

## 1. Provider Context

- 1.1. Kaplan Open Learning (KOL) has over 15 years' experience of delivering online degree programmes and has been working in partnership with the University of Essex since 2007. In 2017 we renewed our collaboration agreement with the University for a further 10 years. KOL is part of the Kaplan, Inc. Group, one of the world's largest and most diverse education providers. KOL successfully registered with the OfS for Approved status in 2018, and subsequently registered for Approved (fee cap) status in 2021.
- 1.2. KOL delivers undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in a number of subject areas including Business, Computing, Criminology, Education, Health, Law, and Psychology. The flexibility of our online provision enables students to study our courses from anywhere in the world, at a time and place to suit them.
- 1.3. KOL's vision is to become a world leader in online learning, making higher education accessible to anyone with the potential and drive to succeed.
- 1.4. In pursuit of the KOL vision, our approach has always been to provide educational opportunities for those who may not have been able to access higher education (HE) at a traditional time or in a traditional way by widening access to a high-quality university education that expands across the globe. This approach provides the overarching framework for the educational gain that we provide to our students, which includes a widened access to higher education through an open entry route, wraparound support to succeed (both academic and pastoral) and vocationally related assessment and activities enabling a truly global learning experience through our vibrant international learning community.
- 1.5. The KOL vision is underpinned by Kaplan's core values. Our core values define our company culture and provide the framework for what we deliver to our students each day.
  - **Integrity** - we hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards in everything we do.
  - **Knowledge** - we offer expert resources to help students achieve their academic and career best.
  - **Support** - we give students the tools they need to succeed.
  - **Opportunity** - we open doors and broaden access to education.
  - **Results** – we are dedicated to helping students achieve their goals – we succeed when they succeed.
- 1.6. Our commitment to providing the highest quality global student experience resulted in KOL being voted the Best Online Classroom Experience at the highly prestigious Global Student Satisfaction Awards 2021. The Global Student Satisfaction Awards are the only student-powered global university survey that captures students' feedback on their study experience. The Awards are delivered by Studyportals in collaboration with the British Council, IELTS and Unibuddy.

1.7. As of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2022, our undergraduate student population stood at 1,954:

Subject Area	Students	Male: Female	UK: O/seas	Average Age		Ethnicity %				
				Female	Male	Asian	Black	White	Mixed	Other
Business	591	44:55	47:53	30	31	6	16	45	4	30
Criminology	28	25:75	88:12	34	50	3	13	78	6	0
Health	58	20:80	62:38	37	37	8	30	43	3	15
Law	760	42:58	48:52	34	39	14	24	39	3	20
Psychology	517	19:81	50:50	31	35	10	7	61	4	17
<b>All UG</b>	<b>1,954</b>	<b>36:64</b>	<b>49:51</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>22</b>

1.8. The student population demographic is mature, with an average age of 33: males at 36 years and females at 32 years. The population is geographically and ethnically diverse with approximately 50% of our undergraduate students based overseas and students identifying as white representing just less than 50%.

1.9. Our students are typically mature, in work (97% of our current student population is in full or part-time employment), with family responsibilities seeking career advancement through further study.

1.10. Analysis of the entry qualifications of our undergraduate students indicates that almost one third of our students (27.5%) joined us on the basis of their work experience and without the usual academic qualifications at NQF level 3 or above.

Subject Area	Entry Level of student population (%) as at 31 July 2022						
	No Qualifications	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7
Business	21.2	5.3	36.7	12.4	11.6	12.6	0.2
Criminology	31.3	3.1	50.0	3.1	9.4	3.1	0.0
Health	28.3	5.0	35.0	13.3	8.3	10.0	0.0
Law	19.1	5.2	28.5	12.4	3.5	19.5	11.9
Psychology	22.9	9.4	37.6	8.3	3.9	12.8	5.1
<b>All UG</b>	<b>21.2</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>33.9</b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>6.0</b>

1.11. These demographic factors, coupled with the part-time and distance mode of delivery have been identified in research by the National Audit Office (2007) as being at significantly higher risk of under-performance and non-completion. However, our TEF metrics demonstrate that the approach we take delivers completion and continuation rates which are materially above the benchmark. For example, our continuation rate is 66.8% which is materially above the benchmark of 54.8% (100% proportion of statistical uncertainty distribution).

## **2. Student Experience: (SE1; SE2; SE3; SE4 and SE5)**

2.1. KOL is committed to providing an outstanding student experience for everyone who enrolls on our degree programmes. Our strategic focus has always been and continues to be on widening participation for those students who could not enter higher education through traditional routes. Recognising that the withdrawal rates for students with our demographic profile combined with the part-time mode of delivery can be high, we have developed a comprehensive wraparound structure of academic and pastoral support which is at the forefront of online learning.

### **2.2. Mode of provision**

2.2.1. All KOL provision is entirely online using our own bespoke Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) which acts as the locus of student academic activity, also providing the central location for a range of support materials, information, and guidance, whilst also hosting opportunities for engagement with a global learning community. A key aim of our academic model is to build a robust, dynamic, and effective learning community for our students and tutors.

2.2.2. This is supported and underpinned by a deep understanding of our unique student demographics, their aspirations, goals, and expectations as well as the constraints under which they engage in their studies. Advanced data analytics from the platform enable us to monitor the entire student journey from initial enquiry, through the admissions process to academic delivery, assessment, and student support, allowing us to implement tailored interventions to encourage retention and completion.

2.2.3. We know that understanding and responding to our students' study experience is central to the delivery and student support model we have developed. This understanding is informed by direct student engagement through our comprehensive system of end of module surveys, student feedback forums, student representatives and Student Council. Insights are gathered not only from existing students and successful graduates but also from students who withdraw from their studies early. We have also facilitated focus groups for students to meet with the Non-Executive Member of our Management Board to discuss KOL's strategic objectives, which informed the development of the KOL Strategic Framework 2022-2027.

2.2.4. Our innovative, world leading VLE allows us to analyse the behaviour and performance of our students in detail and as a result we have been able to develop a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to student support, supported by the application of a learner analytic-driven automated monitoring and response system which is embedded throughout all modules in our provision.

### **2.3. Teaching on My Course and Academic Support**

2.3.1. Our TEF Metric for "Teaching on My Course" is 88% which is materially above the benchmark of 84.1% (80.5% proportion of statistical uncertainty distribution), and the metric for Academic Support is 83.3% which is materially above the benchmark of 80.0%

(66.3% proportion of statistical uncertainty distribution). This performance is a result of our recognition that online tuition and academic support requires additional skills from Academic staff, leading us to develop a thorough approach to online tutor development including an initial tutor training module to enable staff to adapt to online delivery, a process for new tutor mentoring, whereby tutors are mentored through the delivery of their first module. Furthermore, in 2019/20, to ensure the dissemination of best academic practice amongst tutors who themselves operate at distance we launched an annual peer review process. The peer review process has become an integral part of continuing professional development for our tutors and supports consistency of good practice in online delivery with the most recent review taking place in April/May 2022.

