

University of Winchester Student Submission for TEF 2023

1. Approach to evidence-gathering

In this section, we will outline the authorship and scope of this submission, the nature and representativeness of the data used in support of our findings, and the nature of our relationship with the University of Winchester throughout the process. Herein, we maintain that this submission accurately and faithfully represents the experiences of our undergraduate students.

1.1 Authorship of the Submission

This submission has been compiled by myself, _____ as named student contact.

As the _____ my role centres around representing students as learners and empowering student voices to shape their academic experiences. I am also involved in advocating for high-quality academic experiences at all levels of University decision-making, including multiple academic committees. I am also responsible for _____

Other individuals and groups have also been involved in creating and finalising this submission. The Student Union's Student Voice Coordinator has played a crucial role in gathering and analysing the data used in the submission, and drafting and finalising this document. Winchester Student Union's Executive Committee (made up of elected Officers), StARs, and students from across the student body have also been involved in its formation – from contributing to data gathering through surveys and focus groups, to providing feedback on submission drafts.

1.2 Scope of the Submission

The findings presented hereafter shall apply to those full and part-time undergraduates registered at the University from the academic year 2018-2019 onwards to the present cohort (2022-2023).

This submission will not include either data or comment on transnational education (TNE) courses, stand-alone credit bearing modules not leading to a qualification, or degree apprenticeships which are undertaken at the University.

1.3 Data Gathering

This submission makes use of a mixture of pre-existing evidence sources and additional evidence gathering. The details of these sources can be found in the tables below:

| Pre-Existing Evidence Sources | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Source | Collection Method | Student Representation R/R = response rate ; S/P = student population | Course Representation |
| 1. OfS provided data: TEF data dashboard, Size and Shape of provision, NSS data | National dataset | All students | All courses |
| 2. Student Union 'Big Survey' | Annual Student Union Survey | 2018/19 73% R/R from 8.7% S/P 2019/20 with responses from 16.2 %S/P | 2020/21 has representation from all faculties. The mean proportion of respondents per faculty was 20%. Data on specific course representation were not gathered. |

| | | | |
|---|------------------------|---|--|
| 3. Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) Minutes (Sep-Dec: AY 2020/21, AY 2021/22) | Formal meeting minutes | Data derived from feedback collected by elected Student Academic Representatives from across the student body | 2020/21 minutes cover 17 SSLC meetings (some representing >1 course); 2021/22 minutes cover 30 SSLC meetings – of approximately 60 course programmes (incl. joint pathways) (approx. 30% of courses offered that year) |
|---|------------------------|---|--|

| Additional Evidence Gathering | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| Source | Collection Method | Student Representation R/R = response rate ; S/P = student population | Course Representation |
| 1. Student Academic Representatives (StARs) Semester 1 Survey (Oct/Nov '22) | Online Survey as part of training | 79% R/R from 40% of StARs, who represent ~10.5% of S/P 45% UG1, 22% UG2, 18% UG3 | Multiple courses from across all faculties, and across all levels of UG study |
| 2. TEF Survey (Nov/Dec 2022) | Online Survey (incentivised) | 55.8% R/R from 2.5% of S/P 29% UG1, 29% UG2, 35% UG3 | Multiple courses from across all faculties, and across all levels of UG study |
| 3. Feedback (Nov/Dec 2022) | | Three groups were convened (University, Education, and Underrepresented). 3-6 students attended per group (<0.1% of S/P) not representative | Students from across the following faculties: |
| 4. Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) Minutes 2022/2023 | Formal meeting minutes | Feedback gathered by elected student representatives from their cohorts; | Findings were compiled from SSLC minutes (AY 22/23) - covering approximately 82 UG courses (28% of UG courses offered in 22/23) |

1.4 Independence

Throughout the creation of this submission, the University and Student Union Submission teams have worked collaboratively, without undue influence on each other.

Key areas of collaboration have included: liaising with the University of Winchester's key TEF contact, regularly meeting with the University's TEF Task and Completion Group to share training on and analysis of TEF indicators, providing open access to data, assistance with identifying the scope of courses to include in our submission, defining educational gains, and the sharing of draft submissions.

