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## PROVIDER CONTEXT

### Information about its educational mission and strategic aims

The University of Bolton is a Teaching Intensive, Research Informed (TIRI) institution with a distinct emphasis on professional and vocational education. The University proudly traces its unbroken history back to the foundation in 1825 of the Bolton Mechanics' Institute - one of the first to be established in the United Kingdom. The mission of the University is centred on widening **access** and participation to higher education success. We provide **opportunities** for all, including those whose educational or family background has not easily enabled them to progress into HE, or for those whose experience of disability or life commitments that have made accessing HE difficult to manage. To achieve this, we focus on **raising aspiration** and enabling **success**. In that context we are a teaching intensive institution providing high quality higher education. The institution also conducts applied research and knowledge exchange which informs the curriculum and our pedagogy, but it is first and foremost dedicated to facilitating student success through the delivery of excellent teaching and learning. Our new Academic Strategy for 2022-30 confirms these and related priorities. In that context the [Student Success Strategy](#) provides a framework based on empirical research to support students at each stage of their learning journey. This has been informed by student contributions to the key commitments of the strategy. The Strategy adopts “a

personalised approach, exploring individuals' potential and providing the information, guidance and support they need to make informed choices throughout their journey with us and to gain successful outcomes”

### Information about the size and shape of our provision

The University has approximately 7,240 FT UG students and 1,320 PT UG students with a further 610 apprenticeship students and 670 PG students. There are c5,000 students registered at partner institutions across the UK and internationally. The University is organised around three Faculties: Health & Wellbeing (comprising Nursing & Midwifery, Health & Society and Clinical & Biomedical Sciences), Professional Studies (Education, Psychology, Law, Accountancy and Business), and Engineering, Arts & Creative Technologies (Arts, Creative Technologies, Computing, Engineering and the National Centre for Motorsports). In addition, we have an Off Campus Division which oversees our partnership work in collaboration with the Faculties. We have a thriving partnership network. Within the TEF student population we have 1,290 students over the 4 years in scope (of 7490 in scope overall). These are located principally at Regent College and Shockout Arts, along with the Growth Company and Salford City College.

### Socioeconomic Profile

We are a locally recruiting university in one of the most deprived parts of the country. The socioeconomic profile of our students indicates a highly inclusive institution which seeks to provide opportunity for all. The University takes 99.2% of its students from state schools against a national average 90.3% and a benchmark of 96.2%. Similarly, the University takes 17.4% of its students from Low Participation Neighbourhoods against a national average of 12.1% and a benchmark of 15.1% (Source HESA: 2020/21 year of entry). The University had 8.7% of its students in receipt of the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) against a national average of (7%) and a benchmark of 7.2% (Source: HESA). More broadly we have historically had large numbers of students from POLAR4 quintiles Q1-Q3 with 69% of our students falling into this group compared to national average of 47%. The proportion of UoB full-time BAME students in 2018-19 was 36.2% compared to 31.3% nationally. A key focus of the University over the last decade has been an emphasis on vocational programmes such as Nursing, Midwifery, Law, Engineering, Creative Technologies, Social Work and Accountancy. These programmes support social mobility.

Bolton has low levels of economically active people (71.9%) compared to the North West (76.6%) and GB (78.6%) averages. Similarly for unemployment (5.3% Bolton/ 4.2% NW / 3.8% GB). It has higher proportions of Long-Term Sick (30.8%) than the North West (28%) or nationally (25.4%). It has higher percentage of households that are workless at 18.8% (15.5%, NW; 13.6% GB) (Source: Office of National Statistics Labour Market Profile, June 2022). In terms of level of occupation in the Major Group 1-3 (Managers, Directors And Senior Officials, Professional Occupations, and Associate Professional Occupations) Bolton at 41.1% trails very significantly behind the North West (48.9%) and GB (51.4%) (Source ONS Jul 21 -Jun 2022). Bolton is also a low-wage economy with weekly earnings for a Full-time employee (£528) significantly less than across the North West (£578) or nationally (£613). Job density (the ratio of total jobs to population aged 16-64) is low in Bolton at 0.76, compared to the North West (0.82) or nationally (0.84) (Source: [Office of National Statistics Labour Market Profile, June 2022](#)).

### Impact of Covid

The impact of Covid on the University's students has been significant and arguably more severe than in comparable institutions. Evidence for this comes from the Annual Report  
for 2020-21:

*“Patterns of social mixing, household composition, nature of employment such as frontline occupations, and occupations that can't be done from home, are amongst a range of factors that has placed Bolton residents at higher risk of exposure to infection. Both the youngest and oldest age groups have been hit hardest at different times, together with people living in our most deprived areas, and those from minority ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore Bolton has a high proportion of people who are vulnerable to serious complications from Covid-19 infection. People from some groups are at higher risk of suffering more serious illness and*

*complications from Covid-19 infection. ... The association between socioeconomic disadvantage and health is well established and people living in more disadvantaged communities suffer worse health than those from more affluent communities. Covid-19 is no exception."*

In addition the University has disproportionately high numbers of students (c 13% of all students) from the Indian Subcontinent who were [particularly impacted by Covid and related restrictions](#).

The TEF dataset confirms that 22% of our students report a **disability**. For all 5 Student Experience indicators scores here are above benchmark. For the 3 Student Outcomes indicators, students with a reported disability have better outcomes than students with no disability reported. This profile provides evidence that we are able to support students with their specific needs and help them enjoy an excellent academic experience and very good outcomes.

### Link of socioeconomic profile to academic performance

The majority of our students who drop out do so due to family, health, financial or visa issues – not academic underperformance, loss of motivation or dissatisfaction with the course. This is reflected in the evidence for analysis of **appeals** and reasons for withdrawal reported to HESA. Our Annual Appeals Report indicates that the challenges to academic achievement as articulated by students are principally related to their life outside University. Mental health issues (39%), physical health issues (28%) and family issues (25%) were the three most cited reasons for appeal. Over half of these appeals cited multiple issues. In 2020-21, in the context of Covid and post-lockdown a number of new reasons for appeals were identified, including remote learning issues, pandemic travel restrictions, and isolation restrictions. The economic and health challenges are reflected in our HESA returns for **withdrawal** with 30.9% of leavers citing Family commitments, Financial Reasons, Gone into Employment, Health Reasons, Maternity leave, Other Personal Reasons and Unable to Secure Funding.

### Evidence from Institutional Student Surveys cited throughout this Submission

As part of our ongoing engagement with students and our monitoring of the impact of our support, developments, and interventions, we have carried out a number of surveys [often with our partners](#) over the last four years which serve as evidence for claims we make in this submission across different sections. For ease of reference, we tabulate these below.

Survey	Focus of Survey	Abbreviation	Dates	Number of Responses (response rate)	Features of Excellence to which this evidence most directly relates
Journey - 22	Student assessment of Educational Gains, support and opportunity (Final Year UG students)	J-22	6 May – 25 June 2022	217 (18%)	SO1, SO3, SO4-6
Student Online Engagement Survey -2	Gathering evidence on students' learning practices and preferences during lockdown (all UG and PG students)	SOLE-2	4-28 May 2021	472 (6%)	SE5-SE7
Student Online Engagement Survey -1	Gathering evidence on students' learning practices and preferences during lockdown (all UG and PG students)	SOLE-1	10 Nov – 7 Dec 2020	576 (8%)	SE5-SE7
Covid Support	All students about support during Covid and	Covid-Support	9-23 June 2020	1,011 (13%)	SE5-SE7

Survey	Focus of Survey	Abbreviation	Dates	Number of Responses (response rate)	Features of Excellence to which this evidence most directly relates
	preferences for return to campus				
Job Search Time 2	Final Year UG students about career plans	Job-19	5-21 June 2019	161 (13%)	SO1, SO3, SO4-6
Job Search Time 1	Final Year UG students about career plans	Job-18	6-29 Nov 2018	181 (15%)	SO1, SO3, SO4-6

While individually each survey might have limitations in terms of sampling and timing, overall, they provide convergent evidence on support, engagement, educational gains and the impact of our interventions. In addition to these targeted surveys, each module has a **Module Evaluation Questionnaire** which is completed by each student at the conclusion of the module. References to MEQ data relate to 17,195 responses (circa 17%) across the period 2020-21 and 2021-22 (when the process was centralised digitally) unless otherwise specified. The MEQ response scale range is: Strongly Agree (+2), Agree (+1) Disagree (-1) Strongly Disagree (-2). The average score across all items per year is 1.28/2 indicating clear agreement with the items which are positively keyed. None of the 21 items scored less than 1 across the period.

## ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE AND ASSESSMENT

### SE1 - Teaching, Feedback and Assessment

We would submit that our teaching, feedback and assessment demonstrate outstanding quality – with features that are among the very highest quality found in the sector *for our mix of students and courses*. Our practices are highly effective and tailored to supporting our students' learning, progression, and attainment. Specifically, in this area we have multiple effective teaching innovations, an institution-wide effective model for managing blended learning ('Campus Plus') which reflects our students' needs and evidence of impact. Our partners use the same module templates and assessment models with [shared moderation protocols](#) and common external examiners.

### Evidence - TEF Indicators - NSS

This excellence in the student experience is *broad based*. This is evidenced by our **NSS scores 2019-22**. We are 'materially above benchmark' ('MAB') in at least one of Teaching on My Course (TOMC) or Assessment and Feedback (AAF) in Business & Management, Computing, Materials, English, Health Care, Law, Sociology, Biosciences, Allied Health, Nursing and Psychology – that is in 12 out of our 18 areas and across all three of our Faculties. We are above benchmark in a further three of those areas. The academic experience has been outstanding across the TEF assessment period for the full range of our students. We have consistently been above benchmark for the last 4 years (MAB for 3 of those) and the NSS scores are robustly higher than benchmark across gender, age, ethnicity, deprivation, free school meal status and academic subjects - indicating an inclusive institutional culture of high levels of positive academic experience for all students. The Guardian University Guide rankings 2023 (NSS 2022) places us in the Top 50 overall and the first in the UK for teaching quality and student experience for English and Creative Writing, 2<sup>nd</sup> in the UK for Health Studies, 4<sup>th</sup> for Law and 6<sup>th</sup> for Accountancy. The University of Bolton remains number one in Greater Manchester in the National Student Survey for Student Satisfaction for Taught students across all eight teaching scales and Overall Satisfaction for the sixth year in a row.

