

Section 1 - Approach to Evidence Gathering

- 1 I am the current President of Marjon Student Union (MSU), and the Student Engagement Committee (SEC), with representatives from every course being invited to attend and share their views and feedback, along with those passed onto them by course mates and other students.

- 2 The Student Engagement & Outcomes Panel (SEOP) is located, hierarchically, alongside the University Board of Studies (UBoS), reporting to Senate. SEOP receives and discusses all the reports, data and evaluations that are received at UBoS. This structure embeds the principle that students are directly engaged in enhancement activities aimed at improving student outcomes and experience. For this submission, I have therefore used the latest Academic School reports, data on continuation, completion & progression, National Student Survey (NSS) action plans, and internal data dashboards to complement the TEF data dashboards: these are all part of our discussions in the SEOP meetings.

Finally, between 3rd of February 2021 and 29th of April 2021, a student-designed and student-led Student Experience Survey (SES) was run, sent to all first year and second year students studying on campus. It aimed to assess how well different groups of students felt they belonged at Marjon and to identify common traits in belonging. Data has been used from this SES, but it was also replicated this year (2022/23) focusing initially on final year students (to gain longitudinal, comparative data from the Year 1 cohort completing the previous SES for the purposes of this submission) and will be continued for first and second years in Spring 2023.

- 3 The initial SES Student Experience Survey (2020/21) had 415 students respond, with 57 of those being postgraduates and the remainder being 348 undergraduates. 174 first year undergraduates responded: 28% of possible respondents. Responses from first and second years were actively sought. Of the undergraduates, 11% were from the Institute of Education, 14% were Marjon Teacher Education Partnership, 13% were Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and 33% were Sport, Health and Wellbeing. 26% did not input which school they belonged to. Our latest SES (2022/23) surveyed third year students to date received 12% response rate at the point of writing the submission.

- 4 the University and Student submissions have been received and discussed. In addition, it was within these forums that the Model for Educational Gain was discussed and co-produced, in addition to smaller, focused meetings with student and staff representatives.

- 5 All undergraduate courses, including partnership courses, are included in this submission and I can confirm that all conversations have been supportive in nature, and the independence of this final submission has been maintained; it was written completely and proofread by me, using

feedback and additional proofreading from Student Union Colleagues and SEOP.

Section 2 – Student Experience & Student Outcomes

Introduction

- 6 The University prides itself on the community feel and it is very clear from all University Strategies that the key focus is *Student Success*. Everything in our University is underpinned by our values. **Ambition:** through collaboration and co-production we achieve more and empower people to be ambitious for themselves and society. **Humanity:** through human connections and the development of communities of practice we aim to contribute positively to individuals and society. **Independence:** through nurturing self-belief, independence, and wellbeing we aim for individuals to have a sense of agency and identity, encouraging diverse views and independent thought. **Curiosity:** through reflection, resilience, and enquiry we push potential and contribute positively to society.
- 7 As noted in the University submission, students and staff have a shared commitment to the Social Learning Paradigm (SLP) through which there are holistic educational experiences provided for all students. This offers authenticity and inclusiveness within a framework of shared values and co-production. Following discussion with the students throughout the process of writing this submission, it was clear that there was a feeling that positive student outcomes and positive student experience are inextricably linked. For this reason, this submission will focus on the key themes that as student body we felt explained why Marjon is rated so highly. These themes are belonging, authenticity, student voice & academic support; each will be discussed and will reference the new SES throughout.