- 2.3.2. Our delivery model employs a mix of activities including directed reading, multimedia 'lecturecasts' and synchronous and asynchronous tutor-led activities. All KOL modules include opportunities to interact both in real time and asynchronously with their tutor and fellow students, establishing a community of global learning for students to share insights and experience and foster a sense of belonging.
- 2.3.3. KOL modules are typically limited to groups of 20 students to ensure a good balance between access to individual tutor support whilst participating in a diverse and a cohesive learning community. As part of their studies, students explore topics related to their subject and participate in tutor-led asynchronous collaborative learning activities supplemented by regular individual tutor feedback to each assessment.
- 2.3.4. Every taught module also includes scheduled bi-weekly, tutor-led synchronous seminar activities. These 'real-time' sessions provide an opportunity for students and tutors to discuss course related topics in a more immediate setting, supported by audio and web-cam access. To accommodate students in different time-zones, seminars are recorded and made available on the VLE for students to watch at their convenience. Individual student-tutor support is available to all students via the 'tutor office' hours which are listed in each module on the VLE, and which is usually facilitated using email and Zoom. This good practice is supported by the end of module survey feedback below:

*"The tutor is very engaging and explains complex legal concepts in a clear and simple manner. His feedback is very thorough and gives specific examples of things I could have done to improve my work. He is very thorough with his seminars which overall made a huge difference in my quality of work and enjoyment of the module."* **(End of Module Survey, UG Law, September 2021)**

*"I am very happy with the KOL team, their response rate is great and the tutor of this module provided excellent Q&A sessions, thank you!"* **(End of Module Survey, UG Business, July 2022)**

## 2.4. Curriculum design

- 2.4.1. Our curriculum design and delivery is centred on the strengths and weaknesses of our mature student demographic. Mature students bring a wealth of real-world experience and the education we deliver is intended to allow students to build on this knowledge.

However, many of our students are often returning to learning and some may require support and guidance to address issues of confidence and gaps in their academic study skills.

- 2.4.2. Our curriculum design is tailored to our specific student demographic to focus on employability and career development. We achieve this by teaching the subject in a way that allows students to relate it to their own experience and apply their learning in concrete ways. In addition, module content is developed and delivered by subject matter experts with relevant industrial experience and where possible, assessments are based on vocationally relevant activities.
- 2.4.3. We have embedded outstanding teaching, feedback, and assessment practices, such as the Health Professional Practice Portfolio and interactive discussion activities specifically tailored to support students' learning, attainment, and progression in a part-time, online learning environment, which have been recognised in the external examiner comments below:

*“Online discussions are generally to a very high standard - staff should be congratulated on the rigour of the activities and students on the quality of their contributions and the professional level of inter-student communication... I particularly liked some of the discussion activities. Of note was a discussion in Health, Society and Public Policy (August 2020) where students were presented with a scenario with students enacting different roles/perspectives. Students' contributions were impressive.”*

**External Examiner, BSc Healthcare Management, June 2021)**

- 2.4.4. Module delivery is designed in such a way that learning is broken down into units, with clearly stated outcomes and activities. The activities incorporate reading, pre-recorded lecturecasts, seminars, individual learning activities to develop autonomous learning, learning review, and synchronous interaction where it is appropriate to the module aims. The online discussion forums or collaborative learning questions which are present in the majority of modules allow for student to student and student to tutor interaction.
- 2.4.5. Formal and informal feedback from students indicates that the consistency of module organisation and format is a key feature of the programme:

*“Very informative, easy to access platform”* **(End of module survey - Student on UG Psychology, February 2022)**

*“Overall, the platform is user-friendly and the material on this platform and its strategic placements is very helpful with studies and the support teams and tutors are a great treasure.”* **(End of module survey - Student on UG Business, October 2022)**

- 2.4.6. Many of our Associate Tutors are industry experts or current practitioners and as such they bring relevance and subject knowledge to their delivery. This actively engages students to commit to their learning and develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential. Furthermore, our tutors and subject matter experts are involved in the design of module content, and as industry experts/practitioners their contribution ensures that

the curriculum remains current and appropriate for students seeking career enhancement.

- 2.4.7. In 2021 we established an Employer Advisory Board for each subject area, and this is now fully embedded across all programmes. Employer Advisory Boards are sub-committees of Academic Board and meet twice per year. Contributions from our Advisory Board members have enhanced the development of new programmes and the periodic reviews of existing programmes giving them a strong employability focus.
- 2.4.8. Over the past four years several academic departments have collaborated to develop a 'Journal Club'. Students and staff are invited to join a monthly 'Journal Club' providing an opportunity to participate in an interdisciplinary activity. The Journal Club is conducted via Zoom and lead by a tutor who is supported by a member of the Health or Psychology academic team. The group discuss and critically review an article during the session alongside their peers, thus developing their critical analysis and critical discussion skills. This cross-curricular element provides students with the opportunity to interact across different departments, network with their peers across the globe and engage in academic discussion, fostering the sense of belonging to a truly international learning community. Students are asked to complete a short survey following each Journal Club and to date, 92% of those who responded said that the session was helpful. 96% said that they would attend a future session, and many commented on the value of the sessions:

*"It was a good way to assess my critical thinking amongst other things". (CertHE Psychology student, May 2020)*

*"Not having the bricks and mortar experience of attending a typical university classroom setting can at times make one feel a little detached and isolated, but yesterday's journal club made me feel for the first time that I'm actually studying at university and not just engaged in an autodidactic endeavour". (Anonymous, January 2021)*

*"Very well structured. Good engagement - good opportunity for all to participate to the level that they wished to" (BSc (Hons) Psychology Student, Jan 2021)*

*"I have attended quite a few Journal clubs and I found that this one was the most enjoyable. The Lady who presented the debate was fantastic, and I think that it encouraged more people to actually participate as sometimes people do not appear to want to express an opinion" (BSc (Hons) Psychology Student, June 2022)*

- 2.4.9. All programmes have a Capstone project which is a piece of independent study, developing research, presentation, and analytical skills. Students are prepared for their dissertation through a dedicated research skills module. A recent innovation within the Psychology department is the appointment of an Experimental Officer to provide advice, guidance, and support to students on research design and optimal ways of conducting research. The Experimental Officer offers synchronous practical sessions teaching students how to use various software packages within their research projects. These sessions can be delivered to a group of students, or they can provide tailored 1:1 sessions with a student as required.

