

## University of Sheffield: TEF Provider Submission 2023

### Sheffield Made

1. The University of Sheffield has a proud history of delivering an outstanding educational experience. Receiving our Royal Charter in 1905, and funded from penny donations from people across the City, we have stayed true to our roots and the underpinning belief that the highest quality teaching, delivered in an inclusive and supportive environment, can truly transform lives.
2. The University Vision 2020-2025<sup>1</sup> is built on four pillars: Research, Education, Innovation and One University. It is not one, but all of these together that enable us to deliver an outstanding experience to our students. Our commitments under One University speak to the core of our values and ensure that every student matters, whatever their background, demographic or culture.

*'Our research-led programmes will inspire, enthuse and challenge a diverse community of outstanding students. Our graduates will be equipped to stand out as confident global citizens guided by strong values, ethics and standards, able to make meaningful contributions to society.'*

**University's Vision 2020-25**

3. Our motto, "Rerum Cognoscere Causas" (to discover the cause of things), is as relevant today as it was when we were founded. However, the world is now a very different place. As the world has changed so have we. Our educational offer, reinforced through our vision and values, has evolved to ensure that we continue to equip our graduates to stand out as confident global citizens guided by strong values, ethics and standards, able to make meaningful contributions to society.
4. One of the Russell Group of universities, we currently have 30,307<sup>2</sup> students, of which 20,496 are undergraduate, 7,485 postgraduate taught and 2,326 postgraduate research, studying a broad range of subjects across five faculties and at our Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre - Training Centre (AMRC-TC). The majority (93%) study on a full-time basis and are campus based. We have an annual turnover of £822.4m, including teaching and research income of £379.3m and £204.8m respectively<sup>3</sup>.
5. The students we teach join us from over 140 countries and 36% of our total student population are international students. As one of the top 50 most international universities<sup>4</sup>, as measured by the Times Higher Education, and a top 100 university in the QS World University Rankings 2023<sup>5</sup>, we are proud of the internationally diverse nature of our campus and the immense value that this community brings to all our students.
6. Closer to home, our students and those at our neighbour university, Sheffield Hallam, contribute to the social, cultural and economic tapestry of the city and region. The Sheffield City Region (SCR) is largely SME based and we work actively to support business innovation, with a focus on undertaking high quality research and knowledge exchange with local companies. Through the University's *Made Together*<sup>6</sup> programme we are working with partners across the SCR, including the local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships, businesses, and community groups to exploit the untapped regeneration potential. Students are playing a major role in this work.

7. We have 479 degree apprenticeship students studying at Level 4 or above, one of the largest intakes of apprentices in the Russell Group. Unlike many of our peers we also have 418 Level 3 apprenticeship students on advanced manufacturing programmes, recognising the genuinely impactful contribution these students make to the local economy and the need to address unmet demand for skilled engineers at all levels. These students are drawn predominantly from the SCR with 80% having Sheffield or Doncaster postcodes. Whilst our TEF dataset population sizes for apprenticeships are small in relative terms we have included apprenticeship students in this submission given their strategic importance to both the University and the wider city region.
8. Whilst we attract some of the most academically able students from across the world, we believe that all students with the desire and capability to succeed should be able to do so. We are third in the Russell Group in terms of the percentage of students recruited from state schools, with the same percentage (93%) of these as their non-state school peers receiving a 1st or 2:1.
9. Our commitment to creating an inclusive environment, supporting all students to succeed, and closing the gaps in equality of opportunity is not just words. In 2019, we committed, in our Access and Participation Plan 2020-25<sup>7</sup>, to closing the attainment gap for black and Asian students from baselines of 17% and 19% ('full-time all undergraduate') respectively. These now stand at 7% and 4%, ahead of our own targets and ahead of peer institutions. We know there is more to do and we continue to challenge ourselves to deliver outcomes that reflect our values.
10. As a research-led, research-intensive university, pushing boundaries of new knowledge, we continue to integrate discoveries, innovation and new methods into the design and delivery of programmes, thereby ensuring they remain relevant and rich in content. In the most recent Research Excellence Framework, 92% of our research was rated in the highest two categories, meaning it was classed as world-leading or internationally excellent. We submitted to 25 different REF units of assessment and included 1,309 eligible staff on 'teaching and research' contracts. This, and the investment in research infrastructure, mean that students are immersed in an intensive research environment and learn at the edge of knowledge creation and discovery.
11. We have worked with our Students' Union in the preparation of respective submissions, sharing drafts as they have evolved with regular check-ins and providing a point of contact should they need information or support. We are immensely proud of our Students' Union, which has been voted the best in the UK five years running (Whatuni Student Choice Awards<sup>8</sup>) and has topped the Russell Group for the past five years in response to NSS Q26: *"The students' union (association or guild) effectively represents students' academic interests."*
12. The contribution the Students' Union at Sheffield makes to our students goes beyond clubs, societies and social events and reaches into the heart of the academic experience. They manage the student representation system, recruiting, training and supporting c.1,000 'reps' each year, thereby ensuring that the student voice informs the programmes we deliver, helping us to understand what we do well, and challenging us when we need to do more. They are active in all levels of University governance and we work in partnership on the development of our academic offer.
13. Together we know that the educational experience we deliver to our students is outstanding. The evidence below brings to life why we believe this to be the case. It demonstrates the ways in which we understand, deliver, enrich and measure a genuinely transformative experience for all students.

## Student experience

### Aspect 1: Academic experience and assessment

#### ***Educational strategy and oversight***

14. The Education Pillar of the University's Vision makes explicit our ambition to offer the highest quality education and student experience. We continue to enhance our reputation as an inspiring, engaged, research-led institution committed to supporting the development of our staff and students. The headline priorities as cited under the Education Pillar are to:

- Shape and deliver a balanced **research-informed portfolio of programmes**, which serve the needs of students and develop graduates with the knowledge and skills for successful careers.
- Deliver a sector leading vision for **employability** which captures the value of learning and development experiences in and beyond the curriculum...[realising] the benefits of the University's rich network of regional, national and international alumni and employer partners to enable all students to fulfil their learning and career potential.
- Design and deliver a rich, multifaceted and **inclusive teaching and learning environment** that supports excellent and inspiring teaching and enables all students to engage effectively in their learning.

15. Delivery against the above is tracked in two ways at institutional and departmental level. Firstly, via the Strategic Delivery Framework (SDF) that underpins our planning processes, with each academic department producing a five year plan accompanied by annual action plans. They assess themselves against four educational themes: *Quality Education*, *Student Recruitment*, *Employability*, and *Digital Education* using pre-agreed framework metrics (such as NSS Teaching on my Course, Assessment and Feedback and internal module and programme data) and outline how they will drive continuous improvements through targeted actions as relevant to their discipline and the characteristics of their student cohorts locally.

16. For example, under *Digital Education* we set out clearly what we mean by good digital provision and all academic departments completed the 'Digital Education: Core Essentials' tracker<sup>9</sup> for the first time in 2021/22. This invited them to assess how well they were meeting the following statements:

- Students are offered an approach that is consistent and easy to navigate.
- The use of technology is driven by pedagogic need/added value and embedded into practice.
- Staff have the pedagogical and digital skills to optimally use learning technologies.
- No student is left behind, taking into account legislation and creating an inclusive and accessible digital learning experience.

17. Secondly, the planning process is complemented by *Annual Reflection* which takes a deeper dive into the educational portfolio and performance of each department. This has two primary purposes: a) to ensure that we can provide external assurances regarding the quality of programmes and b) to identify opportunities to enhance the quality of our academic offer. Colleagues from the Academic Programmes Office and the relevant Faculty Director of Education meet with departmental teams, using data dashboards, student feedback, and departmental evidence as a basis for reflecting on the content, coherence and academic rigour of programmes. *Annual Reflection* meetings set actions for follow up throughout the year.

18. At a macro level, the University operates a cycle of *Portfolio Reviews*. Programmes are reviewed cyclically in the context of the wider sector to ensure that our offer remains relevant, attractive and continues to promote the distinct ‘personalities’ of our academic disciplines, whilst retaining the sense of a shared ‘Sheffield’ experience for all students.

### **Framing the student experience**

19. All our students are with us to study and so we place the academic programme at the heart of what we do. This is the core of all our students’ experience, how they spend their time with us, how we design our services and physical and digital infrastructure, and how we deliver an outstanding education. Chart 1 reflects our view of the student journey, recognising that each student's experience is unique and rarely linear.

