Provider Submission: Moorlands College

Teaching Excellence Framework 2023

1. Provider context

1.1 Educational mission and strategic aims

Moorlands College (the College) offers undergraduate programmes in Applied Theology and postgraduate programmes in both Applied Theology and Language, Community and Development. Through this provision the College meets its charitable object of developing people for or in Christian ministry and other, similar, social-service related roles. This is worked out in the programmes' aims and learning outcomes and the approach to the programmes' delivery.

The College has been registered with the Office for Students at Approved (Fee Cap) level since October 2018. Its higher education provision has been validated since 1994 by the University of Gloucestershire. The College has prepared itself for an application for degree awarding powers, and awaits the appointment of a new principal before that application is made. In line with this goal, over recent years considerable effort has been expended to ensure that the College not only fully meets the expectations of the Office for Students and the Quality Assurance Agency's Quality Code, but that its approaches to education ensure the highest quality of learning opportunities possible for its students.

The College's strategy is, thus, to provide educational opportunities with a clear and relatively simple focus (and the strategic aims of the College, even with degree awarding powers, would include maintaining this current, strong focus). This brings to the provision a number of strengths that are relevant to TEF, in particular:

- (a) the College's educational commitments are meaningfully and tightly tailored to all its students (see particularly 2.1, 2.4 and 3.2)
- (b) the College's academic framework¹ is coherent and relevant to the pedagogy of the disciplines engaged in (see particularly 2.1, 2.2, 3.2 and 3.4 below)
- (c) the College's activities and the nature of its organisational culture, as experienced by students, are embedded throughout the provider and easily understood (see particularly 2.6 and 3.3 below)

¹ Which operates currently under the academic regulations of and with the approval of the University of Gloucestershire.

(d) the graduate attributes² that the College aspires to produce in its students are directly appropriate to the domain of students' study and the spheres of employment that their studies equip them to enter (see section 3 below).

These combine to enable the College to assure outstanding quality of learning experience, positive outcomes and educational gain for students.

1.2 Provision

The College is small with undergraduate headcount numbers between 190 in 2017-18 and 160 in 2020-21 (headcount postgraduate numbers in the same period increased by a similar amount as this reduction).³ Almost all undergraduates are full-time.⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant turbulence in the contributary streams of recruitment to the undergraduate provision, namely, service-oriented, people-engaging gap year programmes and internships. In addition, during this period the College has been phasing out two "regional centres", with the last recruitment being in respectively 2019 and 2020. These centres' week-long, highly intensive study blocks are not a model that the College believes is pedagogically effective. In place of this activity (and to sit alongside the traditional campus-based mode and the one remaining regional centre which has a significantly different delivery model), a new hybrid mode of delivery of the undergraduate programmes is being developed, carefully blending significant amounts of physically face-to-face teaching, synchronous, large and small group and individual on-line meetings, and on-line independent study activities. It is expected that this new mode will assist in the widening of access to higher education by those from a broader range of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds than is found in the counties closest to the main campus and remaining regional centre (Cornwall, Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset, Surrey and Wiltshire) from where 93% of the 2022 entrants applied. At the time of writing, it appears that the 2023 intake will be considerably larger than those of 2021 and 2022.

Two undergraduate programmes are offered, neither of which are "optional" by the TEF definition:

- BA (Hons) Applied Theology
- BA (Hons) Applied Theology (Youth and Community Work)

Currently (and typically), 65% of active students are registered on the former and 35% on the latter, which is also "professionally validated" by the National Youth Agency, bearing professional qualification in youth and community work. Both programmes are "first degree" in nature and have four-year integrated foundation year formats, recruiting 9% of all students, with the level 3 year known in the College as "Foundation Year".⁵

² Academic Framework 2: Learning and Teaching, 1.4.

³ Size and Shape Dashboard. There are 10 FTE academic staff: Academic Staff Data, 2021-22, academic staff, excluding a-typical (of whom there are none) — the College expects this rounded figure to be the same for the as yet unpublished 2022-23 year. The College's participation in TEF is, therefore, voluntary.

⁴ There are insufficient part-time students to pass the thresholds to enable their data to be discussed here.

⁵ Over 2017-2021, Size and Shape Dashboard.

The programmes' undergraduate students have a number of distinctive characteristics, the first two of which are evident in the Size and Shape Dashboard, but which are worth emphasising.

a) The undergraduate students are older than average.⁶

	Under 21	21-30	31+
Moorlands	45%	31%	24%
Sector	78%	15%	7%

This is to be expected for the type of provision that the College offers, where, in many people's eyes, wisdom from maturity in years is a very helpful characteristic in the relevant professions. However, in contrast to many other specialist theological colleges, where the figure would be considerably higher,

- b) More students are classified as having disabilities (39% compared to 17% in the sector),⁸ with a significantly higher than average number of students with disabilities attributed to Specific Learning Differences (22% compared to 6%).⁹ The College markets itself as a particularly supportive community, attracting disadvantaged applicants and setting high expectations for support.
- c) Students have a wide range of previous academic qualifications, despite the College being a "low tariff" institution.¹⁰

Previous qualifications	Proportion of current students who entered at level 4
Some at level 4 or above	9%
120 (e.g., BBB) or more UCAS points	42%
49-119 UCAS points	34%
48 (e.g., DD) or fewer UCAS points	15%

The College interviews all applicants and selects candidates on the basis of a broad range of criteria indicative of their ability to benefit from and succeed in the studies, not merely their previous academic success. This is appropriate to the educational strategy of the College and results in a vibrant student community academically, in which students learn much from each other's differing strengths.

⁶ Size and Shape Dashboard, 2017-2021, full-time undergraduates.

⁸ Size and Shape Dashboard, 2017-2021, full-time undergraduates.

⁹ Size and Shape Dashboard, 2017-2021, full-time undergraduates, "cognitive or learning difficulties". The College believes that a similar unusual proportion of those with multiple impairments would also be classed as having Specific Learning Differences.

¹⁰ Internal data for current students, 2022-23. Cf. Size and Shape Dashboard. The internal data uses UCAS points to allow BTEC results to be compared with A level results in the standard manner to make the point above.

1.3 Submission

This submission was circulated to a group of elected student representatives, who were invited to compose responses and to send those responses to the College's nominated student contact for TEF (also an elected student representative). The student contact reviewed the representatives' input and composed the student submission as an evaluation of student experience, student outcomes and the College's enabling of these two areas, in the light of this submission.