We have maintained the independence of our submission by gathering data independently from the University and conducting our own analysis on both new and historical datasets, including the OfS dashboards. Further, while we have provided the University with excerpts and drafts of our submission, outlining our findings and direction, no changes in content have been influenced by the provider, who has consistently maintained professional distance from this project.

In light of the above, we confirm that the University of Winchester has not unduly influenced the content of this student submission.

2. Student Experience

2.1 Academic experience and assessment

2.1.1 Teaching, feedback, and assessment (SE1)

The provider submission posits that teaching and assessment practices at the University have been consistently very high-quality during the period of this assessment, with a noted outlier in 2020/21. They link this trend to a holistic approach to embedding high-quality, effective practice, and a teaching culture built on regular engagement, which responds to student needs (e.g. an overhaul of assessment practices to improve student confidence in the system). The provider notes a number of above benchmark courses to substantiate its argument, while also recognising that a number of courses are below benchmark for very high-quality provision.

Student perspectives on teaching, feedback, and assessment support the above, highlighting staff efforts to engage and support students, and well-received changes to assessment-related practice, while also indicating that practice is not always of a consistent quality across the University.

NSS survey results from 2021 and 2022 suggest a narrative of improvement in student perceptions of teaching and assessment, with the proportion of questions (Q1-11) with the percentage of agreement within the benchmark increasing from 55% (2021) to 73% (2022), and one measure even evidencing above benchmark performance (Q10: 8.05ppts above). Overall, this suggests that, in the most recent year(s), students have found the teaching on their course, learning opportunities, and assessment and feedback to be of a very high quality – with noted exceptions in their estimation of how intellectually stimulating courses are, and the fairness of marking and assessment, which have persistently ranked below benchmark – the latter by 4.39ppts in 2022.

Data from SSLC reports and our StARs Semester 1 survey also point toward a majority student perception that teaching is very high-quality, with 54% of responses to ‘What has been most positive about your teaching and learning so far?’ referencing the quality of interaction with teachers, who are cited as being both engaging and supportive. Further, when asked about changes they had seen on their courses, 46% of comments describing changes did so positively, linking this to teaching-related practices – including greater and higher quality interaction with staff in and out of sessions, and greater and more varied support for assignments, including dedicated modules for academic skills, 1:1 support, early release of clear assessment guidelines, and provision for support from Student Support and Success services. SSLC reports from 2019/20 in particular note strong student appreciation (present in 65% of courses for which minutes were received; approx. 14% of courses represented) for staff efforts to adapt to hybridised teaching, including the retention and sharing of lecture recordings, which is likely to have contributed to the return to benchmark for this indicator in Year 4 of the assessment period.

This said, comments on teaching from our StARs survey featured as the overwhelming majority (37% of responses) when asked ‘what would you like to see more of, or change about, the teaching and learning on your course’. Increasing opportunities for interaction, particularly in lectures, but also through seminars, and workshops dominated these comments, in which students expressed strong dislike for teaching which they felt was ‘passive’, non-collaborative, or which ‘lacked passion’. This pattern of recognition for fantastic engagement, but a desire for more was evident in the SSLC minutes from Semester 1 (2022/23), in which 45% of meetings recorded comments lauding the quality of interaction, while requests for changes to enable interaction featured in 39% of meeting minutes.

Student perceptions of assessment and feedback, drawn from SSLC minutes from Semester 1 (Sep-Dec) in 2021 and 2022 evidence recurring student concerns over levels of support for assessment, which the University appears to be moving to address. In 2021, of the 30 sets of minutes available, 70% of them evidenced unambiguously negative reports on assessment and feedback, of which reports, 76% reported perceptions of a lack of suitable and timely guidance to

enable them to succeed with assignments. This pattern is echoed in the minutes from 2022, though with some improvement, with 63% of the 38 sets of minutes provided featuring negative accounts of practices, of which 67% cited a lack of clear and timely guidance. This apparent improvement corresponds with an increase in the frequency of positive remarks (+5ppts) – clustered particularly in the Faculty of Business and Digital Technologies, who express strong appreciation for changes to assessment practice, including workshops, and weekly formative ‘knowledge checks’.

