The University of East London TEF 22/23 Submission
1. The University of East London context

1.1 <u>Who we are:</u> The University of East London (UEL) has a 125-year heritage of being the 'people's university', committed to addressing health and economic inequalities wherever they are found. Our transformational **Vision 2028** is a ten-year strategic plan that sets out both a clear destination and route map to pioneer Future Careers & Innovation for the 4.0 and 5.0 economy, diversifying the talent pipeline and realising potential.[1] We are an award-winning, forward-thinking **careers-1st institution**, with our strategy evidencing an **improvement to student and graduate outcomes in the top 10% among universities**. We have recognised that health gain is a prerequisite to learning gain for our community. Our whole-University approach to this and positive impact on student outcomes has been recognised with one of the first five awards of the University Mental Health Charter. Our role as an anchor institution connects local people, communities, and industries through our work and partnerships addressing skill needs (for example in healthcare and education) locally and globally. Our mission is **transformative**. Our shared values centre on embracing diversity, equity and inclusion; courage by taking ownership of challenges and problems and following through on resolution. We are passionate about putting the student at the centre of everything we do. These values emphasise our efforts to connect, influence and shape the future of our student population in ways that make a difference not just to their own lives but also to the communities in which they, and we, are based. We are inspiring the next generation of academics, highly-skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and creatives from the local community, wider UK and internationally, through our established *Centres of Excellence* (section 2.5) including Primary Health Care, Cyber Security, Fintech, Sustainability, AR/VR, Smart Cities and in our integrated <u>Career Zones</u>.[2] The University has embedded the cultural capital and inter-personal skills and competencies in the curriculum across disciplines through the **Mental Wealth & Professional Fitness** provision: developing the emotional & social intelligence, resilience, and creativity necessary to access and adapt to a constantly evolving world and its new technologies. Through **Vision 2028**, we are transforming our curriculum, pedagogy, research and research impact, and partnerships to make a positive difference to student and graduate success, all while making a lasting impact on our University community. In partnership with Siemens, we are implementing an investment and development programme to become net-zero carbon by 2030 and we harness the power of sport and promote an active campus to transform lives and societies (section 3.7). In the third year of our £350million <u>Connected Campus</u> transformation programme, we are increasing the accessibility of our campuses to our community and enhancing the education and industry interface digitally and physically.[3]

1.2 <u>Where we are:</u> Our three campuses are located in the London Borough of Newham – the most diverse, youngest and fastest growing region of Europe. The area also has some of the largest health inequalities and a borough-wide child poverty rate of 49% which is 14%pts above the average rate of all London boroughs.[4] Historically one of the most deprived boroughs in England, Newham was the 23rd most deprived area in the UK, in IMD 2015, and in IMD 2019, the 43rd most deprived area.[5] As a University community with 155 different nationalities, we are a microcosm of creative diversity.[6] With London campuses in Stratford and in Royal Albert Dock – London's only enterprise zone, UEL is at the heart of the industrial and creative shift east. We have a vibrant and diverse student population, which steers our work and approach to teaching and curriculum: 67.5% of those who declared their ethnicity are from the global ethnic majority; and 68% are from the lowest two quintiles measured by the IMD.[7] Our east London location is significant in opening a powerful global gateway for our students and communities. Our **Vision 2028** – focusing on **social mobility** – and this intersectionality enables us to bring together education, industry and talent in an established

education and skills social-value partnership. This is a unique consequence of our location and the student population and local school, Further Education and employment partners we work with.

1.3 <u>Who our students are:</u> We champion the transformative effect of Higher Education (HE), with over half of our students' parents not holding an HE qualification (52.7%).[8] We advance fairness in education for all, supporting an increase in accessibility of a more diverse talent pipeline. Our size and shape TEF population shows students identify as 35.6% Black, 32.5% White; 19.4% Asian; 7.9% mixed heritage and 4.6% 'other''.[9] We operate as a **glocal institution,** supporting a global student body with a curriculum that has a world-wide reach, while also supporting transformative change at a local community and regional level. In 2021 the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that UEL is a major engine of **social mobility**, placing us eighth nationwide in mobility rate.[10] The 2023 Times Social Inclusion ranking shows our success in placing UEL first in London for **social inclusion** and twelfth nationally.[11] UEL has remained in the top fifteen institutions for social inclusion according to these rankings and has been ranked in the top fifteen in all five of the social inclusion publications.[12] Our students' backgrounds mean they join us at different stages in their lives. On entry, 52% of our student population (across all TEF years) are under twenty-one while 48% are mature students seeking to re-train and re-engage in Industry 4.0 & 5.0.[13] As well as their journey through life, our students have a varied experience of the world with 15.5% having reported a disability.[14] Moreover, 42% of our students who reported their socio-economic backgrounds have parents either in routine and manual occupations or had never worked with 42.9% of students eligible for free school meals in previous education.[15] We work strategically to ensure that the diversity of our staff reflects that of our student body and brings broad cultural industry experience. In addition, we proactively curate an agile staff development programme to ensure we meet the needs of our students and their development (section 2.4).