The submission makes use of a number of internal data sources, three of which merit introduction.

- The "Extra-Modular Survey" is an annually-operated in-house system designed to complement the NSS by gathering feedback from all undergraduates (not just those in level 6) and addressing a small list of areas: facilities, student support, concern handling and personal/professional development under four headings. Students give scores out of six to each area. No benchmarking of these results against the feedback of any other institution is possible; the primary purposes of the exercise are to allow the College to track (a) differences between students studying in different modes/locations and (b) changes in mean scores yearon-year. The data reported here are for the four most recent academic years (2018-2022). In this period 56% of eligible students participated.¹¹
- "Module delivery reports" require students to give evaluative comments and scores out of 6 for learning, delivery and engagement for their experience in each module. Mean average results for the most recent year, 2021-22, are used in this report. The response rate for the 64 module deliveries in levels 4-6 and all locations/modes of delivery was 84% of eligible students.
- Since the College's validating body has no *periodic* review system for programmes, the College has developed its own system in line with the expectations of the Quality Code. This has been applied to the undergraduate programmes at levels 4-6 in 2015 and 2019 under the title of "Periodic Review and Approval" and in 2022 under the title of "Programme Periodic Review and Approval".¹² The system follows a sector-standard pattern, with a submission, including evidence-based reflection and justified proposals, made to a panel. The panel meets various stakeholders at an event day and makes recommendations to Academic Board. The panel includes external expertise,

as well as a student panel member and internal staff members.

¹¹ Weighted average of: 2019 (53%), 2020 (62%), 2021 (59%), 2022 (47%). EMS Report 2022 describes its participation rate as "disappointing". Steps are being taken to see it become more in line with participation rates of other feedback mechanisms.

¹² Here "approval" means internal approval, not validation.

The simplicity of the provision not only strengthens the cohesion of the pedagogy, policy, community and purpose of the College's provision (as indicated at the close of 1.1), it also strengthens the evidence used in this submission. The two programmes share¹⁴

- (a) learning outcomes with appropriate minor variations in wording
- (b) more than half their available modules (with some other modules being very similar in structure, including the compulsory practice modules, such that placements' impact on educational gain and professional preparedness is the same across all the provision)
- (c) their management
- (d) their two external examiners, i.e., the responsibilities of each external span both programmes as appropriate to their specialisms.

Indeed, were it not the need to separate out the second programme to enable National Youth Agency recognition, the two undergraduate programmes might be treated as a single award, with options. This means that evidence, such as averages of the College's data for levels 4-6 and comments of external examiners and students, is not illustrative of what is *possible* within some programmes of the College, but is definitive of the provision offered to all students.¹⁵

2. Student experience

2.1 SE1 and SE2

NSS DATA

The NSS data provides very strong evidence of teaching being materially above benchmark. The split metrics show a strongly consistent pattern: all are above the benchmark and all but¹⁶ year 1 data and responses of the oldest students are materially above.

The NSS data provides compelling evidence of assessment and feedback being materially above benchmark. All split metrics for assessment and feedback are materially above benchmark.

APPROACH TO LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

The College's approach to learning, teaching and assessment has developed over the course of a stable, nearly thirty-year, relationship with the University of Gloucestershire as a validating body. Over

¹⁴ At levels 4-6: in line with University of Gloucestershire direction, the level 3 component of the relevant variants of the programmes is quality assured separately.

¹⁵ In particular, evidence relevant to levels 4-6. The evidence relating to the level 3 provision is less definitive as it describes what some, not all, experience.

¹⁶ Of course, some responses are suppressed due to low numbers or data protection reasons. This submission ignores these datapoints—implicitly, for the sake of ease of reading.

recent years the College teaching team has discussed its educational philosophy in detail as it worked towards its expression within the College's academic framework in readiness for a degree awarding powers application. At the heart are three educational commitments to (1) learning as a holistic process, (2) learning as a situated and active process, and (3) the goal of training people for professional practice.¹⁷ These commitments flow from the College's mission statement which prioritises the student's learning, progression and attainment, equipping people to impact the church and the world.

The College's commitment to learning as a holistic process of personal development is particularly relevant here: teaching and assessment are conceptually secondary and are tailored to the growth of the student (which is the chief "educational gain" for the College's provision, see 3). Personal development takes place not only intellectually, but in further, multiple dimensions, including self-understanding/spirituality and professional (practical and relational) skills that are relevant to the professional outcomes of the studies.

The approach has an impact: "enabling [of] student development and achievement... is strongly reflected".¹⁸ Among the College's good practice are

the careful design of programmes to integrate theory and practice, which enables students and graduates to apply their learning successfully [and] the reflective nature of learning, reinforced by the comprehensive nature of the placements, which provides vocationally relevant enrichment to the programmes, thus greatly enhancing the students' competence in practice.¹⁹

This is echoed by the enthusiasm evident in student engagement, discussed under "Teaching" below.

The approach is embedded through the conceptualisation and operation of academic governance, including by Programme Boards, Academic Quality Committee and Academic Board. Together these ensure that the approach is consistently worked out throughout all the provision including in all modes/locations. The College's own system for programme periodic review explicitly requires that the OfS minimum requirements are met, and that excellence is built into programme design through a rigorous engagement with stakeholders and through documentation that establishes a careful rationale for content and delivery. Aspects of the 2022 process provide clear evidence of this, including the composition of the panel, the diligence with which the submission was composed and evidenced, and the robustness of the process that followed, particularly relating to the approval of the online elements within the proposed hybrid delivery (introduced in 1.2).²⁰

The consistency of the approach is not only enshrined in policy and assured by academic governance, it is embedded in practice. Well-established academics teach at multiple locations: in the calendar year 2022 seven teachers based at the main campus travelled to a regional centre a total of twelve times to participate in the 26 study blocks held there.

¹⁷ Academic Framework 2: Learning and Teaching.

¹⁸ QAA HER 2018 Report, 2.31.

¹⁹ QAA HER 2018 Report, good practice 1 and 2. Placements are found only in the undergraduate provision.