### Evidence - Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQ) Scores 2020-2022

For each module we collect data on students' experience. Over the two year period 2020-2022 the average scores have been 1.28/2 based on 17,195 responses representing approximately 20-60% median response rate. (The response rate fell when we moved during lockdown to online completion from earlier levels of

70-80%). These responses indicate high to outstanding levels of recurring student satisfaction at all levels including Level 4 and 5 and thereby complement the evidence from the NSS.

Our MEQ scores demonstrate *criterion* validity (they reflect Subject Benchmarks Statements, QAA criteria and now OfS B1 criteria), *convergent* validity (correlation with NSS Scores) and *discriminant* validity (the range of scores). The MEQs also show *reliability* inasmuch as similar modules have similar ratings and Semester 1 ratings align with Semester 2 ratings. Additionally, overall, the rank order of ratings is broadly consistent across modules (eg in both 2020-21 and 2021-22 the same three questions were the highest rated).

### Campus Plus

There is substantial evidence that the University reflects on experience, engages with students' views and documents institutional innovation in a transparent manner. For example, as part of our 'learning from lockdown' initiative, we developed our **Campus Plus** model which lays out a framework to combine on-campus learning with online learning. The model has [12 key principles](#) reflecting a pan-institutional framework supporting local, discipline-based and student led implementation. This initiative has [attracted positive national attention](#) and has led to the publication of an [edited collection of case study articles](#) on managing blended learning. The institution-wide initiative has been developed in collaboration with students and the Students' Union and included [a substantial showcase launch event](#) in Dec 2021. The case studies in the book reflect innovative developments rooted in the constraints of lockdown, and which now inform our approach to blended learning. Articles in the collection range from 'Making a Clinic Diagnosis – a Blended approach' (Biomedicine - Goulden & Holland), 'Staff perceptions of the transition to blended Teaching' (Education - Hollins & Telfer), 'Blended Learning – Authentic Assessment and Clinical Supervision' (Psychotherapy - Wadsworth & Greenhalgh), 'Combining E-Learning and Face-to-Face Teaching in Law School (Law - Danielson), Lessons on how to support students working on the front-line during the Covid-19 Pandemic – Blended learning support strategies (Nursing - Smith) 'Using peer-led online community groups to foster connectedness during Covid-19' (Chandler & Luckhurst).

### Evidence – an institution wide culture of pedagogic innovation post-Covid – Campus Plus

As part of the effectiveness assessment of the development of blended learning post-Covid, we developed an institution-wide model known as 'Campus Plus'. To assess its effectiveness, we added two questions to our MEQs for 2021-22 which indicated positive online experiences. 'The online teaching sessions have been well organised' (1.21/2, N=3,922) 'I was able to engage with online teaching sessions in a way that suited me' (1.19/2, N=3,922)

### Assessment and Feedback

Assessment and feedback practices at the University of Bolton are **outstanding** with features which are among the very highest quality found in the sector for our mix of students and courses. This is evidenced by our NSS scores 2019-22 which indicate we have been consistently above benchmark for the last 4 years, and MAB for 3 of those. Assessment and feedback practices are **tailored** to supporting a diverse set of students in their learning, progression, and attainment. Our indicators in this area are high and MAB in the greater majority of cases across all student groups in relation to gender, age, ethnicity, deprivation and free school meal status, indicating an institutional culture of meeting the needs of all students. A very positive [QAA review in 2019](#) mirrored student perceptions of assessment and feedback practices and concluded that the University provided "comprehensive, timely and helpful" assessment feedback to its students. Indeed, no fewer than 11 of the 17 Subjects are MAB with a further 4 better than benchmark. We have been MAB for all 4 of the years in scope, for male and female students, all levels of deprivation, domicile groups and for the majority of ethnic categories. We are not Materially Below Benchmark (MBB) for *any* of the 46 subcategory splits in this area.

**Academic staff are supported** in the enhancement of assessment and feedback practices through University-wide webinars, the most recent of which were in January 2022 (Assessment and Feedback) and March 2022 (External Examiners Professional Development Course), as well as through an annual TIRI

Teaching and Learning Conference (most recently Sep 2022). We build on, and exceed, baseline expectations for assessment and feedback through practices which are set out by the University's Standards and Enhancement Office in the form of comprehensive assessment guidance, published before the start of each academic year, within a standardised Module Guide Template, which incorporates the University's *Assessment and Moderation Procedures* <https://www.bolton.ac.uk/assets/Assessment-and-Moderation-Procedures-2022-23.pdf> and *General Assessment Guidelines for Written Work for Levels 3-8*. The latter were updated at the end of 2021-22 to ensure these were more closely aligned to the OfS Sector Recognised Standards, including a fuller outline of the requirements for the assessment of written English. Furthermore, we are transparent in outlining how exceptional grades of 85%-100% can be seen as achievement at the next level (eg Masters level work produced at Level 6).

### **Evidence - Resilient and Flexible response to Teaching During Covid Lockdown**

Whilst access to campus-based assessment and practice assessments were disrupted during the pandemic in 2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22, the University was commended for its dynamic and supportive (teaching, learning and) assessment arrangements, which sought to encourage timely remote assessment submissions but ensured that students were not disadvantaged by disrupted performance during lockdown. The **evidence** for this is (i) High **NSS** scores on standard questions (ii) High **NSS scores on special Covid Support items** in NSS 2021 where we are higher than average on all six questions (iii) Our **external examiners reports**, (iv) our **survey** of students in June 2021 prior to their return to campus to hear from them about how they had been supported during lockdown and (v) praise in the House of Commons by the Education minister Michelle Donelan on our ground-breaking student support work during Covid - 8 Feb 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/ChrisGreen4BoltonWest/videos/409544136797333/>

The outstanding assessment and feedback practices, prior to and during the pandemic, also are highlighted in the 2019-20 **Institutional Senior External Examiner Report**: *"Once again in 2020 assessment, feedback and student support appear to be areas in which the university excels. Programme teams are to be commended for their dedication to their students. This has been an area of consistent strength during my time in this role.... I think it should be formally noted that the university as a whole, and staff in teams and individually, have responded excellently to provide students with the very best learning experience under the difficult circumstances of 2020."* The 2021 Institutional Senior External Examiner Report indicates that these outstanding practices are ongoing: *"It is clear that course teams and the university as a whole have responded excellently to maintain standards and provide effective high quality learning experiences. External examiners frequently mentioned the passion and high quality support provided by staff. Furthermore, the training provided by Bolton for External Examiners in relation to Covid practices was excellent, particularly the online sessions. The demands of adversity and the challenges posed by the pandemic have led to innovation which could well have a lasting positive impact."*

### **SE2 - Evidence of Outstanding Engagement and Stretch**

We believe that we display outstanding quality in relation to how our course content and delivery inspire our students to actively **engage in and commit to their learning and stretch students** to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential. Our approach is explicitly tailored to our students and is an effective approach which is embedded across the institution. A number of our students lack confidence at entry and we scaffold our management of challenge at different levels, from Level 4 through to Level 6 and beyond to address this. The evidence for the effectiveness of our arrangements is reflected in NSS, MEQ and Journey Survey.

**NSS Scores 2019-22** - We are comfortably MAB for Student Voice in the NSS at 76.7% (v 71.3 Benchmark). On our **MEQ data** Q6 'My course challenged me to achieve my best work' (1.28, N=17,195). In our **Journey Survey-22** (J-22) we found that 71.4% of students agreed that 'Tutors and others at the University helped me overcome challenges I faced in terms of stretching assessments' (N=217) with only 14.7% disagreeing. Similarly, 77% agreed that 'Tutors and others at the University helped me overcome challenges I faced in terms of learning new material' with only 11.5% disagreeing.

Testimony from students as part of J-22 survey illustrate the wide range of ways students respond positively to our supportive environment for learning, implying a personalised approach for each student within a clear institutional framework.

- *JS-SQ (Journey Survey 22 - Student Quote): I feel good about myself that I got a first in all my assignments in the whole duration of my studies. I've become confident around my colleagues and able to share ideas and good practice without coming across too confident. My first ever tutor told me that she can see me doing great things in the future and I've always remembered that each day I work on my tasks*
- *JS-SQ When I started I barely knew how to write fiction in English or see myself being a writer in the future and now I know I can accomplish it*
- *JS-SQ Overall all my academic assignments and projects achieved an average of 75%. I am pleased with achieving A grades. However in order to achieve this higher grades self study time was doubled because some modules were a completely new field for me and I did my best to achieve the best grades in order to become a professional on my field*

A further example of innovation, stretch and challenge is the TEDxUniversityofBolton 2019: "Think Different, Think Again". This was a student-led conference bringing together innovative thinkers from across the University and the larger community to explore ideas for our collective future under the TED ethos of 'ideas worth spreading'. The audience consisted of over 100 students and academics, alongside business and community champions. <https://www.ted.com/tedx/events/30963>

- *"Being part of such a huge student led-event was definitely the best thing I have ever experienced. As the TEDx University of Bolton 2019 Marketing Coordinator I had the chance to put into practice skills I learned throughout my studies. My role included not only promoting the event using digital and traditional marketing channels but also recruitment and general event management tasks. I had also the amazing chance to introduce high-profile speakers on stage which boosted my confidence level significantly. I truly enjoyed the event as it gave me the chance to meet amazing people and get inspired."*  
-- Nitasha Afzal - Course: Business Management BSc Hons

Examples of innovative and stretching learning opportunities which directly link to employment and real-world learning, include our **pro bono clinics** designed by staff in Business, Law, Social Work and Accountancy all delivered by students under lecturer supervision. The **Pro Bono Accountancy, Tax and Business Clinic** launched in September 2021 and uses experiential learning as a creative pedagogy to stretch students through real-world challenges. This live work-based platform exposes students to real world accounting and tax scenarios and further, to provide students with valuable sector specific employment skills. The service is also offered in conjunction with Business Bolton and with 18 Greater Manchester Libraries through its Build a Business Programme. Link to Website:- <https://www.bolton.ac.uk/more/accounting-tax-and-business-clinic-atbc/> and the associated employer-facing talent portal at <https://www.atbc-uob.com/>

The **Law Pro Bono clinic** has helped students secure direct experience with real-world legal issues for underserved communities in Bolton. An example of a briefing video can be found [here](#). Since the opening of the Legal Advice Centre in 2019, we have been able to provide professional skills development to 161 students. This has been at both HE5 level through Preparation for Practice and at HE6 via the Advanced Legal Practice ("Streetlaw") optional module. The clinic has assisted **548 clients** with a wide range of legal matters including Family, Immigration, Employment, Crime, Civil Litigation and Medical Negligence amongst other topics.