1.4 <u>Our mission and distinctive vision:</u> Our vision and shared values evidence that we exist to enhance lives and enrich futures. Our mission is to prepare our students for the jobs and opportunities of the future and to drive forward that future inclusively and sustainably championing **social mobility and life chances of our students**, in service to our communities. We are a **careers-1st University,** meaning we connect students to a fully embedded industry facing curriculum, supporting students to develop their career aspirations from the very start of their journey at UEL. We are being recognised externally for this: recent honours include *Best Employability Strategy at the Target Jobs 2022* from the National Graduate Recruitment Awards*;* and The HE Innovate Award for *Most innovative approach to developing employability skills*.[16] Over 80% (12,800) of our students are regularly accessing co- and extra-curricular careers support; 35% (4,959) students are completing work-based learning; and 3,500 employer partners are actively engaging (a 350% growth in four years).[17] In 2021, *Business Leader* magazine ranked us in the top twenty universities in the UK for producing CEOs and MDs over the last twenty years, demonstrating the consistency of our approach.[18] Across our portfolio, we have over 100 Professional and Statutory Regulatory Body accreditations demonstrating our commitment. These include: *Royal College of Occupational Therapists, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), Chartered Institute of Civil Engineering Surveyors (CICES), The Chartered Institute for IT (BCS), Joint Board of Moderators (JBM), Bar Standards Board, Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL), British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), British Psychological Society (BPS), Royal Society of Chemistry, Social Work England, Department for Education, and Royal Institute of British Architects*.[19] The **real-world curriculum** focus, use of simulation learning (including through AR and VR), our *Centres of*

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Excellence and our **authentic assessment** are matched by our goals for our students, which are ambitious, and demonstrate our **vibrant portfolio** and **careers-1st** vision.

1.5 <u>Our approach to excellence in Learning and Teaching:</u> We have a continued commitment to developing our learning and teaching in recognition of our student population, values and vision. Central to our bespoke learning and teaching strategy are:

- Championing and embedding inclusive, accessible, and <u>Technology Enhanced Active Learning (TEAL);</u>[20]
- Fostering student engagement and partnership in curriculum development and enhancement to maximise success;
- Adopting the latest and industry-focused authentic and innovative learning, teaching and assessment practices to enhance student outcomes;
- Leading and supporting academic staff development, progression, and teaching excellence;
- Maximising the benefits of research informed teaching.

We have committed a significant amount of institutional effort in investing in approaches to **active learning** and teaching and **authentic assessment** practices that are diverse and appropriate to our portfolio and valued by industry partners. This effort focuses upon the use of key learning and teaching technologies to realise our mission to ensure that learning is active, and **research informed**. In addition, we adopt a holistic approach to learning and teaching, providing a range of opportunities to actively develop academically, personally and professionally demonstrated throughout this document. In our approach to our learning and teaching strategy, we focus on the development of the cohort and subject identity of our students and **real-world** application of knowledge within curricular that are well sequenced, and aid progression and **excellent outcomes**, as explored below (section 1.6) and are complemented by outstanding academic support.

1.6 <u>Performance and analysis of TEF core metrics</u>
We are a **gold-standard institution** with outstanding student outcomes as our core metrics demonstrate and as explained below.

1.6.1 <u>Outstanding outcomes:</u> Our framework generates exceptional and leading outcomes in Completion among all universities participating in the TEF. In our student outcomes metrics, we hold a positive flag in Completion and our difference from the benchmark is an exceptional 7.7%pts, for full-time students. Our difference from benchmark is top for all universities, and 2%pts above the next university's difference against their benchmark.[21] Moreover, our difference from the benchmark is 13.4%pts for our part-time students (who represent 8.2% of the total Completion population).[22] We are fiercely proud of this outcome. We attribute this to our ongoing development of, and commitment to, our learning and teaching practices and rich industry-focused curriculum and assessment, as explored in the rest of this document. Notably we have twenty-two positive markers across the split metrics for Completion. In particular, our Associations Between Characteristics of Students (ABCS), has secured an aggregate that is 11.6%pts above the benchmark for students in quintile one: those with the lowest chance of success according to the Office for Students (OfS) statistic. The result shows that our framework is tailored to our students and yields incredible outcomes.[23]

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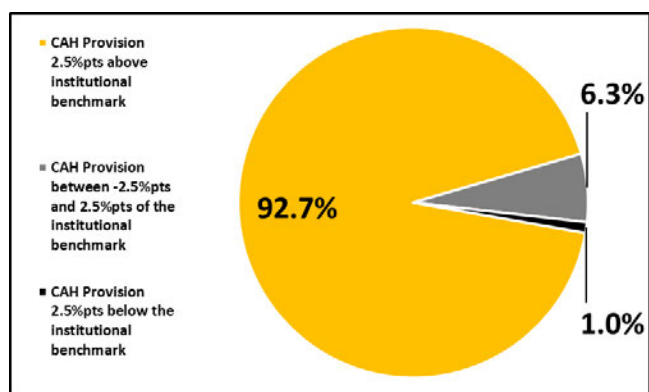UKPRN: 10007144

Figure 1 Proportion of CAH Subjects 2.5% above our benchmark

(a) Completion is significantly above benchmark in 92.7% of CAH subject areas and therefore our students are receiving a **transformational** education and **social mobility gains,** see Figure 1.[24]

(b) UEL's distance travelled from Progression to employment has also been exceptional over the last six years. Figure 2 below shows how UEL has closed the gap on TEF benchmarks from -10.6%pts for 14/15 to 0.6%pt above for 19/20 graduates for Highly-Skilled Employment and Progression.[25] We are proud that lower IMD quintiles, and those who were eligible for free school meals, are all within the excellence benchmark and do not hold a negative flag.[26] This demonstrates our championing of **social mobility** outcomes within our industry-focused **careers-1st** vision.

(c) In Continuation, over the last 3 years of data we have closed the gap between our indicators and benchmarks by 1.5%pts. Our most recent year of data shows we are 0.3%pt below the benchmark, while in year two we were 1.8%pts below the benchmark. [27]

1.6.2 Very high-quality student experience: Our NSS metrics for our full-time respondents (98.4%) show strong performance, with no negative flags, across four student experience

Figure 2 UEL's Improvement Against the Progression & Highly Skilled Employment Benchmark

metrics: Teaching on my Course, Assessment and Feedback, Academic Support, and Student Voice, examples of our approach are detailed in section two. We are proactive in introducing interventions to address issues that impact on our students' experience. For instance, a cohort of just 1.6% (rounded) of our students are part-time. Our four years of student entrant data shows a high proportion of mature students.[28] We recognise that this cohort choose to study part-time due to socio-economic circumstance including contributing to family income and dependents to care for. We have seen some decline in engagement for these students, primary due to the pandemic and the pressures placed upon households. To help students overcome these challenging circumstances, we further strengthened our digitalisation facilities to reach out to those particular students and enrich their level of experience. Furthermore, physical and digital career zones were placed at the foreground of the curriculum, continuing our mission as a **career-1st** institution.