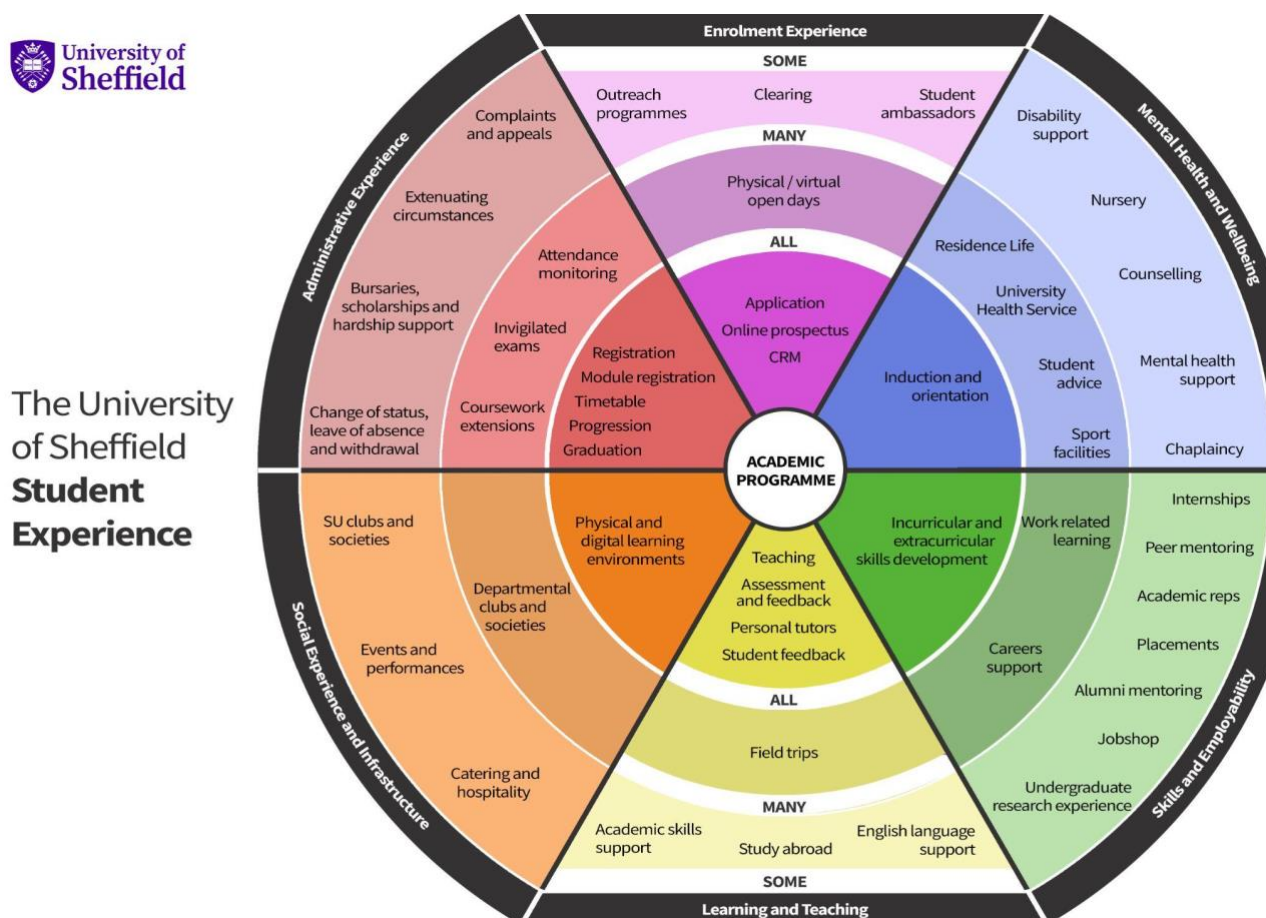


Chart 1: The University of Sheffield Student Experience

### **(SE1) Teaching feedback and assessment**

20. Our programmes are designed in line with our Programme Level Approach<sup>10</sup> (PLA). Introduced in 2017, it centres everything we do around our students’ experience of academic study. It allows programme teams to take a holistic view of how course content, teaching methods, and assessment practices build to deliver confident and well prepared graduates who understand, and can articulate and apply, the knowledge and skills they have gained.

21. PLA has helped us to refocus academic endeavour away from ‘my module’ to ‘our programme’. It helps departments to tailor and scaffold learning in a way that stretches and challenges, rather

than burdens, students and in which Educational Gain (see paragraph 93) is both defined and measurable.

22. Whilst lead times in the roll out of programme improvements mean we will only fully realise the impact of this investment over time, year on year progress against benchmark in the TEF dataset for *teaching on my course* shows steady progress, with the areas that piloted or were early adopters of PLA, such as Economics and Journalism, now seeing the impacts reflected in their NSS scores. Module evaluation via TellUS<sup>11</sup> (our internal module and programme evaluation tool) is also helping us to track this, with 90% agreement with the statement “*it is clear how this module fits within my programme as a whole*” across 2020/21 and 2021/22.
23. For *Teaching on my course* we are consistently above benchmark, and showing a positive trend against benchmark, across the four years of data presented. Breaking the data down further by level of study and student characteristics (age on entry, disability, ethnicity, sex, IMD, domicile and free school meals) we are in line with or materially above benchmark for all groups. Furthermore, and reinforcing our commitment to an inclusive environment, many of our underrepresented groups perform better against benchmark than their peers. For example, we are 5.4 percentage points above benchmark for *black* students, with 91% materially above benchmark, and for *IMD* quintiles 1 and 2 we are 1.5 percentage points above benchmark.
24. Whilst this is positive, it does not detract from the fact that, both locally and across the sector, there is still much to be done to realise equality of opportunity for all students. PLA has been invaluable in helping us to consider how ‘the programme’ is experienced by different student groups and what adjustments can be made to address inequalities. For example, Geography have introduced a Fieldwork Inclusivity Policy<sup>12</sup>, highlighting a wide range of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion considerations relevant to planning fieldwork (e.g. law relating to LGBT+ identities; the support needs of neurodiverse students; the financial burden of fieldwork; how timings can impact upon carers; the need to think about religious fasting practices when scheduling activities etc). This is being picked up and adapted by other departments.
25. Institutionally, we are comfortably within the benchmark for *Assessment and feedback*, but this remains an area where we are committed to do more. We are continuing to embed a programme of work that commenced in 2019 to improve assessment practice, recognising the value of assessment not only in testing knowledge and its application, but in helping students to develop wider skills that will support them as they transition out of education. For example, in 2019/20 Electronic and Electrical Engineering introduced a ‘threshold and grading approach’ that supported the introduction of online, in-class quizzes to provide students with instant feedback on their work. This approach has helped to build confidence and understanding of what is required to ‘pass’ and is reflected in the department’s NSS *assessment and feedback* performance, scoring 11% above the Faculty and 9% over the University average in 2020/21.
26. PLA has allowed us to address potential over-assessment at modular level by looking at the content, distribution and diversity of assessments over a whole year. This led to a reduction in the number of ten credit modules with three or more assessments from 27% to 15% over the period from 2019/20 and 2022/23. Similar reductions in load can be seen for larger credit modules. We continue to review assessment loading, distribution, diversity and value in the context of programme development.
27. Following approval by the Senate<sup>13</sup>, and with the support of our Students’ Union, we are currently in the process of changing our degree algorithms and borderline arrangements to make them more consistent and easier for students to understand as they progress. We are also working

with Students' Union Officers to review how we manage Extenuating Circumstances (policy, governance, systems and training), recognising the need to revisit these in a post-Covid environment to ensure consistency of experience. Critically, this is something that students are telling us matters to them.

28. Across our Apprenticeship provision our split indicator values are consistently materially above benchmark for *Teaching on my course*, with just students *aged 31 or over* and those on *Health and social care provision* being in line with benchmark. This pattern is replicated for *Assessment and feedback*, demonstrating why our apprenticeship provision remains some of the very best across the sector.

**(SE2) Course content, delivery and stretch**

29. All of our courses are designed to meet sector and professional body requirements, with clearly articulated learning outcomes. 264 of our undergraduate programmes are accredited, by 43 accrediting bodies, with 63% of our students studying on these.

30. Our curricula are designed and delivered by leading academic teams, and informed by local research expertise and professional practice, to ensure that graduating students leave us with the knowledge, experience and confidence to succeed. The *Annual Reflection* and *Portfolio Review* processes described above, alongside feedback from our external examiners, ensure that content remains relevant both pedagogically and in a wider political, economic, technological and societal context.

31. All programmes are required to embed our Sheffield Graduate Attributes (SGAs)<sup>14</sup> in discipline appropriate ways, to ensure that students are developing more than just discipline based knowledge. As well as being used to inform the design and delivery of academic programmes, SGAs help students contextualise their academic and wider experience, and to track and measure their progress in terms of *My learning*, *My impact* and *My self*. Further details on how this works to enrich programmes and deliver measurable educational gain can be found below.

32. The combination of a PLA and the focus on SGAs has allowed us to:

- Manage content to deliver challenging, rich and immersive programmes, making explicit how the subject builds over time.
- Enrich programmes without just 'adding more stuff,' thereby resisting the temptation to create stand-alone modules (e.g. in careers, enterprise, sustainability) that miss the opportunity for more progressive, contextual approaches. We have learned from experience that these have limited impact.
- Tackle the risk of over-assessment and maximise the opportunity to use assessment to develop skills as well as test knowledge.
- Provide the canvas for us to stretch our students academically and personally, through the layering of content, context, and application, without creating perverse workloads that hinder progress.
- Take bold steps, such as our commitment to embed Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) within all programmes by 2024/25, without pulling programmes out of shape and by allowing approaches to be adapted to fit a disciplinary context.

33. As demonstrated by the NSS, our students tell us that they feel stimulated and challenged, with 85.96% agreeing that their '*course is intellectually stimulating*' (NSS Question 3). Whilst this has dipped from a high of 89.18% in 2019, it has remained 4-5% above the sector average and above the Russell Group average year on year, suggesting that the dip has been influenced by



external factors, most notably the recent pandemic. Similarly, whilst responses to *'the course has challenged me to achieve my best work'* have also dipped since 2019, our relative performance has continued to track above Russell Group and sector averages.

