

## 1. Provider context

**A Beacon for Social Mobility, Inclusion and Opportunity:** Originally founded as an emergency teacher training College and a symbol of hope in the aftermath of the Second World War, the University of Worcester was established to help win the peace through education.

The principles which led to our foundation in 1946 continue to shape much of our work today, harnessing the power of education to enrich lives and make a positive contribution to society. Worcester is a thriving university for the 21st Century, with the student voice and values integral to our vision and success.

**Our practice is arguably the most inclusive in the UK and our graduates are amongst the country's most employable, with the latest LEO data placing Worcester graduates number one in the country, when specialist institutions are excluded, for sustained employment, further study or both, three and five years after graduation.**

**The evidence in this submission will demonstrate that the University's performance has been very high quality through the 4 years in scope for both student experience and student graduate outcomes.**

**Our student population:** Worcester is a community of 10,000 students, drawn from over 60 countries, studying a wide variety of disciplines, including nursing and health, teacher training and education, biological science, business, arts, humanities, psychology, law, sports science, management and more.

Approximately 90% of our undergraduate entrants are full-time and are studying for first degrees. Students studying for 'other undergraduate' qualifications, mainly Foundation Degrees, has decreased from around 20% to 12% over the period.

45% of our graduates in scope for TEF have followed courses that are accredited by professional, regulatory, or statutory bodies, all of whom provide strong endorsement for our work.

Around 15% of undergraduate students across the four years are taught through partnership arrangements. We have 15 UK partnerships with Further Education Colleges in the region, a Multi-Academy Trust in the Southwest, and a small number of private or charitable organisations who deliver education and training programmes that the University validates.

**One of Britain's most inclusive universities:** We are an open, meritocratic institution that proactively seeks out people capable of benefiting from higher education, minimises barriers to their participation and contributes to the expansion of higher education opportunities, locally, nationally and internationally.

We have a long-held commitment to welcome, support, and engage students with a broad range of backgrounds. We are in the top 10 of universities across the UK to best reflect society in terms of socio-economic class, according to analysis by the [Higher Education Policy Institute](#), an independent higher education think tank. We were a finalist for the UK University of the Year (2019

Provider name: University of Worcester  
UKPRN: 10007139

and 2020), were shortlisted for the annual [UK Social Mobility Awards](#) (2019 and 2020) and were sought out to become members of '[This is Purpose](#)', the new, national organisation promoting universities in delivering social mobility and '[levelling up](#)'.

97% of Worcester's students are state educated and begin their higher education with lower than national average UCAS tariff points. Around a third of our full-time undergraduates come from disadvantaged social backgrounds, 70% are female, 20% declare some form of disability and 36% are aged 21+.

Our 'whole university' approach to inclusion is driven by a commitment to educational opportunity and equality and developed in successive [Strategic Plans](#). This approach maximises student and graduate success, embedding a culture that values every individual and the generation of knowledge that can be put to work in society, and setting a new model for inclusion and social mobility in UK higher education. From the 'inclusive by design' development of the University's curriculum and estate, to the introduction of extensive mental health and wellbeing support and beyond, this submission will show how this University stands out as a driver of innovative change.

In 2020 the University won the inaugural [Times Higher Education/Advance HE Award for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion](#). It is the University's combination of inclusion and excellence which has seen it shortlisted three times for the prestigious [Times Higher Education University of the Year](#), including in 2019 and 2020, the first two years in scope for the TEF.

**An engine of opportunity:** Our inclusive approach, combined with quality education, drives our success in supporting students to benefit from an educational experience that is personally transformative and to succeed in their chosen career.

This is evidenced through the exemplary employment track-record of our graduates as measured by many published indicators. According to the Government-published Longitudinal Educational Outcomes study (2022), **Worcester graduates are number one in the country, when specialist institutions are excluded, for sustained employment, further study or both, three and five years after graduation.**

We empower our graduates to use the skills and attributes that they develop through university study to make a significant contribution to society through employment and good citizenship.

#### **Partnership case study: Working in partnership**

For decades the University reached out to communities and individuals who in previous generations would not have had the opportunity to benefit from higher education. Working with Colleges and high-quality educational organisations, the University has provided programmes in many parts of the UK in such vital but neglected areas as Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Learning Support, Early Years and Parent Education. For example, the University's work with a large Multi-Academy Trust in a rural, coastal and isolated area in the South West, helps largely mature, female students, study through sustainable, locally-based Foundation Degrees and associated 'top-up' honours degrees. These courses overcome traditional barriers to HE through flexible timetabling, basing teaching in accessible locations, such as community centres, and extensive tutorial and student support

### **Somerset Centre for Integrated Learning (SCIL)**

Partnership with SCIL has been in existence for almost two decades. Since 2015, it includes validation of two Foundation degrees in Teaching and Learning and a BA Professional Practice top-up

Activity by the University to support teaching excellence with SCIL includes Link Tutor keynotes at student conferences, input to student induction and attendance at online student staff liaison committee meetings, as well as guidance for new course developments. SCIL staff have participated in University staff development events for partnerships, including in 2021/22 sessions on assessment matters and ABC Digital Learning workshops (online). The University partnership librarian provides support for the development of module resource lists and delivers library induction and literature search sessions for students.

The SCIL Partnership Periodic Review in April 2021 reported high levels of student satisfaction (as evidenced by NSS and CES results), and excellent staff student relationships throughout the student journey. The quality of placements and employer links were commended as good practice 'resulting in positive developmental outcomes for students and employers.' SCIL course TEF outcomes metrics are significantly above benchmarks.

### **Our approach to the preparation of this submission**

This submission has been prepared by a group of academic and professional staff and Students' Union (SU) officers working together. Members of the Students' Union Education Council also reviewed the draft, and their input incorporated into the final version. We do not include any of the optional courses in our submission. Throughout the submission we have focused predominantly on full-time students taught by the University. We use the terms 'materially above benchmark' and 'materially below benchmark' and 'broadly in line with the benchmark' as in the TEF dashboard. Improving student outcomes is contingent on providing an excellent student experience for all students, and therefore the evidence provided in section 3 on student experience is also directly relevant to section 4 on student outcomes.

## **2. Student experience**

### **2.1 Our approach to excellence in teaching and learning, assessment, and academic support: the metrics and additional context**

Teaching quality is of the highest importance for the University, and we place particular emphasis on **continuous improvement and innovation in academic practice**. Strategy is implemented through College Directors and the team of School Coordinators for Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement, and is overseen by a dynamic Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee on behalf of Academic Board, together with the University's Executive Board and Board of Governors. Promoting pedagogic excellence is embedded in practical commitment to clear **features of excellence, as follows:**

- Highly effective **inclusive learning, teaching and assessment practices**
- Strong commitment to **formative learning** and **applied assessment**
- Innovative **strategic framework for promoting teaching excellence**
- Outstanding **personal academic support**
- Outstanding effective strategy for **learning resources**
- Highly effective approaches to **student engagement**

- Courses designed with **employability** and graduate attributes as core themes (see section 3.2.2).

Across our provision, we aim to enable all students to realise their potential by developing the academic and transferable skills, including graduate attributes, for successful progression. This is delivered through **discipline-based conceptual and theoretical learning** together with **applied and work-based educational experiences**. Teaching excellence therefore comes in many forms, and is evidenced by feedback from stakeholders including students, graduates, external advisors, and external examiners.

#### **Biological Sciences case study: research informed teaching**

Recognised by the Royal Society of Biology as good practice, in Biological Sciences a research-inspired culture permeates teaching. Students design small projects at Level 4, and at Level 5 plan their major final year research projects in the Project & Career Development module. Modules and assessments at all levels place considerable emphasis on practical fieldwork and laboratory-based experiments. Students also have opportunities to participate in summer research projects funded either by the University or by professional bodies. For example, in Forensic Biology, students have worked on projects with organisations in the sector. This has resulted in undergraduate students having research published prior to graduation and currently additional undergraduate contributions are in the process of being written up for publication.