In the past four years, we have had a robust series of interventions in place to target specific high-demand resource courses, particularly in creative industries. Despite our long-term plans and comprehensive investment since the previous TEF, supply chain and stock availability has been delayed due to the pandemic. As a result, for a period our students and staff were not able to benefit from the cutting-edge industry standard resources we would usually expect. Nonetheless, due to our ongoing vibrant and agile learning and teaching practices within our professionally focused academic

environment we recognise the work we have done to secure our excellent student outcomes and very high-quality student experience. We are determined to ensure that our ambitious investment programme in campus facilities(through our Connected Campus and Digital 1st transformation programmes) drive rapid improvement in this measure – our **connected campus** and **digital 1st** projects have invested £44million and further created **cutting edge teaching and learning spaces** across campuses.[29] To further enhance students' learning resources, we have introduced a robust, targeted investment and action plan to enhance this area which resulted in our current *Centres of Excellence*, industry-facing pedagogy and learning environments (section 2.5). We have now seen a rise in NSS 'Learning Resources' satisfaction from 71.8% to 76.5% in 2021/22 and twelve out of twenty-one of our CAH subjects are within tolerance of the excellence benchmark, which represents over half of our provision (51.5%). Many of our CAH subjects have seen dramatic increases too, see Figure 3 below.[30] We expect this trajectory to continue, supported by the awards that amount to £2million in 2021 and £5.8 million for 22/23 through to 24/25 from the OfS with an extra £300k from

Health Education England to further develop our Royal Hospital and Primary Care Training Hub - one of our key teaching *Centres of Excellenc*e.[31] We have built hospital wards for simulated learning, obtained a new training ambulance, developed an approach to using Augmented and Virtually Reality for health care learning and refurbished our NHS-sponsored Podiatry clinic for placement learning. It creates a safe but simulated space for professional training which transforms learning opportunities. This

Figure 3 CAH Improvements between 21 and 22

investment has allowed us to be innovative in learning and teaching and enables us to rethink how we teach complex physiology through modelling and VR in ambitious and innovative ways. This approach to pedagogy through this *Centre of Excellence* transforms not simply the learning space but the **connected campus** itself.
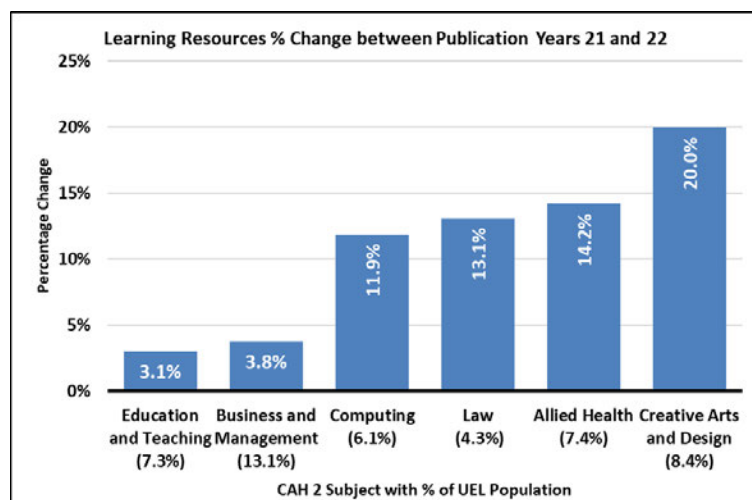
1.7 <u>Educational gain and stretch</u>: The UEL student experience is truly **transformative** and the concept of **'educational gain'** and the **stretch** we offer students should be viewed through this lens. Our transformative impact is clear, for example in 2020/21 98.4% of External Examiners (267 total population) confirmed students had the opportunity to '*achieve standards beyond the threshold level'* and for 21/22 it increased to 99.3% (total population 278). In the same survey, moreover, 92.9% of External Examiners agreed or strongly agreed that our *'assessment methods **stretch** students to perform above threshold levels'* in 20/21 and this increased to 95.0% for 21/22.[32] Our approach is centred on the provision of high-quality **experiential learning** and teaching, personalised academic and pastoral support, and an embedded degree-wide focus on career development for all students – regardless of background and prior attainment. All our students are supported to thrive, to achieve their goals and to be prepared for the next stage of their academic and career journeys. We will explore how we do this in the sections below.

2. Student experience

In this section we develop our claim to be recognised as a **gold institution** by exploring how we respond to our student population and their diverse needs; how we impact upon the social mobility

of our community; the use of levelling-up strategies and how we structure support and intervention, and fund and invest in projects accordingly. We also explore staff development, vibrant learning and teaching cultures and practices and research-informed teaching. We present our industry-facing innovative *Centres of Excellence* and demonstrate what this means for real-world experiential learning and our investment in learning environments and infrastructure.