34. Inclusivity and sustainability are two themes that our students tell us are central to their values and should underpin the content and delivery of programmes. The 25 departments that currently use the optional question in TellUS *"this module provided a learning environment that was inclusive of student diversity"* achieved an 86% agreement score. Examples of how ESD and inclusivity are being evolved at programme level include:

- Work undertaken by the School of Biological Sciences on *Contextualising the Curriculum in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Sheffield*<sup>15</sup>, which explored how imperialism, colonialism, racism and sexism has shaped our science. This work produced a guide for teachers and researchers and informed changes across all levels of the School's undergraduate curriculum.
- The recruitment of 'Decolonising' and 'ESD' student interns (in the departments of Law, Biosciences, Philosophy, Automatic Control and Systems Engineering, Chemical and Biological Engineering, General Engineering, Information School and Neuroscience) to work with staff and students to inform development of programmes. In Philosophy, Decolonising interns organised a series of community building events for BAME students as foundational work to look at how to make programmes more inclusive. ESD interns, through their work across departments, have made a significant contribution to the first 2 steps (Engage and Learn) of the University's 5-step process for embedding ESD<sup>16</sup>.
- The Department of Mechanical Engineering has embedded sustainability throughout its programmes to ensure that students graduate with sustainability at the heart of the way they think and act as future engineering professionals. They are helping students make connections between knowledge and analysis of underpinning engineering science to inform sustainable technology.

35. Digital tools are increasingly central to how we design and deliver our programmes. Our minimum digital requirements for all our programmes (see paragraph 16 above) are used by departments to assess their performance in terms of digital education. They also help us target support, training and guidance on the provision of course information, accessibility of learning resources, teaching delivery, and assessment and feedback practices in a digital context.

### **(SE3) Enriched curriculum**

36. As a leading research-intensive University, we are committed to producing new knowledge and we recognise the importance of integrating this within the design and delivery of programmes. Our students are exposed to a rich, research intensive environment with world leading staff and facilities. Programmes build from the foundation elements of each discipline before allowing students to navigate more diverse, specialist elements as they explore their own interests and ambitions. They are stimulated through delivery via lectures, seminars, laboratory classes, field trips, flipped lectures, and a mix of synchronous and asynchronous problem based and group learning. We do not define 'research-led teaching' as being solely about how teaching draws from the latest research outputs, recognising that for many students it is the research skills gained that are key as they develop as independent thinkers who can apply these in a wider external context.

*"Your students really value your flexible degree programmes, your practical teaching and the range of skills they are able to acquire. Students appreciate the transferable skills they learn and enjoy debates, role-playing, ethics, presentations and posters."  
(External Examiner, Biological Sciences, 2021/22)*

*"Across the assessments I have looked at, from dissertations to essays and gobbet responses, there was a high (sometimes exceptional/publishable) standard of work being produced by students...The content of courses was exciting and well-conceptualised. Students were clearly being engaged in current historiographical fields and debates, including work on the history of emotions, histories of race, immigration, empire, gender, and sexuality. There was a clear trajectory of skills development and research preparation through the courses I saw that was designed to enable students to produce original dissertation projects." (External Examiner, Modern History, 2021/22)*

37. For students who want to build their research experience, especially where they are considering academic research or research and development as a potential career path, we offer the Sheffield Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE). This allows students to experience novel research and to become involved in real-life research projects in subject areas that are of special interest. They work in partnership with academic staff, or collaborate in a research group, having worked with a Principal Investigator to identify and scope a mutually beneficial project. Since 2018/19, 429 undergraduate students have taken part in SURE projects (SURE was suspended in 2019/20 due to the pandemic). These opportunities take place during a six week period in the summer. All students receive a bursary to participate, with ring-fenced funding to support participation by students from underrepresented groups.
38. All students have access to our Languages for All scheme which allows them to develop their foreign language skills; either learning a new language from scratch or continuing to build on a language started at school or college. This can be as part of their degree, through guided module choice, or fee-free as an extracurricular activity. There are currently 15 languages available as part of this scheme.
39. Employers routinely contribute to the development, delivery and review of our programmes. These active relationships ensure our programmes remain relevant and impactful. Most departments have advisory boards and also use placement partnerships as a means of gaining deeper understanding of emerging employer needs. For example, Aerospace Engineering Industrial Advisory Board members have been instrumental in guiding a redesign of the first two years of the Aerospace curriculum to account for fast moving changes in the sector, ensuring that graduates remain highly employable with the right balance of technical and professional skills. The University currently ranks fifth for Aeronautical and Aerospace Engineering graduate prospects in the Complete University Guide, subject league table 2023<sup>17</sup>.
40. Our alumni also play a major role in enriching the student experience. In 2021/22, 8,000 students had individual or group engagement with alumni from 56 countries. 18,531 hours of alumni time were volunteered with 65% directly supporting learning, teaching and employability related activities (as opposed to indirect support through recruitment activities, fundraising and strategic interventions)<sup>18</sup>. Our alumni also supported over 450 alumni-student e-Mentoring partnerships.

*"My mentor has been really helpful in giving me an insight into the field and showing me that it is not as daunting as it may first seem. They have helped me to feel more confident in my own abilities and shown me how to utilise the skills I already have..."  
(e-mentor student, 2021/22)*



41. In 2022, 100 alumni supported the 'Global Engineering Challenge' and 'Engineering: You're Hired' weeks. The Global Engineering Challenge is an annual, week-long event aimed at developing students' ability to take on real life engineering projects. In 2022, 1,260 engineering students joined 230 teams to work on projects (drawn from the Engineers Without Borders Challenge and based on a specific country) that enabled them to learn about sustainability, develop their team and project management skills, gain insight from engineering graduates, and explore how they would tackle real life problems.
42. The University provides a variety of co-curricular spaces designed to enhance students' learning experiences and to help them to build on skills and knowledge developed within the curriculum. For example, the iForge<sup>19</sup> is a 250sqm, student-led makerspace that provides opportunities 24/7 for students to collaborate, create and make alongside their more formal academic studies. This facility was listed by Newsweek as one of the Best Maker Schools in 2021.<sup>20</sup> iForge has also been a springboard for successes in student competitions, including Sheffield students winning the UK Rocketry championship<sup>21</sup>, run by the UK's National Student Space Society (UKSEDS), and the Formula Student UK<sup>22</sup> competition at Silverstone in 2021. Sheffield students also hold the UK's National Open Altitude record<sup>23</sup>.
43. Building links between knowledge exchange, education and employability, all our faculties provide opportunities for students to work with local community organisations within or alongside their programmes. Examples include:
- The Transforming and Activating Places (TAP) programme<sup>24</sup>, funded by Research England and the Office for Students and led by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. TAP provides students from widening participation backgrounds with enhanced three week internships with local organisations. Over the two years that the programme has been running 140 students from the faculties of Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences have worked with 55 partner organisations. 79% of the 2021/22 cohort reported that they were able to apply their academic knowledge to their internship, while 71% felt able to bring their own lived experience to the internship.
- "I truly believe that TAP is a life-changing programme. It opens students up to a world of possibilities that may have been previously out of reach for one reason or another. It's accessible, and the managers are supportive and put in place measures to enable students to draw the best out of their experiences."*
- (Student participant, 2021/22)*
- Medicine's Social Accountability Initiative<sup>25</sup>, where all 3rd year Medical students spend four weeks working with a local health and social care organisation on a mutually agreed project as part of their course. Since 2015, approximately 170 local organisations across South Yorkshire have hosted 1,966 students. 89.5% of students who completed a placement in 2021/22 agreed that it has influenced their thinking on health inequalities. In the same year 95% of organisations said they would definitely take part in the scheme again.
  - Live Works,<sup>26</sup> set up in 2014 by the University of Sheffield School of Architecture. Originally launched with the aim to open up the School's teaching and research for the benefit of the city of Sheffield and beyond, it has evolved into a national exemplar in urban education and community and regional collaboration. Live Works is currently playing a key role in the £19m Levelling Up Fund development of Castlegate in Sheffield, in partnership with Sheffield City Council and local community groups. Working with 20 local partners across the city and region, over 30 projects have been commissioned, with 80 students involved, and 5,000 members of the public engaged.