Belonging

- 8 The SES (2022/23) aimed at assessing the sense of belonging within the student body as this is a major factor in gaining the self-efficacy noted in the Model for Educational Gain, and to support continuation and completion. Noted in the SES (2020/21) and the NSS (2022)¹, the sense of learning community at Marjon is highly rated; 12% above sector and in the top 10 universities for Learning Community. It was pleasing to see that the feeling is continuing to grow. Compared to the first SES, the latest SES (2022/23), the proportion of students that agreed with the statement, "I feel suitably supported" has seen a 5% increase (a 10% increase in "strongly agree"), and agreement with "I feel part of a community of staff and students" has grown 12%. The 2020-21 survey identified that students who felt more matched to the intellectual challenge of the degree (because they felt the challenge was just right rather than too hard or too easy) also felt they belonged more and were supported more. At that time, 79% of the 2020 cohort (first year) students felt the challenge was about right, 13% felt it was too hard and 8% felt it was too easy. In 2022-23, 92% responded that the challenge was about right; a 13% increase in students who felt suitably challenged. This seems to show that the way teaching and assessment provides appropriate and interesting intellectual challenge is very positive (and getting more positive); and demonstrates how it helps students to feel connected.

¹ NSS response rates: 2022 (76%)

- 9 The University recognises the importance of supporting groups that can traditionally feel marginalised by wider society, or minorities within higher education. In cutting the Student Experience Survey,

The university can see how welcome these students feel from how they answer specific belonging-based questions on the Student Experience Survey. In both 2020-21, and 2022-23, both these groups answered key belonging questions either more positively or with no significant variation to students without those characteristics. This is positive considering that in wider society, there is evidence that these groups can often feel less welcome. Furthermore, when answering questions in their first year (for context, with only around five months of experience at Marjon) there was either a small positive variation or little difference seen. But by the time this cohort reaches third year the positive variation is significant. The implication is that for these groups who might feel marginalised in wider society, the Marjon community is an incredibly positive experience – and gets more so through their time here. Whilst improvement is seen on almost all measures, the improvement is significantly more in these groups with protected characteristics. This data reflects our anecdotal feedback whereby generally LGBTQ+ students and disabled students speak very highly of their experiences and tell us they feel recognised and valued at Marjon. For a small university, this sense of inclusiveness is crucial to ensure positive continuation and completion, and a positive student experience.

- 10 Our approach to the pandemic provides a positive snapshot of 'belonging' at Marjon. The pandemic response included students being supported with food parcels during isolation, students calling other students in isolation, to ensure they all had contact every day, and there were regular online activities for students to engage with. Marjon was ranked fifth in the UK for its response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2022, published Sept 2021). Whilst a huge part of this was due to the response for students who were living on campus in halls, another part was the teaching approach. A 'pedagogical glossary' was co-produced with students, that avoided any use of *distance* or *off-campus* terminology. The university didn't want students to feel disconnected to the supportive and close community. As such, the notion of *located* and *connected* delivery was developed so that those students who were geographically further away from campus did not feel any less a part of the Marjon community and 'family'. These details show how there is always a pedagogical focus integrated into actions whilst also acknowledging the composition of the student body. Importantly in this year NSS data² would show that positive responses to 'Teaching on my course' was 86% (8% above sector), 'Learning Community' was 78% (10% above sector), and the positive response to the specific statement, 'I feel part of a community of staff and students' was 78% (a significant 20% above sector).
- 11 Belonging is supported by the wraparound support available to all students. Marjon students often talk about the Marjon family, which includes peer support and support from members of staff. This includes a network across academics and Personal Development Tutors, to our Chaplaincy, SU officers, Student Wellbeing and Support, catering and cleaning staff, and those who manage some of our c.170 Marjon Student Colleagues. In the SES (2022-23), when asked about the staff members they work most closely with, 80% of students agreed "they do a good job for me" and 75% agreed that "I enjoy working with them". There is a very wide, welcoming

² NSS response rates: 2021 (77% taught).

community at Marjon. The Student Wellbeing & Support department guides and supports students throughout their studies, is able to provide counsel and advice for students and tailor support for every individual. They have won Department of the Year through our internal Staff/Student Awards, showing how much their work is appreciated by the entire Marjon community, and they were ranked third in the UK in the WhatUni Student Choice Awards in April 2022. The Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee also ensures that inclusiveness is embedded in everything we do. Marjon Sports Federation do a fantastic job at providing activities for all students, whether they want to compete in BUCS, join a social team, or take part in more relaxed and holistic wellbeing activities. The Chaplaincy team provide an environment that is welcoming to all, holding their own events and smaller scale socials using facilities in the Octagon (our chaplaincy building). The Mature Students' Society often holds their own socials either on campus or off, ranging from coffee mornings to band nights. With mature students making up a third of our student body, this society has supported multiple projects focusing on the mature student experience. MSU also provides a safe space for all students, and we either point them in the right direction of where they can receive specialist help and advice, or we help them through the MSU as much as we are able.