A recurring area of student concern and interest has also focussed on lobbying for the inclusion of scaled/graduated penalties in University assessment policy. Within the period of TEF assessment, the student body has consistently voted in favour of officer elections candidates who have prominently featured scaled/graduated penalties in their manifestos, with the topic featuring regularly in Education Zone meetings and Student Senate discussion (key elements of the Student Union’s democratic functions), since 2018/19. Discussion within the University on this matter is still ongoing, but, as students note, instituting scaled/graduated policies would bring the University in line with the sector, wherein, of the top 50 UK institutions in the UK University Rankings 2018 (The Times), 62% feature scaled penalties for late submissions.

Findings from dedicated assessment and feedback, though inconclusive, also suggest mixed student opinion regarding anonymous marking, with recognition that its use, in their opinion, reduced the risk of unconscious bias, while also noting the benefits of a more holistic approach to assessment and feedback that was present in courses which didn’t employ it (e.g. Performing Arts).

2.1.2 Course content and delivery (SE2)

The provider submission posits that course content at University of Winchester is designed to promote engagement with students, whilst also integrating research and employment-related skills and promoting ‘intellectual stretch’. They present internal and external survey data which demonstrates a clear signal from students, within the limited survey population, who recognise the comprehensive use of academic skills on their courses.

Student perspectives on course content and delivery present a varied picture of engagement and ‘intellectual stretch’, but are positive about course content, and recognising positive changes.

NSS surveying in 2021 and 2022 indicates that course content and delivery is broadly considered to be in benchmark for very high-quality provision. Responses to Q2, as well as Q5-7, clearly demonstrate that, in these years, students perceive their courses to have consistently delivered interesting and challenging content, which provide opportunities to explore new ideas, make links between topics, and apply knowledge in a practical way in line with the designated, very high-quality benchmark (mean difference = -1.2ppts). Notably, however, the degree of intellectual stimulation that students have perceived on their courses has remained significantly below benchmark in this period (mean difference = -3.69ppts).

The delivery of content, in terms of course organisation and management, evidences a clear trend of improvement between 2021 and 2022, with survey results indicating a shift in student perception such that course organisation and communication were rated very high-quality in 2022.

Course content also received positive attention in our StARs survey, with 30% of responses to ‘What has been most positive about your teaching and learning so far?’ referencing highly engaging content. A further 12% of responses from the same question praised timetabling, making note of improvements which had been put into effect in direct response to student feedback. In the same survey, when asked to rank motivations for attending sessions (including course content, achieving a good grade, lecturer/staff interaction, career development, and mandatory attendance), course content led as the most significant factor, representing 29% of responses for first priority, and 4% of responses placed at the lowest priority. Further, when asked to comment on what changes they would like to see to courses, references to course content were in a relative minority (12%), with recommendations within that number focussing on greater diversity in representation (20%) and further opportunities to engage with professionals in their field (28%).

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Analysis of SSLC minutes adds some nuance to the above, wherein, 37% of the minutes noted student perceptions of inconsistencies within and between course programmes with regards to the quality of their course content and delivery. Here, there were many recurring examples of distinct module experiences within courses, largely determined by the staff member in charge, who may be incredibly encouraging, highly organised, and 'open to feedback', or act as a block to effective engagement – the teaching was reported to have encouraged student disengagement from lecturer-led sessions, in lieu of web-based, external alternatives.

While this evidence is not sufficient to detract from the overarching message of very high-quality provision and ongoing improvement presented by more representative sources, it is sufficient to demonstrate that variation persists at inter and intra-course levels, and implies that students feel more could be done to by the provider to establish and maintain minimum standards and expectations for very high-quality provision across the board.

2.1.3 Evidence of research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement in enhancing the student academic experience (SE3)

The provider submission aims to demonstrate a commitment to research, scholarship, and professional practice, as elements of beneficial impact on student experience, through data which suggests research/scholarly activity is embedded in teaching practice, as well as through positive evaluations from partnered professional bodies (e.g. CIfA) regarding course content and design.

While our data prevents us from being able to comment meaningfully on the impact of research, innovation, and scholarship on academic experience, there is evidence to suggest student perspectives on course content highlight a synergy between the increasing embedding of professional links and employer engagement in courses, and student appreciation for such content as a benefit to their academic experience.