2.1 Analysis of our TEF Student Experience split metrics: The strengths of our submission can be found in our very high-quality metrics but also in the qualities of expedient innovation in response to the challenges that we have faced. This achievement is not always observable in all our current split metrics. The calibre of our response to these challenges further attests to the excellence of the student experience throughout their journey. Our students' life circumstances, in particular, with regards to age and gender, present complexities which requires highly innovative and tailored approach to the required student support (see section 2.2.1). For example, our data shows that for our entrants 50.4% of our female students are under twenty-one, 29.4% are between twenty-one and thirty and 20.3% are thirty-one and over. Whereas for male entrants 57.4% are under twenty-one, 30.4% are between twenty-one and thirty and 12.2% are thirty-one and over.[33] The data shows that males satisfaction is 1%pt above benchmark in Academic Support; by contrast, female satisfaction was 3.9%pts below the benchmark. We have identified several CAH Subjects where we have underperformed in Academic Support: Medical Science [-2.7%pts], Psychology [-12.6%pts], Nursing [-23.9%], and Health and Social Care [-7.5%pts].[34] In these courses we have male to female ratios of 1:2, 1:4.5, 1:7.7 and 1:7.6 respectively. Despite our diversity and continued mission to break societal trends, female dissatisfaction is linked to the predominance of female students on placement-facing courses on the aforementioned CAHs.[35] This is especially compounded by the effects of the pandemic on placement-based learning which when combined with the vulnerability of students created an idiosyncratic set of conditions. This is best illustrated in clinical settings where students on placements had to contend with extreme conditions and unprecedented demands. This required vast and immediate innovation in placement procurement, due diligence and link tutor activity to ensure excellence in the support to allow students to continue their studies and provide for their health and wellbeing. Therefore, the requirements of the course along with the conditions of lockdown placed students under unprecedented pressures to complete the work-based aspects of their learning resulting in a drop against the benchmark for satisfaction amongst this population. During the pandemic, to support these cohorts we developed digital placement platforms based on AR and VR to facilitate engagements with genuine placements and work-based learning. In order to mitigate disruption, we worked closely with partners to develop these innovative responses. We are proud of our nursing students for the role they played during the pandemic as well as the training and state-of-the art facilities we provided for the Nightingale hospital.[36] Post-pandemic, we reinforced and extended our strategic partnerships with local placement providers and stakeholders to create a more resilient and responsive approach to those cohorts and professional courses.

2.2 UEL's learner journey to outstanding experience and outcomes:

2.2.1 Personalisation: Our outstanding outcomes (see 1.6) are a result of a **highly personalised approach** taken to learning, inclusivity and engagement **(PLIE).** Our Careers & Student Enterprise; and Student Engagement and Success teams provide a service to all students but also target vulnerable students based on predictive analytics. Our teams can identify initiatives that will improve outcomes, for example the '*MyFeedback'* project through which we developed: an innovative assessment checking service which provides 24/7 access to expert academic writing skills development, adopting a near-to-peer training model. In addition, we developed an online data

analytics dashboard Track My Future (TMF) aimed at boosting engagement and facilitating access to information (for more on this see section 2.2.3). Students who have participated were more likely to have positive outcomes in attainment and Continuation. For example, in 20/21 there was a 6%pts increase in average grades for students that took up sessions with Academic Skills Tutors students; moreover, for Continuation there was a 6.4%pts uplift for students attending one or more academic skills tutoring seminars. The uplift in Continuation increased by 8.5%pts when students attended one or more tutoring seminars or drop-in sessions.[37] In addition, the specialist academic tutoring team provide one-to-one drop-ins and workshops face-to-face and online to further consolidate skills and enhance student outcomes. During 2021/22, over 8,049 individual students accessed academic tutoring support in English and Maths, generating over 22,508 student interventions.[38] For Continuation, we recognise that ABCS quintiles four and five are 2.9%pts below the benchmark. However, the group represents only 14.7% of our entrants over the period in question. Outside of this grouping, quintile one and quintiles two and three are just 0.2%pt and 0.3%pt below benchmark. Quintile one and quintiles two and three make up 37.9% and 47.3% of the population, respectively. Our provision has been designed to support those from non-traditional Higher Education backgrounds that have lower statistical chances of success and we can see this in quintiles one to three for ABCS. Post-pandemic, we will continue further enhancement of our high-quality offerings, recognising that ten CAH subject areas are above benchmark for Assessment and Feedback (55.8% of our provision) can be considered at least very-high quality in this metric; furthermore, 70.7% of the CAH subjects are within the excellence benchmark tolerance.[39]

2.2.2 Student Voice: Our students' voice is central to the University's ethos and operation. It is integral to the creation of a learning community, intrinsic to quality assurance and enhancement processes, course creation, and formally embedded across our committee structure, notably in their representation at Board of Governors, Academic Board and Education & Experience Committee. The impact of this ethos is reflected in the data and supports our claim to be a pioneering **inclusive and equitable** university. UEL is in the top 9% of Higher Education institutions globally for reducing inequalities in the *Times Higher Education Impact Ranking* 2022; moreover, UEL was ranked second globally in 2020 for this measure.[40] As part of our commitment to inclusion, NSS 2022 demonstrates that our students feel part of the learning community (72.5% compared to 68.2% across the sector).[41] While we recognise a decline in our Student Voice metric, 45.3% of our provision is nonetheless outstanding by being 2.5%pts above benchmark and notably CAH subjects Economics and Performing Arts are 12%pts and 9%pts above UEL benchmark.[42] To further enhance the Student Voice and experience, and harness their overall learner journey, we are committed to continuous improvement. For example in a Term One 2021/22 Course Committee meeting a level six Accounting & Finance representative fed back that students wanted more practice with accounting software.[43] This was promptly offered for that cohort and correlates with a 3.7%pts increase in the NSS Learning Resources score in 2022 for the related CAH subject area.[44] Year-on-year increases were noted at institutional level in Learning Resources (+4.8%pts), learning community (+3.1%pts) and learning opportunities (+1.3%pts), reflecting the progress we are making towards our **Vision 2028** goals and underscoring how our student engagement mechanisms and continual monitoring process (a continuous review mechanism for quality and enhancement) allows us to adapt our provision in year and at pace.[45]