- 2.4.10. KOL academic staff also bring a wealth of experience, many holding professional qualifications. KOL supports all academic staff to become fellows of Advance HE and if appropriate to undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Practice (PG CHEP) qualification offered by the University of Essex.
- 2.4.11. The virtual nature of our delivery means that we can draw on tutors from across the UK and internationally, who are able to enrich the curriculum and provide research/industry informed content and discussion from their own specialisms. For example, we have tutors based in Greece and South Africa who can bring experience of criminology and healthcare from their respective regions.
- 2.4.12. KOL Academic staff are supported to become external examiners to broaden and inform their own practice and share best practice from the sector. Currently 57% of academic heads of department hold external examiner posts. They are also supported to undertake further study or research where appropriate.

## 2.5. **Assessment and Feedback**

- 2.5.1. Our TEF metric for assessment and feedback is 86.5% which is materially above the benchmark of 81.7% (91% proportion of statistical uncertainty distribution). KOL programmes employ a variety of assessment methods to enable students to develop essential transferable skills for employability, and we have embedded excellent academic practice to provide high quality feedback across all of our provision.
- 2.5.2. Good practice regarding assessments is consistently identified by our external examiners and detailed in their annual reports:

*“I would like to highlight here the use of collaborative learning question as an assessment method. The assessment is highly interactive in nature and strongly encourages independent thinking, both essential employability skills in psychology. The way how the collaborative learning question is used has developed over the years, with more creativity put in the actual question setting. This consequently has led to some very high standard answers which evidence wider skill development in the student cohort. I also would like to highlight the variety and range of assessment methods. This is particularly the case in Level 6 modules. The variety of assessment methods encourage students to consider information from multiple viewpoints and apply themselves when preparing for the assessments”.* ( **External Examiner UG Psychology, External Examiner Report July 2021**)

*“Many assessments are creative and encourage peer-to-peer learning (e.g., CSP Assessment 1)”* ( **External Examiner UG Psychology, External Examiner Report July 2022**)

*“Students have a wide variety of assessments to develop vital legal skills and other skills needed in preparation for a range of careers. Staff are commended for supporting the students and providing opportunities to develop vital legal, academic and transferable*

*skills, including the ability to demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of the vital and relevant areas of law.” ( External Examiner, UG Law, External Examiner Report June 2022)*

*“Online discussion topics relate to learning outcomes but are also relevant to real work/world situations. This year I particularly enjoyed assignment 2 of the Public Health module which provided opportunity for students to be creative whilst collaborating on realistic scenarios” ( External Examiner, UG Healthcare Management, External Examiner Report June 2022)*

- 2.5.3. An example of how the Employer Advisory Boards described in 2.4.7 add value to assessment within the curriculum was illustrated in the recent 2022/23 periodic review discussions around the concept of ‘Assessment for Employment’. The proposal of conceiving and constructing assessments to reflect the working environments, cultures, ethos and working practices of the real workplace was discussed with an Employer Advisory Board resulting in a new idea for consideration, the continuous assessment through Project Based Learning, with traditional project management ‘milestones’ offering assessment opportunities and illuminating the need for effective group-working and group assessment. This concept is now being taken forward in the UG Business programmes.
- 2.5.4. Our assessment strategy recognises the importance of both summative and formative assessment. Formative assessments play a significant role in maintaining student engagement, especially in an online, part-time learning environment, promoting learning, and developing skills. Over the past four years we have developed more interactive integrated activities within lecturecasts and throughout modules to encourage higher student engagement.
- 2.5.5. Another key aspect of academic support provided by KOL is the provision of grades and feedback in a timely manner. Associate Tutors work to an agreed Service Level Agreement (SLA) which ensures a response to student emails within 24 hours during the working week or noon on Monday if the enquiry is submitted over the weekend. Feedback and grades are made available to students within seven days, allowing them to feed forward into the next assignment task within the module.
- 2.5.6. Grades and summative feedback are provided at regular, fixed points throughout a module along with formative feedback as and when appropriate. The timeliness and quality of the feedback supports our feedforward approach enabling students to develop and enhance the work in their next assessment within the module. The timeliness of grading and feedback is monitored at the end of every marking cycle by Student Support Advisers to ensure compliance, if there appears to be any delays in providing grades and feedback to the agreed timeframes Student Support Advisers will notify the academic teams so that they can follow up with the tutor concerned.
- 2.5.7. External Examiners regularly highlight the quality of feedback provided to students in their annual reports. Tutors are encouraged to provide actionable feedback and identify three areas of strength, three of weakness with improvement points, giving individual



comments and a mark for each of the criteria the work is graded against, as well as an overall mark. The KOL academic team(s) monitor feedback regularly through the second marking and moderation procedures and provide feedback to tutors to share best practice. In response to student feedback, new undergraduate grading criteria was developed to ensure that marking and feedback is clear, fair, and consistent, covering the whole mark range and is understood by both the students and tutors. The grading criteria were developed in partnership with students with external examiner input, launched in 2021-22 and is available to students in every module on the VLE. The quality of the feedback provided for students is consistently highlighted in external examiner reports, as in the examples below:

*“I note the good practice in terms of feedback for all pieces of assessment regardless of the weighting. This is time intensive but so important for students and I note this is applied consistently across all modules”* ( **External Examiner UG Business, External Examiner Report June 2022**)

*“Feedback is generally excellent – it is thorough and provides students with explicit feedforward to aid their future development (or resubmission where appropriate)”* ( **External Examiner, UG Healthcare Management, External Examiner Report June 2021**)

*“The quality of feedback is overall extremely good and the way it is related back to the assessment criteria is an example of good practice.”* ( **External Examiner, UG Law, External Examiner Report June 2022**)

*“The levels of feedback that has been provided to students at all levels of the degree programme are excellent and provide expert guidance to students at every stage throughout the year. I have noted regularly that good feedback at early stages of the modules, especially at assessments, have in a number of instances, has led to poor performance being improved upon and leading to passes. This practice is to be commended.”* ( **External Examiner, UG Criminology, External Examiner Report June 2020**)

### **3. Student Experience: Learning Resources, Student Support (SE5; SE6)**

- 3.1. The KOL student experience begins with the student’s application, and this is also where the wraparound support structure commences. Each applicant is assigned to a dedicated Admissions Adviser who will guide them through the process right up to enrolment. The Admissions team are able to provide support around applying for student loans in addition to advising on programmes that we offer, and the admissions process itself.
- 3.2. We know that our students typically enrol on our online programmes seeking educational gains such as developing the skills and knowledge to enhance their careers or to enable them to switch career paths. Applicants may come to us without traditional academic qualifications and may not have been in education for a significant number of years. As a result, our Admissions Policy provides an open entry route onto a Certificate of Higher Education, from which successful students can progress to a full degree. We believe

that this 'ladder of opportunity' enables people to commence or recommence their higher education journey without having to embrace a significant financial outlay or time commitment until they have determined that an online higher education programme is right for them.