- *"This has been a fantastic module enabling me to work with the general public about real life law situations. It has built my confidence massively in being able to offer options and explain the law in detail. Ian has been fantastic at delivering this module."* – Law Student

From the outset the centre has worked in partnership with the local legal community. The President of the Law Society [has stated](#) "where we employed a student at Bolton University part time whilst she was conducting her studies, that she and the advice centre mutually benefitted from her work in private practice and while pursuing her years in academia.

*This created a “win-win” as through the advice and appointments she underwent at the advice centre meant that she gained experience in dealing with and advising clients and this then benefitted her tasks within the firm which, in turn, through that experience and exposure to clients of the firm, benefitted what she then did in the advice centre.”*

We have recently launched a specialist **Refugee Employment Support Clinic** where students advise refugees and their networks on matters related to their status and rights for work which ran for approximately 3 months in summer 2022, with 10 participants asylum seeker and refugee clients attending to receive support with either developing skills or searching for paid work and volunteering opportunities. Whilst attending our clinics, two of the participants managed to source paid work, which they say was a result of the support they received from our students, especially our sessions on interview skills and CV writing. We supported one participant in applying for a coding course, which she is now attending, and others were supported with their use of English language and skills development and were supported in accessing additional support via local charities and with housing. These outcomes speak to the learning opportunities and authentic real-world engagements that reflect contemporary professional challenges.

Similarly, our **Social Work Centre (SWC)** is a pro bono clinic providing support on advocacy, benefits, housing, budgeting through 1-2-1 sessions, groups and workshops. The centre also has its own channel on YouTube with podcasts on topics related to social work led by the students on placement there. Since 2020 the SWC has helped 110 service users within the local community. 12 students so far have completed a placement at the centre and 3 more are currently finishing.

■ *“My time on placement so far has been great! We've completed different tasks such as: engaging with other agencies, running our own groups, meeting and working with service users and experiencing supervision. I have learnt a lot up until now and only just realised how many phone calls or emails social workers must make to chase something up. It also helps massively with our tutors on campus offering us support when needed. I'm looking forward to tackling new challenges and roles on placement after the Christmas period and build on my experience.” Social Work Student*

The service is appreciated by those who seek its help: *“I found the Social Work Centre useful to me during lockdown, particularly the weekly online quiz night. It really gave me something to look forward to and the students on placement were very supportive. Since lockdown I have attended groups around crafts, and mental health and sport, as well as supporting students as part of the service user team.” SM - Service User.*

In all four of these clinics students are able to submit cases from their portfolio as part of assessment. Students have exposure to current social issues and will gain a broader appreciation of the need for skills development for employment purposes, an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility. The experience not only gives them additional substantive experience in professional matters but gives the students confidence in talking to employers and specific examples of how they have used their academic knowledge and applied their emerging professional skills.

We have also invested in digital and live simulations to stretch students to learn in complex fast moving scenarios. For example, we now bring together students on a range of health courses to support interdisciplinary learning. [Several patient journeys are simulated](#), from pre-hospital care with the use of the University's high fidelity 'Simulance' transfers of patients to simulated acute hospital admissions, right through to a multi-disciplinary discharge approach for patients. More generally placements are being offered to students across a wider range of programmes. The University [has recently reviewed its arrangements](#) post Covid to ensure high levels learning for employment and professionalism from short and extended placements. Placements are positively assessed by external examiners.

Our mandatory **Teaching Observation Scheme** requires observations at least every two years and since the beginning of 2022-23 incorporates the **B1 criteria** as part of the observation and supportive feedback. The B1 criteria are also used in the Teaching Observation Scheme used as part of the **TIRI Teaching Professors Promotion Scheme**. The B1 criteria are also part of Module Handbook templates to help teaching staff provide assurance that they are being addressed. To that end we talk about the 6 Cs implied by the B1 criteria: Contemporary, Cohort, Coherence, Challenge, Consolidation & Choice and have used this across webinars and workshops to develop a common and accessible understanding. These templates

are used by our **Partners** such as Regent to ensure comparability and support. More generally our partners are able to attend all our CPD webinars and our annual TIRI Conference.

### SE3 - Research, Innovation and Employer Engagement for outstanding academic experience

We use **research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement** to contribute to an outstanding academic experience for our students. The evidence for this includes our **Jenkinson** research-informed teaching scheme, the **Ryley** internship scheme, our promotion scheme, and our **Institutional Advisory Boards (IABs)**.

The University has run an annual research pump-priming scheme - **the TIRI Jenkinson Awards** - each year since 2016 where each bid is assessed on three criteria: VFM, REF value and TIRI value. Over 80 projects have been funded through this scheme to date. Incorporated into the arrangement is the **Ryley Awards** for Research Internships for students about to enter undergraduate Level 6 (or students between the final UG year and first PG year). Consistent with our Student Engagement Framework, the SU President or nominee is a full member of the awards panel. Submissions must specify which specific modules will benefit from the research so funded. An end of project report is submitted and the results shared at the annual TIRI conference. Additionally, this culture of research informed teaching has led to 11 Undergraduate Students publishing peer reviewed articles since 2018 within the Ryley or related schemes in subjects as diverse as Psychology, Nursing, Engineering and Computing.

The criteria for promotion to **TIRI Teaching Professor** explicitly incorporates the requirement for research and professional practice informed teaching. The SU President is a full member of the promotions panel. In line with the TIRI model, all new modules must indicate explicitly how contemporary research and practice will be applied within delivery. We apply a **double TIRI test** such that no external research bid is approved without indicating which student groups on which modules will benefit and how, and no new course is validated without an indication of how the curriculum will be informed by research. This provides **evidence for a strongly embedded commitment to research and practice informed teaching across the entire institution** which promotes best practice in all that we do.

Our **IABs** provide input into programme design, assessment, placements and sector issues with the primary aim *'To promote employer participation in curriculum - design, delivery and portfolio development; and to ensure it is industry-led, helps to address skills gaps and ultimately leads to an improvement in graduate outcomes'*. Membership includes United Utilities, Motorola, McLaren, Target Group, Eric Wright, GM Chamber of Commerce, HM Prison and Probation Service, Mersey Care NHS, Royal Bolton Hospital NHS Trust, Wilcox and Stephenson Solicitors. Some of the companies and groups which have delivered specialist sessions in our courses in 2021-23 include: Chartered Management Institute (CMI), Tesco, Deloitte, Rekook, Rage Fitness, NatWest, JD Sports, Enterprise Cars, R2R Recruitment. BAE Systems, MBDA, Howarth Air Technology, Eddie Stobart, PWC, Marlborough Group, Bolton Metro and the Civil Service. Evidence of effectiveness of involvement can be seen for example in the significant revamp of our Business & Management provision in 2021-22 and an increase in live brief and placement learning and assessment.

**Additional evidence** that our TIRI approach is effective includes the fact that **80.6% of Journey 22 respondents** agreed with the statement that 'On my course, Tutors and others at the University have made sure that relevant research, professional practice and/or employer input helped create an outstanding academic experience for me'. Graduate Attributes Matrix for Employability (**GAME**) is set of key skills for employability embedded within the curriculum which develop those characteristics which research and employers indicate improves students' chances of graduate employment. Evidence of the relevance of our GAME matrix is that in 2021-22 JD Sports when looking to source CPD select us over other providers explicitly due to GAME.

## RESOURCES, SUPPORT AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

### SE4 - Outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice

There is outstanding support for **staff professional development** and excellent academic practice is embedded across the institution. Our evidence of outstanding quality relates to our embedded teaching professor promotion scheme, our Advance HE engagement and our training and CPD support activities. Evidence of a very positive support culture can be found in our [anonymous Staff Survey](#) (Sep 2022; N=524, 57%) carried out by an independent external company which put us in Best Organisations to Work for Q4 in the Education & Training category. This includes positive responses (5.4/7) to items on 'the job is good from my own personal growth' and 'I believe I can make a valuable contribution to the success of this organisation' (6.2/7) and 'I love working for this organisation' (5.7/7).

#### TIRI Teaching Professor Promotion Scheme

Approximately every two years we run a [TIRI Professor Promotion Scheme](#) where outstanding academics are promoted to Assistant, Associate or Full Professors on the basis on their pedagogic practice including an additional expert classroom full session observation.

The SU President is a full member of the appointment panel. We currently have Assistant TIRI Professors, Associate and Full TIRI Teaching Professors who have come through this scheme. Evidence of the success of the scheme includes the high number of applications in each cycle and the number of successful applicants who build on initial unsuccessful applications through a development plan and mentoring support. The TIRI professoriate reflects all Faculties and the majority of Schools. The closing dates and panel membership are the same for the TIRI Professors scheme and our Research Readership and Professor promotion scheme to signal and secure comparability of status, evidence and scrutiny.