This research-based pedagogy results in between 20% and 25% of graduates (2019-21 Graduate Outcomes Survey) progressing to postgraduate courses, many of them to MRes or PhD programmes. Students are encouraged and supported to make applications through a workshop in year 3. **The approach has contributed to the outstanding 100% student satisfaction ranking in the latest NSS results** and has been endorsed by the External Examiner who in 2022 commented that most students he met had 'a clear vision of what they want to do'.

**NSS indicators for teaching, assessment and feedback, and for academic support show that we are overall broadly in line with our benchmark.**

At subject level, 8/20 subjects for teaching, 11/20 for assessment, and 12/20 for academic support have indicators materially **above benchmark**, and only 2/20, 3/20 and 2/20 subject areas respectively have indicators materially below benchmark.

The split indicators for different groups of students (age, disability, ethnicity, sex, and deprivation indicators) across teaching, assessment and feedback, and academic support **are all broadly in line with, or above, the benchmark** and therefore suggest that we are delivering very high quality for all groups. Numbers of part-time students are very small and overall indicators for teaching, assessment and feedback, and academic support in relation to the benchmark are -1.2%, +6.3% and +2.4% respectively.

Outstanding in the first year of the period, the NSS indicators worsened relatively, particularly in the most recent year (2022), where the students reporting were those whose University experience had been very largely impacted by the pandemic.

### University of Worcester institutional ranking for NSS core question sets

NSS Core Questions	2019	2020	2021	2022
The teaching on my course	13	38	54	101
Learning opportunities	13	30	25	72
Assessment and feedback	16	20	29	80
Academic support	14	36	48	114
Organisation and management	37	44	57	107
Learning resources	18	11	16	44
Learning community	20	31	33	48
Student voice	12	15	18	66
<b>Overall satisfaction</b>	<b>16/152</b>	<b>41/149</b>	<b>53/149</b>	<b>108/149</b>

This profile of NSS indicators across the four years is mirrored in our **annual Course Experience Survey (CES)** which is sent to all first- and second-year undergraduates. The survey response rate in all years is above 45%. The profile of results shows the consistently very high rates (80%+) of satisfaction for teaching quality in the first three years and the significant impact of the pandemic in year 4, although three quarters of all students responded positively on all questions.

### Course Experience Survey results for teaching questions

CES Teaching questions	2019	2020	2021	2022
Staff are good at explaining things	94.0	90.7	90.8	80.9
Staff have made the subject interesting	89.5	86.0	87.6	75.9
The course is intellectually stimulating	88.9	85.7	86.0	76.3
My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt	89.5	88.1	79.7	82.0
My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth	88.9	86.5	83.1	79.1
My course has challenged me to achieve my best work	88.4	85.8	83.7	77.2

Alongside these quantitative metrics, qualitative comments give insight into what students value, and whether we deliver on this. The report on the 2022 CES is typical of all four years: *As with previous years, the majority of positive feedback from students focuses on the quality and variety of teaching that students receive, as well as the overall support that they are given during their time at the University. Students reflect on the overall enthusiasm and knowledge that staff have for their subjects, and on how they have been encouraged to apply their learning. Students also comment on the positive benefits of the return to face-to-face learning and that online materials and support have also enhanced their overall experience.*

### The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on Worcester

Our student satisfaction on the core measures, and overall, was outstanding for the first year of the period (2019), which was the last pre-pandemic year. **Worcester entered the pandemic as one of the best institutions for student experience nationally.**

Over the next 3 years, during which education in the pandemic accounted for an increasing proportion of each successive cohort's experience, NSS results worsened. In the first 2 years (2020, 2021) of the pandemic affected period, Worcester continued to perform above benchmark

for most questions making up the core NSS metrics, including the 5 indicators used for TEF. In the final year (2022), Worcester, for the first time ever, performed below benchmark for a majority of questions (15/27), including for the indicators in teaching and academic support. This was reflected in our own internal student surveys.

**The negative effect of the pandemic on student experience as reported through the NSS and our own Course Experience Survey was particularly significant at Worcester for three key reasons. These explain why Worcester's position deteriorated relatively, as well as absolutely, and why the highly detrimental effect of the pandemic on student experience at Worcester cannot be accounted for through benchmark data alone.**

**1. The very high proportion of Worcester students on health and education courses which are placement intensive:** The composition of the University of Worcester student body is highly unusual in the sector. 45% of students are studying subjects allied to medicine or education and teaching. This includes the single largest course at the University – Adult Nursing. The unusually high proportion of students following placement intensive courses, including a very large Primary Initial Teacher Training Course, means that these courses and areas of study have a major impact on the University's overall student experience metrics. During the pandemic, the disruption to placements turned this from a major positive to a major negative influence on the University's student experience results. The negative impact on the student experience of the pandemic in Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health courses (including Paramedicine) has been widely commented on nationally, for example by [WonkHE](#) and [AdvanceHE](#).

The extensive, long-lasting disruption in the schools had a correspondingly significant impact on teacher training courses. School and teaching practice were deeply disrupted even after national lockdown restrictions were eased and then abolished.

The relative impact of the pandemic on placement intensive students in health was also affected by the weaknesses of the NHS locally. Mandatory student placements of 2,100 hours over three years are largely concentrated in the acute sector with Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Worcestershire has one of the most fragile acute sectors in the UK with the Acute Trust in special measures from 2015 until late 2020.

Students on many other, less placement intensive courses at the University, continued to report positively on their student experience with 9 out of 38 of all subject areas in the top 10 nationally and a majority in the top 2 quartiles. Contextual evidence reinforcing the significance of placement intensity/disruption on student experience, may be drawn from the AdvanceHE Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey where Worcester performed very strongly through the pandemic, including the most recent years. Postgraduate study at Worcester is much less placement intensive than undergraduate study. In this study, Worcester ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the country overall.

**2. Relatively high social deprivation leading to disproportionately low access to adequate home study space during lockdown:** Over 32% of home students have home addresses within the bottom two quantiles of the Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). The IMD is the official measure of relative deprivation for neighbourhoods in England, and assesses various factors including, for example, income, barriers to housing and services, and living environment for each area. The majority of the University's students returned to their home addresses during the

pandemic and many struggled with inadequate study space in their homes. In 2022, our analysis of the NSS Covid results, including comments, indicated a strong preference from our students to return to fully on campus teaching.

### **3. Relatively poor internet connectivity due to the rural location of many of our students:**

Nearly 50% of home students at Worcester have home addresses within the counties of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Shropshire or Worcestershire. With an average internet speed of 41.5% across the four counties compared to a national average of 51.5% (source: <https://fibreheroes.co.uk/blog/uk-internet-speeds/>), these students were particularly adversely affected by the impact of remote study during lockdowns.

## **2.2 Excellence in Assessment and Feedback**

Prior to the pandemic, we achieved significant incremental improvements in student satisfaction with assessment and feedback. Working in collaboration with students we aim to ensure that their experience of assessment supports learning, and meets requirements for clarity, fairness, consistency, and high-quality prompt feedback. This work is driven by a comprehensive and regularly reviewed [University Assessment Policy](#) and an Assessment and Feedback Task and Finish Group. As indicated above we achieved outstanding NSS satisfaction for assessment and feedback that placed us in the top 30 HEIs for assessment and feedback in years 1, 2 and 3 of the period under scrutiny.

