to develop our differentiated programme of support, and to ensure we monitor student progression gaps across our Schools – responding accordingly.
- An "Elevate" programme, which comprises a suite of initiatives to support students to overcome real or perceived barriers to progression.
- A "REACTION 24/7" initiative, which connected students from our APP cohorts to aspirational employers and opportunities with a focus on raising confidence and self-efficacy. The programme won an AGCAS national award for excellence in EDI.
- To support engagement, we have invested in the recruitment of student staff to support impactful communications and initiatives which resonate with identified priority groups.

We have increased our data capture and analysis to inform the development of impactful employability initiatives, including:

- Recruitment of a new Digital Content and Data Insights Consultant and establishing a Content and Data team within Business Engagement Services to support the growth of our online presence; and sources of data to inform strategic development of our services.

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- A pilot and subsequent roll-out of the “Career Readiness Tracker” data set in 2022/23 as a compulsory element of enrolment and re-enrolment. The data will inform our impact assessment and identification of priority disciplines, year groups and student characteristics.
- A Graduate Exit Survey – introduced to drive greater insight into our graduate destinations, and to develop ‘case-loading’ allocations for our newly formed Graduate Progression team.

We have instituted a data-informed approach to target intensive employer led and co-delivered services which extend the student life-cycle to support graduate progression and professional development, including:

- The creation of a Graduate Progression team who provide early careers support for our graduates, through outreach and opportunity generation, extending our services for our students and supporting them beyond the parameters of their studies.
- The development of a ‘Graduate Promise’, including the introduction of a graduate summer programme in which graduates (identified via our exit survey) engage in a professional development programme to upskill themselves, leading to a micro-internship, supported through a bursary so that there was no negative financial impact.
- Increased communication in support of the Graduate Outcomes Survey to maximise response rates. This has included professionally developed marketing and communications campaigns, direct educational delivery, and development of staff training and development initiatives.

We have developed a new approach for students and employers to gain and offer quality, career enhancing work-based experiences, including:

- A realigned and reframed placement team into an experiential learning team who provide increased scope and capacity for our students and employer stakeholders.
- Use of new technology and platforms to source and generate impactful paid projects for students during their studies.
- Development of a major project to develop scalable and flexible experiential learning opportunities which are responsive to employer demands whilst supporting student and graduate employability.

We have developed an approach which seeks to build scale and efficiencies into our operating model, including:

- Development of a ‘Micro-teams’ approach across all schools ensures that all subject disciplines are supported by the entire Business Engagement Service, driving focus and efficiency to encourage more interdisciplinary connections through our central ‘open to all’ employability offer.
- Capitalising on new digital capabilities to package provision for distinct student groups – using live, online, and asynchronous careers education written/ delivered by ourselves in addition to sector leading platforms in which we have invested.

Conclusion: Strategically-Driven and Focused Improvement

Throughout this submission we have presented a series of typically very high indicators across Leeds Beckett University, which have been the outcome of a number of years of concerted and consistent efforts, based on a clear Strategic Framework which emphasises our contribution to our local environment and is supported by an Education Plan which provides a clear philosophy of education and student support.

In implementing this strategy, we have adopted an approach which seeks to support and develop activity at course level which enhances the nature of the course and enables course-level responses to our overall academic philosophy that are both appropriate and effective. We have

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provided many opportunities for course directors and their teams to share good practice and to reflect upon what works well, and encouraged adoption of innovations wherever they can have best effect.

It is without doubt that much of this work would have been more fully developed (and having even more impact) were it not that the Covid-19 pandemic had caused course teams' attention to move to more urgent matters as the whole University responded to the circumstances which surrounded us all. While we have managed to maintain much momentum, we are still in the process of further development in many areas, which will all have a positive impact on our work at all levels.

During this time, we have built upon a great deal of the activity that received positive comment in our first TEF evaluation and secured our Silver status at that time. Our focus is upon continuous improvement, driven by a coherent strategy and implemented consistently within a collaborative and supportive academic environment which is well understood across the University, by both students and staff in all areas.

The next phase of the Education Plan will see more focus upon course identity and integrity, working with course teams, professional services and our Students' Union to strengthen the collegiate environment within which our courses work and to enhance the community our students inhabit.

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