Our 2021-22 **Annual Review of Accredited Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Schemes for Advance HE** indicated that 68% of our academic staff were Fellows of the Higher Education Academy (FHEA). This is well ahead of the UUK sector average of 46%. Our Staff Teaching Enhancement Programme (**STEP**) (UK Professional Standards Framework UKPSF Descriptors 1-3) aligns with the contractual requirements for all new staff who are required to gain a teaching qualification and fellowship. Staff new to HE undertake a level 5 unaccredited module 'Introduction to Teaching and Learning in HE' before they embark on the accredited programme, this process can take 18-24 months but supports staff in developing teaching and learning skills. Those staff with a teaching qualification but are new to HE are expected to apply for Fellowship after a year in post. The PgCert in Teaching and Learning in Higher and Professional Education supports and models TIRI practice. Evidence of effectiveness is that the MEQ rating for the course overall is 1.41/2

**A Pedagogical Research Fund** was launched in 2021 which requires collaboration across faculties and requires a teaching professor to be part of the team. Amongst bids funded in 2022 were: *Simulation based education (SE) for crisis management - A cross faculty initiative for student engagement and enhanced graduate employability [Business]*; *Simulation for learning and employment readiness [Nursing]* and *DigiSkills Accounting Passport [Accountancy]*.

During 2021-22 we organised thematic schemes of Staff Development Workshops. For example, we had a series of **13 institutional Staff Development webinars** focusing on blended learning in the context of our Campus Plus initiative. These included sessions such as (i) Implications of Campus Plus for teaching and learning in the context of TIRI: An Introduction to the Campus Plus Staff Development Webinar Series (ii) Full STEAM Ahead – The University Portal for Staff Development in Campus Plus and everything else (iii) The Library and Blended Learning (iv) Using Moodle to Support Blended Learning in Campus Plus (v) Designing and Delivering Blended Learning (vi) Using interactive and participative technologies in online teaching sessions (vii) Developing Employability Skills by Using Blended Learning (viii) 'Action-learning' sessions for blended learning (ix) Promoting Student Engagement in Online Teaching Sessions (x) Online Teaching and Student Diversity (xi) Effective assessment in blended learning (xii) Project Digital and

Campus Plus (xiii) Campus Plus, Blended Learning and working with partner institutions. Since Jan 2020 we have held a further [28 institutional Webinars for all staff](#) (including franchise partnership staff) addressing support for academic and professional services staff in the context of national policy and institutional developments covering topics ranging from TIRI Prof Promotion briefings, OfS B conditions, consultation on Campus Plus, TIRI teaching awards and consultation on Educational Gains.

We had two rounds of a **Campus Plus Staff Development Fund** in 2021-22 to support both academic and professional support staff to secure specialist external training to access best practice nationally and internationally in blended learning. This complemented a separate pedagogical research fund to explore evidence-based applications of best practice in blended learning. The development scheme funded 12 teams from around the institution. The scheme complements the staff development budgets held in each School and Service.

The **TIRI Showcase** is an [annual staff development conference](#) focussing on innovation and excellence in the context of our student-centred Teaching Intensive approach. This provides support for new staff and established staff exploring new areas. This complements our annual [TIRI Teaching Excellence Awards Scheme](#) which recognises excellence in delivery. Development funding awards support candidates in developing projects that may raise their profile of excellence and support submissions for external teaching excellence awards. We also have an established **Workload Allocation Model** which gives full recognition to course and resource development activities. This includes recognition for academic staff enrolled on PhD programmes against academic administration (but not from teaching per se).

### SE5 - A supportive learning environment

As a provider we seek to ensure a **supportive learning environment**, where our students have access to wide and readily available outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs. Evidence for this comes from NSS scores (including 2021 Covid questions), MEQs and our Covid support strategy.

**NSS Scores 2019-22 (inc 2021 Covid questions)** Academic Support is MAB in 8 of our 17 Subject Areas, and above benchmark in a further 6. We have been MAB in the last 3 years and for all levels of age, sex and domicile. For students who were eligible for free school meals or are from the highest IMD Deprivation quintiles, we exceed the benchmark by a very high margin in relation to learning support. We are at or above BM for 44 of the 46 splits. In the **MEQs** responses indicate high levels of satisfaction on multiple, convergent aspects of a supportive learning environment: Q7 The learning materials enhanced my learning (1.26/2) Q8 The IT resources and facilities provided supported my learning well (1.18) Q9 The library resources (eg books, online resources and learning spaces) supported my learning well (1.15) and Q10 I was able to access module-specific resources when I needed to (1.31).

### Covid support strategy

In March 2020 all support services offered by Student Services transitioned online with minimal disruption. Student Services delivered sessions on 'Supporting Students Remotely' and how to refer to specialist support services. All services offered online or telephone appointments and we introduced the TAP 'Ask Us' online Chat Platform, and we introduced [Umi](#) – a Social Networking Platform to address concerns with isolation. Recognising the socioeconomic profile of our students we enhanced the Student Support Fund and a new Emergency Crisis Fund for International Students plus a new laptop loan scheme. We also reviewed Safeguarding Practices arrangements and delivered staff development in relation to domestic abuse. As additional support for students, staff provided out-of-hours activities. It quickly became apparent that some students, including overseas students, were struggling with the transition into lockdown and experiencing difficulty with online learning. To offer health and well-being support and address learning needs, Head of Business Lisa Rees-O'Donnell created additional Zoom drop-in sessions – **Fix It Sundays**. These sessions were designed to discuss how to approach the upcoming assessments, use Moodle resources and access e-journals and e-books via Discover@Bolton. Whilst the primary purpose of the sessions was to aid academic needs, the sessions also provided the opportunity to break up the weekend and ensure those students living in isolation still had access to friends and staff in a semi-social setting.

**Evidence of effectiveness of support for students during Covid.**

In 2021 the University scored the highest of any northwest university and was one of highest nationally on the additional NSS Covid questions.

Percentage satisfaction to Covid specific questions in NSS 2021		
Question	University of Bolton	Sector Average
I have received useful information about changes to my course from my university or college during the covid-19 pandemic.	81	73
I have received timely information about my course from my university or college during the covid-19 pandemic.	74	64
My university or college has taken sufficient steps to support my mental wellbeing during the Covid-19 pandemic.	60	42
My university or college has taken sufficient steps to protect my physical safety from the virus during the Covid-19 pandemic	87	80
I am content with the delivery of learning and teaching of my course during the covid-19 pandemic.	55	48
I have been able to access the learning resources I need (lecture notes, course materials, journals, Virtual Learning Environment) for my course during the covid-19 pandemic.	79	78
Mean	73	64

Over the last few years, we have been conscious of the impact of Covid on the student experience and different students' views about support for learning. During Covid the University ran a large survey to assess students' experience of learning and support during lockdown. This was also designed to help students engage in the institutional discussions on the scale and schedule of campus reopening.

Covid-Secure Campus Student Survey 9-23 June 2020	Agree & Strongly Agree
Overall, given all the difficulties, I have been well-supported by the University during lockdown	73%
Overall, my experience of being taught online has been good	64%
Overall, my experience of being supported for assessments has been good	72%
<i>"If you would like us to contact you about any of the issues covered in this survey including any additional help you might need, please put your contact details in the box below and we will get back to you as soon as we can."</i>	287 students responded to this question and all were contacted by Student Services.

We have a strong Personal Tutoring scheme in which individual Personal Tutor meetings are held with students during each semester to review feedback and progression. This is guided by a [Best Practice Framework](#) which provides evidence of a commitment to outstanding practice. We also have a team of four **Student Liaison Officers** which offers students information and guidance on academic and pastoral matters via appointments and drop-ins (F2F, Zoom, MS Teams or telephone). They are available for personal, academic and study support, including advice and guidance on issues relating to the University's policies and procedures (eg Mitigating Circumstances, Appeals, Academic Misconduct.).

In our 2022 Journey Survey on the item 'Tutors and others at the University helped me stay the course when I had thoughts of dropping out' [Q2.6] 40% of students indicated that the question was not relevant to them while a further 39.2% agreed with the statement. Although our personal tutor system is well-developed and effective, as evidenced by NSS and internal surveys, we are continually looking for innovative enhancements, for example, in Psychology, Personal Tutors are allocated to students pre-enrolment during the 'conversion/keep warm' period developing the student contact prior to even fully starting on programme.

We have a wide-ranging, integrated programme of support and initiatives [accessible through a single portal](#) to help all our students access HE, succeed while with us and go on to find graduate-level roles:

**Success4Life:** pre-university aspiration programme for looked-after children to raise their aspiration for Higher Education. **Early Diagnostic Data:** early-in-course assessment to understand students' readiness for future careers. **Student Financial Support** through an extensive [hardship grant scheme](#). **Personal Academic Tutoring:** allocation of a personal tutor for information, guidance and support for the student to increase their chances of success. Students' assessments, attendance and any special needs are accessible by the Personal Tutor in one place on our UNIPULSE software. **Career Registration Data** we capture annual data from all students on their career aspirations and work experience. **LEAP ([Learning Excellence Achievement Pathway](#)):** an award-winning package of digital resources to improve academic and digital literacy. Peer-reviewed publications indicate positive engagement, experiences and learning by students in relation to their Learning Development (LD) with results indicating "a number of positive changes to their LD behaviour and habits, their assessment of LD, the accessibility of help and support and their awareness of the context in which LD takes place (McIntosh & Barden, 2019; <https://journal.aldinhe.ac.uk/index.php/jldhe/article/view/466>)". **Peer Assisted Study Support (PASS):** encouraging peer-learning, belonging and engagement at the University; **Welcome & Induction Programme :** to ensure students feel welcome and their transition to University life is a positive experience. **Peer Mentoring:** students can request a peer mentor, to help support their studies, based upon how individual students self-identify, for example as BAME, disability, 'first in family' etc. We have a pilot scheme in progress to assess this approach. **Student Ambassadors** students who support initiatives locally. **Progression Working Groups:** to understand employment and/or further study destinations of our graduates and guide how we develop services to support improved graduate outcomes. All of these link into our **Graduate Attributes Matrix for Employability ([GAME](#))** framework. These systems are further supported by the **myBolton app** which lets students access timetables, emails, Moodle, library account, calendar, PC availability, advice and support, campus maps and the student hub. Similar high quality services are to be found at our partners such as [Regent](#) and [Shockout](#).