- 12 Marjon offers a large variety of clubs and societies which aid and improve the student experience. In the SES (2020/21), members of a society scored more highly in questions about belonging than those who were not in a society. The range of questions included if students felt they belonged, if they felt supported, if their confidence had grown, if they felt they felt part of a community and whether they felt their views and opinions were heard and respected: all scored more highly for those who were part of a club or society.

- 13 What is important is that students are involved in designing the projects supporting the sense of belonging. Many of our projects were developed through our Access and Participation Plan. The Plan, developed in 2019, included consulting with 40 students in face-to-face workshops, and 66 students from specific under-represented groups answered surveys on their experiences.

These experiences were used to develop new projects, including Marjon Student Colleagues. Marjon offers this scheme during the duration of the students' time at Marjon – and offers graduate schemes for when they have graduated. Marjon frequently has over 100 Student Ambassadors at a single time, who are there to introduce new students to Marjon, provide tours to prospective students and be available on open days to promote Marjon. There are positions available on the Welcome Team, who operate the Welcome Desk – providing support to guests and visitors, organising transport and handling the post of the university (and students that live on campus). live in halls with first year students, to provide first aid and mental health support throughout the year.

- 14 Another scheme that has been developed is Marjon Change Makers. The purpose of the Marjon Change Makers project, part of our Access and Participation Plan, is to give students the opportunity to deliver a project, demonstrating their ability to bring about positive change. The Change Maker project allows students to put themselves forward to lead a project (along with support from a member of the university) and potentially receive funding to change an area of the university that they think requires improving. The objective is to create genuine change for students, particularly for those from underrepresented groups, by enabling students from those groups to deliver the change. Now in its fourth year, Change Makers have completed a project, and pre and post surveys from past groups show improvement each year in key areas

such as general confidence, communication, confidence to apply for a stretching job, understanding personal values and talking about strengths with confidence.

- 15 Our Mental Health and Wellbeing policy and strategy is based off the Student Minds Mental Health Framework, and was developed via student surveys and workshops, then built through further detailed workshops with staff and students in early 2020. This student representation continues:

The large number means that we get input from a wide range of student expertise: we recognise that this is a topic on which it's very hard for a small number of reps to speak for others. This also means that in this group there is generally a fair balance of staff and students in discussions which leads to much more engagement and more creative ideas.

- 16 Being a small-campus based university means that specific subject-discipline events become university events. This provides a holistic view of activities and opens eyes to what other activities are going on in society generally. This provides opportunities for cross-discipline and inter-disciplinary learning experiences that helps students prepare for employment and bring students and staff together. As examples, in the performing arts and acting arenas, there is media training through journalism projects, health and well-being support (including injury prevention) via Sports therapy and rehabilitation projects, there are resilience sessions via psychology projects and employability work (including self-employment which is common in this area) with input from business students. It is like a series of jigsaw pieces coming together.
- 17 However, the focus is not just internal. External practice- and community-based activities are embedded in most, if not all programmes. Very much aligned with our values this develops social capital that supports student progression into work but also helps students see how they can contribute to society. There are many examples of how students are supported to manage their learning and employment plans:
our student-led healthcare clinics that focus on pre-habilitation and support local healthcare services; work with language schools that support refugees;

Not surprisingly, these value-based activities mean graduates from Marjon are likely to see their work as meaningful as can be seen in Graduate Outcome surveys - the percentage of our students agreeing that their *current activity is meaningful* has ranged between an 86%-90% over years 17/18, 18/19 and 19/20, with response rates to the survey of 56%, 39% and 53% respectively. Meaning and identity brings a sense of belonging and our SES backs up how important this is to Marjon students. In the 2020-21 survey, when asked *what will drive your choices about your future career* the highest response was "I want to help others in my job" at 86%. In the 2022-23 survey to third and final year students, this was even higher