In 2021/22, of approximately 60 courses/pathways for which we received SSLC minutes, 46% of courses made reference to provision on their courses for taking part in placements and/or receiving input from industry and external higher education professionals in the form of guest speakers. Alongside this, written feedback regarding opinions on how attending the University sets students up for future success in our recent TEF survey was dominated by positive references to dedicated career-based modules, placements, and acclaim for industry-relevant guest lecturers, equating to 42% of all coded comments. Feedback, though divided in opinion about whether this development was positive or negative, also suggested that links to employers, and more focus on professional links, was becoming more embedded university-wide.

Feedback from one particular student, whose subject stood out and, though it cannot be put forward as representative evidence for all student opinions, does perhaps highlight the efforts which the University is putting into creating employer links, and echoes in its sentiment the comments of those referenced above: "Having visiting lecturers leading in charge of [sic] our modules is really great. Specifically [redacted] for BA and teaches from current experience. We have learnt about the arts council and how to approach creating your own theatre when we leave higher education which is a great skill for the future."

2.2 Resources, support and student engagement

2.2.1 Support for staff professional development and academic practice (SE4)

Due to the staff focus of this criterion, and understandable lack of student perspective on it, staff professional development will not be covered by this submission, though evidence in 2.1.2 regarding increased interaction, and students' appreciation for this, may speak positively to the provider's commentary on staff training and reflection on academic practices.

2.2.2 The learning environment, and academic support (SE5)

The provider submission presents the quality of academic support, and the learning environment, as being very high-quality, and broadly in line with the benchmark. They link this to the success of a responsive partnership approach mediated through a range of Faculty-based academic support mechanisms which have been developed continuously over the TEF assessment period –including Wellbeing and Employability Tutors, Student Success and Support Advisors, and student mentoring schemes – and which evidence positive impacts on students who have accessed them.

Student perspectives on the learning environment largely endorse the views of the provider submission, with a preponderance of evidence highlighting the much-valued efforts of staff across the University to engage and support students to create an inclusive environment.

NSS results show evident improvements in student perception of academic support during the TEF assessment period, with all such measures (Q12-14) moving within benchmark for very high-quality provision by 2022. This coincides with positive student opinion on the learning community, which consistently rates within benchmark where other measures dipped in 2021. Notably, student sense of belonging (Q21) sits significantly above benchmark (+5.14ppts) in the latest data.

This trend was echoed in our TEF survey results, where 87% of responses for ‘my course provides a supportive learning environment’ were the two most positive answers (‘definitely’ or ‘mostly’ agree). Responses for statements about course inclusivity (84% agree) and belonging (79% agree) show similar indications of students’ positive evaluations of the learning environment.

Clarifying comments give further support to this. Of 215 coded responses, 61% were in this vein, citing empathic, and encouraging staff who helped to create a ‘comfortable’ learning environment through the provision of valuable 1:1 services, availability for self-certification for extenuating circumstances, learning agreements for students with disabilities, and staff dedication to giving up additional time to provide support.

2.2.3 The quality of physical and virtual learning resources (SE6)

The provider submission recognises that student assessment of learning resources is below the benchmark for very high-quality provision. They attribute this to the exceptional impact of Covid on student access to resources in the Winchester context, and present the finding as an outlier amid a culture of high investment into physical and virtual resources that benefit all students. The submission substantiates this through evidence of markedly positive student perspectives on resources in 2021-22 in below benchmark courses, drawn from surveys which frame the issue in terms of sufficiency of resources to progress.

Student perspectives on learning resources, in the most recent years, consider course provision to be very high-quality, and value the University’s efforts to develop virtual learning resources. Perceptions around investment, although from a small pool of students, contend a disparity between faculties/programmes, which may link with other data in suggesting a disjunct between student and surveyor definitions of learning resources.

OfS data shows a clear reduction in the quality of learning resources in 2020/21, creating an exaggerated point within a general trend of declination between 2018 and 2022 (from 0.4ppts below benchmark in 2018/19, to 2.4ppts below in 2021/22). The indicator does, however, show a strong recovery in the latest year, reducing the distance from below the benchmark by 3.6ppts – greater than that for Teaching (2.2ppts) and Academic support (3.5ppts) – though still insufficient to place it within benchmark.