3.3. A key feature of the student experience is the support that we provide to enable our students to enter or transition back into higher education. Our work in this area commences during the admissions and onboarding process to ensure that students have realistic expectations of their study experience, are adequately prepared for successful study and potential additional support requirements are identified and addressed.

#### 3.4. **English Language Support**

3.4.1. English language testing is undertaken by all students whose first language is not English and is provided free of charge as part of the application process. The Kaplan International Test for English (KITE) is mapped to the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR) and can be completed online from anywhere in the world making it completely accessible to all of our applicants. KITE identifies student performance in listening, reading, and grammar and the results are used to ensure students are capable of undertaking their chosen programme of study. KITE also helps to identify areas for further development with support from our Study Skills team which includes team members who specialise in English language support and have themselves been an international student thus bring their lived experience to enhance the support offered.

#### 3.5. **Student Induction**

3.5.1. All new students undertake an induction where the Academic, Student Support and Study Skills teams collaborate to deliver an introduction to online learning that prepares students to commence their first module with confidence and enthusiasm. In addition to course and VLE familiarisation, our student induction incorporates an Academic Readiness Assessment (ARA). Students engage with a series of interactive activities throughout a three-week period culminating in a short academic assignment task. The ARA provides opportunities for the academic staff to make quantitative and qualitative judgements about a student's readiness to progress to their first online module and enables us to determine the nature and extent of additional support that a student may need.

3.5.2. Where a student's ARA submission indicates that they will require additional support, the Study Skills Team will devise a package of measures that will support the student to strengthen their skills and knowledge level to a point where confident independent study becomes the norm for them. Together with our sector-leading 21-day money back guarantee and clear signposting of all of the support on offer we believe that our induction process is key to starting our students on their journey.

*"I enjoyed the Welcome Week, which allowed us to become familiar with the online learning platform and take time to get to know other students on the Students' Forum. I also benefitted from Career Guidance, which helped me with everything from CV writing*

*and interview advice to professional skills". (End of module survey - BSc (Hons) Psychology Student)*

- 3.5.3. Where students with additional learning needs are identified during the admissions process a Reasonable Adjustment Plans (RAPs) will be developed in collaboration with the Disability Officer and Academic staff which is used to ensure appropriate support for students during their studies.

*"As a student with a disability, I disclosed my disability in the admissions stage, and I was contacted by the disability team to guide me through the disability process. My point of contact within this department was fantastic and helped me every step of the way. Students can disclose their disability at any point throughout their course so I would encourage anyone who thinks they may benefit from this support to reach out, you do not need to struggle alone." (BSc (Hons) Psychology student)*

### 3.6. Student Support

- 3.6.1. Support for student learning is manifested in a number of ways within the general structure of modules. The VLE is comprehensive in the quantity and quality of the learning resources available. It is designed so that the presentation of information is consistent removing the need for students to re-learn where or how to access relevant materials. Students are able to engage with interactive activities to check and test their learning, submit formative pieces of work for feedback and engage with their peers through discussion forums and collaborative activities.

*"I really have felt supported throughout the module, evidenced through regular, timely and detailed feedback from my tutor, interesting seminars and a sense of comradeship within the cohort. I also really appreciated the way the module was set up, allowing us to submit draft reports / submissions for preliminary feedback (non-graded of course), making sure that we were on track (and if not, providing us with clear guidance on what could be improved to get us back on track!)." (End of Module Survey UG Business Student, February 2022).*

*"UoE has really impressed me so far. The structure of the course is easy to follow, and the lecturecasts coupled with the seminars really are valuable for the coursework.*

*I want to commend [redacted] for her seminars- she is great at making complex topics easier to understand and explain. Her feedback is also very in-depth, allowing me to really understand where I need to improve moving forward". (End of Module Survey, UG Law student – February 2022)*

*"The structure that he has created to assignments and how to tackle them has been clear and concise. Q&A sessions, along with supporting slides, have made it easy to go back and reference/double check that you have completed all steps. I have been able to apply the learnings from this course to work in a great way, with benefits in ways of working already being delivered. I love that the tutor gives great, honest and clear feedback so quickly, along with grading and not a single Q&A was missed. I've honestly learnt a lot from this module" (End of Module Survey, UG Business – August 2022)*

3.6.2. During their educational journey students can feel confident that our dedicated Student Support and Study Skills teams are available to offer advice, guidance, and reassurance as they progress through their programme.

3.6.3. Upon enrolment to the programme students are transferred from their Admissions Adviser and assigned to a dedicated Student Support Team for their subject area, who work closely with the academic teams and will become their main point of contact throughout their studies. This team builds a relationship with students, managing module enrolments and helping students' keep on track with their study planner which aids motivation and encourages continued engagement, as evidenced by the student comments below. Student support also provide non-academic advice and guidance related to late submission of coursework, extenuating circumstances, and intermission, helping students to navigate our procedures during what can be a time of stress.

*"I'd like to mention two amazing Student Advisers, I almost gave up on my studies, but kept me going. He solved every problem I presented to him and would patiently listen to my questions. He solved them with keen interest and would even consult other teams on my behalf. I had fantastic tutors. They were always on hand to support me even outside their office hours. I am truly grateful for all the support from the University of Essex Online team"* **(Student Testimonial -BA (Hons) Business and Management Student)**

*"The lecturers have without exception been willing to assist and guide my study; not point to the answer but suggest starting points for reading for learning and explanations. I also have to mention the Student Support Advisers, upon whom I can only heap praise. One assisted me to get started and supported me when I relocated and lost internet access for a month. Another was a calming voice when the finals deadlines loomed, and my world started to disintegrate".* **(Student Testimonial - BA (Hons) Business and Management Student)**

3.6.4. We are aware that due to the demographic profile of our student population it can at times be challenging for them to fully engage with their studies alongside all of their other commitments. To support students when this occurs, we have implemented a Leave of Absence policy which facilitates the flexibility of study that our students are seeking. This policy permits students to take a break of up to 3 months between modules which helps them manage life events such as busy work periods, moving home, childbirth, or holidays. Throughout the Leave of Absence period the Student Support Team remain in contact and work with the student to ease their return to study at the end of leave period.