²⁰ BA PPRA Submission 2022;

TEACHING

The 2022 periodic review of the programmes noted "[t]he high quality learning experience offered to students".²¹

Students, recent graduates, placement supervisors, employers and external examiners confirmed that a consistently high quality of learning and teaching is maintained in the provision.²²

The inspirational nature of the College's provision reflects the second of the College's educational commitments: that learning is a situated and, in particular, an active process.²³

The College's starting point is that there will be no learning without successful motivation of students, and the level of student attendance is a strong indicator of their enthusiasm for and enjoyment of their studies.²⁴ The recent periodic review of Foundation Year picked up on the concept of inspiration, noting that the provision's students were "increasingly independent (and inspired) learners".²⁵

Classroom teaching is seldom observed by those outside the College, but one exception is when external examiners review assessed presentations (which are always video-recorded to allow the upholding of academic standards). One external examiner took the time to comment on the classroom dynamics and teaching.

Watching video recordings of group presentations gave an insight into the classroom and teaching setting for students. These sessions seem to run in an organised way, with a sense of students engaging well when meeting face-to-face for teaching.²⁶

Students agree that the teaching is engaging and stretching. In the College's Extra-Modular Survey (see 1.3), students are asked to rate the provision in terms of its enabling of spiritual, practical, intellectual and relational development. The mean scores for these four areas of development are 4.8, 4.8, 5.2 and 4.7 (out of 6) respectively.²⁷ In the module delivery report mechanisms (see 1.3) for 2021-22, the median scores out of 6 for learning, delivery and engagement were 5.2, 5.3 and 5.3.²⁸ While these numbers have no external benchmark for comparison, they indicate the students' enthusiasm and positive attitude towards their experience. The Programme Board, which receives these data in annual reports, is required to consider whether there are significant differences for either programme, any level or mode/location, and ensures that best practice is embedded across the College.²⁹

^{6.1, 2&}lt;sup>nd</sup> good practice.

^{10.3.}

²³ Academic Framework 2: Learning and Teaching.

²⁴ Figure for all undergraduate classes in 2021-22.

²⁵ FY PPRA Report 2021, 10.5.

²⁶ BA External Examiner Report 2019-20, 4.1.

 ²⁷ Weighted average 2019-2022. EMS Report 2019; EMS Report 2020; EMS Report 2021; EMS Report 2022.
²⁸ These are consistent across levels: all being within 0.1 of the overall medians, bar one which is 0.2 different, which appears to be statistically insignificant.

²⁹ E.g., BA PB 21-22b, 6; BA PB 21-22c, 7; BA PB 22-23a, 8; Academic Framework 5: Annual Monitoring, 2.1.

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

While, in accord with the validation agreement, the University of Gloucestershire is ultimately responsible for assessment, the College plays a very significant part. External examiners speak very positively about the College's assessment and feedback practices. All external examiners reports unequivocally affirm that assessment ensures that academic standards are being appropriately upheld.³⁰ The College is not afraid to identify inadequate work:

Markers used the full range of grade bands and grades within each band, including within the first and fails.³²

Although the University of Gloucestershire systems do not require it, the College works hard to encourage external examiners to make explicit comments about the different modes/locations.

The panel commends the managers for their awareness of the potential for variations in quality of assessment across different modes/locations, noting as evidence of this concern, that reminded the External Examiners of the need to look for any potential differences and requested that the External Examiners make explicit comment on whether any were identified in their annual report.³³

Academic Board in September 2022 received a report reflecting on attainment rates, particularly with an eye to the impact of the University of Gloucestershire's "no-detriment" variations applied during the COVID-19 pandemic. It found evidence that in 2019-20 students may have gained an advantage in gaining a 1st class Honours degree but not lower classifications and that proportions of classifications returned to their usual distribution thereafter.³⁴

External examiner reports all make explicit commendations relating to assessment,³⁵ including the quality of the College's approach and consistency to policy.³⁶

³² BA External Examiner Report 2021-22, 3.3.

 ³⁰ BA External Examiner Report 2021-22, 1. BA External Examiner Report 2021-22, 1. BA External Examiner Report 2020-21, 1. BA External Examiner Report 2019-20, 1. BA External Examiner Report 2019-20, 1.

³³ BA PRA Report 2019, 36. The situation is affirmed in BA External Examiner Report 2021-22, , 3.1. That the College requested this of external examiners is recorded in BA External Examiner Report 2021-22,

³⁴ Academic Board 22-23a, 15.

³⁵ The commendations are strong in all four reports for the last two years: "Assessments are well and thoughtful [sic] designed... creative... with a thoroughly [sic] academic underpinning" — BA External Examiner Report 2020-21

^{3.4; &}quot;high quality of marking" — BA External Examiner 2021-223.3;"Good processes are in place for the moderation of assessments" — BA External Examiner 2021-223.4.³⁶ E.g., BA External Examiner Report 2021-22,3.4.

Assessments for the courses include a high level of critical self-reflection and theological reflection alongside practice-based experiences in youth and community work and ministry settings.³⁷

Markers have demonstrated a high quality of marking and adherence to the grading rubric(s) and standards expected for HE academic work.³⁸

Another common theme, particularly relevant to student experience, is the quality of feedback.

Markers use a good variety of in-text comments, smart comments and overall feedback. Feedback highlights areas of strength alongside any areas that might be developed by the students. Where appropriate markers offer direct support or signpost to other advisees [sic] or resources to enable students to develop their work, practice or thinking. Likewise, markers also include in-text questions to help students deepen their thinking or practice. Feedback often refers to the learning outcomes for the module and triangulates these with the students' responses to the various assignments.³⁹

Looking at samples from across the grade range, the markers have made good use of the range of grades available. Feedback to students was well-rounded and, I think, offered positive feedback and very clear points for students to develop their work.⁴⁰

In particular, the College seeks to stretch even the academically strongest students.

I have also seen progress with the way in which developmental feedback is increasingly offered to students who achieve grades above 70%.⁴¹

RELATED DISCUSSIONS OF EVIDENCE

The College believes that the NSS data is a true indicator of the quality of academic experience offered. This is further supported by evidence relating to the College's personal tutoring system, which plays a particular role in the overall stretching of students to their fullest potential (see under SE4, 2.4) and the steps the College takes to develop students towards professional readiness (see under SO4-6, 3.3). Perhaps the most telling evidence of the high quality of students' active engagement in and commitment to their learning is in the remarkably high proportion of the student body that typically takes up opportunities to provide feedback. This is discussed in detail under SE7 (2.6).