Though limited in its conclusiveness, data from our StARs survey suggests that learning resources are not a primary concern for respondents, made evident in the low weighting of resources-related comments for course positives (6% of responses), and recommendations for improvement (8% of responses).

Comments

highlighted a strong impression of overall high-quality,

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course-specific resources (particularly for students), alongside anecdotal references to a wealth of easily accessible resources that support the deepening of students' knowledge and understanding. Negative commentary, especially in SSLC minutes/reports, has invariably centred on calls for earlier release of materials (noted 33% of meetings in 2021/22) and extending the provision of covid-related measures (e.g. recording lectures) (noted in 47% of meetings in 2019/20), rather than commenting negatively on the quality of said resources (as seen in our StARs survey).

discussion around the provider's statement on how funding 'benefits all students' revealed perceptions (which may or may not be representative) that the University prioritises particular courses over others - citing the construction of new spaces like newsrooms for Journalism students, and forensics laboratories, as evidence of this 'favouritism'. In contrast, they argued that though possessing very high-quality resources, were 'side-lined' or 'underfunded' with potential for outstanding provision if supported. This perception of 'underfunding' was also a passionate topic of discussion at Student Advisory Council (2021/22), which noted the same concerns as those detailed above.

2.2.4 Student engagement, and link to improvements to student experience and outcomes (SE7)

The provider submission identifies that Student Voice is broadly in line with benchmark for very high-quality provision. It argues that its community-based, collaborative approach is responsible for this, citing a sector-recognised culture of consistently and actively seeking feedback and input from students, as well as the continual development of student voice mechanisms (e.g. Student-Staff Liaison Committees, modular evaluations), as the chief drivers of these results. Particular attention is paid to BA Film Production, as a specific example of the provider's proactive/responsive practice, and the positive impact this has made on student experience.

Student perspectives on student voice and student experience indicate that students' perspectives support a very high-quality provision of engagement and voice opportunities. The move from Programme Committee Meetings (PCMs) to Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs), alongside which saw the introduction of the Student Chair role, in co-creation with the Student Union saw a marked improvement in student views on opportunities to feedback and feel listened to. With around 700 Student Representatives (StARs), making up over 8% of the student body, engagement is high with student voice at Winchester comparative to sector.

In the period of assessment, great gains were made in student engagement and student experience, one of which being provision to support this work. In 2020-21 academic year, the University funded a part time Student Voice Assistant (SVA) in the Student Union, enabling an increase in resource to support engagement and student voice opportunities. This role was agreed via a valuable student voice forum, Student Advisory Council, where students and the Student Union are eligible to 'bid' and agree funding initiatives to support and enhance student experience. The University's commitment to providing capacity to enhance engagement continued with funding secured to expand the SVA role into a full time Student Voice Coordinator post (2022-23) for the Student Union. This has been invaluable to the strength of student voice mechanisms and engagement opportunities within education and representation at Winchester. This role was introduced on a fixed term basis to support with student engagement opportunities, democratic functions within student voice, the growth of the successful StARs scheme and increasing partnership working between the University and Student Union to promote and elevate student voice. To ensure this success continues to grow sustainably, and maintains high quality, we remain optimistic that the University will secure their onward commitment to the position, embedding a permanent and meaningful support for our student voice capacity to engage students. With the introduction of this role alongside partnership working with the University, our engagement with delivered training to StARs has increased from 60.2% in the year 2019-20 to 83.8% 2022-23, demonstrating the positive trajectory of growth in this area.

The student views on student voice are supported by survey data, for example through our 'Speak Week' TEF survey, we identified that 72% of respondents agree that feedback was heard/acted upon. The NSS data also demonstrates that students ranked student voice focused questions all within benchmark (with Q23 4.94ppts above benchmark in 2021). This coincides with data from our StARs survey, in which, of those who identified changes had occurred between academic years on their courses, 46% of respondents cited positive changes resulting from student feedback (including more support for assignments, changes to pedagogy, and enhanced course content) – mediated through programme evaluations and/or the work of StARs at SSLCs. Through data, it was acknowledged that the University is heading in the right direction in terms of responding to student voice. More however, could be done to focus efforts into embedding good intentions into consistent universal best practise, where 17% of coded comments on 'feedback is heard/acted upon' were negative, noting pockets of impassivity and 'hostility' from staff in the context of student-presented feedback.