### 3.7. **Study Skills Support**

3.7.1. Students can contact the Study Skills Team at any point throughout their studies with advisers on hand to help them develop their academic skills such as planning assignments, academic honesty and referencing, using the eLibrary and time management. This support can be offered via email for smaller queries, over the phone or in the form of personalised one-to-one support with sessions held through Zoom that can be booked at convenient times for students.

- 3.7.2. The Study Skills Team also offer proactive support to students at the most vulnerable periods of their studies. This includes when they first start their course, at which time a live introductory session is held, and students are offered advice and support via email. If students receive an academic offence throughout their studies, the Study Skills Team reach out to them to offer varied types of support ranging from advice based on draft submissions to a personalised one to one session to discuss the reasons for the offence and how to improve academic practice moving forward.
- 3.7.3. During 2020/21 a new Academic Workshop was developed to support students who have been referred for their first academic integrity offence. Containing exercises and self-tests the workshop helps students develop their academic skills and aims to reduce the number of students being referred for a second offence. At the time of writing the Study Skills team are monitoring the outcomes of the Workshop to assess its effectiveness.
- 3.7.4. We have also identified failure to complete reassessment following a module failure as a critical point in a student learning journey when they are at greatest risk of withdrawing/being withdrawn from their studies. As a result, following each Examination Board, the Study Skills Team contact all students required to undertake resubmission and are available throughout the resubmission period to answer any academic skills queries the students may have and offer feedback on a draft submission.

### 3.8. Learning Resources

- 3.8.1. Unlike most campus-based delivery there are no physical resources involved in the online teaching process. All KOL courses are delivered using our bespoke VLE where our students are provided with access to learning resources that are tailored for online study. The only TEF metric relating to student experience which is below benchmark is Learning Resources with a score of 74% against a benchmark of 82%.
- 3.8.2. It can be seen from the NSS results over the past four years that the response to this question has improved from -10.4 below the benchmark in 2019 to -3.0 below the benchmark in 2022, which is a result of our continued development and enhancement of the VLE and learning resources.
- 3.8.3. Furthermore, data from our internal end of module survey, which mirrors the NSS questions indicates that the continued development and enhancement has been recognised by our students as beneficial and, over the past three years, we have seen an upward trend in the satisfaction scores as shown below:

<b>Approval rating for Learning Resources from End of Module Surveys (NSS Questions: 18, 19, 20)</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>All UG Programmes %</b>	88.7	89.8	90.7

- 3.8.4. We acknowledge that it will take a number of years for the results of the changes that we have made relating to Learning Resources to fully demonstrate impact on the NSS results due to the longer timeframes for study of our undergraduate student population. Students can take between four and nine years (their maximum period of study) to complete an undergraduate degree with us. However, there is already clear evidence of an improving trend in relation to the NSS benchmark for this category and our End of Module Survey results show a promising upward trend in satisfaction.
- 3.8.5. Students receive personalised access to free copies of all core textbooks, provided in a downloadable electronic format accessible across a range of devices. The eBook platform provides students with the flexibility to access their textbooks on a variety of devices both online and offline. Students can study at home on their laptop, write notes on their smartphone, then see the same notes and highlights on their PC at work.
- 3.8.6. The provision of core texts in this way enables students to build their own library of textbooks as they progress through their programme; an integrated search facility allows them to search across all their textbooks from one central place. The eBook platform also supports assistive technologies for users with visual, hearing or mobility challenges. These features include text-to-speech software and screen reader technology.
- 3.8.7. In addition to the provision of core text eBooks, students have access to the University of Essex Albert Sloman Library e-resources including additional eBooks, journals, articles and over 300 databases.
- 3.8.8. Where modules require specific academic software for the completion of coursework and assessment, students are provided with access to software licences free of charge. For example, SPSS and Codio.
- 3.8.9. Our VLE has a responsive theme which provides easy access on a wide variety of mobile devices and conforms to WCAG 2.1 Level AA, which means that there should be no barriers for people regardless of disabilities, assistive technologies that are used, different screen sizes and different input devices. We have an Accessibility Working Group, with members from Learning Technology, Student Services and the Academic Teams who regularly review the VLE and resources to ensure that accessibility standards are maintained.
- 3.8.10. The Accessibility Working Group also developed an Accessibility Hub for the staff intranet which was launched in May 2022 and provides guidance and resources to aid with the development of accessible learning materials.
- 3.8.11. Advice and support for students with disabilities regarding the use of our VLE is available from our Learning Technology team. Students who disclose disabilities during the admissions process are automatically flagged for support when they join a programme.
- 3.8.12. Learning resources on our VLE are organised in a consistent way throughout all modules which minimises cognitive load involved in navigation and facilitates students' access to

key learning materials. The consistent organisation of content also provides the opportunity to monitor student engagement at regular points throughout their studies.

- 3.8.13. Our Learner Analytics System (LAS) enables us to track student engagement and activity on the VLE. The development of a better understanding of student engagement, informs the adaption and tailoring of materials to further improve the student experience. The LAS is also used by the Student Support Team to understand the individual study patterns of students and identify when they are at-risk of failing or withdrawing from their course. Student Support Advisers can use the data to intervene and provide students with the support they need.
- 3.8.14. The LAS has enabled us to automate some interventions based on the study patterns that we have identified from analysis of the data related to engagement on the VLE. Automated interventions are used to encourage students with positive messages, such as congratulating them on the number of posts they have made within a discussion forum. Students may reply to the automated emails with the reply going directly to the Student Support Team for a response.
- 3.8.15. We continually develop the LAS to ensure that we maintain insight into how students are engaging with all areas of their learning resources. A recent innovation includes using the VLE to facilitate extracurricular conferences where students, staff and externally invited speakers can engage via oral sessions, posters, or discussion boards on themed topics. Our inaugural conference in 2021 was well received and appropriately addressed "Narrating the Lived Experience of a Global Pandemic". We plan to develop this model and our next conference will centre on "Student Futures" and is planned for 2023/24.
- 3.8.16. The Learning Technology team are currently scoping the development of an advanced personalised student dashboard to further enhance the student experience. Currently, students have access to a dashboard through the VLE which provides access to their taught modules. The advanced dashboard will enable students to track their progress throughout their programme of study, set and monitor personal goals, make payments for their tuition fees, and download transcripts and other important documentation.
- 3.8.17. Video content plays an important role in the delivery of content in each taught module. Video is produced internally by the Learning Technology Team and contains a combination of animation, audio, illustration, text, stock footage and is predominantly used in lecturecasts. The Learning Technology Team are currently working on a project to improve how video content is hosted and presented to students. This project will optimise video delivery, enable students to access a wider range of content and provide detailed analytics on student engagement with video.