2.2.3 Tailored academic support for student success: Our learning and teaching **staff development** is in response to the nature of our student population and academic needs. Our research shows that our students have **unique life circumstances** that do not appear in the TEF split metrics and require us to provide tailored academic support. For example, the 2021 *State of the Nation: Social Mobility*

and Pandemic paper by the *Social Mobility Commission* clearly demonstrates that economically disadvantaged young people were the hardest hit by Covid-19.[46] We recognise in this the challenges faced by our students and use bespoke systems such as our Track My Future platform to identify support needs (section 2.3.2). The last four years of student entrant data shows that 48.2% of students were twenty-one years or older.[47] Taking this into consideration we run a variety of interventions including our *New Beginnings* course (see section 2.3.3) to ensure that those entering the university as a mature student are able to develop and progress accordingly. In addition, the age of our students and their contribution to family/household finances means that many students must work part-time in addition to their studies and/or have dependents to care for. In a study called '*Beyond Adversity*', (Davies et al., 2019) involving 858 of our first-year students, during termtime, 28% of respondents had caring responsibilities for children, 26% worked more than twenty hours per week and 12% worked more than thirty hours per week, usually due to family financial circumstances.[48] We are conscious that many of our students face barriers to achieving academic success and that a robust and personalised academic support, with inclusive learning approaches at the centre, is a key factor in ensuring all students' potential is realised. To maximise student gain and further support we recognise the need for 'active learning' alongside curricula which train students for Industry 4.0 & 5.0 and **authentic assessment** that speaks to industry skills and simulated experiences. We have worked tirelessly at replacing dualistic notions of 'lecture-seminar' and we embrace workshop formats supported by our specialist *Centres of Excellence* (explored further in section 2.5) and their **industry-standard** innovative learning environments.

2.3 Levelling up to support educational gain
UEL has a holistic approach that aims to support students throughout their journey. We tailor our student support to recognise the needs of our student population. These services place the student at the heart of all that we do and are instrumental in achieving our outstanding outcomes.

2.3.1 Tailored support to ensure inclusion: *The Disability and Dyslexia Team* (DDT) registered 904 new students in the academic year 2021/22 (72.4% UG); of these students we provided almost 20% (171) with additional support through our disability discretionary fund, which covers interim support, whilst students wait for confirmation of external funding (through the Disabled Students Allowances).[49] We also provide support for those students who do not qualify for this scheme, such as international students. In total DDT have 2308 students (71.8% UG) who are fully registered with our services.[50] In addition to this, the DDT service also considers our students' lived experience of trauma. In 2021 51% of the 858 surveyed students reported 3 or more adverse childhood experiences, and the research demonstrates that these experiences impact quality of life, experiences of anxiety and self-reported detrimental physical and mental health.[51] These interventions have been reflected in our approach to **support staff to support learners:**

- For example, in 2021/22 all student facing staff members took part in neurodiversity training to better equip them with the skills, experience and tools to ask the right questions and provide support and careers signposting to neurodivergent students. This significantly increased the awareness of neurodiversity and confidence of staff in supporting students.
- The *Dyslexia and Disability Team* provide a screening service for students who feel they might have a specific learning difference, in order that they might be provided with additional support. In 2021/22 full diagnostic assessments were carried out on 230 students across the academic year. Our DDT run an online service called Edu-Tech with an external partner, that disabled students can book into via an online booking system.[52] The Edu-Tech drop-in service provides students with access to an experienced Assistive Technology specialist who can assist them with making the most of these, but also provide support around the use of

standard university platforms, such as Moodle, Microsoft 365 (including Teams), referencing software such as Zotero and other mobile apps that can support their learning. These sessions run weekly throughout the academic year and uptake has proved extremely popular; of the 210 sessions available in 2021/22 90% (188) were subscribed to by students. 80% of students who engaged with this service gave a feedback rating of very satisfied.[53]

2.3.2 <u>Academic support:</u> We have been introducing robust interventions in order to enhance our overall student academic support in a more holistic approach. This culminated in the use of an institution-wide funding pot of over **£2 million of hardship funds** as detailed below (during the duration of TEF). This is in response to the published indicators which show Academic Support to be 2.1% below benchmark, yet our outcomes indicate that academic support is having a positive impact, because Continuation is above benchmark in most CAH subject areas.[54] We recognise that our Academic Support fell during the Covid-19 pandemic years from 77%pts to 69.3%pts.[55] We understand the impact of Covid-19 has had on the poorest households in the UK, and we are conscious that many of our students are among them. For our student population, students in IMD quintiles one and two are negatively flagged in Academic Support being 2.5%pts below benchmark which correlates with the findings of the *Social Mobility Commission's* for the same time period.[56] We are therefore conscious of the impact of the pandemic on the lives and personal circumstances of our students and their digital poverty in many cases. For our students, where the majority are in IMD quintiles one and two, many were disproportionately disadvantaged without access to PCs or WiFi at home. As a result, using an institution-wide funding pot of over £2 million of hardship funds to address digital poverty we supported students in purchasing IT equipment. The library team also worked with a supplier to deliver over 3000 textbooks directly to students' homes to mitigate travel to campus when restrictions were in place.[57] For Learning Resources, IMD quintiles one and two were not negatively flagged; however, they were negatively flagged for Academic Support.[58] Reflecting on this challenge, we introduced a system to identify students who were not engaging, in order to reach out to them and ensure they are getting the support needed. This includes – uniquely – empowering students with their own learning progress data and providing personalised advice and signposts in parallel**.** We developed, inhouse, the online data analytics dashboard <u>Track My Future (TMF)</u> to improve the number of students who engage with academic support and make the most of the wealth of personalised opportunities for learning in the wider university, collating personalised dashboards (including engagement, assessment and career-readiness), information, tutorial booking, digital tools and resources into a 'one-stop shop' for students, available anytime, anywhere and through any device with over 1.5 million logins.[59] There is strong evidence showing that the dashboard is having the positive impact we had hoped. In September 2022, for example, there was a 30% increase in the number of online events completed compared with 2021.[60] TMF played critical role in enabling dual delivery of teaching and student support online and on campus during the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020-2021. In its first year of implementation, 65.1% of the student population (11,164) accessed the TMF student engagement dashboard and for 2022/23 we have seen 15,910 students accessing the service so far.[61] TMF is now visited one million times a year by UEL students, with 76% of students visiting TMF at least two or three times per week.[62]