### **Sport case study: applied assessment strategies for skills development**

Ranked 100% for satisfaction in the most recent NSS, a strong focus on applied work-relevant learning and assessment is a feature of excellence endorsed by external examiners in the School of Sport and Exercise Science. As External Examiner said in 2022, the *'developmental nature of the programme challenges students, but provides clear links to our industry ... I especially like the research project poster defence'*.

Work-based learning of between 40 and 100 hours is a mandatory in all courses, and local employers contribute to mini-interview panels, act as guest speakers and review course content for currency. Well-developed partnerships with local schools and community organisations provide students with opportunities to teach and coach both within the curriculum and through volunteer and paid roles. A Coach Education programme enables students to gain national coaching and other sport industry related qualifications, enabling students to find part-time paid work, and to complete their course with a competitive advantage in employment. Progression outcomes for Sports Sciences are 4.6% above benchmark.

Student satisfaction with assessment and feedback has been consistently above sector averages for all bar one of the NSS assessment questions for the first three TEF years. We believe this is due to the impact of our work to address student and external examiner concerns in a small but significant number of courses about consistency in feedback and grading. Over the last four years we have built on identified best practice by ensuring all courses review and **recalibrate assessment criteria** against [University updated generic grade descriptors](#); provide **formal opportunities for formative assessment in the first year**; and induct students into **understanding assessment criteria** and the **use of Turnitin®** for formative learning with respect to referencing. We have recommended a simple format for providing feedback, produced a staff



guide to effective feedback, and targeted advice and staff development to courses where external examiner reports continue to indicate a need for development. We have also undertaken extensive work in relation to academic integrity developing a consistent approach and training materials for staff and for students. The effect of this work has been greater emphasis on formative assessment and using feedback to develop student confidence and learning, as well as marking standardisation exercises, and a greater awareness of academic integrity. External examiner reports are very positive about the impact of this work. For example, a

external examiner in 2022 stated: *'there has been much greater consistency in the ways and styles of delivering feedback (...) using the 'what done well', 'what can be improved', 'lessons for next time' approach is to be commended'*.

The **NSS indicators for assessment and feedback show that overall, we are performing broadly in line with our benchmark**, and for students taught at the University performance is materially above benchmark, and in years 1 and 2 of the four years we performed materially above benchmark. When performance by subject is considered, 11 subjects are performing materially above benchmark. This is clear evidence of very high quality and for some subjects there is evidence of outstanding quality.

The three subject areas performing materially below benchmark include Paramedic Science (included in the Allied Health dashboard), a large course that was particularly adversely affected by the pandemic in years 3 and 4. Additional support and staff development is in place for this course.

Throughout the period **external examiner reports are overwhelmingly positive about course assessment strategies and the quality of feedback**, as evidenced in our Annual Quality and Standards Reports for Academic Board and the Board of Governors. Key themes that run through reports refer to **creative assessment design** in testing academic and applied skills, **excellence** in the provision of **assessment briefing materials**, **rigour** in the processes for **moderation of marking**, and **commendations for the quality of feedback** that supports student development.

### 2.3 Promoting excellent academic practice

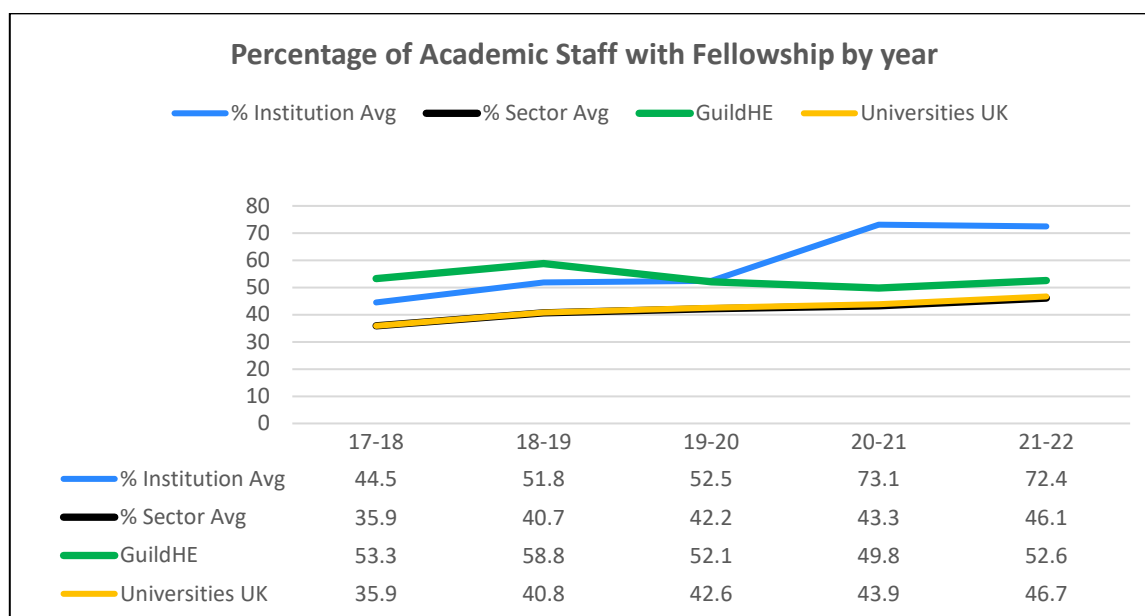
The **promotion of excellence in teaching and learning** starts with the appointment of academic staff. We require all shortlisted applicants to deliver a teaching session as part of the selection process. **Satisfactory teaching observations, informed by the UK Professional Standards Framework, are a key requirement of the probationary year.** Newly appointed academic staff are expected to obtain **HEA Fellowship** at the appropriate level within three years of joining the University via our PG Cert in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education if new to teaching. For those with HE teaching experience the continuing professional development (CPD) scheme, the **Worcester Scheme**, provides support through workshops and mentoring for staff to achieve recognition. **This approach has put us well above the sector average for HEA Fellowships.**

We have a well-established **University Teaching Awards scheme**, (alongside the Students' Union Student Choice Awards) focusing on recognition of innovation and excellence. The Leading Teaching Award acts as a stepping-stone towards developing an application for Senior Fellowship of the HEA or developing an application for promotion. 30 awards, have been achieved over the last four years. The **annual learning, teaching and student experience conference** celebrates teaching excellence and innovation and attracts high quality presentations



and high participation. The conference has stimulated the development of communities of practice; for example, following the 2022 conference there has been interest in forming special interest groups around decolonisation, and teaching with virtual reality. **Case studies of innovative practice** prepared by the winners of awards are made available in an annual Vignettes publication, so that award winning practice is disseminated. **Annual Mentoring Award evenings** for health, social care, and education courses, recognise the contribution of mentors from professional organisations, including Schools and Health Trusts, to the practice learning of our students.

Our whole-institution policy of emphasising professional practice and innovation in pedagogy contributes to particularly **high proportions of our staff having professional recognition for teaching expertise**. As the graph below shows **72.4% of our teaching staff have Fellowship of the HEA at some level, compared with the sector average of only 46.1%, a UUK average of 46.7 % and GuildHE average of 52.6%**



[Source: Advance HE Annual Review of Accredited Continuing Professional Development (CPD)]

There is strong evidence of engagement with practitioner led research and scholarship, and employer engagement that underpins outstanding academic experiences for students across much of our provision. We are now strengthening and broadening the drive for pedagogic excellence. In September 2021, following consultation, we introduced a [University Strategy for Recognition of Teaching Excellence](#) (RTE) and invited all Schools to participate. The strategy provides a framework for Schools to ensure a comprehensive overview of professional development activity for each member of staff and their achievement of recognised professional status and excellence. It is explicitly linked to the completion of probation and annual appraisal processes that themselves are linked to our [University strategy for recognition and reward](#) and our [University Academic promotion scheme](#) for academic staff.