2.2.5 Section Conclusion

In light of the above, we feel that student perspectives on their experiences overall would recommend a rating of silver – in which evidence of very high-quality provision is perceived to be typically evident across all indicators, with recognised uncertainty surrounding student perspectives on learning resources.

It is clear that, of those students surveyed, there is wide recognition of the provider's good intentions towards the positive development of staff-student interactions in the service of learning. This ought to be balanced against the recognition that very high-quality experiences are not the norm for all students - as evidenced in the TEF split indicator metrics. Here we note, as a singular example, that 43.8% of FTUG students in the assessment period experienced below benchmark provision in 'the teaching on my course' (derived from the 4-year aggregate FTUG proportion of student of subjects recording below benchmark with a statistical certainty $\geq 50\%$).

3. Student Outcomes

3.1 Positive Outcomes

3.1.1 Support to succeed and progress beyond studies (SO1), including Continuation and Completion (SO2), and positive Progression outcomes (SO3)

The provider submission attributes its consistently within benchmark outcomes to a strategy of 'enabling and identifying excellence', including the rapid and successful adaptation of policy and pedagogy during Covid closure (e.g. a 'no detriment' policy), and tailored student support through intervention measures (Support to Study), 'comprehensive' orientation guidance (e.g. 'Back to Study' days, Autism Spectrum Condition events), and the embedding of employability into every curriculum. Areas of below benchmark performance are outlined (e.g. non-UK, Philosophy & Religious Studies students), alongside intentions for future action to address these areas of poorer performance.

Independent Data on student perspectives on continuation, completion, and progression are understandably limited. Such questions do not feature in the NSS, and the routine surveying that Winchester Student Union undertakes has not historically included alumni research (as SO3 implies), and has neither focussed on, nor had the capacity to analyse, student outcomes in terms of specific student perspectives on continuation and completion. That said, we would like to offer commentary on the following areas highlighted by the provider in their submission: student perspectives on support, Covid adaptations to pedagogy, and on the drive to embed employability into every curriculum.

In relation to the provider's claims around the impact of high-quality academic support and student partnership in supporting continuation and completion, we refer back to our analysis of SE5 above, noting the strong signal from students that the University works to create a supportive

learning environment, and which, we would conjecture, has contributed meaningfully towards the institution's evaluation as being within benchmark of very high-quality for these measures.

Student perspectives on Covid support, derived from SSLC minutes in 2020/21, after students' return to campus, show appreciation for efforts to facilitate teaching during the lockdown period (noted in 50% of minutes). Hybrid teaching was welcomed (91% of minutes), and much discussion and desire for it to continue, making specific note of its utility to continuing to study when unable to attend in person.

Data from our TEF survey provides insight into student perspectives on careers provision at Winchester, and the perceived impact of their time at the institution.

Herein, on a Likert scale regarding 'the University supports me to understand my career options', 73% of responses gave the two most positive answers. This pattern of positive weighting was mirrored when students responded to 'my course works to make students aware of career opportunities', evidencing, again, 73% agreement. Finally, 79% of respondents expressed agreement with the statement 'I feel that attending the University of Winchester sets me up for future success'. When asked for further clarification on their responses, 60% of coded comments referred positively – with 42% referencing the high value they placed on placement opportunities, specialist support, and careers-dedicated module content (including guest lectures from industry), and a further 18% highly rating the course-related knowledge and skills their courses provided which they considered to be important to their future success.

3.2 Educational Gains

3.2.1 Provider intent, and relevance to students (SO4)

The provider submission identifies four inter-linked educational gains (ref. EG1-4), which function as a developmental ethos for students and, seemingly, are to behave as guiding principles behind all activities at the University henceforth. These educational gains emphasise the acquisition of high-level skills and knowledge in service to career readiness, and seek to encourage a disposition to collaborate within communities, during and after their studies, in order to 'make a difference'.