Authenticity

- 18 Authenticity in learning experiences is supported by the well-qualified lecturers, the use of external professionals and industry specialists for placement and guest-lecturing and through professional accreditation and endorsement (over 60% of our students are on professionally accredited or endorsed programmes). In addition to accreditation, further industry qualifications are embedded where possible. For example in our coaching and sports development degrees, as well as CIMSPA and CMI endorsement and accreditation, UK Coaching Safeguarding, L2 Multi-

sports, FA L1, UEFA C and UEFA B coaching awards are embedded and supported through bursaries.

- 19 All programmes have a focus on offering authentic learning experiences around future careers to support positive outcomes and progression. Taking journalism and media as an example, students link with BBC and other media providers across the region for extended work placements, students work with Derriford Hospital on podcast projects, and there are targeted field trips to enhance employability prospects including BT Sport, Sky Sports News, Sky News. The experiences are not just local or regional, however, and as examples, Outdoor Education students work on collaborative activities with students in Iceland and Ireland, teacher training students work online with students in the US, and forensic students benefit from our partnership with *Locate International* where they can be part of national and international investigative teams solving cold cases with police forces in Devon & Cornwall and internationally. Maybe some of the most successful authentic experiences are evident in our health provision. The award-winning clinics (Good Health & Wellbeing Award at the National Levelling Up Universities Awards 2022) including cancer clinics, leg ulcer clinics, back pain clinics and Speech & Language Therapy clinics are clearly valued by students;

Powerfully, these clinics also show how these authentic experiences can be inclusive

- 20 However, authenticity also includes assessment and therefore appropriate preparation for work and careers. Assessment is tailored to discipline but authenticity is embedded in all assessments; whether it is business students developing plans for a business or product that directly competes with one that actually exists, or acting students having to undertake performances in front of agents. Good examples that emphasise the access to profession-focused resources and direct career application can be seen in our health programmes. Practical clinical simulations and presentations include both facilitator and peer group assessed participation where clinical data are presented on video for students to respond to in a clinical assessment, students work from case-based scenarios to produce either a communication resource for a person's language development or to provide informed consent for an invasive operation, and in osteopathy (which was my course) concepts such as the script concordance test are used that allow direct comparison of case-based problem solving between students and qualified professionals and the final clinical competence exam is fundamentally a demonstration of what the student would do in day-to-day practice with
- 21 Authenticity of experience seems to improve progression. Taking our Sports Therapy programme, for example, following experiences and assessment linked with multiple organisations, students have obtained jobs within professional sport in the sports therapy and rehabilitation area, part of the rehabilitation team at Plymouth Argyle Football Club, Head of Medical Support at Exeter City

Football Club, Head of Youth Medical at Torquay United Football Club and Injury Cover at England Basketball.