Evidence that these arrangements are effective include the year on year **improvement in completion rates over the last 4 years** (74%, 76%, 77%, 80%)

Given the profile of our students includes many with non-traditional qualifications we recognise the importance of providing help **when students face initial challenges**. Evidence for the effectiveness of our systems include Q1.6 on our Journey-22 survey where 79% of respondents agreed that "*Although I struggled with some aspects of the course at the beginning Tutors and others at the University helped me successfully continue my studies*". Student testimony illuminates the character of support and benefit that students get from skills support:

- JQ-SQ - *I have made outstanding progress across the whole breadth of diverse artistic practices taught during my Fine Arts degree. It has provided a good basic grounding (and offering higher level input) in all major disciplines. I have also benefitted from excellent personal tutoring and input from a uniquely skilled team of technicians, who work well together and whose knowledge and mentoring / teaching gifts are entirely compatible both within the their own team and with the Fine Arts academic tutors. I have nothing but praise for the whole department and it has been an honour to be part of it for the duration of my part-time study -*

## SE6 - Physical and virtual learning resources

Physical and virtual **learning resources** are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning.

## NSS Scores 2019-22 on Learning Resources

We have been above benchmark for the last three years on the Learning Resources indicator. We are MAB for 6 of our subject areas and above benchmark in another 3. Evidence for the institution-wide strength of our learning resources is reflected in the fact that we have areas which are MAB across all of our faculties. The indicator for students taught directly by the University is 83.6 (N= 2,620) while the indicator for subcontracted partnership provision is 62.7 (N=330). Highlights include the state-of-the-art £31 million Bolton One building where multiple nursing and paramedic clinical simulation suites are located. Every

module has a presence on [our e-learning portal, Moodle](#) with support for teaching and assessment. The entire Institute of Management moved during 2018-19 into a single new building in the town centre which includes a large open learning and support area known as the Student Success Zone.

In order to resource our new model of blended learning Campus Plus we consulted across the institution with staff and students through a **Campus Plus Priority Investment Group** which led to investment of an additional £386k capital and £65k recurrent commitment in 2021-22 above scheduled plans. This included individual and group study pods, acoustic chairs, PC upgrades, hot desk set ups, digital interactive panels, Simulance movement simulator, specialist software (Vevox audience, Uniwis Remote Proctoring, Freshdesk onboarding) JISC Discovery tool, blended learning CPD co-ordinator and a CPD fund.

### Laptop Loan Scheme

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and disruption of access to on-campus facilities, the Library and IS&T team developed a loan system for laptops. The scheme was initially started during 2020 to cater for students who would struggle with acquiring a laptop for online zoom lessons. The scheme was such a success that it was continued into the 2021/22 academic year. Long-term Loans: 83 (2020-21) 77 (2021-22) Short-term Loans: 139 (2020-21) 145 (2021-22). This intervention reflects the fact that many of our students cannot easily afford their own laptop or get guaranteed access domestically to a shared desktop.

### Library – Enhanced Facilities

The following improvements have been driven by a range of factors including NSS feedback, student and staff feedback through other means and Library planning processes and horizon-scanning activity. The Library's approach to continuous improvement through student engagement and feedback is detailed here: <https://libguides.bolton.ac.uk/about-us/feedback>

### Resources

Evidence of commitment to sustainable learning support can be seen in the investment in digital resources over the last three years: UoB students now have access to over 220,000 ebooks (an increase of 30% since 2019) and over 60,000 journal titles. Our new Resource List strategy has increased the online availability of essential reading: <https://libguides.bolton.ac.uk/academic-staff/resource-lists> Over the last three years the Library has acquired the following new online databases/packages to support specific disciplines at the University: IBISWorld <https://libguides.bolton.ac.uk/blog/IBISWorld-Market-Research-and-Industry-Reports> GDC Vault for Computing and Game Design: <https://libguides.bolton.ac.uk/blog/New-resource-for-Creative-Tech-GDC-Vault> Stan Winston Online Library for Special Effects and Creative Technology: <https://libguides.bolton.ac.uk/blog/Monsters-and-more-June-21> A range of new resources were acquired to support UoB performing arts courses in 2021: the Library worked with academic staff in this area and acquired Marquee TV, Dance in Video, the Drama Texts Collection and a range of new ebooks: <https://libguides.bolton.ac.uk/blog/Your-NSS-feedback-makes-a-difference>

The Library introduced the RNIB 'Bookshare' service in 2019 to improve access to resources for students with additional visual needs. All eligible UoB students are [signposted](#) towards this service by the University Disability Support team. The Library is committed to supporting graduate employability and acquired a [new collection of employability-focused resources](#) in 2020-21. In addition, and as arguably an example of sector best practice, our new support guides have been developed to highlight resources relevant to **student wellbeing** <https://libguides.bolton.ac.uk/wellbeing> and **sustainability** <https://libguides.bolton.ac.uk/sustainability>

### Library Help and Support

The Library website was significantly redeveloped in June 2021. The new website is more accessible and mobile-friendly and features a range of new support content including help videos and guides:

<https://libguides.bolton.ac.uk/> A feedback form is available on each page of the website. The Library's Subject Guides are [discipline-specific online guides](#) that showcase the key online library resources available to UoB students for their area of study. The **Online Chat Service** was well received during lockdown, dealing with over 3,000 enquiries during the 2020-21 academic year. 97% of users rated the chat service [as excellent or good](#) during that time. Responses to a **post-chat survey** are used to inform staff training and development. Due to the positive feedback received we have retained this chat service once our in-person support services resumed after Covid. Academic Librarians also offer [online appointments](#) to students, to support them in searching for information for assignments and making the most of online resources: 93% of students who attended an online appointment in 2020-21 stated that it helped them feel more confident using library resources. Academic Librarians work with faculties and schools to deliver Library inductions and sessions embedded on taught programmes. Sessions can be delivered online or recorded to support the pedagogical approach of the department.

Following a trial during 2021-22, the Library launched its [LEAP Live](#) series of learning development opportunities in September 2022 to complement the extensive LEAP Online system. LEAP Live sessions are delivered by a range of UoB staff including academics and EAP Tutors, and colleagues in the Life Lounge, IT and the Library. The programme covers themes such as academic writing, English language and grammar, wellbeing, digital skills and more. The LEAP Live programme has been developed to complement the online resources offered by LEAP Online: [www.bolton.ac.uk/leaponline](http://www.bolton.ac.uk/leaponline)

### Enhancements to Study Spaces and Services

The **Developers Lab** (a room that provides 24/7 access to specialist computers for Creative Technology students) was set up in 2018 in response to student feedback. In addition, the Peter Marsh Library has dedicated PCs for NCME (the National Centre for Motorsport Engineering) students, Macs for Arts students and an Assistive Technology room. The Library has been **zoned** into specific areas to support different ways of working: group study zone, individual study zone, silent study zone and laptop area. The Library introduced Covid-secure spaces and services earlier than many other University libraries: bookable individual study space and a Click and Collect service were launched in early summer 2020. Initial limits on study space bookings were increased due to student feedback. In response to student feedback, the Library launched a range of [bookable individual spaces](#) in September 2022 to support video calls and online lectures. These Study Pods were acquired as part of the University's Campus Plus initiative and have been very well used. Each pod contains a link to an online survey and student feedback will be used to inform future study space developments at the Library.

### SE7 - Outstanding quality of embedded engagement with our students

We believe that we display outstanding quality of embedded engagement with our students, leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of its students. Evidence for this comes from NSS, examples of collaboration on inclusion of the Students' Union in institutional decision making and our **Student Engagement Framework (SEF)**.

#### NSS Scores 2019-22

We have exceptionally high levels of student engagement with 9 of our 17 subject areas BAM and a further 5 higher than benchmark. We have been BAM on this measure for the last 3 years on higher than benchmark throughout. We are at or above benchmark for 44 of the 46 split categories.

**MEQ scores** are consistently high - Q18 'My tutor(s) valued students' views and opinions about the module' scores consistently highly (1.43, N=17,195)

#### Collaboration with Students' Union

There is extensive collaboration with the Students' Union with the President and / or General Manager members not only of panels and committees very directly linked to teaching and learning, but also on appointments panels, research investment panels and policy development groups (eg for Campus Plus

Placement, and Distance Learning policies). We consider this to be best practice bearing comparison with the best in the sector. We also run joint workshops with the Students' Union on student support issues. For example, in Nov 2020 we held a joint session on *Helping Students: Complaints, Appeals, Reportable Events, and the Student Protection Plan* for Student Representatives which had 99 registrants. The Student Union President and SU General Manager were full members of the TEF Steering Group.

### Student Engagement framework (SEF)

The University adopts a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to student representation and feedback as presented in its [Student Engagement Framework \(SEF\)](#), which was developed in consultation with the Students' Union, the Student Life Team, Student Services, the Library and the Careers Service in 2017-18 and is updated annually. The framework was commended by the QAA in 2019, described as "*detailed and comprehensive, demonstrating the University's commitment to student engagement across all areas of operation*".