One year on, all Schools have identified a **RTE Lead and administrator and have established baseline data for recording and monitoring achievements and recognition**. Five Schools have used this data to inform appraisal processes, and the other four plan to do so in the current

appraisal round. Six Schools have attended mentor training and are in the process of putting in place mentoring and buddying for teaching excellence. It is too early to assess the impact on individual staff or on recognition and outputs, but engagement and feedback have been very positive. The **academic promotion scheme** was relaunched in autumn 2022, following a pause during the pandemic, and the successful applicants gained promotion based on evidence of teaching excellence as their chosen key criterion.

Over the last four years, alongside opportunities for personal development, we have trialled a **new approach to staff professional development** that focuses on targeted development for course teams rather than an open workshop programme. The rationale for this is to strengthen reflection on practice to achieve a consistent course team ethos that is more clearly identifiable by students, and a team-based approach to quality enhancement. We have now formalised this into the **Learning Design for Teaching Excellence Programme**. The approach is to work collaboratively with departmental leaders and managers to devise a tailored workshop programme leading to agreed actions for adjustments to pedagogy and/or practice. Ongoing support is also offered in the form of action learning sets and follow-up meetings to discuss progress.

In 2020/21 due to the pandemic, workshops focused on planning and delivery of online and blended learning experiences. As well as running 9 bespoke sessions for Schools, departments, and partners, 14 TEL workshops took place in which almost half of staff on teaching contracts participated, with recordings made available as well. In 2021/22, a more extensive programme was in place, with the most popular topics being assessment for effective learning, and tutoring for academic support and challenge, and staff were engaged with one or more workshops. The new programme has much **greater reach in terms of staff engagement** and reported course changes have included, for example, changes to assessment types, a communication tool for just-in-time feedback, use of guest speakers, development of a shared team vision, embedding digital capabilities, and designing a set of principles for review of assessments.

## 2.4 Academic support

We know from student survey feedback and from course representatives that our students place a high value on academic support and staff accessibility. **For the overwhelming majority of full-time students, the indicator suggests very high-quality academic support and, for some subjects, outstanding academic support.** Our indicator for academic support is 2% above benchmark, with some variation across the years from 3.9% above benchmark in year 1, and 0.7% below benchmark in year 4. 12 of the 20 subject areas have indicators 2.5% or more above benchmark, and just two, representing 670 students have indicators below the benchmark.

Our strategic approach to academic support is intended to create a learning community and includes the following features of excellence:

- Very well used **Programme Advisory Service**
- Vibrant and **inclusive welcome week 'festival style' programme** designed to foster a sense of belonging and community, including in 2022 a special 'welcome back to campus' initiative for all students, recognising the damage done to the broader student experience by the pandemic
- Active **promotion of academic societies**, supported by £50 credit for membership

- Strong proactive commitment to **personal academic tutoring**
- Use of an **Early Feedback Survey**
- Effective **tailored support for student groups**

Students can access a **Programme Advisory Service** for advice on module choices, course and pathway transfers or interruptions and general progress matters. This service is very well used and provides invaluable help to students who might have failed a module, wish to take a break from their studies or otherwise need advice on progression arising from a Board of Examiners decision. A wide range of student support services (see section 2.6 on Learning Resources) is also available.

In harmony with our values and strategy, the University regards promoting a sense of belonging to a learning community as vitally important for effective student learning. In recent years, initiatives have focused on the transition to University and induction through an extensive and inclusive **Welcome Festival** for both new and returning students that is tailored to the needs of specific groups of students – for example commuting students or students with a disability. Many courses now facilitate **online pre-entry forums** for new students and our Student Life and Library Teams provide events, information, and resources to support transition. The University actively promotes the growth of **academic student societies**, emphasising their role in engaging with programme development and student representation, as well as creating a sense of a community in each subject area. Following a fall in membership of academic societies in the pandemic years, the University is working with the Students' Union to provide additional resource, including funding a graduate intern to increase membership and engagement.

The success of this academic support strategy is reflected in our **NSS results for learning community, which over all the 'in scope' years, despite the pandemic, has been consistently materially above the benchmark, at 5.2%, 5.3%, 5.5% and 3.5%**. Our Early Feedback Survey is an important part of this strategy. Introduced in 2020 to focus on how students were coping with blended and online learning, the questions have evolved and we now ask questions about feeling included and supported and meeting initial expectations.

The University's track record in supporting the **learning experience of students with some type of disability**

has been central to our commitment and development of inclusive academic practice. Our reputation for inclusion and effective support attracts students with disabilities. We have a range of resources in place to support both students and staff in ensuring awareness of, and practical support for, issues around inclusion. These include an [Inclusive Practice Toolkit](#) for course teams; a University created on-line resource ([SCALE](#)) that promotes inclusive approaches to learning support. These resources and their development have generated greater engagement of course teams with the principles of inclusive practice, especially when preparing for course or departmental reviews.

We continue to place strong emphasis on the **personal academic tutor (PAT) system**, as this is key to supporting students, many of whom are first generation in HE. We have a policy framework setting out core responsibilities of the PAT role that Schools can adapt to ensure the needs of their particular students are met. Some Schools match tutees and PATs based on interests and expertise while other areas have focused on reflective portfolios to form the basis of PAT

discussions. We have developed the student record system to enable PATs to record meeting notes and access attendance and coursework data, together with assignment grades for all modules taken by their personal tutees. Academic staff can therefore build a truly holistic picture of their tutees to help them reflect on progress and set developmental goals. Qualitative student survey data provides much evidence of how **support from PATs impacts on student resilience, engagement, and graduate destinations**. Members of the SU Education Council consulted on this submission told us how PATs challenged them and encouraged them to learn more actively and effectively.

We measure the effectiveness of the PAT system and our learning and academic support through the internal Course Experience Survey, with course level data used to identify the need for targeted development and to track course improvements.

## 2.5 Student Engagement and Voice

The University approach to **student engagement** is to work in active partnership with students. There is evidence of outstanding excellence that **meets the criteria for being among the very best in the sector**. Student survey data **shows satisfaction levels that are materially above the benchmark in three of the four years in scope**. For most of the student characteristic splits, the majority of indicators are materially above benchmark. 13/20 subjects are materially above the benchmark with only 1/20 subject split that is materially below the benchmark, with this result again strongly influenced by Paramedicine, which was so badly affected by the pandemic.

We attribute these strong results as evidence of the following features of excellence in our approach to student engagement:

- a highly valued **active student representative system** developed in partnership with the SU
- very effective approach to the collection of student feedback via **course and module surveys** that increasingly emphasises **closing the feedback loop**
- the importance given to actively **building a sense of learning community** (see also pages 10 and 11)
- strategies for engaging students in the design and development of courses through **participation in quality assurance** and through **opportunities to work as pedagogic partners on learning and teaching development projects**.

We have worked closely with the Students' Union for more than a decade to develop **student academic representation**. The system and its impact are overseen by a joint SU/University sub-committee. All courses have a student course representative, and bespoke training is available to elected representatives devised in partnership by the SU and School Academic Representation Co-ordinators. In 2022, the SU has reported that 94% of the representatives have been trained. Course representatives play a vital role in the development of their course and assuring the quality of the course-based learning experience as members of **Student Staff Liaison Committees** (SSLC) where student business is given priority, as evidenced in SSLC minutes. Accreditation to incentivise and recognise the student representative role is also promoted and run by the SU, with input from staff, as is the annual student representatives conference with staff running workshops for student representatives on leadership skills.