## Aspect 1: Resources, support and student engagement

### (SE4) Staff - Professional development and academic practice

44. Teaching matters at Sheffield. We know that teaching is not just about what a teacher does at the front of the classroom, it is part of what happens across the academic community. Realising excellent teaching and genuine student engagement is dependent on having motivated, engaged and committed academic staff, who are developed and supported to be the best teachers they can be.
45. Our Academic Career Pathways<sup>27</sup> (ACP) framework reinforces the importance of teaching practice as a pillar in academic staff promotion and career progression, for both staff employed on 'teaching and research' and 'teaching specialist' contracts, making sure that teaching is not only valued by all academic staff but a progression path. In the three years to 2021/22, 68 staff were promoted via the teaching pathway, with 2021/22 showing the highest number of teaching specific promotions over the last five years.
46. In September 2019 we established Elevate. Supported by a central team, and drawing on expertise from across the University, Elevate provides resources, support and community based opportunities for all academic staff across the University who teach, including 1,323<sup>28</sup> 'teaching and research' and 638 'teaching specialist' staff. Elevate also offers support beyond our teaching staff, with its resources available to all employees via Sheffield Teaching Assistant (STA) Programme. It supports early career staff, including Graduate Teaching Assistants, Teaching Associates, technical staff and anyone else who directly or indirectly contributes to teaching across the University.
47. Curriculum support can be accessed at multiple levels. Elevate provides extensive online resources for individuals and teams to inform programme design, delivery and enhancement; runs workshops, webinars and academic retreats focused on pedagogic themes; and undertakes targeted interventions with departments and programme teams. In 2021/22 there were 497 attendances at STA workshops, 357 attendances at other workshops providing training and support, 50 one-to-one consultations with academic staff, 22 departments provided with targeted curriculum design and teaching support, and 84,654 visits to Elevate webpages (April 22 - Oct 22 only) with a low bounce rate of 4.78%.
48. The team also supports staff with their personal development, both in the context of the ACP and through management of the University's Learning and Teaching Professional Recognition Scheme (LTPRS). This aligns to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for Teaching and Supporting Learning in Higher Education and helps staff to secure HEA fellowship.
49. There are currently 1,073 live LTPRS registrations, 747 on the personal pathway (SFHEA, FHEA and AFHEA) and 290 on the foundation pathway (AFHEA only) working towards initial or advanced recognition. Our PgCertTLHE, enables new academic staff to achieve Fellowship of the HEA on completion of the first 30 credits of the programme, as part of their probationary requirements. It can also be accessed by other staff simply wanting to develop their teaching practice through formal qualification. 152 staff completed this programme during 2020/21 and 2021-22, with over 95% of these saying they would recommend the course to others. The quality of the programme is similarly backed up by external examiner comments:

*'This is a strong programme, with a highly effective and knowledgeable team and an established culture of ongoing enhancement. It has excellent feedback from participants'*  
(2020/21)

*'The assessments are appropriately practical and reflective, with the Viva approach to assessment being best practice for this type of programme due to its inclusive and supportive nature' (2020/21)*

50. 56.3% of our academic staff had a primary academic teaching qualification, as at 1 December 2021. This included 913 colleagues recognised by Advance HE as Associates Fellows (46), Fellows (630), Senior Fellows (225) or Principal Fellows (12), an 11% increase since 2019/20. 75.7% of our teaching staff hold doctorates.
51. For staff who are seeking recognition of outstanding teaching practice the Elevate team supports individuals with applications to Advance HE's Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) and National Teaching Fellowship Scheme (NTF). We are proud to have secured a CATE award in each of the last three years and have had ten staff become National Teaching Fellows since 2018<sup>29</sup>.
52. Teaching excellence is celebrated through our annual education conference, providing dedicated time for staff across the University to reflect and share good practice, and the University's Vice-Chancellor's Awards which recognise team and individual contributions to teaching. In 2020/21 and 2021/22 over 160 staff were nominated for awards. We are currently working with the Students' Union to merge these and the SU Academic Awards for 2023.

#### **(SE5) Learning environment and academic support**

53. Creating an environment where students can succeed is an essential part of our offer. The importance of learning communities is reinforced within programmes and beyond through induction, academic support and communities of practice.
54. There are extensive resources available to ensure that barriers to students being able to engage positively with their learning are removed and/or their learning enriched. All taught students have a named personal academic tutor throughout their studies who is an academic based in their department. Academic staff access guidance and support in this role through Elevate as well as Supporting the Supporters training, delivered by Student Support Services and focused on helping them make the right referrals for students who need additional advice and/or signposting to specialist clinical and non-clinical services.
55. There are many routes through which students can assess their academic progress and identify where they may need additional support and/or might benefit from the extra and super curricular opportunities we offer. These might be via conversations with tutors, in response to assessment feedback, through use of the MySkills<sup>30</sup> tool, and through their own learning communities and peer support. We provide extensive academic skills support that students can access outside of their department and encourage second and third year students to volunteer as student mentors<sup>31</sup>, supporting up to four first year students in their departments.
56. We understand that to stay on track with their studies some students need, or simply want, access to extracurricular academic support. Providing this at the point of need can be instrumental in preventing students from falling behind, or worse disengaging completely. We provide extensive support via our 301 Academic Skills Centre, hosted in a large, dedicated building in the centre of campus and adjacent to the Students' Union. Available to all students in all years, 301 work alongside academic departments and draw in wider student support teams from across the University to provide workshops, 1:1 sessions, and online resources to help students manage their learning, develop their maths and statistics skills, and to improve their

academic skills (essay and report writing, exam techniques, academic writing, listening and note taking).

57. The centre also supports student groups to develop peer-assisted learning, helps teach students how to undertake an original piece of research, and hosts the Writing Advisory Service run by the University's English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC). Since September 2019 there have been over 9,500 attendances at 301 Academic Skills workshops and over 2,000 1:1 study skills tutorials attended from students in all faculties and at all levels of study. In addition, almost 4,500 students have attended maths and statistics workshops and over 3,500 students have attended maths or statistics 1:1 appointments over the same period. 301's departmental curricular interventions have benefitted more than 15,000 students over the last four years, and the Peer Assisted Study Session (PASS) schemes have trained over 230 students as Leaders, providing approximately 1,500 students per year with facilitated peer learning support on modules across the University.

58. The Library contributes to the development of academic skills, helping students to develop their digital literacy, through their Information and Digital Literacy Framework<sup>32</sup>, with a rich offer of online tutorials that can be embedded in academic programmes and delivered through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

59. We evaluate all our academic support services to ensure these remain relevant, impactful and provide value for money. For example, in 2021/22, 99% of the 1,063 students who provided feedback having accessed 301 support said they would recommend academic skills workshops and 1-1 tutorials to other students; 88% of students felt more confident in their ability; and over 85% felt able to apply knowledge, techniques and strategies learned or developed from these engagements.

*"I have had a very positive experience with 301, they took the topics down to a base level and explained it in a way that was simple to understand"*

*(2nd year Aerospace Engineering undergraduate student)*

*Mixing with the wider learning community [at 301] helped with confidence. It helped give structure to my days because of the low contact hours in my discipline. It has helped to improve all my academic skills, and resulted in really good grades.*

*(2nd year Sociological Studies undergraduate student)*

60. Due to the disruption to education caused by the pandemic we recognised that new and returning students would be facing additional challenges. The *Level Up Your Academic Skills*<sup>33</sup> programme was developed over the summer of 2020 to begin to assess and address gaps students may have in terms of their underpinning academic skills. It delivered a series of web-based courses, each aimed at a specific level of study new undergraduate, continuing undergraduate, final year undergraduate, and postgraduate taught student, broken down into sections containing relevant resources and activities, and presented on a week by week basis to keep pace with the skills students were likely to need as they transitioned. This gave students control over whether they followed the whole course in sequence or dipped in and out of the resources as they needed. It also allowed them to take an online Skills Audit<sup>34</sup> to understand their strengths and areas for development. The programme was used as a case study in *Gravity Assist: Propelling higher education towards a brighter future*<sup>35</sup> led by Sir Michael Barker.

61. Academic teams were encouraged to integrate *Level Up Your Skills* resources into their induction programmes to help students whose A Level studies had been disrupted during the pandemic, picking out the most useful and relevant resources for their cohorts. In response to

the student uptake and feedback, we have retained this programme beyond the pandemic. Google Analytics data show that engagement with these resources rose from 14,000 page views (10,864 unique views) in 2020/21 to more than 29,000 (12,101 unique views) in 2021/22 and this is part of a pattern of increased engagement with online academic skills resources with page visits increasing from 416,998 in 2020/21 to 605,299 in 2021/22.

*"I would absolutely recommend it! You can go through the videos/resources at your own pace and pick and choose what's useful to you. Even if you think you have all the study skills you need, it's quite likely there is something you could work on..."*

*(Student, Department of Education)*

62. The departmental welcome and induction processes we use to help students transition to the University are the first stage in establishing the learning communities that they will need throughout their studies. The University recently completed a comprehensive review of these, leading to a fresh approach for 2022. This delivers a programme of activity that ensures greater parity of experience and consistent messaging for all students, irrespective of their programme of study, and a greater sense of community and belonging. It comprises three core themes designed to improve institutional consistency whilst allowing academic departments the flexibility to cater for local environments, populations and particular needs. Initial evaluation, with feedback from 358 evaluation participants, shows that 76% were extremely satisfied/very satisfied with the experience received during Welcome and Induction week; 71% said they were extremely satisfied/very satisfied with the information provided to enable academic preparedness and 74% strongly agreed/agreed that they were made aware of the skills needed to succeed on their course.
63. We are one of only three UK universities with accreditation from the Royal College of Psychiatrists and the British Psychological Society for our Student Mental Health, Counselling and Therapies Service. As the mental health and psychological therapies provider for our students, we offer a comprehensive in-house clinical service providing a range of clinical interventions, consultation, community education, training, as well as conducting research into student mental and psychological health. The integrated Mental Health Liaison and Guidance Desk also acts as the key point of contact for internal and external colleagues to discuss students of concern and works collaboratively with NHS services to ensure care pathways are maintained, developed and strengthened.
64. The University Health Service (one of only two UK university-run GP practices) in the heart of the campus is a bespoke student practice enabling us to offer student-only clinics. The Disability and Dyslexia Support Service (DDSS) offers wrap-around support from pre-arrival for students with a declared disability, including mental illness. This may include information on and/or support with orientation; personal care; accessing taught sessions, note taking, exams, guidance on managing workload and liaising with the department Disability Liaison Officer.
65. In 2021/22, 697 Learning Support Plans were produced for students by the DDSS team and 904 exam referrals were made. There were 312 referrals for specialist mentors, 134 support workers, 302 other support worker referrals, and 29 support and guidance mentors. Student satisfaction in DDSS has been consistently high over the past five years with a 90% student satisfaction rate in 2021/22. As of 12 December 2022, there were 2,511 undergraduate students at the University who had a Learning Support Plan.