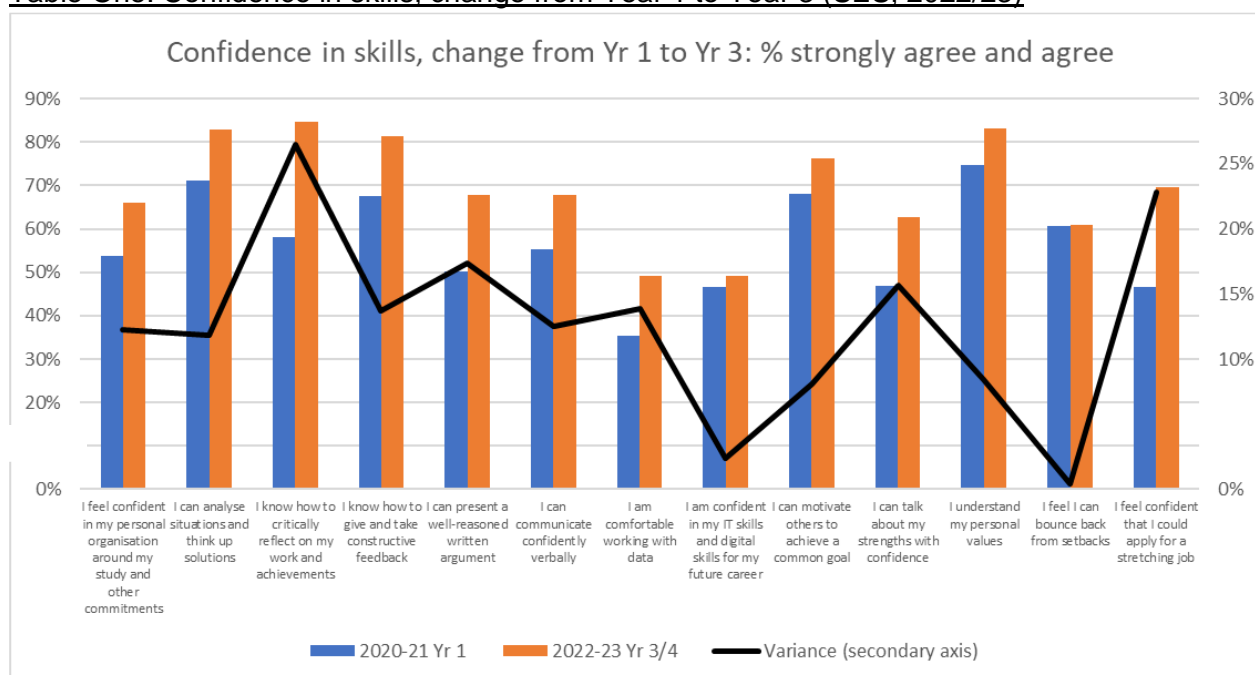
- 22 Framing authenticity to ensure positive progression and careers, students have access to multiple resources. As well as every student being allocated all students have access to Futures Online which provides a supportive learning environment and platform for students and alumni. Resources are permanently available. Many programmes tailor these even further and embed them into modules. As an example, in sport, the content was tailored and co-designed with alumni and colleagues from Southampton Saints, Plymouth Argyle Community Trust, Active Devon, Premier Education, and Plymouth School Sport Partnership. As a direct result of engaging with this embedded content, students have been invited to take part further recruitment activity with partners which has resulted in jobs for students with Active Devon, Premier Education, Plymouth School Sport Partnership, and multiple roles with Argyle Community Trust.
- 23 Resources also include an innovation and incubation space for graduates wishing to establish their own companies or charities. *Wombat Cricket* is a good example, There is also a virtuous circle to such activities as our graduates often come back to support the next cohorts of students and, as examples, we have a Performing Arts Education graduate who established a company to teach performing arts in schools who worked with education students, and we have Acting graduates working with Speech & Language Therapy students in simulation activities.
- 24 Profession-focused resources are available in all programmes and this adds to the authenticity of experience but also the sense that students are being valued. There are open discussions about resources in student panels and as noted in the University Submission, there are specialist rooms and resources supporting all disciplines, including British Association of Sport & Exercise Sciences accredited laboratories and gymnasium, Osteopathy clinics, sports therapy laboratories, mock school classrooms, editing suites, performance analysis suite, theatres, nursing and health simulation suites, forensic laboratories, observation rooms and a *Crime Scene House*. These clearly help provide excellent, authentic learning experiences and when combined with the digital resources and platforms such as MarjonCanvas and Studiosity (these are outlined in the University Submission), it provides a powerful learning environment.

Student Voice

- 25 The TEF indicator data for student voice is deemed to be outstanding. Indeed, following a combined staff and student review of student voice mechanisms in 2018, students are now able to provide feedback after every session, mid-module, end of semester and are embedded in all quality assurance mechanisms. There is also a system called 'Chatback' which means students can provide anonymous feedback at any time about any part of the university, so it can be received, reviewed and acted upon quickly. Since its implementation in 2018, the university has received and responded to over 1000 Chatbacks in these 4 years. Programme Voice Panels provide powerful opportunities for staff and students to engage as does the Student Experience Council and the SEOP. NSS data would suggest the combination of these mechanisms is powerful, being 11% above sector in both 2022 and in 2021 (the latter again emphasising the key work done during the pandemic).