2.3.3 <u>Funding projects to enhance social mobility:</u> Central to our values and practice is our desire to target access while **widening participation**, improving **educational gain** and supporting transformative **social mobility** practices. We have a range of invested projects which provide such support through our Access and Participation Plan. We have seen the impact of our **Access and Participation Plan** in the TEF data relating to our students with a reported disability: an increase of 4.3%pts between 17/18 and 19/20 entrants' Continuation, which has moved us to within 0.4%pt of

the benchmark underscoring the value of these projects for **staff development**, student support, **stretch** and **educational gain**.[63] Launched in 2019 for 2020 to 2025, the Access and Participation Plan involves a programme of funded projects to address gaps in attainment across different groups.[64] Projects include: exploring Trauma Informed Practice in Higher Education; Coaching for Academic Success and; a pre-entry programme provision called New Beginnings. APP also provides students with opportunities to engage in the primary research not only as participants but as co-researchers, delivering new knowledge leading directly to improved **staff reflexivity and development** and in turn, positive student outcomes at UEL. We recognise the impact that these projects and their resulting **staff development** have had for the upturn in Continuation and our maintenance of outstanding Completion. As a result, we have initiated Specialist Trauma training for staff wellbeing, a Big White Wall which enables students and staff access to psychological and emotional support 24/7, 365 days a year and Mental Health First Aid training for staff.[65] Developing this, we are proud that we are one of only five Universities to be awarded a *University Mental Health Charter Award*.[66]

2.3.4 Investment in our digital learning infrastructure: We recognise that the course-specific resources NSS score (Q20) saw decline to 78% in 2022.[67] Conscious of this, and to support our **rich learning and teaching culture** with **industry-standard infrastructure**, as well as embracing our **connected campus**, we have now accelerated our investment in the learning environments with a £44 million digital transformation programme until 2026.[68] **Connected Campus** underpins our pedagogy of 'Technology-Enhanced, Active Learning' (TEAL) which is significantly addressing and leading key changes in our **careers-1st** pedagogy. Outside of the core metrics, NSS categories 'learning opportunities' and 'learning community' increased by 1.3%pts and 3.1%pts respectively between 2021-22 and in 2022 for 'learning opportunities' we are ranked fifty-first out of 134 HEIs and for 'learning community' we are ranked thirty-sixth out of 134 and fifth in London.[69] We recognise that our *Centres of Excellence* (section 2.5) were affected by pandemic lock-down and we also recognise the need for learners to 'grow' into their understanding of new resources, especially given their innovative nature. Our **digital transformation programme** has so far enabled upgrades to the network infrastructure and WiFi installation of new computers in the libraries, purchase of laptops for use in Schools, and installation of AppStream for student desktop applications. **Total investment in 2021 was £5.5m:** the first phase of the WiFi project has seen **£1.2m** investment; **£2.1m** for improvements to student facing systems such as the student records system; and **£2.2m** for the upgrade to enable students' access to their courses both in-person and remotely.[70] Augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies in classrooms enable students to apply practical skills such as patient care in immersive environments.[71] Further innovations enhancing the learning experience include a lightwell where students can engage in design sprints and other sandpit-like activities that can be livestreamed through a student-led broadcast unit. In addition, a state-of-the-art flight simulation machine enables aeronautical engineering students and researchers to flight test their novel designs. All these innovations in technology enhance **student digital fluency** in the light of digital poverty for our students in IMD quintiles one and two, thus preparing them for jobs of the future. It is expected that this significant investment will yield improvement in the IT- and course-specific NSS metrics.

2.3.5 Degree awarding gap: Given our location and the backgrounds of our students, our **glocal reach** requires us to foreground our practice within a narrative that explores the role of learning and teaching for transformation and equity. Work is therefore ongoing to eradicate racialised gaps in attainment. For example, in 2021/22, we engaged with Global Ethnic Majority (GEM) students to develop a deep understanding of their lived experiences at university; to find out what support they

require and co-construct initiatives that aim to tackle the awarding gap using an appreciative inquiry approach. In 2022/23, we are engaged in outreach events with educators in schools to increase awareness and knowledge among university staff on how to support GEM students effectively. This also underpins our **careers-1st** approach seeing this aspect of our learning and teaching as a direct and transformative act of social mobility. To this end, the degree awarding gap currently stands at 13.5% for 2021/2 (down from 21% in 2018/19) and it is a strategic goal to eliminate this gap entirely by 2028. The data shows that the gender attainment gap has converged for the last five years though to 2021/22 graduates where a small gap of 1%pt exists between male and female students. We see the impact of the projects within our **inclusive learning and teaching culture** through recognition that Black identifying students (the largest of our student population) between 2017/18 and 2019/20 entrants have improved in Continuation by 7.3%pts to 87.9%, supporting the work we do in levelling-up. [72] Our *Office for Institutional Equity* (OIE) was established in 2019 to advance an inclusive, equitable, and anti-racist environment for all within the UEL community. The OIE led two projects aimed at promoting Student Success in the 2021/22 academic year in its institutional leadership role of advancing equity and inclusion across the institution. In carrying out that task, incorporating the student voice was considered to be of primary importance alongside facilitating staff engagement. Students were thus positioned to co-lead on the delivery of the projects: *The Promoting Student Success in Higher Education Project* which, using an appreciative inquiry approach, explored the lived experiences of students at UEL, by investigating their perceptions of the causes that underpin their performance.[73] *The Inclusive Curriculum Review Project* utilised a bespoke audit tool to facilitate co-creation of diversified curricula across schools and make recommendations to improve inclusive practice.[74]