## (SE6) Learning resources

66. The University's learning resources are rated as outstanding by our students for good reason. We have an extensive estate which covers 480,000sqm of non-residential space and an additional 60,000sqm of residential space, putting us in the top ten of university estates in the UK by size. The University enjoys a campus feel, whilst being within an easy walking distance of the city centre.
67. Our facilities at the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre - Training Centre (AMRC-TC), where our engineering apprentice students study, are world leading. Established in 2013, the AMRC-TC is a 5,600sqm state of the art training facility where students learn alongside global companies such as McLaren, Rolls Royce and Boeing. The quality of these facilities is evidenced with our engineering apprenticeships scoring us 11.5% above benchmark for learning resources in the TEF dataset.
68. In Spring 2023, our latest large scale capital development, the Social Science Hub building, will open. With a total area of 16,500sqm, this £99m, low carbon building will facilitate the collocation of disparate social sciences departments, helping to promote interdisciplinary excellence in education. Along with new state of the art teaching spaces, computer rooms and specialist teaching spaces, such as those to support Journalism programmes, the building will provide 500 study spaces of varying styles with two silent study areas.
69. The University's Library occupies four sites across our campus, providing access to over one million physical items and around 3,500 study spaces. It is a central pillar of students' learning, through both the physical and digital services offered. Physical visits to the Library are returning to pre-pandemic levels with over 1.8 million visits in 2021/22, and we are on track for record levels of usage in 2022/23. Our digital access to learning and research resources has supported 8.7 million digital downloads. In Q19 of the NSS, 86.87% of our students agreed that *"The Library resources (e.g., books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well"* placing us 3rd in the Russell Group and against a benchmark of 84.31%
70. Student voice informs Library service design. The Garden Room, co-designed with students, is a space for student wellbeing and relaxation offering a comfortable, relaxing space. It serves to encourage them to take regular study breaks and to be cognisant of their wellbeing, especially during assessment periods. The Digital Exhibition Space in the Information Commons (our largest library building) allows students to disseminate their innovations relating to creative forms of assessment, employability and diversity, complemented by curated book collections.
71. Whilst the University of Sheffield remains a campus-based university, the digital learning environment is as important to the delivery of an outstanding student experience as the physical one. The University's VLE provides the portal through which students access course materials, collaborative online learning spaces, electronic assessments, and assessment grades and feedback.
72. Over the past three years we have averaged 11.5 million student sessions per year on the VLE, with 318,067 pieces of assessed work handed in via Turnitin in the last calendar year, demonstrating the centrality of the VLE to the student experience. The robustness of our virtual resources came into sharp relief during the pandemic when we saw a 1,000% increase in video uploads to Kaltura per month, and between March 2020 and July 2021 students engaged with over 53 million minutes of content.



73. Post pandemic, we are starting to understand the long-term impacts and how we can use digital technologies more creatively to enhance an on campus experience. We are currently piloting 'adaptable digital' with Computer Science students to help us design a future learning environment based around laptops and mobile devices, moving away from the traditional, separated model of lecture theatres and computer labs.
74. We are continuing to expand the portfolio of tools available, taking care to ensure that these conform with accessibility requirements to support our commitment to an inclusive learning environment. We are putting students at the heart of these through the appointment of Student Digital Associates. 14 students have been appointed since 2021/22, further evidencing our commitment to students as co-creators.
75. Digital Core Essentials (see paragraph 16) has been invaluable in helping track where local improvements can be made. For example, 95% of modules (n.b. this includes PGT) have an accessibility statement and we need to reach 100%. This exercise has helped us identify teaching staff for whom there is an opportunity to develop digital skills to a 'core' level; to track modules where students cannot submit assignments digitally (16%, accepting that this includes forms of assessments such as presentations, performances, artefacts etc.); and to determine where more could be done to 'template' the presentation of module information on the VLE.
76. As with other student facing services, we evaluate our digital services. For example, for our Digital Learning for Students<sup>36</sup> resource base (a one stop shop for students showing them how to use the University's digital resources) we track 'bounce rates' via Google Analytics. These have remained low at 7.24%, indicating that most users arriving on the site are finding, engaging with and mining the site for further information. We also commissioned the University's Institute of Work Psychology (IWP) to survey students to rate their experience of the resources. Over a six month survey period beginning in April 2022, they engaged 102 students, 80% of whom rated the resources 'Good' to 'Excellent.'
77. More broadly, we use the JISC Digital Experience Insights<sup>37</sup> survey to assess the quality of our online learning environment. In 2021/22, 72% of 739 student respondents said the quality of their online learning was *good*, *excellent*, or *best imaginable* and we use this to benchmark our performance externally and to enrich our understanding of the student experience through the text based comments students make.

#### **(SE7) Student voice**

78. Students are involved in every stage of how we design, deliver, review and improve our academic programmes and the wider student experience. This starts at an institutional level with the Students' Union Officers playing an active role as members of the University's governing bodies and associated sub-committees. Less formally, routine engagement is managed through the Partnership, Education and One University Boards which bring together Students' Union Officers with members of the University Executive and Professional Services Directors to ensure that issues of importance to students are raised and dealt with in a timely, informal fashion and to ensure that the Students' Union have opportunities to understand and inform institutional activities. Each full-time SU Officer is allocated a mentor from the University Executive Board, with all part-time officers allocated a mentor from among senior Professional Services Directors.
79. At a basic level our academic teams use surveys such as the NSS and TellUS (our internal module and programme evaluation tool) to understand how we are doing, to benchmark internally and externally across disciplines, and to highlight areas where we need to improve or

to identify best practice. As detailed above, these underpin our planning processes and the data presented via the *Annual Reflection* dashboard.

80. Introduced in 2020, TellUS allows us to survey students towards the end of each module and by programme at the end of each year. The Semester One module feedback window for 2022/23 has recently closed with an institutional response rate of 43% and over half of departments achieving a response rate of 50% or above. Whilst these response rates are typically lower than NSS they still provide an invaluable resource, especially given the more granular level of information collected. Response rates are growing annually. Since 2020, we have had in excess of 100,000 responses from students about their academic experience of the modules they have taken.
81. The University's approach to student representation across disciplines was reviewed in partnership with our Students' Union in 2017. The programme became far more inclusive with the removal of the traditional 'election' processes and, at course and departmental level, we now have c.1,000 academic representatives volunteering each year, with training provided by the Students' Union.
82. Across the University we continue to use Student-Staff Committees as spaces in which students and staff can explore topics related to learning and teaching, where academic representatives can present ideas, discuss data, collaborate on department priorities, and present feedback on issues raised by students on their course.
83. The above however are purely the foundations from which departments build their engagement with students. Elevate provides guidance and produces resources for academic teams to help them develop effective, relevant approaches to engaging students in reflection, co-creation and related processes. The Academic Programmes Office also supports a community of (c.130 academic and professional services) practitioners around 'student voice,' and the University's Digital Learning Team's role is leading work to champion the role of technologies in engaging students. The latter is helping departmental and programme teams to extend their reach and to do so in a more inclusive and accessible manner.
84. In December 2022, PWC completed an internal audit of how we ensure "Student Voice in Programme Design"<sup>38</sup>, based on sample testing across departments, the report stated that *"it was clear that all key staff interviewed do understand that using the student voice is a valuable and essential strategy for programme design which impacts positively on both staff and student experiences."*
85. PWC also highlighted areas of good practice, such as the approach taken by Mechanical Engineering that *"promotes equitability in decision-making, consultation and responsibility with an emphasis on student empowerment and inclusivity.... students had sustained, continuous engagement in recent programme design processes, they were consulted in the early planning stages, involved in key conceptualisation and brainstorming activities, SWOT analysis workshops and discussions regarding the limitations, ideal end goals and skills gaps within current programmes. During the programme change process, further consultations took place via focus groups, student-wide presentations and, Q&A sessions to ensure satisfaction in outcomes and alignment between all stakeholders. Students were also involved in the evaluation of programme changes following implementation to provide further feedback, helping to inform additional minor tweaks and adjustments to fully optimise the student experience."*