Presenting student perspectives on educational gains has been uniquely difficult. The provider's definition of educational gain has, understandably, been subject to ongoing review during the period of compilation for this submission, therein complicating efforts to accurately gauge student opinion in both historic and novel data-gathering exercises. This said, student perspectives on their priorities and motivations for studying, as well as student feedback on pedagogy, may offer insights into the relevance of the educational gains outlined by the provider to students.

Data gathered from Winchester Student Union's Big Survey in 2019 and 2020 highlights the persistent importance of academic achievement to students, followed by employability, and then personal wellbeing. In the academic years 2018/19, 53.1% of respondents cited achieving good grades as their highest priority, a full 35ppts greater than the second most popular option – 'achieving personal wellbeing' (18.1%), then followed by 'gaining employability skills' (13.7%). This pattern largely persisted in 2019/20, with 48.4% of respondents citing good grades as their highest priority, followed by employability (20.5%), and then personal wellbeing (14.6%).

Interpreting these results within the context of the provider's educational gains may indicate strong support for the relevance of EG1 to students – provided that 'achieving good grades' can be considered as a proxy for acquiring 'subject knowledge, skills, and professional competencies'. This may be borne out by more recent data – wherein, when asked to select reasons for why they chose to study in our TEF survey, the most popular response (21%) was gaining skills and knowledge, followed closely by obtaining a qualification (20%).

The relevance of employability-related skills and knowledge to students also seems apparent, both in its consistently high placing in the priority surveying referenced above (always in the top three highest priorities - of six options total), as well as in the frequent and high degree of praise that courses which have incorporated professional links to industry (see 3.1.1 above). While discussions indicated that students may be uncomfortable with

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employability becoming the driving focus of the University's strategy, citing concerns it could be detrimental to a culture of learning for learning's sake, most recognised its importance to students and saw merit in ongoing efforts to weave it through curricula.

Student support for greater engagement and collaboration with both staff and fellow students (i.e. EG2) has been made consistently evident in student feedback at SSLCs, as well as in our StARs survey (see 2.1.2).

3.2.2 Support to achieve educational gains (SO5)

The provider submission, in addition to noting the quality of its courses, focusses on a plethora of initiatives which have taken place and/or have become embedded during the assessment period which, it argues, evidence the University's continual efforts to substantiate its educational gains.

Student perspectives on this criterion, as referenced previously, evidence broadly positive perceptions regarding the level of support received from course-related staff and student services (see 2.1.1, 2.1.2), as well as giving evidence of strong career-related support within a number of courses across the University (see 3.1.1), and student appetite for further work in this regard.

Unfortunately, we cannot comment in a representative manner on student perspectives of advocacy-based schemes (e.g. the Student Fellows Scheme). From my perspective

over the last two years, the provider has shown a wavering commitment for, in particular, schemes like the Student Fellows Scheme. Herein, although senior leadership support was initially strong throughout the period of assessment, subsequent actions were taken to withdraw funding support for the scheme for 2022/23 without consultation from elected student representatives, as primary consultants, nor from the student body itself. Recent strategizing by the provider around educational gains has seen the reinvigoration of a commitment to the scheme, demonstrating the positive influence of the TEF exercise on student provision. This affirmed commitment to the scheme is appreciated, with students noting how valuable it is for aiding their research skills development, project management skills and impact on the student community through research outcomes.

3.2.3 Evaluation and demonstration of gains (SO6)

The provider submission acknowledges that its educational gains are still under a process of development, and therefore, so too are robust means of comprehensively evaluating and demonstrating them. Evidence they have gathered suggests positive student engagement in 2021-22, without reference to trends over time, unquantified increases in career confidence over time, and response scores regarding values, ethics, and citizenship broadly in line with national averages for the sector.

As referenced previously, the relative novelty of the provider's definition of education gain, itself still under a process of formulation, curtails our capacity to present on student perspectives on their evaluation and demonstration. As such, we are not in a position to offer further meaningful comment.

3.2.4 Section Conclusion

In light of the above, we feel that student perspectives on their outcomes overall would recommend a rating of silver – in which, evidence of typically very high-quality outcomes, and support to achieve them, is evident across all indicators, with the clear caveat that the data we have used to support this recommendation, particularly around educational gains, is limited in representing the student body's perspective.