The SU Annual Report on Academic Representation details on a School by School basis the **impact of the academic representation system on the student experience**. The 2022 report indicates this ranges from the development of online communications and discussion forums, resolving timetabling and assessment scheduling issues, providing resources for progression and employability support, improving accessibility of the VLE, as well as raising the profile of course representatives.

The fact that **in the NSS students rate the effectiveness of the SU in representing their interests very significantly above benchmark, and have done so for the last 4 years**, is a clear indicator that the representation system is outstanding and has positive impact.

Across our nine Schools we encourage and support innovation and excellence through designated funding for projects. Our **Students as Academic Partners (SAP) scheme**, which is run annually (although at a lower level during the pandemic years), is an excellent example of how we use the funding to promote research informed teaching, co-creation of the curriculum and the integration of students into academic cultures and communities of practice. Around 20 projects per year are supported and students are paid for their time working on projects. The impact of SAP projects on the development of course curricula through the production of new learning resources, co-design of content, use of digital learning tools, and researching student perspectives, is significant. For example, the 2019 and 2020 SAP Reports include projects that have initiated or underpinned the development of student coaching in practice for Nursing courses; online animations to support the learning of Harvard referencing in Biological Sciences; in Social Work, the piloting and evaluation of peer-led teaching; and introduction of the use and analysis of imagery obtained by unmanned aerial vehicles into the Geography curriculum.

Strategy for working in partnership with students extends to our **core quality management and quality enhancement processes**. Students are full members of course approval and departmental review panels. We have a highly effective student feedback and evaluation strategy that encompasses centrally managed course experience surveys and module evaluations.

Survey outcomes are shared with student representatives, and we have well **embedded strategies for ensuring that the feedback loop is closed** by asking all module tutors and course leaders to respond to surveys in sessions and make action plans available via the VLE. Module leads are also able to provide feedback directly to students using the centralised survey management system, meaning that feedback is timely and visible to all students enrolled on the module. Module evaluation and course level survey outcomes are reviewed by School leadership teams; outstanding practice leading to high levels of student satisfaction is identified and shared, and recommendations for further action and enhancement where specific issues are identified by students form part of detailed action plans. Action plans are live documents, with regular follow ups throughout the year to ensure progress is made. We believe this strategy is a key reason why the **NSS question 'it is clear how the student feedback on the course has been acted upon' was at least 6% above benchmark in 2019, 2020 and 2021**.

Student feedback through these different mechanisms has been instrumental in enabling us to focus quality enhancement on what matters to students – for example, improving the timeliness, consistency, and perceived fairness of assessment feedback (see section 2.2) the arrangements for accessibility to teaching materials via the VLE and initiating improvements to timetabling. The

evidence is that our feedback and evaluation processes are outstandingly effective in engaging students and prompting improvements to the student experience.

## 2.6 Learning Resources

Our consistently high and above benchmark NSS scores for learning resources are the result of many outstanding initiatives. These include:

- The University's commitment to **inclusion and access**, exemplified through The Hive, **Europe's first joint university and public library**
- The effective **development of our digital estate** alongside an award-winning strategy for **student engagement with library services**
- Our approach to **quality assuring resources provided for students studying with partner institutions**
- Our approach to **digital inclusion**, including the implementation of learning technologies and actions to **address pandemic-related hardship**
- The **inclusive design of our physical estate**

**Analysis shows that the specific questions related to Library, IT and specialist resources are rated consistently above benchmark across all 4 years in scope.**

The effectiveness of our approach is apparent in the indicators for different social groups and across subject disciplines. The indicators are either broadly in line with or materially above the benchmark and there are no significant differences between social groups. **In 14 of 20 subjects (80% of the total full-time students) satisfaction with learning resources is materially above the benchmark.**

**The Hive Library:** Worcester reimagined the modern university, developing facilities to be public by design and by opening our doors to the community. We are the only University to have created a shared public and university library where schoolchildren and university students, older members of the community and researchers, all learn side-by-side. This Library, opened by HM The Queen in 2012, is regularly among the most visited of all the UK's public libraries each year. The 28 awards it has won include Best Large Library 2016-19, awarded by the Society of College, National and University Librarians, and The Guardian University Award for Best Contribution to the Local Community. User statistics show that this Library is most used relatively by the least affluent and is a driver of social mobility, a place where students and academics work alongside members of the public sharing books and resources. Its extensive collection of both public and University materials, extensive volunteering programme and quality study spaces, deliver a vibrant learning environment.

**Library Resources:** All reading lists are provided online, and we have **significantly higher engagement with library online resources than elsewhere in the sector**. Over the last 4 years, SCONUL statistics show a steady rate of full text journal downloads between 130 – 135 per FTE student each year compared with 72 – 79 at similar institutions. eBook title requests per FTE student are **routinely in the top quartile of all SCONUL institutions**. Our 2020/2021 project on [reading list engagement by students and staff](#), which won the Talis Award 2021 for Innovation, demonstrated the benefits of structured resource lists embedded into the teaching and learning experience. Project outputs provided a suite of evidence-based resources staff can use to inform their approach to list design.

**Library Support:** We attribute the consistently high levels of student satisfaction with library resources to our commitment to customer service and student engagement, which drives continuous improvement to our [Service standards, measures, and achievements](#)

Library Services have held **Customer Service Excellence accreditation for the last five years**. Examples of engagement initiatives include:

- Development and popularity of **live chat services** (5,000 Live Chat queries and 1,500 in-depth email enquiries in 2021)
- Bookable **one to one appointments**, with 94% of students rating the enquiry service as excellent
- **New Library Service webpages** with a focus on accessibility (55% increase in traffic)
- Specialist teaching delivered by **liaison librarians** (40% increase over past 5 years and is based on extensive [‘learner journey’ research](#) informed by student input)
- **Mystery shopper exercises** that benchmark the University’s services positively against the services of other universities. We deliberately aim to recruit mystery shoppers from hard to reach and under-represented groups, to test accessibility and inclusion
- **Student engagement coordinators** to manage and evaluate a range of student projects, including placements for Library Services.
- Working groups of staff and students routinely **help inform learning space developments**

**Learning Resources at Partner Institutions:** Learning resources indicators are slightly lower for courses delivered through partnership arrangements although they are broadly in line with the benchmark. We have robust service level agreements, rigorous quality checks and have introduced [dedicated student partner pages](#) which include a tailored library search designed to make access to resources easier.

**Support for students during the pandemic:** The pandemic impacted on access to and the range of library and other learning resources and services available, and this is reflected in satisfaction scores for years 3 and 4, although they remained above benchmark. We provided a range of additional learning resources support during the pandemic, including laptop loans, booking systems for PCs and remote access to PCs with course specific specialist software and the re-launch of a student software store (including free access to Adobe for all students needing this for coursework assessment). Microsoft Teams and other Office 365 functions were fully deployed, as well as the roll out of an extensive implementation programme for lecture capture.

While these additional measures were not enough to overcome the issues related to digital poverty, connectivity and access already noted, students appreciated the rapid and effective deployment of the additional support, as evidenced in our 2021 Course Experience Survey.

**Physical Estate:** We have invested significantly in physical and IT related learning infrastructure over the period covered by this submission to ensure students have the highest quality learning environments. This includes refurbishment projects to create adaptable teaching accommodation and modern facilities such as the Art House, which includes flexible studio and exhibition spaces; the Law teaching accommodation with a mock Court and Mooting facilities; and the development of the Clinical Skills and Simulation Centre with 10 state-of-the-art clinical simulation suites of varying sizes.