2.3.6 Supporting equitable access to learning resources: As we recognise elsewhere in this document, given our student population, the effects of the pandemic were felt especially hard by our community. We met this challenge by continuing to innovate access to and improve the quality of the learning environment. For example, in 2020/21, the libraries outperformed comparator institutions (modern universities) in offering study learning spaces at a ratio of 1:9.7 at UEL against a ratio of 1:22.5 for comparator institutions.[75] The NSS score for the Library specific question (Q19) saw an improvement from a sector-wide low of 74% in 2021 to 80% in 2022.[76] To support levelling-up at a time of global crisis, there was a seamless pivot to fully online delivery when the library buildings closed in March 2020. As national restrictions were eased after the first lockdown, UEL Library buildings were among the first academic Library buildings in the UK to fully re-open in compliance with government health guidelines according to SCONUL data.[77] In May 2020, the Library team successfully implemented an online chat platform called *LibAnswers,* which significantly increased the visibility of online support for students, allowing them to get live support when searching the online Library catalogue. The Library team engaged in 10,396 chats in 2020/21 and 6,050 in 2021/22. Users of the chat service have rated the service 93% positive, contributing to the positive sentiment expressed in the Library question in NSS 2022.[78] The increased, hybrid and flexible access of the library learning resources in supporting the complex and demanding lives of our most vulnerable learners has contributed to the institution-wide efforts to **decrease the degree awarding gap**.[79]

2.4 Staff Development

2.4.1 Enriching students' learning through staff development: The continual enhancement of our teaching, feedback and assessment practices is core to our approach to supporting students' learning progression and attainment, as embodied in **Vision 2028**. For instance, striving for

continuous improvements in teaching quality and staff training, we are proud to be early adopters of the *UK Professional Standards Framework* (UKPSF) and champion this within our learning, teaching and staff development cultures. We have around 275 staff who achieved HEA status through the scheme between 2015/16 and 2019/20 and 562 staff currently hold accreditation, including eighty-four SFHEA and seventeen PFHEA currently employed.[80] Since 2020, three UEL staff members have been awarded a *National Teaching Fellowship*, totalling five NTF in all.[81]

It is a requirement that all academics are formally learning and teaching trained (within their probationary period). In addition, three of our staff held leadership roles within the *British Educational Research Association* (BERA), during this TEF submission, furthering our links between teaching and research:

2.4.2 Innovative pedagogic output: Recruitment, probation and academic staff appraisal processes ensure that academic staff have a student-focus, innovate in their teaching practise, and assume responsibility for their students' academic support, in addition knowledge and skills within their discipline. This culture leads to innovative output with a global impact and is embodied which have driven student-focused success across UEL, as well as across the globe (2.44K subscribers and over 50K individual views in less than a year when launched in 2020).[84]

These examples are emblematic of the UEL signature approaches to academic support: using a combination or research and practical, evidence-based examples, ensuring that students from **non-traditional backgrounds** can engage, develop the skills and implement change into their own study practices.

In addition, the innovative national staff development session sponsored by *AdvanceHE Hard to Teach, and Hard to Reach* in 2020, adopting the mechanics of game-based learning and 'escape-rooms' to model to HE sector staff across the country the importance of active learning to support **diverse and non-traditional** entrants into HE.[87] Our **vibrant learning and teaching culture** means that fourteen out of the twenty available CAH subjects are within excellence thresholds for Teaching on my Course, with six out of the fourteen achieving outstanding by being 2.5%pts above institutional benchmark.[88]

2.4.3 Diversity of staff and community: Strategic staff recruitment leads to a diverse and vibrant community of over 1600 permanent and fixed-term academic and support staff. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is a fundamental characteristic of our culture: among our staff 16.7% identify as Black, 20.1% as Asian or Arab; 51.8% as White; 4.7% as mixed heritage, and 6.7% as 'other'. In addition, 6.4% of our permanent and fixed term staff have declared a disability. A good proportion of our Teaching staff come from non-HE backgrounds with rich careers in the public sector, healthcare and the voluntary sector.[89] EDI is also built into our annual performance review process, in which staff are required to reflect on EDI training and comment on how it has contributed to the advancement of equity and inclusion at UEL.

2.4.4 Scalable and sustainable growth: Our approach to teaching is reliant upon scalable and sustainable growth in staff understanding about learning and teaching to affect learner experience and outcomes. This is supported institutionally by our *Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching* (CELT). CELT provides leadership, training and good practice dissemination in teaching excellence across the institution. The profiling, facilitation and recognition of excellence in teaching across UEL is also supported by the *UEL Annual Teaching and Learning Symposium* led by CELT, offering staff and other HE institutions the opportunity to share, celebrate and learn from good practice.[90] The UEL teaching awards for teaching excellence also sits alongside the symposium offering a further opportunity to disseminate examples of excellence in teaching and learning. This approach is enhanced by UEL's School of Education Journal *Research in Teacher Education* established in 2011, which offers a platform for staff to share and disseminate good practice in teaching and learning. In addition, we have ten academic teaching staff in the top 2% globally for citations by Stanford University's report on top-cited researchers from a sample of 6,880,389 scientists globally.[91] Many colleagues sit on external boards and offer expert consultancy for