## Student Outcomes

### Aspect 2: Positive Outcomes (SO1)

#### (SO2 & SO3) Continuation, Completion and Progression

*To note: we have not submitted any commentary in this section on the continuation and completion of part-time students. This is due to a historic reporting issue, relating predominantly to Nursing and Medicine CPD. 520 of the 640 students in the continuation denominator and 580 of the 1080 in the completion denominator are students who attended to complete discrete modules during the period 2011-18. They were attached to programmes of study within our student record, but only for the purposes of accessing discrete credit bearing modules and were never expected to proceed to an award. The historical submissions met HESA verification requirements but have now created a perversion in terms of the student outcomes dataset with these students showing as non-continuers/completers. This issue is not particular to the University of Sheffield, but due to low part-time numbers outside of these disciplines, this presents on the institutional level dashboard. The OfS data team is aware of this situation.*

86. As shown in the dataset 96.5% of our full-time students (against a benchmark of 94.9%) and 92.3% of our apprenticeships (6.1% above the benchmark of 86.2%) successfully complete their first year of study. These high **continuation** rates are testament to the ways in which we induct and support students as they transition into their studies.
87. For our growing number of undergraduate programmes with postgraduate components (now around 25% of our UG provision), we see continuation values rising to 97.6%. Continuation rates for students who are under 21 at the point of entry are marked as outstanding with a value of 96.9%. Continuation rates for *Asian* students (accounting for ten percent of the total denominator and the largest ethnic population after *white*) sit at 97.5%, for mixed (the next highest population) 95.1%, and for *black* students, 94.1%. Our continuation rates for both UK (96.3%) and non-UK (95.9%) exceed high benchmarks, the latter being 100% materially above.
88. Similarly, our **completion** rates sit at 93.9%, in line with benchmark and comfortably above the national rate of 88.6%. These figures, achieved during recent years with the disruption of Covid and industrial action, are significant. For undergraduate programmes with postgraduate components, completion values rise to 95.4%. Completion rates for students who are under 21 at the point of entry remain outstanding at 94.9%.
89. For the smaller cohort of mature students, we see these figures dip to being broadly in line with benchmark and slightly below benchmark for students '*31 years and over.*' The majority of these students enter via our Lifelong Learning Foundation Year programmes, often without traditional academic qualifications. We are committed to continuing to provide these opportunities to mature learners across our region and therefore this is an area of focus for us to understand why these students have positive continuation rates, but completion rates that then dip below benchmark, and the extent to which challenges for older learners have been compounded by the recent pandemic.
90. For some cohorts of students, we know that more targeted support is needed for them to engage and succeed in their studies and we have adapted our offer to reduce barriers to success. For example:
- We are committed to the Care Leaver Covenant<sup>39</sup> and provide a targeted package of support for care leavers and estranged students from the point that they might visit an undergraduate

open day, or engage in an outreach opportunity, during their studies and beyond. We guarantee accommodation on campus year-round, waive deposit payments, provide basics such as bedding, towels and kitchen items, allocate a designated contact in Welfare Support, allocate student mentors, and provide annual bursaries of £10,000.

- We provide Sanctuary Scholarships<sup>40</sup> for students who have sought refuge in the UK, for example Ukrainian students recently affected by the invasion. In 2022 we granted ten fully funded scholarships to cover the cost of tuition along with a £9,840 award to support cost of living for each year of study.
- We provide support for international students to help them with their learning, such as the subject specific Departmental Language Programmes and Writing Advisory Services, mentioned above. In parallel, our International Student Support Team and Students' Union Student Advice Centre (SAC) help students with issues including visa and immigration concerns, adjusting to life in the UK, and housing to ensure that these do not become unnecessary distractions from their studies.
- Sheffield's Global Campus Programme has provided ongoing orientation for international students since 2012. This has been featured as a case study in the recent OfS report, Working in Partnership to Improve International Student Integration and Experience<sup>41</sup>.
- Our investment in financial and hardship support in response to the external challenges students face, such as our £3m Covid fund during the pandemic, and more recently the 2022/23 £3m cost of living fund.

91. Looking beyond graduation, 77.1% of our students have positive **progression** outcomes securing graduate employment or further study in line with benchmark, and rising to 89.5% of students on programmes with postgraduate components. Preparing our students for life beyond their undergraduate studies, either as they progress with their studies or move into their first jobs and beyond, is a central pillar of our University Vision. We have made huge strides in how we scaffold this for students over the past three years, with details provided in subsequent sections, building from an already solid base to a sector leading approach.

92. We have strengthened the emphasis on skills development and employability across our curriculum and invested to ensure that this impacts the experience of *every* student across the whole student lifecycle. Most importantly we have made this central to our Programme Level Approach and not something bolted on. We continually get students to reflect on the skills they develop enabling them to make informed decisions not just about career options, but about what is right for them. This has set our approach to understanding and measuring Educational Gain; how we support each student's individual journey and how we measure the impact we are having.

## **Aspect 2: Educational gain**

### **(SO4) Articulating Educational Gain**

93. We understand Educational Gain in the context of the development of the whole student. We support students to focus on, and track, the development of their academic skills, the contribution they make within communities, and the personal attributes they will need for the future. Chart 2 shows how we visualise educational gain and scaffolds the narrative that follows.



## The University of Sheffield Educational Gain

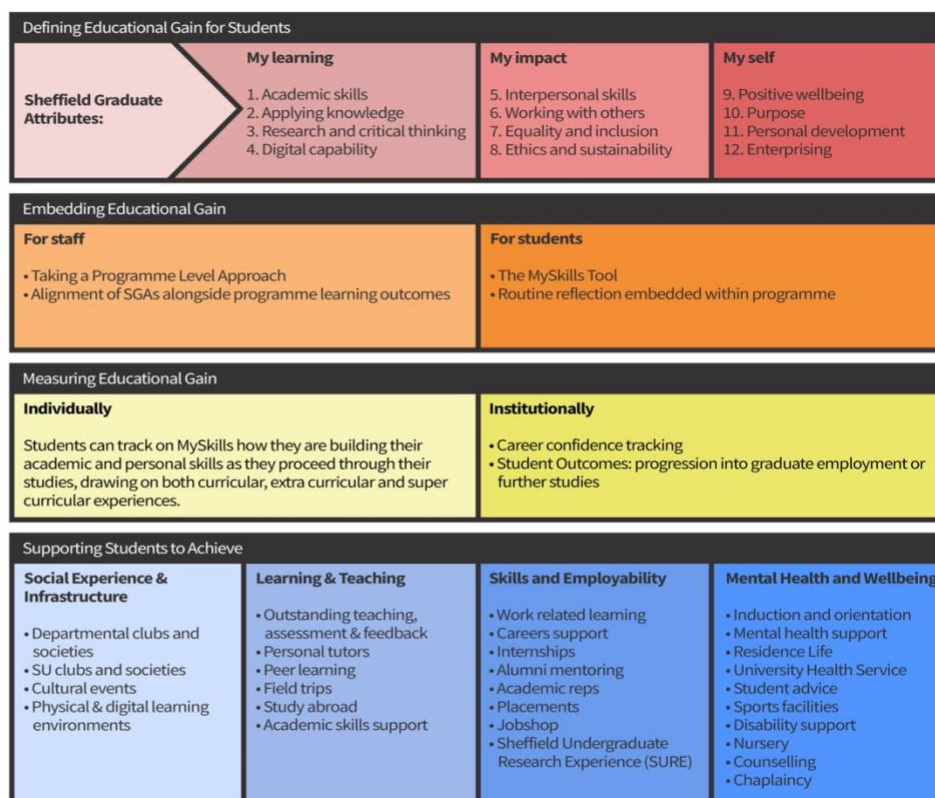


Chart 2: The University of Sheffield Educational Gain

### (SO6) Measuring Educational Gain

94. The process starts at registration, where we measure 'career confidence' for each of our incoming students, and then again annually as part of the re-registration process by asking a series of questions to understand how 'ready' they feel in terms of identifying and pursuing their preferred careers. This, introduced for all students in 2021, is the first step in understanding the level of support students may need on this journey and is an invaluable census point with undergraduate response rates of 96.6%. We will not see the full value of this until further cohorts come through, but it is already providing data that we are using to refine and tailor our services and enable more personalised communications with students about appropriate next steps. For example, the value of work experience, with 66.6% of those students with some work experience stating that they were 'fairly' or 'very' confident about articulating their skills to potential employers compared to 50.3% of those with no work experience. We are also able to track over the student lifecycle, for example with 25.1% of undergraduate home students reporting that they are ready to apply/have a job lined up at the start of their final year, compared to just 5.5% at the start of their second year.