### 3.9. **Study Skills Resources**

- 3.9.1. During their studies, students have access to a wide range of materials aimed at informing, developing, and maintaining their academic skills, to complement their subject-specific studies. These can be found in the Study Skills Hub on the VLE and include resources covering academic integrity, academic writing skills, reflective writing

skills, critical thinking, research skills and how to book one-to-one sessions with a Study Skills Adviser. Additionally, there is guidance around using the library and enhanced guidance for students with specific learning difficulties.

### 3.10. **Careers Guidance resources**

3.10.1. All KOL students have access through the VLE to a bespoke Careers Guidance platform which contains a wide range of resources that are designed to support students in their career development. The resources cover key aspects of careers guidance:

- CV writing
- Career path guidance
- Professional Skills
- Online Presentation
- Interview Advice
- Job Search Advice

### 3.11. **Enhancements to Learning Resources**

3.11.1. Following feedback in end of module surveys regarding the integration of University of Essex resources and services we worked in collaboration with colleagues at the University of Essex and introduced:

- A bespoke 'landing page' for the University of Essex Albert Sloman library for online students linking directly from our VLE to simplify student navigation.
- Access to the University software hub
- TALIS reading lists – allowing students to access resources directly from module materials and also creating a central reading list in collaboration with the University of Essex Library ensuring full availability of the required texts and journals.

3.11.2. Additionally, we have a programme of continual development and refreshment of our multi-media learning materials which support students throughout their modules. These pre-recorded 'Lecturecasts' incorporate multi-media learning content and self-test facilities which encourage students to engage with the learning materials. Student activity on the VLE indicates that they are engaging and completing more formative tasks which previously students neglected due to focusing on activities which contributed to summative assessment.

3.11.3. We have also introduced access to additional learning resources tailored to particular software programmes such as Codio, a development design environment for computing applications and our Research Hub materials for students approaching the final year capstone projects. These resources are supported with instructional materials tailored specifically for students studying entirely online.

3.11.4. We have recently launched a Psychology Technical Hub which was developed and overseen by the Experimental Officer; a new role established in 2021 to provide specific research support to psychology students. The overall aim of the technical hub resource



is to provide centralised information for students to access, use as necessary, and return to when needed to focus on specific statistical tests, software or processes related to their modules or final capstone project. The intention for the future is to widen access to the Technical Hub to all subject areas.

### 3.12. Future Learning Resource Developments

3.12.1. We have a number of future developments planned in relation to learning resources involving our VLE which we will further enhance the student experience.

3.12.2. Through end of module surveys, we have identified that students experience frustration with the navigation from the VLE to the University of Essex Albert Sloman e-library which requires an additional sign-on procedure. Therefore, we are now working in collaboration with the University to develop a single sign on process.

3.12.3. We embed employability skills innovatively and consistently across all departments with a focus on supporting and promoting employability, not only for new career students, but also for more experienced students seeking career progression and enhancement. A framework is being developed consisting of tools, resources, specific practical skills, and knowledge bundles as well as providing outcomes that apply academic knowledge in a workplace context.

3.12.4. To ensure a continued focus on employability, we review all of the integrated employability skills and as part of the periodic review process, taking into account Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) information where appropriate.

3.12.5. In addition, we send out quarterly departmental newsletters to students where we focus on employability related topics. The newsletters were praised by The British Psychological Society (BPS) in their recent accreditation visit for the UG Psychology programme:

*“The way in which students articulate and develop a clear identity as future psychologists that includes; the quarterly newsletter is a noteworthy initiative, which exemplifies the employability focused ethos and that helps to promote students development of psychological literacy”.* **BPS (Sept 2021)**

## 4. Student Engagement and the Student Voice (SE7)

4.1. Our TEF metric for Student Voice is 71.4% which is materially above the benchmark of 62.6% (99.7% proportion of statistical uncertainty distribution). This excellent result is despite the challenges of engaging with students in an online learning environment where students are geographically dispersed in different time zones and in regular employment with other life and family commitments. Over the years we have established various approaches to embed student engagement throughout our provision to inform continuous improvement for student experiences and outcomes.

- 4.2. In 2018 we consulted with students to understand how they would prefer to engage with us. In total 15% of the student population at that time responded, which is an excellent response given the demographic of our student population. 27% of respondents had never completed an End of Module Survey and 75% had never used the online feedback forums, supporting the view that a review of how students engage with us and how we use our online methods of communication is warranted.
- 4.3. Within the consultation students were provided with a proposal for a Student Experience Committee and asked if they would be interested in participating as a member of the committee. 52% of respondents expressed interest in membership of a Student Experience Committee. However, the free text responses indicated that students who were interested in participating did not wish to commit to attendance at scheduled meetings, although they would be happy to contribute via email or a virtual meeting.
- 4.4. As a result of this consultation, in 2019 we proposed and established a Student Council with a remit of formally engaging with topics affecting the wider student population and to inform decision-making across the entire student experience. Membership of the Council is open to all students. Prior to meetings of the Student Experience Committee, (SEC) the Student Council meets to discuss topics which have been identified for consideration at the SEC, by students or by academic staff. Attendance at the meeting itself is not mandatory and Council members are notified of the topic beforehand and can feed in their comments via email if their other external commitments prevent them from attending. The feedback from the Student Council will then inform the discussion at SEC. Attendance of members at the Student Council is currently running at an average of 50% which is extremely positive given the globally diverse geographical spread and variety in time-zones of our student population. The contribution to the meeting increases to 80% when we include those members who provide written feedback on the topics that are circulated.
- 4.5. In 2020 we created the role of Lead Advocate on the Student Council, with the incumbent of this role also being a member of the Student Experience Committee, which is a formal committee in the KOL governance structure.
- 4.6. The Lead Advocate is also the Student Contact for the TEF Student Written Submission. The Lead Advocate, along with 15 other members of the Student Council have worked together to produce the Student Written Submission and we have agreed with the Student Council that in future a Student Submission will be produced on an annual basis to inform the longer-term development and enhancement of the student experience.
- 4.7. All students have the opportunity to complete an End of Module Survey, and the results of the survey are considered by the Student Satisfaction Group (SSG) who meet on a monthly basis. The SSG, whose membership includes members of the Student Experience and Welfare team, academic staff and student support staff identify trends in the satisfaction data and provide responses so that the feedback loop can be closed. The current response rate to end of module surveys is 35%, which is in alignment with the 'good' response noted in general guidance from HEA in 2016, a rate which is quoted

again by Evasys in 'How to achieve high response rates in online surveys' (November 2021).

- 4.8. Student Representatives on Course Committees are responsible for canvassing fellow students to gather views of their peers on their course, that they wish to then bring to the attention of the Course Committee. Students are also members of periodic review and validation panels to inform curriculum development and enhancement.