### 3. **Student Outcomes**



### 3.1 Continuation and completion

**Completion indicators for full-time students are overall, and for each of the four years, broadly in line with the benchmark.** There are only 2/19 subject areas that are materially below benchmark (350 or 3% of full-time students in total), and most recent figures show improved profiles for these two subjects. There are some split indicators – notably ‘other undergraduate’ at Level 4 and Level 5, Asian and Black students, ABCS quintile 1 and non-UK students, that are materially below benchmark performance. Our analysis of the data shows this relates primarily to the partner referred to below. For part-time students, 72% of whom are following Level 4/5 programmes, the indicator is materially above benchmark. Only 28% of part-time students on first degree programmes are materially below benchmark. Our analysis of the data indicates this is largely related to students on the now closed Applied Health Sciences course qualifying with credit (i.e. completing specific modules rather than completing the entire course).

Our continuation metric for full-time students indicator is 3.7 below benchmark, which is primarily due to a significant fall in retention for year 4. **The data dashboard shows that the materially below benchmark performance is related to students taught through partnerships.**

Partnership students account for around 16-18% of the denominators. The 4 year aggregated indicators in terms of distance from benchmark for University taught and for partner taught are as follows:

#### **Student outcome measures for University and Partner provision: distance from benchmark for FT and PT**

Outcome indicators for UW + Partners	Continuation		Completion		Progression	
	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
UW Taught	-1.0	10.3	-0.6	4.7	2.6	0.6
Partner Taught	<b>-12.4</b>	-5.4	-3.8	-1.3	0.3	-7.0

The continuation measure for full-time, partner taught provision is explained by the poor performance of a **partnership with an Embedded College provider (ECP)** to deliver Level 3 and Level 4 integrated pathway programmes for international students, mainly in Business Management.

We believe that data relating to these students was erroneously returned by the University and this has had a very significant impact on the year 4 continuation indicator (see table below). The University has submitted a **data error request** to remove these ECP students as we did not have ‘full contractual responsibility’ for them in the years they were studying with the ECP.

The partnership was terminated in early 2022.

**Continuation indicators for full-time students with and without Embedded College provider included and distance from benchmark**

Continuation indicators impacted by Embedded College	Benchmark	Current Indicator	Difference to benchmark	Indicator with ECP removed	Difference to benchmark
Overall FT Continuation	89.4%	85.7%	-3.7	87.6%	-1.9%
Year 4 Indicator	89.1%	79.7%	-9.4	87.0%	-2.1%
First Degree Indicator	90.6%	86.5%	-4.1	89.1%	-1.5%
Foundation Year Indicator	76.1%	42.6%	-33.5	76.4%	0.3%
Business Management	88.9%	65.9%	-23.0	84.0%	-4.9%

Students taught through many of our partnerships are more likely to be following 'other undergraduate programmes', mainly Foundation Degrees. Many are relatively small courses where a small number of withdrawals can have a disproportionate impact on continuation and completion rates. Higher non-continuation and non-completion rates are found on Foundation Degrees in the health and care field across both University and partner taught courses. In part this reflects the nature of the student entrants and their employment opportunities. Because of the work-based nature of Foundation degrees, entrants will be either employed or undertaking a placement in relevant settings. A formal graduate level qualification is not necessarily a requirement for the role. This impacts on all outcome metrics.

As an example of how we work constructively with partners to meet student needs and ensure high quality, the **structure and purpose of the qualification awarded for one important partnership** has been changed. This relates to a long-standing employer-partnership that has delivered a national professional training programme as a Level 5 Foundation Degree for students who the partner certifies as practitioners, having completed the first year of the course. As many of the students already have a degree, and their primary objective is to become practitioners, this led to early withdrawal from the programme. The course has recently been revalidated as a one-year Cert HE, which will better meet student needs.

The recent appointment of a Pro Vice Chancellor for Partnerships will deliver even greater support to the strategic development of partnership provision and improvement in student outcomes. The availability of OfS outcomes data is also enabling us to take a more systematic approach to monitoring quality indicators.

**For part-time students the overall continuation metric is very positive at 6.4% above benchmark.** 20% of these students are studying on first degree programmes alongside full-time students, whilst the other 80% are on other degree programmes including Diplomas and Foundation Degrees, some of which are taught by partners. Our analysis shows that the continuation outcomes for students on Foundation degrees in health related and social care programmes do have challenges and vary significantly across the partnerships and the University of Worcester. For some students, completion of the first year of a Foundation Degree can give entry to a professional training programme

**Most subject areas accounting for the 65% of full-time students have continuation indicators in line with the benchmark.** The metrics show indicators materially below benchmark in only 6 of 20 subject areas which dropped to -2.1% for University taught students in year 4. Our own internal analysis of student withdrawal and non-continuation rates for the period, (setting aside the impact of the Embedded College as explained above), suggests the impact of the pandemic was a significant factor, particularly for our **larger professional training degree programmes**. Both temporary and permanent withdrawals increased – perhaps not surprising given the demographic profile of students on these courses where there are higher proportions of mature students – mainly women, with caring responsibilities. We have taken action to improve support for students on courses showing higher rates of attrition. For example, we have set up a more structured communications and support strategy to encourage students who temporarily withdrew to return to study; we are piloting learning analytics with our Nursing programmes; we are providing additional dedicated support for international students where diagnostic assessments indicate a need; and we have invested more in simulated work-based learning to support students in developing professional practice. Our own student tracking data is already providing evidence of impact.

More students are reported to be engaging with and successfully completing formative and initial assessments and student feedback indicates they feel more confident in preparedness for practice learning.

The University has a **Student Retention and Success Framework** setting out strategic objectives at each stage of the student lifecycle that provides a basis for a whole institution approach to enhancement activities and projects. Improving student retention has been a priority for the University for the last three years, but the impact of the pandemic has made progress difficult. We believe that above benchmark student retention and completion is founded on a strong sense of belonging and engagement, excellent teaching and academic support, inclusive practice, good organisation, and management, particularly in relation to assessment and feedback, and working in partnership with students. Evidence of these features of excellence has been set out in detail in section 2 on Student experience.

### 3.2 Progression

The **overall progression indicator for full-time graduates is broadly in line with the benchmark** and showing a positive trajectory across the three years from 1.8% above benchmark in year 1, to 2.2% above benchmark in years 2 and 3. Progression outcomes are better for first degree than for 'other undergraduate' levels of study, and this impacts on the metric for partnership courses.

As approximately 45% of our graduates in the TEF period have been following courses in the subject areas of Allied Health, Nursing and Midwifery, and Education and Teaching, where courses have clearly defined professional outcomes in relation to employment, these courses have a strong impact on the overall indicator. A particular feature of excellence for these courses is the contribution of the **University's 'experts by experience' group** of health service users and carers ([IMPACT](#)). Members of this group not only contribute to the design and delivery of the courses; they are also engaged in collaborative research with academic staff on their role. It has been commended as outstanding practice in all internal and external (PSRB) reviews over the period.

**8 of the 18 subject areas  
benchmark; 7**

**with data, have indicators materially above the  
have indicators broadly in line with benchmark and just 3**

**have indicators materially below the benchmark.** The majority of the latter

are health and social care graduates who have studied courses in working with children and families, delivered via flexible learning, or courses in social work (which has very high positive progression outcomes) or childhood and mental health. Similarly, the indicator for the small number of part-time graduates (210) is 3.1% below the benchmark. Well over half of these graduates have been following Foundation Degrees in Education, Health, and Social Care, normally studying whilst in employment.

Studying part-time or taking a flexible work-based learning course of this nature is generally motivated by professional development for the student's existing employment role. Whilst these roles are skilled and valuable, they may not be coded as SOC major group 1-3. However, the responses of these graduates to the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) Graduate Voice questions indicate they are following their chosen career. 89% and 75% responded positively to the statements 'my current activity is meaningful' and 'my current activity fits with my future plans' respectively.