2.2 SE3

The outstanding academic experience evidenced in 2.1 flows from the outstanding quality of teaching, which in turn, essentially at higher education level, is underpinned by scholarship. "All College

3.3.

³⁷ BA External Examiner Report 2021-22, 1.5.

³⁸ BA External Examiner Report 2021-22, 3.3.

³⁹ BA External Examiner Report 2021-22, , 3.3.

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⁴¹ BA External Examiner Report 2019-20, , 10.1.

[academic] staff are appropriately qualified for their role and possess relevant formal qualifications."42

They engage in further research and study that underpins their teaching. Teachers' workload modelling includes 10% of their time "to facilitate scholarly activity, which includes conference attendance and tri-annual internal staff [scholarly] training sessions"⁴⁴ Teachers' annual review processes require a discussion about scholarly activities and, critically for these purposes, of the impact of that activity on teaching.

Teaching is, equally importantly given the nature of the College's provision, underpinned by practice. This is seen in various ways.

- 1. Students of all programmes are required to engage in equally substantial, assessed placements as part of the modular structure of their studies. The impact of this is explored further under education gain (see 3.3), but at this point it may be noted that the College uses the students' own professional practice to contribute to their academic experience.
- 2. Programme periodic review processes require an appropriate professional panel member to ensure that the vocational perspective on programme design is carefully thought through.⁴⁶
- 3. The workload model is used to manage delivery so that the majority of the more professionally oriented modules at levels 5 and 6 involve outside speakers, who bring their ongoing professional experience in specific areas. "Good use is made of occasional visiting teachers, as is appropriate for professionally oriented studies."⁴⁷
- 4. Teachers are appointed who are able to model professional thinking relevant to the professional futures of students. Most teachers engage in substantial amounts of on-going practice. Teachers' annual review process also require a discussion about on-going professional activity and its impact on their teaching.

The ability to teach is not assumed. The College recruits able communicators and supports their ongoing development as teachers through three pedagogical training sessions each year.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ E.g., BA PPRA Report 2022, 1.
⁴⁷ BA PRA Report 2019, 23.

⁴⁹ All three topics in 2021-22 were related to the new hybrid form of delivery and were led by an external consultant.

⁴² QAA HER 2018 Report, 2.27.

⁴⁴ QAA HER 2018 Report, 2.27. The figure is higher in a few cases and is maintained for all on fractional posts. Topics for the 2021-22 year were: Violent Biblical Metaphors; Human Flourishing: Theological and Anthropological Perspectives; Churches' Ministry to Young People in SW England Post-Pandemic.

Policy ensures that every Programme Board meeting has a standing item to consider whether any good practice in teaching, as well as elsewhere, can be identified and that every Academic Quality Committee reviews these items and seeks ways to propagate it throughout the College.⁵⁰

The College had not until recently made a strategic priority of gaining nationally benchmarked recognition of the quality of its teaching through the Advance HE's HEA fellowship scheme. Rapid progress is being made.

staff in the College are able to demonstrate both (relating primarily to Fellowship status) the high quality of their current teaching practice and its growth out of their assured understanding of its nature and purpose, and (relating primarily to Senior Fellowship status) their ability to mentor and develop others in their teaching.

Finally, the College's academic framework recognises the benefits to the College and its staff of engaging in external examining in other institutions.⁵² Currently, three teachers are contributing to the sector and simultaneously benefiting from this wider exposure to the variety of practices and policies nationally.

2.3 SE4

The outstanding teaching and its underpinning, as evidenced in 2.1 and 2.2, is enabled by the support the College gives its academic staff. Three aspects of this support have already been covered in 2.2, namely, the 10% included for scholarly activities in teachers' workload model, the tri-annual pedagogical staff training sessions,⁵³ and the tri-annual scholarly sessions.

New teachers are thoroughly inducted into the College, with annual reports on new academics' inductions received by the College's Academic Quality Committee.⁵⁴

Teachers are facilitated to develop through the sharing of specific good practice and discussion of individual lessons through a formalised, peer-based system.

⁵⁰ Academic Framework 1B: Meeting Protocols, 5.6. E.g., BA PB 22-23a, 13; Academic Quality Committee 22-23b, 5g.

⁵¹ Academic Board 21-22c 20.

⁵² Academic Framework 2A: Academic Staffing.

⁵³ QAA HER 2018 Report, 2.27.

⁵⁴ Academic Quality Committee 21-22a, 7.

There is an established and beneficial peer observation of teaching process. This facilitates a constructive critique and dialogue. The results are also reported to the Vice-Principal (Academic), which provides useful management oversight.⁵⁵

A further aspect contributing to the support of staff was introduced briefly in 2.2: the annual reviews for academic personnel include reflection on the extent to which engagement in scholarly activities impacts their own teaching. These reviews have a constructive and formative, not merely evaluative, orientation: "Individual staff development needs are identified through the annual reviews with line managers".⁵⁷

The College's Staff Study Policy creates a mechanism for the College to support staff in various developmental projects. Examples from 2021-22 and 2022-23 include:

- members of staff given time allowances and financial support for further degrees
- members of staff given time allowances and/or financial support relating to HEA fellowship status applications.

The system is set up so that applications for support are made in time to allow workload modelling to take account in the following academic year. Each year allowances are made to facilitate developmental projects, such as research, further study, external examining, and work towards HEA fellowship applications.

The following statement made with reference to Foundation Year teachers reflects what the College enables for all its academic staff.

*The programme has an outstanding team of teaching staff who can get the best out of the students. They are a closely knit team working strongly together.*⁵⁸

2.4 SE5

The NSS data provides extremely compelling evidence that the academic support of the College is overall materially above benchmark. The split metrics for academic support show a generally consistent pattern, all being well above benchmark.⁵⁹

The College's internal data suggests that support is rated by students as a typically strong feature of the College.⁶⁰

The tutors are great, and I know I can [contact them] about anything; whether academic, work/placement or something else... support has been fantastic. This has

⁵⁵ QAA HER 2018 Report, 2.28. The Head of Postgraduate Studies now receives these results, as they lead on scholarship and related activities.

⁵⁷ QAA HER 2018 Report, 2.27.

⁵⁸ FY PPRA Report 2021, 6: 3rd good practice.