95. In 2020 we refreshed our Sheffield Graduate Attributes (SGAs). These provide a framework of 12 attributes, each with 3 sub-attributes, that sit under the headings (My learning, My impact, and My self) and against which students can understand their own unique journey in terms of their academic success, personal development and readiness for employment. SGAs are the way we frame, understand and measure educational gain. The attributes are:

#### My learning

**Academic skills** (academic writing, numeracy and data, study skills)

**Applying knowledge** (translating knowledge, problem solving, exchanging knowledge)

**Research and critical thinking** (research skills, research impact, critical thinking)

**Digital Capability** (digital fluency, digital communication, digital citizenship)

My impact

**Interpersonal skills** (communication, networking, emotional intelligence)

**Working with others** (collaboration, influencing, leadership)

**Equality and inclusion** (community engagement, global awareness, inclusivity)

**Ethics and sustainability** (integrity, appropriate conduct, sustainability)

My self

**Positive wellbeing** (self care, autonomy, self awareness)

**Purpose** (healthy relationships, defining purpose, positive mindset)

**Personal development** (growth mindset, determination, resilience)

**Enterprising** (innovation, commercial awareness, adaptability)

96. We recognised the need to bring the above to life for our students and academic teams and, working with GroupGTI, developed mySkills. This is a fully interactive portfolio tool which allows students to undertake regular self-assessments against these attributes; identify the areas they want to focus on for improvement; set goals and track progress against these; and to capture an in-curricular and extracurricular record of activities and experiences that build their portfolio and that weave through their academic programmes.
97. MySkills is not just a tracker, it provides access to a wealth of resources, videos, assessments and support that allow students to manage their own development at their own pace, to track their progress and, when they are ready, to consider suitable career options and prepare for the recruitment process. It enables students to reflect on skills developed and then consider future career direction in an informed and personalised way.
98. The mySkills tool, and the way its use is being embedded for both curricular and extracurricular activities, is being positively recognised within the sector. The tool, and its use as a foundation for delivery of the University's employability strategy and services, have contributed to the University being shortlisted for two national awards: Best University Employability Strategy at the Target Jobs National Undergraduate Employability Awards 2022<sup>42</sup> and Best Strategic Development with an external Partner at the Institute of Student Employers (ISE) Awards 2022<sup>43</sup>.
99. Since 2020 our Careers Service has presented on the development and use of mySkills at events and meetings with multiple other higher education providers. We have supported other universities in developing their own versions of the portfolio tool with GroupGTI and also in the development of their own versions of the Graduate Attributes framework. Subsequently, we understand there are now 46 higher education providers using, or currently implementing a GroupGTI generic skills portfolio, following the work they did with us to launch mySkills. This year we have begun to deliver presentations internationally, including via the British Council, on the SGAs and MySkills.
100. In 2021, 33% of first year students were using mySkills and all first year undergraduates will see mySkills in their programmes in 2022/23. Due to piloting and testing of different models for embedding, some disciplinary areas are ahead with the roll out. For example, in the Faculty of Engineering 75% of first year students had engaged with mySkills by 2021/22. As a consequence of the mySkills tool, we are seeing academic departments using and referring to the Sheffield Graduate Attributes more actively, such as the Department of Music who are using these to help students to make module choices by showing how content and delivery of



an individual's modules contributes to their wider skills development. This phased approach has thus allowed departments to utilise a central scaffold locally to close the loop in terms of learning and reflection without losing the disciplinary and programme context.

101. This year also sees the launch of the *mySkills Engagement Certificate* and *mySkills Impact Awards* to encourage students' continuing engagement with the portfolio and their skills development. *The Impact Award* recognises and celebrates students who have made notable contributions that align with the University's Vision in the areas of Inclusivity, Sustainability, Community and Entrepreneurship.
102. Whilst still in the early years of the careers confidence data collection process, we are using this to evaluate how mySkills is adding value and to reflect on our approach to Educational Gain. Of first year undergraduate home students who reported being "not at all" confident articulating their skills in 2021/22, 65% of those who actively engaged with mySkills reported higher levels of confidence by 2022/23, compared to 59% of those who didn't. The headline categories of My learning, My impact, and My self also allow us to see how students' confidence balances across these and how it develops over time.

#### **(SO5) Supporting students to achieve**

##### **Careers Support**

103. Our Careers Service is sector leading and we are committed to providing both students and graduates with the careers information, advice and guidance they need for as long as they need it, with no fixed period after graduation when these services are withdrawn.
104. Our investment in skills and employability, and the location of a Careers Hub within the Students' Union has increased student engagement. Demand on our Careers Services is growing at pace as students are encouraged through their programmes to understand and manage their own development. In the last year we have seen a c.40% increase in the number of phone calls and emails received by the Careers Service, a 21% increase in live chat enquiries and an 82% increase in start of term (Sept/Oct) drops-ins compared to the same period last year. In 2021/22 there were a total of 3,346 unique users of careers appointments and drop-ins, a 34% increase on 2020/21. The service hosted 531 Careers led events with 11,492 student bookings, and supported 467 students through the well established alumni:student e-mentoring scheme.
105. We provide extensive opportunities for our students to interact with potential employers. Each year, our careers fairs run over two days in October, attract over 120 employers from local SMEs to world leading companies, and are attended by over 3,000 students. These large scale events are complemented by smaller, themed multi-employer events focusing on Investment Management, Law and Languages, alongside over 60 single large company webinars and 60 externally hosted employer events.
106. Careers and Employability Consultants work directly with academic departments, helping to deepen the offer to students and to ensure that students are able to recognise, reflect and articulate the skills they are gaining as they progress through their programmes. This work focuses on embedding the use of the mySkills portfolio to support skills development through the curriculum. In 2021/22 an Employability Professionals Group was established as a means for staff across the University who have roles in delivering employability services to gather and share best practice across the institution.

107. We are keen to share our knowledge and our free MOOCs 'How to Succeed at Writing Applications' and 'How to Succeed at Interviews' have amassed 551,070 enrolments between them since they were first released in 2015. They have a 25% completion rate, a 92% satisfaction rating and have run 112 times (56 times each). Both courses have appeared on the Class Central Top 100 Courses of All Time<sup>44</sup> list for 4 consecutive years, a public vote covering over 50,000 available online courses from 1500 different providers.

### ***Work Experience and Graduate Employment***

108. In 2021/22, we rewrote our regulations to include a commitment for all undergraduate students to have the opportunity to take a placement year, or a study abroad year, as part of their programme of study. We are scaling up the support we provide to assist students in sourcing these opportunities, gaining the full benefits of the experience and reflecting on the knowledge and skills they acquire as a consequence. This also means that those students, often from underrepresented groups, who are less likely to commit to a placement at the application stage can be supported to consider this as an option as they progress. This offer will take full effect for our 2022/23 entrants, but we are already seeing placements growth with 530 undergraduate students undertaking year long placements in 2022/23, 29% higher than the 411 students in 2021/22, and 60% higher than the number on placement in 2020/21.
109. We recognise that not all students want to take a full year placement, but still want the benefits of work experience. This may be to develop core skills and to gain advantage in the employment market, and/or because temporary or part-time work is essential to them being able to support themselves during their studies. The University's JobShop (part of the Careers Service and based within the Students' Union) is responding to this demand, and helps students to find not only graduate opportunities, but part-time paid work, summer internships, placements, vacation and voluntary work. In 2021/22 this included the advertising of 10,777 vacancies. Alongside the large scale Graduate and Placement Careers fairs, the team host a Part-time Jobs and Volunteering Fair (this year 1,518 students attended, up from 1,283 the previous year).
110. As one of the largest employers in the city we recognise our contribution to providing students with meaningful work experience and have made it a requirement that all student part-time employment on campus is managed via the Jobshop. In 2021/22 3,471 unique students were employed in roles within the University, up from 1,546 the previous year. 250,000 hours of work were delivered and £3.8m paid to student workers.
111. Operating the Jobshop in this way not only allows us to track students' eligibility to work, but to work with them to make sure that their engagement with us involves a level of reflection that will help prepare them for the application/interview processes they will meet when they begin their search for graduate opportunities. We also go further, running our annual Inspiring Student Worker Awards to recognise students who have excelled in the workplace through part-time jobs or short-term internships and to celebrate our employer partnerships.
112. The University operates an Internship Programme that has been running since 2013/14 and allows University departments (academic and professional services) to submit proposals to host students on placements of up to 100 hours. Open to all final year undergraduates these provide valuable work experience and skill development opportunities as these students prepare for work. Approximately 50 on-campus internships are advertised each year. We particularly promote and track the uptake of these opportunities by students from underrepresented groups

113. We work actively with local employers because we understand the impact that graduates have on the local economy. With 15% of our home undergraduate population (2021/22) drawn from South Yorkshire (Sheffield, Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham), and 25% of Sheffield graduates who were in UK based employment 15 months after completing their course being in employment in South Yorkshire (Graduate Outcomes Survey 2019/20), this is more than just a 'nice to do,' it is critical to the future success of our students and graduates.
114. As a city, Sheffield has its challenges. Dominated by SMEs, with poor infrastructure and low productivity relative to other large cities, we are working collaboratively with Sheffield City Council, Sheffield Hallam University and local employers to help tackle the many economic and societal challenges. We have delivered several initiatives that support talent retention in SMEs in the SCR by removing barriers to recruitment, helping businesses to grow and generating paid work opportunities for students and graduates. This includes the highly regarded RISE<sup>45</sup> programme, a partnership between Sheffield City Council, Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Sheffield which has helped more than 400 regionally based SMEs to successfully recruit over 500 graduates.
115. We also deliver an SME Summer Internship Programme facilitating paid summer internships at SMEs and charities in the Sheffield City Region. In summer 2022, 55 £1,000 grants were awarded to organisations to host an internship. We prioritised funding opportunities at community-based organisations, or organisations in sectors hardest hit by the pandemic.

### **Working with Alumni**

116. The transition to graduate employment can feel particularly daunting for students from underrepresented groups. London City Connections<sup>46</sup> (Social Sciences) and Northern City Connections<sup>47</sup> (Arts and Humanities) are two examples of how we help such students explore opportunities and provide an insight into the careers that are available to them in London and the Northern Region, exploring a range of organisations and meeting our alumni. Both projects include a pre and post-workshop where students set objectives, practise their networking and review their experiences.