## **5. Student Outcomes and Educational Gain: Completion, Continuation and Progression (SO1; SO2; SO3, SO4, SO5 and SO6)**

- 5.1. Educational gain is a key focus for all aspects of our delivery given our vision of widening access to higher education and delivering the knowledge and skills that our student body are seeking to enhance their careers or enter a new career pathway. A key element of educational gain for mature, part-time distance learning students is to support them to stay engaged and continue with their studies, complete their studies and progress with a successful outcome.
- 5.2. Research into factors affecting student retention and success in Higher Education have identified a number of risk factors all of which are present in our student demographic including:
- **Age** - HESA statistics show that 'Non-continuation rates of full-time entrants after first year at HE provider' for 'Young' First degree students was 5.3 per cent in 2019/20, with that for 'Mature' First degree students being more than twice that figure at 11.9 per cent. The average age of undergraduate KOL students is 32 and students on KOL programmes have to balance their studies with busy domestic and work-related demands.
  - **Entry qualifications** - For full-time students, pre-entry qualifications were stated to be "the biggest influence on likelihood of continuation" (National Audit Office, 2007). KOL students are typically 'return to learn' students who have not taken part in formal study for many years. KOL also recognises non-traditional entry requirements such as work experience.
  - **Mode of study** - Research from the National Audit Office ('Staying the course: The retention of students in higher education report', 2007) noted that "the factor most affecting a student's chance of continuing is whether they are studying full-time or part-time, with full-time students being much more likely to continue if other factors are held constant" (National Audit Office, 2007: p 20). All KOL students study part-time.
- 5.3. As described in the previous sections our wraparound comprehensive support systems for students enable them to overcome the above challenges and succeed. Building robust longstanding relationships with students in order to gain a good understanding of their individual challenges and study patterns is essential for retention and student success. Our success in doing this is evidenced in our materially above benchmark TEF metrics for Student Experience and Outcomes.

- 5.4. We recognise that whilst there is no formally agreed measure in place to track ‘educational gain’ we strongly believe that our approach to student monitoring ensures that throughout the student journey indicators of educational gain such as module pass rates, continuation rates are in place which provide assurance that expectations are being met.
- 5.5. Monitoring is facilitated by our bespoke Student Management System (SMS). The monitoring is used to identify trends in student performance and inform our Annual Review of Courses returns to the University which result in enhancements to our student delivery. Our monitoring focusses on three key areas of student performance:
- 5.6. **Continuation**
- 5.6.1. Our TEF metric for continuation is 66.8% which is materially above the benchmark of 54.8% (100% proportion of statistical uncertainty distribution). Module pass rates are a leading indicator of overall student performance and allow adverse trends to be identified early so remedial action can be taken. Students who fail modules are identified as at greater risk of withdrawing from studies and as noted in 3.7.4, KOL provides additional support for students at these points in their study.
- 5.6.2. KOL is materially above the benchmark in almost all the split indicators of the TEF continuation metrics. In the subject split indicators, the only area that is below benchmark is the Sociology, Social Policy and Anthropology and this is because our only programme in this area is Criminology which is in the latter stages of teach-out.
- 5.6.3. KOL monitors student module pass rates regularly and internal benchmarking is undertaken to analyse student performance over time and between programme areas.

	<b>Module Pass rate%</b>		
	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>
Business	92	91	90
Criminology	90	89	83
Health	88	87	92
Law	87	88	87
Psychology	86	89	87
<b>All UG</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>88</b>

- 5.6.4. The above data indicates a consistent level of student achievement over time and between programme areas which indicates the effectiveness of our overarching academic delivery and student support systems. The module pass rate for Criminology is the single outlier area identified from our analysis and this is explained by the fact that the BA (Hons) Criminology and Criminal Justice programme is currently in teach-out and student numbers are low. Encouragingly, the replacement programme LLB (Hons) Law with Criminology is growing and the module pass rate for these students is higher at 88%.

5.6.5. We monitor module pass rates at a programme level to identify performance outliers and to assess the impact of any adaptations we make as a result. The following case studies illustrate actions we have taken as a result of our monitoring processes:

- **Case study 1**, the level 4 Business module 'Introduction to Finance' had a pass rate of 80% compared to 90% for the programme area as a whole. We have undertaken a number of actions to address this issue including, changing the delivery to a 'narrative' case-study approach and revising the sequencing of modules to introduce the subject later in the student's study plan. The changes were well received by students but at the time of writing it is too early to assess the impact.
- **Case study 2**. The level 4 Law module 'Legal Skills and Context' currently has a pass rate of 71% compared with 87% for the programme area as a whole. This is the first taught module in the programme and a slightly higher fail rate is normal, however, in 2022 the academic team undertook a complete review of the module delivery including revised activities, content and assessment activities. This new module was launched in August 2022 and initial indications are positive as this cohort has a pass rate of 80%. On-going development work to the Induction module is planned for Q3 2023 to facilitate better group cohesion and employability focus for students. Follow-up monitoring of module pass rates will be used to evaluate the impact of the changes introduced.

5.6.6. The analysis of module outcomes also covers a variety of student demographic categories, including age, gender, ethnicity, and fee status. A key indicator of educational gain is the comparative performance of students analysed by entry qualifications:

Entry Route	Module Pass Rates			
	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Overall
NQF L3 and above	91%	91%	89%	90%
Widening Access (open entry route)	87%	86%	84%	85%
<b>Total</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>89%</b>

5.6.7. The above data indicates that module performance of students is broadly consistent regardless of their entry qualifications and the variation in module outcomes is greater between subject areas than between the different student entry types. We believe that the support structures that we have in place for students from the open entry route is key to their successful performance.

5.6.8. Student continuation rates are a lagging indicator of student performance but still provide important insights into the student learning journey. Our analysis indicates that the highest rates of student attrition occur in the first 12 months of study, and this has led us to examine this stage in the student journey in detail.

Academic Year	% Students still studying after			
	3 Months	6 Months	12 Months	24 Months
2021/22	96	92	87	N/A
2020/21	97	90	81	72
2019/20	94	85	74	67

5.6.9. KOL monitor student continuation rates regularly and this analysis is broken down to programme level and covers a variety of student demographic categories, including student entry qualifications:

Months of study	2019-20			2020-21			2021-22		
	% Students still studying after								
	3	6	12	3	6	12	3	6	12
NQF L3 and above	94.1	85.6	74.7	96.5	90.7	82.0	95.6	90.6	82.8
Widening Access	97.0	82.1	71.6	97.1	88.2	76.5	93.3	85.4	73.0
<b>All UG</b>	<b>94.3</b>	<b>85.3</b>	<b>74.4</b>	<b>96.5</b>	<b>90.5</b>	<b>81.7</b>	<b>95.4</b>	<b>90.1</b>	<b>81.8</b>

5.6.10. The data indicates that the continuation rates for 'widening access' students is comparable to the overall population and ahead of the benchmark figures.