⁵⁹ There are only three split metrics below the 80% "probable" threshold (at 69, 72 and 73%). The College notes the rather complex relationship between the benchmarks for these split metrics and the data for the College, and has no evidence to justify its hypotheses about the patterns.

⁶⁰ EMS Report 2022: the average for support over the last four years is 0.025 below the average for all areas.

been carried out by multiple tutors during my time and there has been a consistent level of quality and care... Personal tutoring, chaplaincy, academic support are excellent. My personal tutors... show genuine concern and care... amazing support...

This outcome has been noted by others. During a recent institutional review of the College the University of Gloucestershire surveyed students and found that "almost universally those students reported... that they felt very well supported by the College in their studies."⁶² QAA recorded an area of good practice:

The multi-layered support structures, which enable students to develop fully their academic, personal and professional potential⁶³

A recent review of the programmes agreed.

Students stated that academic and pastoral support is very effective. The College has developed a strong sense of community for each of its diverse groups of students: students at the Regional Centres indicated that they felt included and gave examples of how they were listened to by the programme team. Students described responses to queries as very prompt.⁶⁴

A number of activities are responsible for the outstanding student support. The first is the emphasis on having a genuinely meaningful learning community. During the most recent periodic review of Foundation Year the strengths here were recognised as institutional.

Foundation Year has a very strong learning community which includes both students and staff. The College ethos comes right through the programme, with a strong sense of integration between the studies in Foundation Year and Levels 4-6.⁶⁵

The second activity contributing to the outstanding sense of support is the system of personal tutoring. Policy ensures the maintenance of the practice whereby students meet with personal tutors for half an hour five times per year to discuss pastoral, vocational and academic questions.⁶⁶

*The personal tutoring system is viewed as providing extremely effective mentoring across broad areas of life ("brilliant").*⁶⁷

Thirdly, pastoral care is further provided by a well-used chaplaincy provision that sits outside of the academic structures of the College. It reports back on its activities via the Student Welfare Analysis Committee, which, with the help of its student representatives, ensures that engagement is significant.⁶⁸ The student response is consistently positive.

⁶² Partnership Review Report, 8.2.17.

⁶³ QAA HER 2018 Report, good practice 1, 2 and 3.

⁶⁴ BA PRA Report 2019, 39.

⁶⁵ FY PPRA Report 2021, 6: 4th good practice.

⁶⁶ Academic Framework 9: Student Support; Academic Framework 9H Support Structures, 3.3.

⁶⁷ BA PRA Report 2019, 39.

⁶⁸ E.g., SWAC 2022 01 07.

The chaplaincy system is great, I've found it really helpful to talk to people throughout the year and process how I'm feeling and what I'm feeling anxious about... Chaplaincy has been amazing.

Fourthly, the College has invested considerable resources in the Student Welfare Department to ensure that support is appropriately tailored to their needs, reflecting the profile of the student body (as explained in 1.2(b) above, the College has a relatively high proportion of students with Specific Learning Differences).

Students and recent graduates were very positive about the College's provision of Learning Assistance for students with Specific Learning Difficulties.⁷⁰

Finally, the support includes assistance specifically for those struggling with assignments (additional one-to-one sessions are offered to all those receiving marks below 50) and more generally to enable all students to flourish at each academic level, as evidenced in the recent Foundation Year review.

Student support is one of the strengths of the programme. Students commented on how helpful Study Skills is, particularly for those who have not come from an academic background, and those without a strong background in English studies. Study Skills gives students the capacity to successfully progress towards their degree.⁷¹

While there is always more that could be done in this area, the College is an outstandingly supportive environment for its students.

2.5 SE6

The NSS data provides very strong evidence that the learning resources are overall either in line or above benchmark with a very slight weighting towards above.

The split metrics show a varied pattern with compelling evidence of materially above benchmark satisfaction expressed by the 2021 cohort and less satisfaction expressed by the 2022 cohort, older students and students with disabilities.

Student feedback has suggested two factors explaining this variation, which relates primarily to library resources, particularly electronic library resources, rather than the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).⁷²

 Resources and services during the COVID-19 pandemic. First, in 2021 the College took advantage of the offer by one online resources provider, Perlego, of excellent additional online resources at a rate that was massively reduced for a period of some months. This offer was withdrawn before the 2022 data was gathered. Second, during the period of lockdowns the College introduced a postal service for library resources, whereby items were posted from

^{10.7.} Cf. the similar comment in QAA HER 2018 Report, 2.29.

⁷¹ FY PPRA Report 2021, 6: 2nd good practice.

⁷² BA CC 2020 07 07, 5a, 21; BA CC 2021 06 25. (CC stands for Course Committee—now Programme Boards.)

the library free of charge, during the periods of lockdowns. This was withdrawn with the return to "normal". The 2022 results regarding learning resources are understandable reflections of the post-pandemic situation.

2. Ease of searching the library catalogue. Until December 2023 the catalogue did not allow resources to be searched for from a single request: students were required to re-enter a search for each collection of resources. This may contribute to the lower results for students with Specific Learning Differences (appearing in the data under students with disabilities). For many of these students, to have to operate multiple search engines, each with slightly different user interfaces, is more onerous than for the neurotypical. Fortunately, since the data was produced, the issue has started to be addressed. A single search request can now access multiple databases, producing information about both online and physical resources. Students have not been inducted into this yet, because the interface needs further work to smooth the process.

The learning resources available to students are considerable and growing. In terms of hard copy, there are over 46,500 items, with 1073 being added in the twelve months to September 2023. Regarding electronic sources, more than 2750 journals and 10500 books are accessible with 368 e-books added last year.⁷³

The College's Moodle-based VLE was initially used as a repository of key and additional resources for teaching. External examiners agree.

Learning activities and resources, as evidenced in the virtual learning environment, are presented in a systematic and accessible way.⁷⁴

Module descriptors and the VLE are clear and enable students to access relevant information and a variety of learning resources including video links and texts. The tutors for the individual modules have populated their various VLE pages with a variety of recourses [sic] that offer excellent supplementary resources and access to e-books aside from any on-site resources such as library materials that are noted in the Programme Specification document.⁷⁵

As the College prepares for the new hybrid mode of delivery, teaching staff's pedagogical training sessions have been focusing on online teaching, and the majority of module delivery pages already act as far more than repositories of information, becoming spaces for collaborative, interactive learning.

4.1.