In relation to the split indicators for different social groups (age, disability, sex, ethnicity, deprivations etc) all are either broadly in line or materially above the benchmark. There is very strong performance relative to benchmark for black and mixed-race leavers, males, and those from ABCS quintiles 1, 2 and 3, and those eligible for free school meals (although numbers are small). In addition to this, **87% of our leavers are working in geographic quintiles 1, 2 and 3**, (see dashboard) indicating that **not only do many of our students come from disadvantaged backgrounds, but they are also successfully finding graduate work in regions where there is a more challenging graduate labour market.**

Our **graduates with a reported disability** are in line with the benchmark and either agreed or strongly agreed with the GOS statement 'my current activity fits with my future plans'. The survey also tells us that most of these graduates are pursuing meaningful activities as well as using the skills they learnt as part of their course ( **the same proportion as those with no known disability**).

**Longitudinal educational outcome (LEO) data** shows over the last 5 years **employment outcomes for our graduates are outstanding in terms of sustained employment or further study** three years after graduation. The latest (2022) LEO data shows that at three years after graduation, Worcester scored 90.6%, compared with the average for all English HEIs of 87.0%. This means when ordered from high-low the **University is the 1<sup>st</sup> highest English HEI (excluding specialist institutions) for 'sustained employment, further study or both' at three years after graduation.**

The metrics on progression collectively demonstrate evidence of very high-quality outcomes, together with outstanding excellence in some subject areas, and for sustained employment. We also believe that a full understanding of the progression outcomes for our graduates must take

account of the values and priorities of our students in terms of their own personal work-related goals. This is set out in the next section.

### 3.2.1 Meaningful relevant graduate activity

Our Strategic Plan states that we endeavour to create an institution which encourages students to become good citizens, both within the University community and in the wider world. 'Inspired for Life' means that we not only support students to succeed in their chosen career, but also that we motivate them to use the skills that they develop to build a better world. Recent research into wider definitions of work, such as the [Measuring Job Quality Working Group](#) and the LSE investigation of the concept of '[full earnings](#)' point towards the importance of looking beyond job titles and earnings to measure the value of work. Many of our graduates place high importance on work value and contribution to wider society.

This is evidenced by the results of the **graduate voice questions in the GOS** which show that Worcester graduates consider their careers to be meaningful, that these fit in with their future plans, and are using what they learned in their course. **The results indicate across the 3 years of the GOS significantly higher positive outcomes than the national average.**

#### Proportion of graduates from full-time undergraduate courses in agreement with the graduate voice questions: University of Worcester compared to UK HEIs

Graduate voice questions from Graduate Outcomes Survey	UW 2018	UK HEI 2018	UW 2019	UK HEI 2019	UW 2020	UK HEI 2020
Current activity is meaningful	87.1%	84.0%	86.8%	82.0%	90.5%	84.0%
Current activity fits with future plans	79.9%	77.0%	77.2%	74.0%	81.3%	75.0%
Utilising what has been learnt in current activity	75.0%	68.0%	75.7%	67.0%	76.9%	67.0%

Source: UW: Graduate Outcomes Survey 2017/18, 2018/19, 2019/20. Population: full-time other undergraduate + first degree. National: [HESA Figure 17](#)

Although data is not benchmarked, an overall high-low ranking shows **outcomes in the top 10 of institutions for both questions across all three years.**

Information on future plans is more variable; this may be due in some part to the timing of the survey for students graduating in 2018/19 which took place at the start of the Covid pandemic and may have contributed to some uncertainty. (Note this population is slightly different to that in the preceding table).

**University of Worcester relative positioning to English HEIs (excl. specialist institutions) when the percentage of GOS respondents in agreement with the graduate voice questions is ordered high-low**

Graduate voice questions and ranking	2017/18 position	2018/19 position	2019/20 position
Current activity is meaningful	6	=9	=5
Current activity fits with future plans	19	=24	=7

Utilising what has been learnt in current activity	6	5	=4
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### 3.2.2 Embedding and supporting employability

Strong graduate outcomes in terms of progression indicators, sustained employment metrics and high levels of satisfaction in relation to the value, relevance and meaningfulness of graduate activity is evidence of very high rates of successful progression. We attribute this to the following key features of excellence in our approach to ensuring students have successful outcomes:

- **Embedded employability in course curricula** which focus on the applied and ‘real world’ application of learning and assessment
- Near universal availability of **work placement and other work-related opportunities** inside and outside of the formal curriculum
- **Employer and community engagement** and use of **experts in the field** to inform curricula and provide learning opportunities
- Support provided by the **Careers and Employability Service** which takes account of the University’s mix of students and courses.

Employability is embedded throughout our undergraduate curricula, with all courses required to specify transferable skills and employment related learning outcomes at validation. All courses offer **work-related experience** through placements or work project modules. We work closely with employer representatives to deliver partnerships that support the development and take up of these opportunities. In the 2022 NSS, students agreed that *My placements have helped me to develop my skills in relation to my course*, 5% above the average for English HEIs, with scores for the other work placement questions being just above or just below the English average. **Live projects** are a feature of many Business, Computing, Law, Media, Performance and Creative Arts courses.

#### Law Case Study for TEF: Law into Action with Local Employers

Imaginative and dynamic employability activities have combined with excellent teaching and learning resources to place Worcester’s new Law School, founded in 2016, into the outstanding echelon for both student experience and graduate outcomes:

- **A Top 20 Law School** (The Guardian University Guide 2023), with the:
- **Most Satisfied University Law Students in the Country** (NSS 2022)
- **After Oxford and Cambridge, Worcester is the Joint Top University for Law Graduate Prospects** (The Complete University Guide 2023)

Students studying on the professionally recognised qualifying LLB degree benefit from close relationships with local legal employers, as well as excellent teaching and personal academic support, including a simulated learning environment. A Law Advisory Forum ensures the involvement of the local legal professions. The Forum members include judges, barristers, solicitors, heads of legal departments and members of the CPS, West Mercia Police and the local law society who contribute to the education of the University’s students. Contributions include acting as professional mentors to students; meeting students at networking events; giving guest lectures on career options and workshops on legal skills and creating work experience placements. In addition, Forum members are key to the operation of the University

Legal Advice Centre by giving free legal advice on Family Law issues to members of the public, assisted by law students who gain real world client facing experience.

Students also benefit from a 'moot room' which is 'fitted out' to replicate a court of law and designed to enable wheelchair access to all positions, from trial judge to defendant in the dock, with a separate jury room.

Student experience and graduate outcomes are truly outstanding. Many of the students are from challenging socio-economic backgrounds and/or have an impairment. In common with the student population as a whole, over 97% of students in Law are from state educated backgrounds, underlining the significance of the School and University in truly widening participation, embedding real educational gain and securing excellent employability.

Our inclusive approach to learning and teaching and to student support enables students to make **very strong self-assessments of skills development as evidenced by the NSS results related to personal development**: scores for all questions in all years are well above the average for English HEIs, and in 2021 was well above the top quartile institutions. The optional questions for the NSS obtain a circa 40% response rate in each year.

#### NSS scores for Personal Development Questions

NSS Personal Development scores	2019	2020	2021	2022
UW	86.2	84.5	78.7	77.2
Top quartile	88.7	86.5	72.1	89.2
England	80.5	79.7	72.9	73.8

We have students employed in over 50 different roles by the University, including opportunities for course related employment with the SU. In addition, measures to raise aspirations and improve access to highly skilled work opportunities have included the introduction of **subject relevant Careers events**, the use of specialist industry contacts, and the expansion of University 'earn as you learn' and volunteering opportunities. We also have significant success with the **Worcester Award**, which enables students to record extra-curricular activities and reflect upon how these activities can help to improve their future employability. The number of award completions has been between 200 and 250 for the first three years of the period, although this did drop in 2021/22, due to the pandemic. The Award has been designed to meet the diverse needs of our students, whatever their backgrounds, so they can draw upon activities from within their own communities, as well as those on campus. A notable feature is the Platinum level award, which includes a three-day strengths-based leadership programme. Impact on student learning is very strong and was summed up by one of the Council representatives as '*mind-changing – it made me become an opportunity-seeker*', and there are numerous examples of positive impact on career openings for participating students. This work also attracts very positive feedback from employers involved in the assessment processes.