## 5.7. Completion Rates

5.7.1. TEF metrics for completion rates indicate that KOL consistently exceeds the benchmark figure for the period under consideration (2017-12 to 2019-20). Our overall metric for completion is 49.5% which is materially above the benchmark of 41.3% (99.9% proportion of statistical uncertainty distribution).

5.7.2. Analysis of our graduates indicates that in the last three years approximately 34% of our graduates commenced their studies with non-standard qualifications via our widening access route – typically on the basis of the work experience.

5.7.3. Analysis of the percentage of graduates achieving 'good degrees' (1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1) indicates that students who enter via the widening access route perform at an equivalent level to those graduates who entered with standard academic qualifications.

Good degree	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Total
Widening Access Route %	75	63	73	<b>70</b>
NQF L3 and above %	66	63	74	<b>68</b>

5.7.4. Centrality of the student in the KOL approach to Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) recognises the key challenges facing our typical learners which are studying at a distance, mature, in full-time employment with other family or caring commitments.

5.7.5. Our good student outcomes are a reflection of the success of our integrated wraparound student support approach which involves close collaboration between Admissions, Student Services, and the academic delivery of the programme. It is based on our

understanding of, and tailored to, our student body which is data led and responsive to variations in student outcomes and feedback from students.

- 5.7.6. This approach is scalable and applied systematically across our entire curriculum, generating consistently outstanding academic outcomes, continuation, progression, and level of student satisfaction.

## 5.8. Progression

- 5.8.1. The KOL indicator for progression stands at 77.5% which is materially above the benchmark of 74.8% (53.1 % proportion of statistical uncertainty distribution).
- 5.8.2. The KOL strategy for achieving these above benchmark results is to understand our students, in particular their motivation for study and the preferred learning styles for mature part-time students. Feedback from our students indicates that the majority are undertaking study in order to advance their career rather than as a stepping-stone for higher study and this informs our approach to curriculum design and delivery.
- 5.8.3. The Curriculum design as described in Section 2.4, has a vocational focus, and is informed by appropriate benchmark statements but also with input from industry representatives through our Employer Advisory Boards and employer representatives on periodic review and validation panels. This approach aligns with our students' desire for career progression, providing them with a relevant, up to date curriculum, delivered in a way which our students find engaging, and which equips them with the skills they require to succeed in their careers. Our programmes incorporate, CPD activities, reflective diaries and journals which allow students to record their learning and its relevance to their workplace and to identify opportunities for further development which many find helpful in their future career development as evidenced in the following feedback from our end of module surveys:

*"I find these (Q&A) sessions incredibly useful and having a tutor who is willing to share their experience provides an invaluable insight into the reality of working within the criminal justice system"* **(UG Criminology EoMS, September 2021)**

*"Very practical and interesting module which clarified a lot of things I have heard in the workplace but never really understood"* **(UG Law, EoMS, February 2022).**

- 5.8.4. In the most recent Graduate Outcomes survey (2019/20) 97% of our undergraduate students were in paid employment or further study. To further support our student's career progression, we provide additional employability resources on our Careers site which contains a mix of generic materials including, information on professional skills, CV writing, interview advice and job search skills. The site also includes subject specific careers materials, which in addition to providing useful tips and information, re-enforce the value of the students learning and experience and aim to inspire students and foster confidence and self-belief, crucial ingredients in successful career development.

## 6. Conclusion

- 6.1. The demographic profile of our learners is atypical in the Higher Education sector and presents significant challenges particularly around retention and progression into highly skilled employment. Despite these challenges, KOL's commitment to provide an outstanding student experience underpinned by highly motivated subject experts and the application of cutting-edge instructional design and learning technology is evident in all the metrics. We recognise the challenges faced by our students and engage with them to customise and enhance their learning. We believe our approach to and support for teaching excellence in its widest sense enables us to provide a truly transformational learning experience for our students.

## 7. References

*Global Student Satisfaction Awards 2021*

Available at <https://gssa.studyportals.com/winners/>

*National Audit Office. "Staying the course: The retention of students in higher education report, 2007" National Audit Office. Available at <https://www.nao.org.uk/reports/staying-the-course-the-retention-of-students-in-higher-education/>*

*Lim, H November 2021, How to achieve high response rates in online surveys*

Available at: <https://evasys.co.uk/insights/how-to-achieve-high-response-rates-in-online-surveys/>

*Tusting, K, Barton, D 2006, Models of adult learning: a literature review, NRDC, London.*

*University of Essex Online Admissions Policy. Available at:*

<https://online.essex.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Admissions-Policy-2022.pdf>

*21-day Money back guarantee. Details available at: <https://online.essex.ac.uk/money-back-guarantee/>*

*HESA Graduate Outcomes Data. Available at:*

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/graduates/table-1>

*HESA Data. Non-continuation summary. Available at:*

<https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/performance-indicators/non-continuation-summary>

*KOL Strategic Framework 2022-2027. Available at <https://online.essex.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Strategic-Planning-Framework-2022-2027.pdf>*

*End of Module Survey Comments 2018-2022. Unpublished. Held in Student Experience and Welfare Department Files.*

*BSc (Hons) Healthcare Management External Examiner Annual Report 2021. Unpublished. Held in the Quality and Enhancement Departmental department files.*

*Journal Club Internal Survey Responses. Unpublished. Held in Psychology Department Files.*

*BSc (Hons) Psychology External Examiner Annual Report 2021, Dr Katri Cornellisen. Unpublished. Held in the Quality and Enhancement department files.*



Kaplan Open Learning (Essex) Limited. UKPRN: 10021682

*BSc (Hons) Psychology External Examiner Annual Report 2022, Dr Marina Strachinskiy.  
Unpublished. Held in the Quality and Enhancement department files.*

*LLB (Hons) Law External Examiner Annual Report 2022. Unpublished. Held in the Quality and Enhancement departmental files.*

*UG Business External Examiner Annual Report 2022. Unpublished. Held in the Quality and Enhancement department files.*

*BA (Hons) Criminology and Criminal Justice External Examiner Annual Report 2020.  
Unpublished. Held in the Quality and Enhancement department files.*

*Tutor Service Level Agreements. Unpublished. Held in the Programme Support department files.*

*University of Essex Online Leave of Absence Policy. Published on the VLE and the KOL Intranet.*

*Academic Departmental Newsletters. Published on the departmental pages of the VLE.*