⁷³ BA PPRA Submission 2022, G.2.9.

⁷⁴ BA External Examiner Report 2021-22,

⁷⁵ BA External Examiner Report 2021-22, 4.1.

2.6 SE7

The NSS data provides extremely compelling evidence that engagement with student voice is overall materially above benchmark. The split metrics for student voice show a thoroughly consistent pattern, all providing at least strong evidence of being materially above the benchmark.

The outstanding levels of student engagement in the College start with the students themselves, and their commitment to learning and the professional futures they envisage—attributes that the College identifies during the Admissions process, then nurtures and develops in various ways.

At the individual level it is true that:

Students have the opportunity to take an active role in their studies and manage their learning.⁷⁶

This is underpinned by the engagement of individual students through the personal tutoring system and other mechanisms of student support (see SE5, 2.4).

The College manages a strong system of student representatives, selected by each academic cohort. Annual reports to Academic Quality Committee ensure that the College is satisfied with the operation of the system, both the selection and induction of representatives, and the operation of the system for all students.⁷⁷ Representatives make reports to Programme Boards and to the Board of Trustees.⁷⁸ Representatives are also members of a range of academic governance and management bodies: Academic Board, Academic Quality Committee, Student Journey Analysis Committee, Student Welfare Analysis Committee, Programme Boards and Prevent Group.⁷⁹

The provision engages well with students through a variety of mechanisms, including module delivery reviews, and the student representative system, which enables feedback at Programme Board meetings. Student input is appropriately responded to.⁸⁰

In addition, there is a further student-elected body, constituted and supported by the College, at the (only residential) campus which facilitates the communal life of students there.

There are processes for handling more formal issues. However, informal remedies to concerns are almost always successful.

In the last five years and across both programmes, there was concern that was elevated to the level of a formal complaint and there were no appeals.⁸¹

The mechanisms ensure that the College listens carefully to students. Not least, the College seeks to learn from concerns raised by students that do not become formal complaints: matters raised either at Programme Boards or directly with the programme leader (in that role) are logged and compared

80 12.4.

⁷⁶ BA External Examiner Report 2021-22, 4.1.

 ⁷⁷ E.g., respectively: Academic Quality Committee 22-23b, 14; Academic Quality Committee 22-23a, 11.
⁷⁸ BA PB 22-23a.

⁷⁹ Academic Framework 1A: Governance and Management Bodies. Shown diagrammatically at 1.3.

⁸¹ 10.18.

annually by a separate member of staff to seek to identify issues that might reoccur across years or in different parts of the provision.⁸²

The outstanding approach taken by the College reflects its charitable foundation and the nature of its disciplines as people-oriented and service-minded. The outstanding sense of commitment to and engagement with their studies that students and graduates share is confirmed by the typical participation rates in surveys.⁸³

Survey	College participation	National participation
NSS (core questions)	91%	69%
NSS (optional questions)	61%	13%
Graduate Outcomes	84%	52%

3. Student outcomes

3.1 SO2 and SO3

The College's continuation data provide strong evidence that continuation is overall materially above benchmark. The split metrics indicate a minority of groups for which continuation is more likely to be in line with benchmark than above: 2019-20 students, students with disabilities, female students, ABCS Q2 or Q3, IMD Q3-5. The College hypothesises that the most recent continuation statistics are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and its particularly strong impact on people-oriented vocations in general. The College notes but has no reliable explanation for why its students from less advantaged geographies (in IMD terms) should be more likely to continue than those from the more advantaged, unless those from less advantaged areas are more likely to have already overcome more obstacles in choosing to come to the College.

The College's completion data are more often above benchmark than around benchmark, but not with any strength. The exceptions to this standard result are positive, for IMD Q1 and Q2 and ABCS Q1.

The College's progression data provide strong evidence of being materially above benchmark. The interesting exception to this is the datapoint for older students for which the evidence is only slightly stronger for being above benchmark than for being around benchmark. The College views this exception as a reversion to the norm, rather than an issue, noting that the oldest students are still more likely to "progress well" than the average student. The difference is just not as great as is typical nationally.

⁸² Academic Quality Committee 22-23a, 16; Academic Board 22-23a, 19.

⁸³ TEF Data Dashboard (NSS Core question 4-year participation; Graduate Outcomes 3-year participation). NSS Optional question data 2017-2022 (4-year participation). OfS NSS webpage (national 2022 participation). HESA GO 2019-20, national 2019-20 participation. The College recognises that these data may also raise questions of comparability since the (non-random) sampling is so different.

3.2 SO1

The College's approach to achieving outstanding positive outcomes for its students is strongly related to its approach to achieving outstanding student experience (section 2). In particular, the sense of being a learning community, as part of the broader academic support provided, underpins the strong continuation and completion metrics (see also 2.4, cf. 3.3 and 3.4).

The seriousness with which the College takes positive outcomes for students and educational gains in particular is exemplified by the optional question banks that the College typically adds to the NSS, in order to assist the College to understand its impact in the area of educational gain in an evidence-based manner.

Year	Additions
2023	Bank 1 (Personal Development); Bank 15 (Employability and Skills);
	Provider specific question regarding overall satisfaction.
2022	Bank 1 (Personal Development); Bank 15 (Employability and Skills)
2021	COVID specific questions; Bank 15 (Employability and Skills)
2020	Bank 15 (Employability and Skills)

The results are extremely positive.⁸⁴

	Moorlands	Sector
NSS 2022 Personal Development overall	88%	74%
NSS 2022 Employability overall	83%	74%
NSS 2019-2022 average of Employability overall	87%	76%

These data are reflected upon by Programme Boards, which create an action plan in response, and this reflection flows into annual monitoring processes.⁸⁵

The approach for positive outcomes is encapsulated in the design of the programmes. In particular, they are designed for educational gain, understood as the preparation of students for professional futures. The QAA review panel noticed two relevant good practices in the programmes' design:

the careful design of programmes to integrate theory and practice, which enables students and graduates to apply their learning successfully

the reflective nature of learning, reinforced by the comprehensive nature of the placements [which only applies to the undergraduate provision], which provides vocationally relevant enrichment to the programmes, thus greatly enhancing the students' competence in practice." ⁸⁶

⁸⁴ NSS Optional question data 2017-2022.

⁸⁵ BA PB 22-23a, 9; BA CER 2021-22, pp.2-3.