The framework comprises four pillars: (1) Student Representation on Committees and Panels, (2) Student Surveys, (3) Students' Union Activities and (4) other Student Feedback Mechanisms, as well as two further sections which are: (A) Action Planning as a Result of Student Engagement and (B) Student Engagement Monitoring and Review. The framework is reviewed and updated annually. The degree of embedding and pan institutional adoption is evidence of a broad culture of inclusive support for students to shape their learning in a way that is linked to action, monitoring and practical improvement. The co-ordinated approach to engagement and the outcomes this delivers, are reflected in the University's high scores relating to the NSS Student Voice. These have been materially above the benchmark for the last two years and were higher than the benchmark set for the two years before that. Furthermore, our most recent scores are at or above benchmark for 44 of the 46 split categories (of TEF data).

We seek to ensure that our external examining system impacts positively on the student experience generally. Evidence of this includes the fact that we were one of the first and remain one of the few institutions nationally to have an Institutional Senior External Examiner (and two deputies) whose role is to review and advise on institution-wide issues on assessment and standards. The job description is student-centred specifying that the post holder will "Contribute to ensuring that course design, development, standards and assessment are effective in stretching students " and "ensuring that assessment and feedback are used effectively in supporting students' development, progression and attainment".

In terms of subject areas, we have exceptionally high levels of student engagement with eight of our 17 subject areas (Business & Management, Computing, English, Media, Health & Social Care, Law, Sociology, and Biosciences) materially above benchmark, and a further four higher than benchmark (Creative Arts, Education & Teaching, Allied Health, and Nursing). Again the range across disciplines is evidence of a culture that supports student engagement at an outstanding level.

A number of specific, significant projects and improvements to the student experience have been initiated as a result of feedback from the student body within the context of the SEF. For example, the individual study pods. Additionally, the establishment of a **Student Success Zone** in the McCulloch building for Business and Management students in September 2021 is an enhancement which was in part the result of 2020 NSS feedback centring on a need for greater support and the strengthening of the sense of belonging to the University learning community although only 10 minutes from the central campus area.

Further evidence of our effective student engagement is reflected in our **very low numbers of formal student complaints** or complaints that are escalated to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. In 2021 (six complaints made to OIAHE) 2020 (2 complaints) 2019 (8 complaints) and 2018 (8 complaints) we had **zero complaints justified or partially justified**. This provides evidence that we are unequivocally outstanding in terms of engaging with students and responding to any significant issues they might have. This evidence on our full OIAHE Annual Statements can be found [here](#).

## EXCELLENCE THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

Our partnership students who are registered with us are a very important part of our student community. These comprise approximately 17% of the TEF student population. They are taught by local partners from the FE, private and specialist provider sectors. We have a full Division with Faculty status which oversees our partnership network, supported by **Link Tutors** across university schools. Evidence that these partnerships are effective include the **excellent Student Outcomes** indicators for partners on Continuation, Completion and Progression all being above benchmark. Additionally, in our Student Online Engagement Surveys of 2020 and 2021 we surveyed students at our partners using established instruments such as the student engagement in e-learning experience scale ([Lee et al, 2019](#)). Led by an academic at Bolton supported by colleagues at **Regent College** [a comprehensive survey of the student experience across the partnership](#) (SOLE-1, N=803 inc UoB) indicated high levels of support, engagement and wellbeing across partner institutions. Compared to students elsewhere, Regent students in this survey of all levels of UG study reported being more satisfied with their course, getting higher grades, being less likely to think of leaving their course, and more likely to have a clear idea of what they are planning to do after graduation. All partnerships have [detailed Operations Manuals](#) to protect and promote outstanding delivery.

In partnership with colleagues from **Shockout Arts, Manchester**, we designed an innovative teacher-training course, the UK's first PGCE in Dance to help boost the employment prospects of Dance graduates. Launched in 2020 We have had over 30 graduates from this programme and the impact on the industry is being noticed. Affiliations are being built with FE providers to upskill their existing teachers. We have had very positive external examiner reports and student satisfaction on this programme is at over 90%. [Student success stories at Shockout](#) reveal outstanding national and international industry recognition.

## STUDENT OUTCOMES

### SO1 - Highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies

We submit that we are a provider which deploys and tailors approaches that are **highly effective** in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies, particularly in the context of the needs, talents and aspirations of our students in the context of often challenging contexts that militate against a straight line to success. We have extensive evidence to demonstrate outstanding quality – with features that are among the very highest quality found in the sector - **for our mix of students and courses**. In that context, we successfully deploy and tailor approaches that are highly effective in ensuring that our students succeed in and progress beyond their studies. However, the majority of our students succeed in their studies and their progression objectives, and this success was maintained and indeed enhanced during Covid.

Evidence that our efforts are effective include the **year-on-year improvement in Completion Rates** over the last 4 years (74%, 76%, 77%, 80%)

Our students face significant challenges outside of their academic studies. There is considerable **economic deprivation** in Bolton and across East Lancashire where many of our students reside and attend as 'commuter students'. **Public Health** has been and continues to be a major issue for our students, their families and their communities. The report from the Bolton Director of Public Health unequivocally highlights the disproportionately disruptive impact Covid had on the town, reflecting its high levels of deprivation, social vulnerabilities and caring responsibilities. More generally our analysis of the reasons students give for leaving university very clearly highlight life circumstances which are not related to the academic or support arrangements in the University.

### Why do students at University of Bolton leave higher education?

In line with our HESA reporting requirements, we poll all students who leave their course prior to completion. Since 2020 we consolidated the survey options and have data on approximately 51% of our UG leavers. The evidence indicates that students typically leave for explicitly personal non-academic reasons (53.7%) rather than explicitly academic reasons (9.6%) of which 7.6% is 'Chose wrong field of study'. This suggests the Student Outcomes data to a significant extent reflect the student profile rather than the quality of teaching or support. In this context, our SO1-SO3 indicators are commendable.

Reason for Termination	Total 2020-22	Percent	Reason	Total 2020-22	Percent
Academic Failure during or at end of course	14	1.6	Non-attendance	200	23.0
Breach of UKBA requirements	1	0.1	Other	194	22.4
Chose wrong field of study	66	7.6	Other Personal Reasons	103	11.9
Death	4	0.5	Quality of teaching/staff support	2	0.2
Family commitments	26	3.0	Suspension or withdrawal as a result of Covid-19	3	0.3
Financial Reasons	39	4.5	Transferred to another Institution	59	6.8
Gone into Employment	14	1.6	Unable to secure funding	9	1.0
Health Reasons	65	7.5	Unknown	41	4.7
Job loss	5	0.6	Workload too heavy	2	0.2
Job re-location	12	1.4	Written off after lapse of time	4	0.5
Maternity leave	5	0.6	Total	868	100

The key elements which enable our students to achieve positive outcomes despite contextual difficulties include (i) **The Bolton Award** – an additional qualification students can secure through successful engagement in additional employment and personal development skills and linked to a HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Record) (ii) The **Professional Skills Certificate** (iii) Bolton **Future Leaders** award (iv) The **Career Registration** system (v) **Student Employment Champions** (vi) **Careers Fair Pre-events** and (vii) **Industrial Advisory Boards** in each Faculty and at the institutional level. The thread running through these initiatives is that of tailoring the offering to meet the needs of our mix of students. Approximately **60% of our students are the first in their family to go to university** – and we are acutely aware of the fact that they are correspondingly likely to be the first in their family to apply for a graduate job. Accordingly, we ensure support for positive outcomes reflects a clear understanding of levels of confidence and ambition at entry, building in recognition and credit for a wide range of skills and talents beyond the academic and providing support where social capital, networking and resources might be lacking. We are also aware that many of our students are ‘young-mature’ and as such already have exposure to the world of work though often at a precarious manual or unskilled level. Additionally, in our Journey-22 Survey 28% of respondents agreed with the statement “I am unwilling/unable to move region due to **care commitments**”.

#### **Evidence of effective support – student feedback and attainment by underrepresented groups.**

In our 2022 Journey Survey on the item ‘Tutors and others at the University helped me stay the course when I had thoughts of dropping out’ [Q2.6] 40% of students indicated that the question was not relevant to them while a further 39.2% agreed with the statement. This provides evidence that the University works hard to support each student as an individual and help them address challenges to their continuation. As an access focused university, we are pleased that **70%** of our graduating students in the most deprived areas as indicated in EIMD 1 (English Indices of Multiple Deprivation) achieve a **good honours degree** (HESA, 2020-21 qualifiers <https://www.bolton.ac.uk/governance/transparency-information/>)

## The Bolton Award - Evidence of Positive Impact of targeted intervention

In 2021, we were part of a national research group via AGCAS (Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services), that looked at Skills Awards at HE Institutions. The Task Group put together a report of their findings on the impact of skills awards on students' personal and professional development by measuring their progress before and after the completion of an award. The report analysed student data before and after completion of a skills award from three different institutions. Analysis at individual institution level and a collective level (across all three institutions) was completed to understand the impact of skills awards on students' skills, attributes and career readiness and provide recommendations for institutions to measure the impact of their skills awards. <https://www.agcas.org.uk/Knowledge-Centre/skills-awards-research-2021> The [findings of this research](#) indicate (i) students' more positive self-assessments after taking the award and (ii) students' increased participation in career development activities after taking the award. This was measured on all 10 of our GAME attributes to ensure the research could help us address differential impact on the Bolton Award at a granular level.