*"Hearing from successful University of Sheffield alumni was even more motivating than I expected, it was inspirational to see people who have been in your position make something so great of themselves." (London City Connections 2020 Participant)*

117. In 2021, the University of Sheffield received a record £2.85m gift<sup>48</sup> from alumnus Andrew Law to launch the Law Family Ambition Programme. Running over a five-year period, this programme includes a range of activities to help students from demographic areas with low progression to higher education to access university, support their success and confidence in their studies, and go on to develop successful careers.
118. Our alumni also support the CoachCafé<sup>49</sup>. During 2021/22 this included 5 online networking events which saw over 300 students connecting with 110 alumni volunteers from 21 different countries. 50% of the student participants met one or more widening participation criteria. 89% of students across all events felt they had a better understanding of what career roles interest them after participating in Coach Cafe and 76% said that they felt more confident about their career prospects.

*"I volunteered for this because I went to a career event in my third year which really helped me plan for the future. I wanted to give back and do the same for someone else and I'm so glad I did. I would recommend this to anyone who can remember how daunting it was to graduate and be flung into the world of work." (Coach Cafe Alumni Volunteer, 2021/22)*

119. We continue to strengthen our working relationships and partnership with the Students' Union through our individual and collective contributions to students' personal and skills development. We invite and welcome Students' Union staff and student officer contributions to all key university-wide employability committees and working parties, providing vital student voice input to the development of careers, employability and skills provision. We collaborate with Sheffield Volunteering (hosted by the Students' Union and involving over 2000 students and staff volunteers) on events and activities and support various Students' Union led employability focused events.
120. Ranked 8th in the top twenty universities targeted by the top graduate employers in 2021/22, our highest ranking to date in the annual High Fliers' Graduate Market<sup>50</sup> report (up from 15th in 2017/18), we know our approach is working.

## References

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Vision and Strategic Plan: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/vision>
- <sup>2</sup> HESA HE Student enrolments by HE provider 2014-15 to 2020-21, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/table-1>, accessed 1 December 2022
- <sup>3</sup> University of Sheffield Annual Report 2021-22: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/about/annual-report>
- <sup>4</sup> University Times Higher Most International Universities 2022: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/best-universities/most-international-universities-world>
- <sup>5</sup> QS World Rankings 2023: <https://www.topuniversities.com/university-rankings/world-university-rankings/2023>
- <sup>6</sup> Made Together Brochure, July 2022: <https://www.flipsnack.com/uos/made-together-brochure-7jiqtkco7k.html>
- <sup>7</sup> Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/finance/access-and-participation>
- <sup>8</sup> Whatuni Student Choice Awards 2022 (Students' Union): <https://www.whatuni.com/student-awards-winners/students-union/>
- <sup>9</sup> Core essentials: institutional tracker: unpublished, held in Digital Learning Google Drive
- <sup>10</sup> Programme Level Approach: <https://staff.sheffield.ac.uk/teaching-guidance/curriculum/pla> Internal Staff Website
- <sup>11</sup> R6 Aggregate Department Report (TellUS) 2020-21 & 2021-22: unpublished, held in TellUS Google Drive
- <sup>12</sup> Department of Geography Fieldwork Inclusivity Policy: unpublished, held in Department of Geography document management system
- <sup>13</sup> <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/govern/senate>
- <sup>14</sup> Sheffield Graduate Attributes <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/skills/sqa>
- <sup>15</sup> Contextualising the curriculum in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology: <https://sites.google.com/sheffield.ac.uk/contextualising-eeb-curriculum/home?pli=1> Internal Staff Website
- <sup>16</sup> Education for Sustainable Development in the curriculum: <https://staff.sheffield.ac.uk/teaching-guidance/curriculum/sustainable-development#The-five-step-framework-for-embedding-education-for-sustainable-development> Internal Staff Website
- <sup>17</sup> Complete University Guide Subject League Table 2023: <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings/aeronautical-and-aerospace-engineering?sortby=graduate-prospects>
- <sup>18</sup> Alumni Volunteer Report 2021-22: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1dSBDwgZ2TSy4us7CohKoIBkIFyaGGvvy/view> Internal published document
- <sup>19</sup> iForge Makerspace <https://iforgesheffield.org/>
- <sup>20</sup> The Best Maker Schools, January 2023: <https://www.newsweek.com/best-maker-school-list-2021>
- <sup>21</sup> Sheffield Engineering Students win UK Rocketry Championship, October 2021 <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/sheffield-engineering-students-launch-winning-rocket-uk-championships>
- <sup>22</sup> University of Sheffield Students win Formula Student, July 2021: <https://www.imeche.org/news/news-article/university-of-sheffield-crowned-second-british-winners-of-formula-student>

- <sup>23</sup> University of Sheffield Engineering Students hold national altitude record for the UK, July 2019, <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/acse/news/team-sunride-set-new-national-altitude-record-uk>
- <sup>24</sup> Transforming and Activating Places Programme <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/arts-humanities/schools-and-outreach/transforming-and-activating-places-tap>
- <sup>25</sup> Social Accountability Project, June 2021 <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/doctors-training-are-reconnecting-sheffield-community-through-social-accountability-project>
- <sup>26</sup> School of Architecture Live Works: <https://liveworks.ssoa.info/>
- <sup>27</sup> Academic Career Pathway <https://staff.sheffield.ac.uk/reward-recognition/academic-career-pathways> Internal Staff webpage
- <sup>28</sup> HESA HE academic staff by HE provider and employment conditions <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/employment-conditions> , accessed 31 July 2022
- <sup>29</sup> Award Winners and Fellows: <https://staff.sheffield.ac.uk/elevate/awards/vc-winners> Internal Staff webpage
- <sup>30</sup> MySkills: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/skills/myskills>
- <sup>31</sup> Student Mentors Scheme: <https://students.sheffield.ac.uk/sheffield-mentors/mentors> Internal Student webpage
- <sup>32</sup> Information and Digital Literacy Framework: [https://www.librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/idl\\_framework/](https://www.librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/idl_framework/)
- <sup>33</sup> Levelling up your skills: <https://students.sheffield.ac.uk/301/level> Internal Student Website
- <sup>34</sup> Online skills audit: [https://301skills.shef.ac.uk/skills\\_audits](https://301skills.shef.ac.uk/skills_audits) Internal Student Website
- <sup>35</sup> Gravity Assist: Propelling higher education towards a brighter future, OfS 2020, page 79 <https://ofslivefs.blob.core.windows.net/files/Gravity%20assist/Gravity-assist-DTL-finalforweb.pdf>
- <sup>36</sup> Digital Learning for Students: <https://students.sheffield.ac.uk/digital-learning> Internal Student Website
- <sup>37</sup> JISC Digital Experience Insights 2021/22 University of Sheffield Results, non published document, held in Digital Learning Google Drive
- <sup>38</sup> Student Voice in Programme Design Internal Audit Report, December 2022, PWC, non published document, held in APSE document management system
- <sup>39</sup> University of Sheffield signs the Care Leavers Covenant, Oct 2020, <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/news/university-sheffield-enhances-support-student-care-leavers-through-care-leaver-covenant>
- <sup>40</sup> Sanctuary Scholarships <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/funding/sanctuary-scholarships>
- <sup>41</sup> Working in Partnership to Improve International Student Integration and Experience, LSE, Report to Office for Students, January 2023: [https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/international-student-integration-and-experience-evaluation-of-evidence-submissions/?utm\\_source=OfS+alerts&utm\\_campaign=9eb4e553ac-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2023\\_01\\_17\\_05\\_27&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_-9eb4e553ac-%5BLIST\\_EMAIL\\_ID%5D](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/international-student-integration-and-experience-evaluation-of-evidence-submissions/?utm_source=OfS+alerts&utm_campaign=9eb4e553ac-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2023_01_17_05_27&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-9eb4e553ac-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D)
- <sup>42</sup> Target Jobs National Undergraduate Employability Awards 2022, The professional panel awards, <https://targetjobsawards.co.uk/winners/2022#:~:text=the%20professional%20panel%20awards>
- <sup>43</sup> Institute of Student Employers Awards 2022, Outstanding University Partnership with an Employer and/or Supplier <https://ise.org.uk/page/ise-awards-finalists-2022#:~:text=outstanding%20university%20partnership%20with%20an%20employer%20and%20For%20supplier>
- <sup>44</sup> Class Central Top 100 Courses of All Time: <https://www.classcentral.com/search?q=university%20of%20sheffield>
- <sup>45</sup> RISE <https://www.risescr.co.uk/>
- <sup>46</sup> London City Connections <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/alumni/london-city-connections>
- <sup>47</sup> Northern City Connections <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/arts-humanities/schools-and-outreach/city-connections>
- <sup>48</sup> Law Family Ambition Programme: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/giving/causes/student-experience/law-family-ambition-programme>
- <sup>49</sup> Coach Cafe <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/alumni/news/launch-new-online-networking-programme-coach-cafe>
- <sup>50</sup> High Fliers Graduate Market report, The Graduate Market in 2022, page 23, [https://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2022/graduate\\_market/GM22-report.pdf](https://www.highfliers.co.uk/download/2022/graduate_market/GM22-report.pdf)