⁸⁶ QAA HER 2018 Report, good practice 1, 2 and 3.

Practice is an integral part of both programmes and plays a vital role in delivering positive outcomes, through (a) motivating students to continue/complete, (b) equipping for professional futures, and (c) raising awareness of the realities of the workplace and building connections with networks of employers. This has been recognised by external voices.

The good practice of the vocationally-relevant placement settings continues.⁸⁷

Various module content and assessments facilitate students the opportunity to demonstrate core professional competencies and to receive constrictive [sic] feedback. The practice-based learning modules are a core requirement for the JNC award [i.e., the professional qualification associated with the Youth and Community Work programme] and there is strong evidence (module descriptors, assessments, and administrative processes) that the course complies with relevant PSRB requirement...⁸⁸

There are 26 competencies outlined in the JNC framework [of the National Youth Agency] and I was particularly pleased to see that this year, students were encouraged to identify these competencies in a number of pieces of work, including their reflective essay and their record of activities in placement.⁸⁹

Despite the central place of professional preparation in the design of the programmes, in 2017-18, the College observed a dip in its progression data, relating to earlier years' graduates. This was determined to reflect the younger recruitment profile, and so, from that point the area was strengthened under the banner of a "vocations strategy". Various initiatives were introduced into the curriculum, including careers-oriented sessions, a "dummy interview" day, a careers fair, and generally greater weight on the articulation of professional progression within the provision and particularly in placement modules. For those students whose centre of gravity is not in their placement, i.e., campus-based students, a greater exposure to vocational life is required and so they are provided with an additional set of (non-modular) classes at level 4 where outside speakers discuss their experience in a variety of the professional settings that the programmes are designed for.

The impact is perceived by students and others.

Students spoke very highly of the quality of the training they receive, recognising how well it develops them for their desired professional futures... The preparation for professional future [sic] is also very well enabled by various means, including role-play interviews, the distribution of information about potential jobs, opportunities for negotiating curriculum, and supportive, focused conversations with tutors.⁹⁰

Students commended the steady deepening of the required reflection on practice over the three levels. The panel notes that this is reflected in the increasing expectations indicated by the relevant programme-level learning outcomes associated with each level of study.⁹¹

⁸⁷ QAA Review SCD 2019, 5.

⁸⁸ BA External Examiner Report 2021-22, 1.5.

⁸⁹ BA External Examiner Report 2019-20, , 1.5.

⁹⁰ BA PRA Report 2019, 1

⁹¹ BA PRA Report 2019, 50.

Students, recent graduates and placement supervisors confirmed that the programmes' placements provide excellent learning opportunities that play a vital role in the student's ability to achieve the programmes' more professionally-oriented intended learning outcomes. The wide range of activities within the placements that the programme team may approve reflects the wide range of professional interests of students. The panel recognised the helpful role of the Placement Provider Policy that was developed in response to a recommendation of the previous Programme Periodic Review and Approval process.

Placement supervisors and employers spoke very positively of the learning achieved by level 6 students and graduates.

The approach for positive outcomes is embedded in assessments that are constructed with a diversity in content and format that reflects the needs of the workplace.

Good synergy between theory and practice, professional competencies, and academic subject benchmarks are demonstrated across the programmes with opportunities for students to engage in depth with theory, reflection on practice, and demonstrate their awareness of professional competencies.⁹⁴

Assessments are well and thoughtful [sic] designed to give students practical experience, to be creative in their thinking and practice, but with a thoroughly academic underpinning.⁹⁵

It's good to see diverse modes of assessment (presentations, posters, community profile, etc.) – some really creative assessment tasks.

Assessments are varied and include presentations with individual and group components, essays, posters, portfolios, and practice-based learning including opportunities to develop relevant administration skills.⁹⁷

3.3 SO4

In the College's context, positive outcomes are tightly aligned with educational gain, as mentioned above: through the gains in professional readiness and through the articulation of that goal, students are motivated to continue and complete and to be equipped to progress. This is straightforward and obvious in all the College does, from its marketing, through induction, to the content of teaching, the nature and ethos of the learning communities created, and the nature and style of assessment with the consequent formative feedback.

⁹⁴ BA External Examiner Report 2021-22, 3.1.

⁹⁵ BA External Examiner Report 2020-21, 3.1.

⁹⁷ BA External Examiner Report 2021-22, , 3.1.

The simplicity of the College's identity results in an extremely clear, coherent focus which, deliberately, is matched by "an extremely clear, coherent academic structure" of programme design. Personal growth and the idea of the provision as "equipping" are central to the College's publicity. Thus, what was found of Foundation Year may be taken as representative of the educational gains evidenced (see 3.2) throughout the undergraduate provision.

The programme significantly changes students [sic] lives. They grow in confidence, in selfworth, and spiritually, as well as gaining academic skills. Students and supervisors were unanimous that the integration of spiritual and academic is a great strength of the programme.⁹⁹

For most of the period under consideration the College used, in informal contexts, the acronym "SPAR" to describe the provision: students were expected to develop spiritually, practically, academically and relationally, i.e., holistically, as discussed above under 2.1.¹⁰⁰ These four areas provide the basis of the four questions in the Extra-Modular Survey about personal development towards professional readiness (see 1.3).

The small and focused nature of community life in the College, including meetings of various sizes, creates a norm whereby students participate in reflection on the purpose of their studies and of the vocational goals that those studies prepare students for. This is supported in turn by the personal tutor system (see 2.4 and 3.4).

Students are, thus, made very aware of the purpose of the College and of their studies.

3.4 SO5

The College cannot separate its support for educational gain from its approach to academic support more generally (see 2.4, SE5). Indeed, the College internally avoids the term "academic support" as used in SE5, preferring "student support" as a term to indicate that support is of the whole person, with pastoral and professional dimensions as well as, of course, the academic, more tightly understood.

Students and graduates affirmed that the support is focused on the development of the student as a person and for their vocation and balances appropriate exhortation and assurance.¹⁰¹

This is achieved through good practice in both

⁹⁹ FY PPRA Report 2021, 6: 1st good practice.