In terms of the evidence for participation in employability related events, in the 2019/20 academic year, out of a total of 276 unique students who attended non-curriculum careers events hosted by the service during the academic year, 161 had signed up for the Bolton Award, a proportion of 58% which indicates a disproportionately high level of representation in such events by Award holders. The ratio of BAME and disabled students in this category was 47% BAME and 29% disabled students, compared with 22% BAME and 29% disabled students in the selection of students who had not enrolled on the Bolton Award. In the 2020/21 academic year, out of a total of 359 unique students who attended non-curriculum careers events hosted by the service during the academic year, 198 had enrolled on the Bolton Award, a proportion of 55%. The ratio of BAME and disabled students in this category was 42% BAME and 34% disabled students, compared with 22% BAME and 28% disabled students in the selection of students who had not enrolled on the Bolton Award. Students [increased their scores on 9 of the 10 GAME attributes](#) after doing the Award by at least 6 per centage points. Students registered for the Award come from all Faculties across the University. This provides evidence of an inclusive careers support service which in the Bolton Award has developed a vehicle to help a wide range of students. We also run the [Ignition Awards](#) which provides funding for students or recent graduates to test the market on their ideas for enterprise. The pilot had 19 applications, with 7 finalists pitching to an industry panel for a share in some initial pre-seedcorn funding. The winner and two runners up came from across the University - Motorsport Engineering, Midwifery and Dental Technologies. We will be expanding this scheme in 2023.

In order to promote and celebrate the achievements of students who have secured the award, [a dedicated website](#) captures students' stories in their own words and how they overcame challenges and obstacles. Student testimony in these areas illustrates the combination of practical job-application skills working alongside personal development and confidence.

- *I found out about The Bolton Award through one of the Careers Advisers drop in sessions. I found that all the workshops contributed to my wider understanding of the job application process, not just for when I graduate, but later on in my career journey. I feel much more confident and open to opportunities since doing The Award. With the help of the Careers Advisers I'm able to put together a successful application I did not think I was able to do beforehand. The key skills I've taken away from The Award [are] communication skills, teamwork, creativity, risk taking and confidence. I would definitely recommend The Award to people*

The **Professional Skills Certificate** is an online skills development award, designed to build commercial awareness and encourage reflection within students. To achieve this, the student (i) completes a detailed industry insight task related to their degree and (ii) writes an action plan to promote their own self-development of the university's Graduate Attributes Matrix for Employability. They also write a reflective statement focusing on their development throughout their time completing the certificate. This helps students understand their own strengths and weaknesses and have built a detailed understanding of their chosen industry. A primary goal of the certificate is to target students from groups who tend to have less contact with the careers service, such as part time students, those on apprenticeship pathways and those

studying professional courses such as education and nursing pathways. To this end, promotional campaigns have been launched to target these students specifically, leading to over 1000 students participating in some form in 2021-22

The **Bolton Future Leaders** award is a further extension of the Bolton Award, eligible to those who have previously achieved the Bolton Award. To achieve this, the student has completed a minimum of 20 hours of leadership development activity (such as leading a student society), attended leadership developments workshops and completed an extensive programme of psychometric tests. They have also delivered a reflective presentation to their peers on what they have learnt. Students who have completed the Bolton Future Leaders Award have achieved exceptional levels of development and have consistently gone above and beyond in their work with others. The University also now recruits 10 **Student Employment Champions** every year as part of a major investment focusing on employability. An intensive recruitment process is delivered which sees applicants taking part in an assessment centre to enable them to practise their job hunting skills. The Student Employment Champions work alongside the existing team to engage and consult more students about careers and employability initiatives, generate more participation and promote the service.

### **Career Registration – Progress Tracking in Real Time**

All new and returning students each year are asked two mandatory questions via online enrolment: (1) *What are your career aspirations?* - this allows us to understand the point that the student is at in terms of the career planning continuum, and all answers are categorised as either: 'Decide', 'Plan', 'Compete', 'Sorted' and (2) *What level of work experience have you had to date?* - the students are able to choose from a drop-down menu of activity. Based on their responses, we target support more effectively, and follow any trends that might appear year by year, subject by subject. Crucially these data sit inside our core Student Data Management system (**SITS**) and links to our careers platform software (**Student Hub**) so that we can monitor responses more closely. A workflow has been built within Student Hub so that event and resource alerts can be sent to the student, depending on the stage they categorise themselves. This also allows students to update their status in real-time, rather than waiting for the next enrolment. This allows real-time data about students' careers thinking and levels of work experience so that we can utilise these data when providing support and guidance interventions. The system also involves a set of automated interventions for transactional issues freeing up the J4S (Jobs for Students) teams to give more customised in-depth support to specific students. **We believe this to be an outstanding level of support for students' structured individualised career plan development.**

### **Employability Diagnostics**

The overall aim of the **Employability Diagnostic** process is to improve the chances for students from the University of Bolton to compete positively in the labour market post-Graduation – and to enable the J4S Team to provide more targeted support as necessary. Our approach is an opt-out rather than opt in. Students do not need to make an effort to contact the Careers Service to review their career plans – but it is not mandatory. The **Diagnostic Questionnaire** is made available to students via the University's VLE platform Moodle as students enrol or re-enrol onto their programme of study, starting with the first round being taken at the start of the academic year. There is a specific set of consistent questions for each HE level. Students are automatically enrolled onto the questionnaire relative to their intake (Sept, Jan, May). Each question is on a five-point scale – from 'Agree Strongly' to 'Disagree Strongly' with each question covering a specific area. The questionnaire is not mandatory, however, every student is encouraged to complete the questionnaire as part of the personal tutoring process. The Diagnostic intervention is intended to improve the preparation of students for the world after University and to improve their chances of competing for Graduate-level employment opportunities. We now have three years' worth of data on the diagnostics and a review was undertaken in December 2021 which indicated the variation in the profile of pre-course employability anxieties across ethnicity, gender, POLAR4 and disability status. These analyses inform the development of interventions by the Careers Services directly and in partnership with Schools.

Given that many of our students were significantly impacted by Covid we sought to minimise any employability support deficit. In 2020, as a result of the pandemic, and working with **Student Employability Champions**, the Jobs for Students Team decided to deliver its first ever **Virtual Careers Fair**, as an on-campus event was not possible. The Team built their own unique microsite to host the event, utilising our online careers platform, Student Hub and delivered employer presentations, career workshops and Q&A sessions with employers. The microsite also provided a range of key careers resources to support students with their career planning and job search techniques. Our team of Student Employment Champions were a key element of the event. They promoted the event, created a Student Countdown promotional timeline and were also involved in hosting employer sessions online.

An important element in this process was the '**Prepare for the Fair**' sessions. These reflected the needs of our students who, given their socioeconomic background and often limited social capital, had not engaged directly with employers previously. These workshops were delivered online and an accompanying **Virtual Careers Fair Guide** was produced to provide an overview of what was taking place in order to give students confidence and to normalise employer engagement as an individual and as part of a peer group.

**Evidence of impact and engagement** includes over 9,000 hits to our microsite for this event. We engaged with 61 employers and hosted 39 live presentations and 31 Q&A sessions with employers. We had 1,046 participants on our live presentations, and 2,476 event views. The event led to further employer engagement such as networking and blog contributions. The sessions allowed students to be prepared for recruitment practices. It showed the benefits of allowing us to engage with employers who are not local or would not normally be able to attend constructing a good cross section of international, national and local businesses. We will be using remote contributions more frequently in the future. The evidence of impact of the integrated Career Registration and Student Hub system comes from the overall **year-on-year improvement in Progression indicators since 2018**. Additionally, in our Journey-2022 survey [Q1.2] 86% agreed that "Compared to how I was when I started my course, I am better prepared to succeed in my chosen career". Beyond this we have 134 of our programmes recognised by 27 PSRBS with areas such as Accountancy with Gold partner status with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA).

We consider outstanding support for students' successful outcomes to include a full understanding of what 'successful outcomes' mean for our students. In that context it is important to note that for many of our students, success is not reducible to getting a good job. In our Journey-22 survey 83% agreed [Q1.5] that 'While getting a good job is important to me, that is not the only benefit to me of completing my degree'

## SO2 - Outstanding rates of continuation and completion for our students and courses.

We believe that *given the profile of our students and the enduring structural challenges they have faced for many years*, exacerbated by the pandemic, that there are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for our students and courses. Additionally, our students define 'successful completion' in different ways.

### Continuation

For the last four years we have been broadly in line with benchmark at > 85% confidence (74% confidence in Y4) and never more than 2.1% below benchmark. This performance is robust across all types of partnership, disability status, ABCS quintiles, and deprivation level (IMD). We are MAB in Media while only 4 of our 17 Subject areas are MBB (Materially Below Benchmark). These are Business, Engineering, Bioscience and Computing where we have disproportionately large numbers of overseas students even though they account for only 8% of our student body. The majority of our overseas students come from modest backgrounds and have faced challenges around visa and UKVI requirements generally. Our undergraduate degrees have better continuation rates than our Foundation year programmes (ie where students study at Level 3 as part of the degree). Continuation by ethnicity shows that the University's Continuation gap between ethnic minority groups and white students is lower (or identical) than the benchmark gap in every case (except for Asian students).

## Completion

Our completion rates are currently at benchmark with a 99% degree of confidence. This was historically below benchmark but has been improving considerably over the last four years with 74%, 76%, 77%, and 80% completion. We are at or above benchmark in 8 of our 17 subject areas with our largest course, Nursing & Midwifery comfortably in line with benchmark at 99% confidence level. Overall, our students provide evidence of successful support and achievement in a way that makes sense to them:

- *JS-SQ - Academically I have made progress in how to complete assignments that are detailed yet concise. I have gained massive practice experience which has prepared me for my job. This course has enabled me to get the registration to become a qualified licensed nurse.*
- *JS-SQ When starting university, I was anxious, uncertain in my abilities, and very poor at talking with or to strangers. Now I've managed to leave my final year and walk straight into employment, be confident in the skills I have honed at university, and have happy memories of my time at UOB*
- *JS-SQ As a student who is about to graduate, I've learned a lot about my own reliability and independence, especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I feel I've since progressed into a confident, mature individual who is more decisive about where they want to move forward in life. This particularly pertains to the change in direction of my future career, my likes and dislikes, and where I would like to relocate*

## SO3 - Outstanding rates of Successful Progression

We believe that given the profile of our students and the enduring structural challenges they have faced for many years, exacerbated by the pandemic, that there are *good to outstanding rates of successful progression*. The evidence for this is as follows:

We were broadly in line with benchmark until Covid. Progression during Y3 has impacted most severely on women, Black students, mature students and less well-off students (ABC quintile and free school meals). We are above benchmark in 6 of the 14 subjects for which there are data. In Nursing our students were very heavily and directly involved in front line care at the Royal Bolton Hospital. We have noticed an increasing reluctance of many of our students to engage in the Graduate Outcomes survey. Although our student numbers have grown in the last four years participation in the survey has fallen by 20%. As indicated by the HESA statistical release in June 2022 which covers 2019-20 performance, our graduate outcomes performance is improving. The percentage of students in 'Total High Skilled' positions – managerial, professional, associate professional has risen from 69% to 72%. In an interesting statistic, the HESA data show that the percentage of our graduates who stated that they 'strongly agree' that they utilise the learning from their degree programme in their current employment, puts us 3rd out of 12 institutions in the north west - ahead of Manchester, Liverpool and Lancaster.