Students and graduates respond positively in relation to the employability support offered by the University. We use the optional bank of **questions on employability and skills in the NSS**. This shows for all questions scores are well above the English average and in 2021 well above the outstanding and among the best in the sector, being well above the average for institutions in the top quartile.



### NSS Scores for Questions on Employability and Skills

NSS Employability and Skills scores	2019	2020	2021	2022
UW	82.6	82.9	79.6	78.4
Top quartile	87.7	87.0	70.3	80.6
England	78.5	79.0	71.8	73.6

The **University Careers and Employability Service** offers wide ranging support for students directly related to improving progression opportunities and outcomes. Since 2019 advisory appointments, workshops, employability development resources, advertising of job vacancies and careers events, have been offered through the myCareer portal which enabled the delivery of all services throughout the pandemic and its recovery period. Regular engagement with the platform has remained steady from 2019 to date, with approximately 30% of the student population actively engaged with the platform.

We have also developed self-directed online learning tools for building CVs and for career planning since 2020. These have been specifically developed to take account of the needs of our own students – particularly those who indicate ‘career undecidedness’.

### 3.3 Educational gains

Our approach to educational gains sits well with our [Learning and Teaching Strategy 2020-25](#), and the articulation of a set of graduate attributes that we consider are relevant to all our students, regardless of their background or aspirations. We have a clear plan to further embed the attributes in curricula and to support students to evidence achievement of the attributes, over the period of the plan. Our thinking on educational gains is influenced by several considerations:

- commitments to the **principles of inclusion, diversity, and equality, realising potential and social mobility**
- our excellent graduate outcomes in relation to **sustained employment** that is ‘meaningful’, ‘relevant’ and ‘fits with future plans’
- placing **graduate attributes** at the centre of what we want to measure
- the experience we have had in trialling a ‘career readiness’ survey
- a conviction that our **approach must be efficient, effective, and beneficial to all stakeholders**

Our success in guiding graduates into rewarding careers is critical. But other factors, such as being able to provide higher education to individuals from families where they are the first generation to enter higher education is also essential for students to fulfil their potential as drivers of social mobility and ‘levelling up’. Our **approach underpins the very strong graduate employment and further study outcomes** as set out in the previous section.

We recognise that the educational gains of completing a programme of study in higher education are multiple and often personal to the individual graduate. As we have demonstrated (see section 3.2.1), what constitutes success in employment outcomes is about more than salary or status; for many of our students, success will be sustained employment that is meaningful and relevant to their individual aspirations. With a high proportion of students following courses in health,

education, and social care, employment that has high societal value and is personally rewarding is important to the individual.

The University **graduate attributes** were developed through discussions with staff and students and intended to give a coherence to the educational outcomes that all students can expect to be embedded in their courses at Worcester. The attributes reflect our values as an educational institution, and they also signal the skills and qualities that are particularly valuable to graduates aspiring to professional employment and lifelong learning opportunities that will be challenging and fulfilling.

Our graduate attributes are: **social responsibility, reflective and resilient lifelong learning, problem solving, teamwork and effective communication, and digital citizenship**. These can each be realised within disciplinary contexts and applied practical learning opportunities of programmes of study. We regard the graduate attributes as providing a **tangible, outcomes-focused model** to benchmark students' own skills development against and identify potential development needs.

We support achievement of the graduate attributes as educational gains primarily by embedding them in course curricula and encouraging course teams to use them in setting learning outcomes at course and module level. The attributes can form the basis of conversations with personal academic tutors to assess progress and set learning goals. A [toolkit](#), facilitated by trained School Learning and Teaching Co-ordinators, supports course teams to reflect on the attributes for this purpose. We are at the early stages of refreshing training for personal academic tutors in developing graduate attributes through personalised and coaching pedagogies.

We have developed or piloted several diagnostic tools to support student self-reflection and understanding, including a study skills check and a diagnostic audit of skills related to spelling, punctuation and grammar aimed at new students. We have also trialled a **career readiness survey** of all students at the start of each academic year that aims to capture students' career thinking and preparedness and their engagement with employability activities.

At the moment, these tools have been developed independently; we now plan to assess them as part of a University model of educational gains.

### Concluding summary

**The evidence in this submission has demonstrated that the University's performance has been very high quality through the 4 years in scope for both student experience and student graduate outcomes.**

At Worcester we have pioneered and developed a 'whole university approach' to our work, which examines every activity of the University and the way in which each activity and facility promotes inclusion and participation, whilst simultaneously contributing to educational excellence, student and graduate success.

Completion and Progression outcomes are very high quality in all three years.

We have presented evidence that graduate outcomes were outstanding as measured in terms of sustained employment and/or further study.

TEF metrics for the student experience in the only pre-pandemic year in scope were outstanding at the University across the range.

Each year, the University educates many hundreds of first-class teachers, midwives, nurses, paramedics and other health professionals. The University's unusually high proportion of students on these placement intensive courses meant that the pandemic had a disproportionately detrimental effect on our NSS metrics at institutional level, particularly in the 4<sup>th</sup> year in scope. Away from the placement intensive courses, outstanding results were achieved in courses such as Biology, Computer Science, Law and Sports and Exercise Science. The results in Social Work and Childhood and Youth were the best nationally.

The deeply disrupted, mandatory, professional placements in education and health also detrimentally affected our students and our relative progression and retention data. Despite this highly negative impact, our commitment to student voice and the provision of outstanding, highly inclusive and effective learning resources achieved outstanding results throughout the period in scope.

As the University moves forward from the challenges of the global pandemic, we will continue to demonstrate our clear commitment to, and record of excellence in, providing an inclusive, very high-quality education where every student at the University has the opportunity to make the most of their own precious human potential and achieve excellent outcomes.

## References

University strategy, policy and process documents that are available on our externally facing webpages have been hyperlinked in the text, along with research or project reports available in our open access research repository WRaP. The following list refers to internal committee reports or similar that have been drawn upon for the purposes of the TEF Submission. All documents unless hyperlinked are unpublished and available on request.

- Annual Academic Quality and Standards Report and Development Plans 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21 Academic Board; 2021/22 ASQEC
- National Student Survey Report 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 to University Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC)
- Course Experience Survey Report 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, LTSEC
- Report on Graduate Outcomes Survey 2020, 2021, 2022, LTSEC
- Report on Learning Design for Teaching Excellence workshops, September 2022, LTSEC
- Academic Representation at Worcester: Update from Academic Representation Oversight Group, 2021, 2022, LTSEC
- Report on implementation and initial impact of Recognising Teaching Excellence Strategy, 2022, LTSEC
- Summary of results for Early Feedback Survey, 2020, 2021 and 2022, LTSEC
- Digital Learning and Teaching Academic Year 2020-21, 2021, LTSEC
- University Teaching Award Scheme Report, 2019/20, 2020/21, LTSEC
- Students as Academic Partners Project Reports, 2018/19, 2019/20, LTSEC
- Careers and Employability Annual Reports, 2020/21 and 2021/22
- Evaluation of the first year of Student Staff Liaison Committees, 2021, LTSEC
- Annual Evaluation Reports for Schools and Colleges, 2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, ASQEC