 ¹⁰⁰ The acronym was not used in formal contexts, because of the loose use of "academically" to mean intellectually. It has now also been dropped from other contexts, for brand reasons.
¹⁰¹ BA PRA Report 2019, 39.

the appropriate combination of challenge and care to facilitate the transformative aspects of learning¹⁰² and

the quality of the design of the programmes for developing professionals capable of impacting the contemporary world¹⁰³

Students' educational gain in relation to practice and professional readiness is discussed in 3.2. The support offered in this area may be considered a particular strength in the College, not least when the COVID-19 pandemic was having its greatest impact.

The placements are managed extremely well and the coordinator for this is able to use the mid-way review to check in with student progress and support students to address any potential issues early on.¹⁰⁴

This is true even when there are risks within the placements or external challenges.

*There were paper trails of clear communication between the placements and the College, and where possible, any placement issues were picked up and addressed quickly.*¹⁰⁵

"The Moorlands [sic] College team - particularly the Team - are to be commended in their work this [pandemic] year as they have responded quickly, supportively and professionally to maintain regulatory and professional standards for these placement-based programmes. They have closely followed National Youth Agency (NYA) and Government guidance/legislation to help to maintain robust learning frameworks for students and enable them to contonue [sic] to work towards the professional standards with minimal disruption... As individual issues have arisen with any students has been open to review such issues to maintain professional and academic integrity of the course and student learning"

"...the positive comments from many of the placement hosts affirm the work of students in their work with a range of people, some of whom are themselves struggling because of the effects of the pandemic. I commend all those (particularly students) who have worked to navigate and complete this year."¹⁰⁷

Overall, the College agrees with the QAA review team which commended

the multi-layered support structures, which enable students to develop fully their academic, personal and professional potential. ¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² BA PRA Report 2019, 4th good practice.

¹⁰³ BA PRA Report 2019, 6th good practice.

¹⁰⁴ BA External Examiner Report 2019-20, 2.2.

¹⁰⁵ BA External Examiner Report 2019-20, , 1.5.

¹⁰⁷ BA External Examiner Report 2021-22, , 2.1.

¹⁰⁸ QAA HER 2018 Report, good practice 3.

3.5 SO6

The orientation of learning at the College is towards practice (in line with its third educational commitment). Therefore, the College's programmes might be judged successful inasmuch as graduates have learning gain to enable them to enter and/or thrive in professional contexts. And, as discussed in 3.1, the College's progression data provides strong evidence that the performance is materially above benchmark.

As discussed in 3.2, over the last five years considerable effort has gone into addressing what was perceived at the time as a motivation for more focus in the area of progression. This has been successful. The introduction and continued use of both the College's Extra-Modular Survey and the choice of optional question banks within the NSS indicate the seriousness with which the College takes its students' holistic development for educational gain and the care it takes over evaluating the programmes' impact on different groups of students.¹⁰⁹ The Extra-Modular Survey is discussed annually by the programmes' Programme Board and an action plan drawn up.¹¹⁰

As the preceding discussion of evidence has made plain, the College gathers data assiduously and evaluates it critically to ensure that the quality of its provision, not least in the area of educational gain, remains outstanding.

4. References

Locations are either internet addresses or file locations within in the College's Microsoft Teams folder system. Internal documents are shown with a date of publication where that is not already in the filename.

Document reference	Location
Academic Board 21-22c	Meetings/Academic Board/2021-22/Academic Board 21-22c.pdf — 6 April 2022
Academic Board 22-23a	Meetings/Academic Board/2022-23/Academic Board 22-23a.pdf — 5 September 2022
Academic Framework 1A: Governance and Management Bodies	Policies/04 Academic Framework/AF 01 supporting documents/AF 01A Governance and Management Bodies 2022 07 13. ¹¹¹
Academic Framework 1B: Meeting Protocols	Policies/04 Academic Framework/AF 01 supporting documents/AF 01B Meeting Protocols 2022 04 07.
Academic Framework 2: Learning and Teaching	Policies/04 Academic Framework/AF 02 Learning and Teaching 2022 04 07.pdf

¹⁰⁹ EMS Report 2019; EMS Report 2020; EMS Report 2021; EMS Report 2022.

¹¹⁰ At the final Programme Board meeting of each year, e.g., BA PB 2021 06 25, 11; BA PB 21-22c, 8.

¹¹¹ Policies within the College include the date as YYYY MM DD, i.e., big-endian format, which aids sorting.

Document reference	Location
Academic Framework 2A: Academic Staffing	Policies/04 Academic Framework/AF 02 supporting documents/AF 02A Academic Staffing 2022 08 10.pdf
Academic Framework 5: Annual Monitoring	Policies/04 Academic Framework/AF 05 Annual Monitoring 2022 04 07.pdf
Academic Framework 9: Student Support	Policies/04 Academic Framework/AF 09 Student Support 2022 04 07.pdf
Academic Framework 9H Support Structures	Policies/04 Academic Framework/AF 09 supporting documents/AF 09H Support Structures 2022 04 07.pdf
Academic Quality Committee 21-22a	Meetings/Academic Quality Committee/2021-22/Academic Quality Committee 21-22a.pdf — 26 August 2021
Academic Quality Committee 22-23a	Meetings/Academic Quality Committee/2022-23/Academic Quality Committee 22-23a.pdf — 24 August 2022
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EMS Report 2020	4-6 BA/Statistics/Extra-modular/EMS Report 2020.pdf — 27 June 2022
EMS Report 2021	4-6 BA/Statistics/Extra-modular/EMS Report 2021 w BA PL Response and Action Plan.pdf — 22 June 2021
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FY PPRA Report 2021	3 and below/3 Foundation Year/Monitoring and review/2020-21 PPRA/ FY PPRA Report 2021 04 13.pdf
HESA GO 2019-20	https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/16-06-2022/graduate-outcomes-data- statistics-201920
NSS 1819 Report	4-6 BA/Statistics/NSS/NSS 1819 Results.pdf — 3 September 2019
NSS 1920 Report	4-6 BA/Statistics/NSS/NSS 1920 Results.pdf — 16 July 2020
NSS 2021 Report	4-6 BA/Statistics/NSS/NSS 2021 Report.pdf — 28 September 2021
NSS 2122 Report	4-6 BA/Statistics/NSS/NSS 2122 Report.pdf — 5 October 2022
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SWAC 2022 11 07	Meetings/Student Welfare Analysis Committee/SWAC 2022 11 07.pdf
TEF Data Dashboard	https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/data-and-analysis/tef-data- dashboard/data-dashboard/