- 26 However, student voice is not just feedback and representation. For Marjon, many students need to develop the confidence and skills to ensure they can be ‘heard’ and therefore improving the potential for positive progression opportunities. The University Submission talks about the Oracy Project which relates to this area. It is also a reason why students wanted self-efficacy and communication skills (within Global Citizenship) to be a fundamental part of our Model for Educational Gain. It was also a reason why it was included in the SES survey. The longitudinal view of tracking year 1 cohorts in 2020/21 to third year in 2022/23 via the SES (2022/23), showed that there has been an improvement in all questions about skills confidence from this cohort over the 21-month period. The biggest percentage point improvements are in “I know how to critically reflect on my work and achievements” and “I feel confident I could apply for a stretching job”, both over 20 percentage points improvement. Over 80% of students agree or strongly agree that they can “analyze situations and think up solutions”, “critically reflect on my work and achievements”; “give and take constructive feedback”, and “understand my personal values”. Students are most confident in statements about interpersonal skills, self-efficacy and influencing which integral to our Model for Educational Gain (see Table one)

Table One: Confidence in skills, change from Year 1 to Year 3 (SES, 2022/23)



- 27 A key function of enhancing student voice is enabling student voices to be part of day-to-day decision making. This has become a core benefit of the Marjon Student Colleagues project. The initial goals of this project, started in 2019, were to develop more student and graduate employment opportunities; ensure they are all consistently high quality; improve graduate outcomes and evaluate what makes a difference to graduate outcomes. But an additional and significant benefit was identified as part of the TASO funded Marjon Student Colleagues evaluation; that when students or recent graduates are embedded within teams, it enables more creative ideas and more effective decision-making which better reflects and supports the student experience. This means the students feel of value, and gain confidence.

- 28 What is noticeable again is the virtuous circle of such projects, students helping students which not only develops a sense of community but also a synergy whereby personal independence and confidence can grow, whilst valuable experience is gained.

Academic Support

- 29 Academic support, as well as Student Wellbeing & Support, Futures, MSU and other professional services, operate an open-door policy to ensure students can access appropriate support quickly. In addition, services such as Futures and Studiosity, have systems that provide 24/7 support; indeed, the latter service (introduced in 2018/19 and provides on-demand academic feedback) has staff accessible in Australia which means students can get incredibly fast feedback and support at times that colleagues in the UK would be asleep. This is important because students seem to access the Studiosity service very late at night e.g, Studiosity data had 794 unique users with 25.6% of usage being between 20:00-02:00. Feedback from the informal focus groups indicated that the majority of students felt this had meant the feedback they received from lecturing staff became even more discipline-specific and has therefore pushed students further. Interestingly, UKES 2022 data³ would support this notion, with the positive response to the statement, 'My course has challenged me to achieve my best work' being 91% which is 10% above sector. Also, to bring attention to the NSS data⁴ would suggest this positive view was supported by the wider student body, with the positive response to 'I have received helpful comments on my work' being 80% for both taught and registered provision in 2021 (10% and 11% above sector respectively), and 81% for both taught and registered provision in 2022 (11% and 12% above sector respectively).
- 30 The University as a whole has a maximum of 72-hour response rate to emails which again ensures strong communication and support for students. There is a maximum 4 weeks marking turnaround time also with majority of work returned. In the focus groups, this was seen positively as it allowed feedback to be used to support upcoming assignments. The UKES (2022) data would also support with the positive response to the statement 'Feedback on my work has been timely' being 84% (14% above sector). Indeed, for the NSS category as a whole in assessment and feedback, the positive response was 8% above sector for taught provision and 9% for registered provision in 2022.

³ UKES response rates 2022 9.8%

⁴ NSS response rates: 2021 (77% taught, 73% registered), 2022 (76% taught, 72% registered)