In terms of the recent OfS analysis of **geographical disparities** in progression to employment or further study, the Bolton region and six of the seven adjacent zones to it are firmly located in the Quintile 1 Group which has the lowest rate of graduate employment in the UK – some 24 percentage points below the geographical areas in the highest quintile. <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/a-geography-of-employment/>

In addition, 62% agreed that 'Tutors and others at the University helped me overcome challenges I faced in terms of understanding my options after graduating' [Q2.8] with 11% indicating not applicable and 18% disagreeing. Open ended responses by participants from across the institution indicate the importance of support, confidence and resilience in achieving their own progression outcomes - however defined.

- *JS-SQ I changed as a person and stopped having as much self-doubt. I also started devoting more time to studying and recalled the reasons why I was doing it. The higher my grades were, the harder I worked to improve them.*

- *JS-SQ From a narrow, uninformed perception of what skills and qualities I might acquire through my degree I have a far deeper understanding of and capacity to exercise the power of contemporary art in reflecting, commenting on, challenging, and shaping political and cultural social dynamics. To me, now, I would argue that contemporary artist bear a unique responsibility for how they use their craft*
- *JS-SQ My confidence has grown massively*
- *JS-SQ Been prepared to take up high responsibility and accountability on my job.*
- *JS-SQ Since I started from the foundation, my writing, spelling and overall*
- *JS-SQ confidence has improved. My technical knowledge regarding to accounting profession is significantly better. In summary, I am better prepared for the job market.*

## EDUCATIONAL GAINS

SO4. In the adoption of an Educational Gains Strategy approved by our Executive Board and by Senate unanimously in 2022 we submit that we clearly articulate the range of educational gains we intend our students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to our particular students and their future ambitions. In 2022 the University Senate and Executive Board approved A **Strategy for Educational Gains**. This strategy was built on existing research literature, our own internal research and the emerging OfS expectations arounds EGs and [extensive consultation](#) with academic and professional support staff across the institution and in collaboration with the Students' Union. This strategy incorporates: (i) A **definition** (ii) a **Statement of Approach** with 4 Key Actions, and (iii) a clear **Measurement Model** for tracking and enhancing EGs:

A **definition** of educational gains which explicitly recognises the needs of our students

*'Educational Gains' are the academic, personal and work skills and knowledge that a student acquires during their programme principally as a consequence of the wilful design of academic curricula and of support systems within a framework that is transparent to students and secures the confidence of internal and external stakeholders. It reflects the 'distance travelled', or the improvement in knowledge, skills, work-readiness and personal development students can show at two points in time.*

A **Statement of our Approach** to supporting these educational gains focusing on Four Core Actions

(a) Ensure that Educational Gains is emphasised in the **Academic Strategy Action Plan** (b) We will **continue to embed** GAME and GAME+ in our programmes and modules (c) We will **survey** our students regularly on their overall views of the broader benefits of their programme of study (d) We will provide **staff development** to support academic and support staff's understanding of best practice in relation to educational gains

A clear **Measurement Model** for tracking and enhancing EGs which directly reflects the important educational gains relevant to our student profile, and in general.

(a) *General cognitive gain* – what students think and know including but not limited to curricular knowledge

(b) *Power skills* (aka 'soft skills') development

(c) *Employability and career readiness*

(d) *Social capital development* – students' awareness of and ability to mobilise alliance and support within power structures.

Educational scaffolding supporting EGs is **embedded** in our programme structures. Our programme and module handbooks clearly identify the learning outcomes for each individual module and for the course overall. Within the Programme Specifications these are explicitly structured in stages (eg L4, L5 and L6 for UG honours degrees). We have a widely disseminated long-standing framework which captures the key educational gains in employability that are promoted and supported by our courses. This is the **GAME** (Graduate Attribute Matrix for Employability) model which has both a UG and PG version. Each new

programme is mapped onto the GAME matrix and reproduced in student learning materials. This ensures that employment skills are foregrounded in every module and students can [track their own progress](#) and educational gain. and [interactive resources](#)

In addition, our **Student Success Strategy** lays out three stages on the student journey drawing on a transition model. In practical terms our induction programme highlights the key stages for success and incorporates a **diagnostic profiling** of all new students in literacy and this information is sent automatically to the Personal Tutor via our **UNIPULSE** system which integrates assessment, personal tutor, special needs and academic status in one place effectively in real time.

### SO5 - The provider's approaches to supporting its students to achieve these gains

Our **approaches to supporting our students** to achieve these gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points.

As indicated above, the development of our EG Strategy reflected our own internal research with our final year students (the 'Journey' survey). [Journey Survey 1.7 to 1.10] In our June Journey Survey we asked four questions relating to the (i) Clarity (ii) Individualisation (iii) Tracking Progress and (iv) Student Sense of Progress in relation to Educational Gain. Results provide evidence of high levels of endorsement by students that Tutors and others are clear about educational goals, treat students as individuals, and track progress. 87% of students felt they had made 'good progress' towards their educational goals since they started at the University. This survey was distributed to all UG final year students and was completed by 217 (11%).

Item in Journey 2022 Survey relating to Educational Gains [Q1.7 to 1.10]	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	= Total agree
Tutors and others at the University have been clear about what educational goals they would like me to achieve and why	13%	27.9%	34.4%	75%
Tutors and others at the University treat me as an individual when supporting me achieving my educational goals.	7.9%	28.2%	43.5%	80%
Tutors and others at the University keep track of how I am progressing towards my educational goals.	12%	28.2%	34.3%	74%
Overall, I have made good progress towards my educational goals since I started at the University.	9.8%	27.1%	50%	87%

### SO6 - Evaluation of Success in Educational Gains

We believe we meet and exceed the criterion 'The provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and demonstrates its students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains.' The evidence for this is in the quantitative results (above) and the qualitative comments made by students which illustrate the transformative nature of the educational gains students secure from our programmes – and through their own high levels of engagement and resilience.

- JQ-SQ *My confidence and belief in myself has grown. I never thought I would be clever enough to get a degree but I have proved to myself that self belief and hard work can bring good things*
- JQ-SQ *I have developed my confidence and can now take public speaking and client facing roles without too much anxiety. I have improved my academic writing and referencing skills, and have been able to meet deadlines consistently throughout the course -*
- JQ-SQ *I have learned a lot rather than studies {decency, polite. respect, helping}*

- *JQ-SQ - I was able to vocalise and invest in my special characteristics, grow academically, and mature, in aspects of my personality. I managed to broaden my social circle and my professional networks, gain valuable employment experience, and significantly raise my social status*

The **Journey 23** survey is scheduled to run again 1-28 May of this year. As in 2022, the survey will include recognised instruments such as Dweck Open Learning Mindset scales ([Paunesku, et al, 2015](#)) as we examine predictors, consequences and correlates of Educational Gains. We have already introduced two additional questions into our standard MEQ survey for all modules. These questions are: Q21 *Overall, this module has increased my knowledge in this area* and Q22 *Overall, this module has increased my skills in this area*. This will complement the Journey survey by giving us a module-by-module tracking of the extent to which different parts of the student's programme is contributing an educational gain, in a way that is defined by the student.

## SUMMARY and CONCLUSION

- In relation to Student Experience, the provision at the University of Bolton is typically of outstanding quality for all groups of students.
  - In relation Student Outcomes **for its mix of students and courses** and, as per 268 b of the guidance which states that “benchmarks do not include all possible factors that could have affected a provider's historical performance”, most features of the aspect are very high quality for all groups of students.
  - Our students suffer considerable **structural socioeconomic challenge** in the context of a vulnerable public health environment and have been particularly disrupted by Covid.
  - Where students have not completed their programmes this is in the majority of cases **attributable to economic or health issues** and not by virtue of being underserved by the University.
  - Policies and practices are **evidence-based**, and their impacts are demonstrated.
  - The University has been swift to define, measure and develop plans in relation to **Educational Gains**, building on extensive consultation with staff and the Students' Union, extant research and on existing practice in relation to academic and personal development through scaffolding.
- In the context of the above we submit that an Award at the Gold or Silver level would be appropriate.

## REFERENCES

Key source documents include peer reviewed publications, policy papers, student support portals and related resources. For efficiency and clarity, hyperlinks are placed at the point of exposition within the text to facilitate ease of verification by readers. A folder with some of the main sources of evidence not otherwise publicly available can be found [via this link](#) including evidence relating to partners.

## STATEMENT FROM THE STUDENTS' UNION PRESIDENT, NIHIT TIWARI 2021-23

“The Students' Union is proud to have been involved in developing this TEF submission as part of the TEF Steering Group. This is an example of how we continually work in partnership with the University of Bolton on a range of projects including representation and delivery of enrichment activities. We have student representatives at every level of the decision-making process from course committees to Senate and the Board of Governors – plus internal grant and promotion schemes. This reflects the student-centred ethos at the heart of TIRI and the University and its partnership network generally, which enables it to play a transformational role in the learning journey of so many of our students – despite the multiple challenges they can sometimes face.