2.5 Centres of Excellence for transformational student journey: Our *Centres of Excellence* (as outlined below) are professional and immersive platforms for training our students on **industry standard facilities** to exert a high level of **stretch** and to raise aspirations, contributing to educational gain and highly-skilled graduate employment. Since 2018, we have been aware of Learning Resources declining in actual value, so we have invested heavily in specialist learning environment with our *Centres of Excellence*. These Centres provide a network of dedicated venues aligned to distinct industry clusters - designed with the support of prominent business partners such as Amazon Web Services (AWS), Siemens, ARCADES, Accenture, Atkins, just to name a few. These spaces bring together employers, resident businesses, investors, students, faculty, alumni and members of the local community through a range of events, training, workshops, careers fairs, hackathons, exhibitions, demonstrations and live projects with a clear and direct focus on shaping and responding to the challenges of Industry 5.0. Students gain real-life experience and training using cutting edge technology and state-of-the-art simulation suites, such as the:

- *Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT)*: Supports academic staff by nurturing research, leading on the adoption of innovative approaches, particularly the use of Technology Enhanced Learning. The centre also creates a space for staff to share expertise and to evaluate their effectiveness.
- *Hospital and Primary Care Training Hub* : To support the development of a career-ready NHS and health and social care workforce.[93]
- *Wellbeing and Psychological Services Centre*: A School of Psychology Career Zone initiative. The Career Zone offers industry standards training and placement opportunities to our students and operates a Wellness Clinic through the provision of counselling and psychology-enriched coaching.
- *Mock Courtroom:* A fully operational mock courtroom complete with a dock, witness box and a public gallery was established to offer students real-life experience. In our 2021/22 Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ), 100% of our final year students on the 'Public Law' module (LA5012), who received most of their teaching in this space, responded positively to the 'overall satisfaction' questions:
  "Coming into here getting to wear the wigs and the gowns, you truly learn how the dynamic of a courtroom works." –   student, LLB (Hons) Law;

> "It's the whole atmosphere of the courtroom. You get to see the professional part of it and you get to see what it looks like in real-life." –
> Law with Foundation Year;
> "this is...taking away the fear of going into the real court and we are getting familiar with the cultural facilities."

- _Trading Floor:_ The _Bloomberg_ Trading Floor provides greater opportunities for students to expand their exposure to the global business world. This facility uses cutting-edge technology sponsored by _Bloomberg_ and is used by our students to practice simulated trading and other finance related activities. In our most recent MEQ, 100% of our level four students on the 'Financial Markets and Institutions' module (FN4007), who received most of their teaching in this space, responded positively to the 'overall satisfaction' and 'careers' questions:
"What we do with our degrees, it's all theoretical. With this we've got a chance to understand what the practical side is, and it is very beneficial."

- _Strategy and Marketing Analytics Lab:_ Our state-of-the-art Strategy and Marketing Analytics Lab, designed in partnership with AWS, allows examination of data in real time to discover and implement insightful business solutions.[96]
- _Technology Enhanced Multipurpose Psychology Lab (TEMPL):_ Our students benefit from extensive state of the art VR/AR equipment TEMPL, which is used to support teaching and learning across our BSc programmes.[97]
- _Teacher training specialist rooms:_ equipped to support specialist pedagogy for trainee teachers in sciences, design and technology, food technology, music and computer science teaching.
- _Digital Fabrication Lab (DFUEL):_ This a Maker Space hub that enables students to work alongside employers in co-creation environment that unleash their potential.[98]
- _Cybersecurity and Computer Forensic Lab_: Following the growing interest in students enrolling onto our pioneering Cyber Security courses, our new Cyber Security Centre consists of a state-of-the-art Digital Chip Forensics Lab in partnership with the Metropolitan Police to offer students the opportunity to work on real-world forensics projects, a dedicated Cyber Security Teaching/Training Room (to equip students with the latest Cyber Security skills) and a Security Operation Centre (to support small businesses in East London with their Cyber Security).[99]

These _Centres of Excellence_ have been created as incubators to provide students with work experience in their chosen field, under the guidance and supervision of academics and professionals from industry.[100]

2.6 Real world experiential learning: As well as our _Centres of Excellence_, there are a variety of ways our curriculum and initiatives engage students in authentic practices using real-world projects to further **experiential learning**. Examples such as these demonstrate learning and teaching practice, pan-university, central to our mission as a **careers-1st** university. For example, BA Architecture students worked in partnership with the Victoria & Albert Museum of Childhood to design and build full scale interactive installations in the museum. In addition, in collaboration with industry, students work on 'live' knowledge exchange projects, such as the digitally designed and constructed buildings. Also, our students work with Studio Bark on self-design, self-order and self-build zero-carbon construction system using grasshopper based digital manufacturing. Furthermore, in collaboration with the Royal Docks Learning Activity Centre in Silvertown, students build an experimental prototype educational building, solving with Studio Bark the structural design, façade and green roof

details.[101] In 2020-21 Brickfield Newham, a year-long research, teaching and social practice collaborative project involving UEL Performing Arts, the V & A Research Institute, V & A East and Brickfield St Austell, brought together students, professionals and the local community, culminating in the reconstruction of a brickworks for Newham Heritage Month in spring 2021.[102] **Widening Participation** academics from the *Centre for Narrative Research*, UEL students and volunteers taught University 'Life Stories' courses for refugees at Calais, Jordan and the UK. Through examples such as these, we see the following above institutional benchmark scores for Teaching on my Course in the following CAHs: 7.7%pts for Architecture; 7.5%pts for the Economics; 2.6%pts for Engineering; 8.6%pts for Performing Arts; 4.4%pts for the Politics.[103] Through this we see the success of our commitment to active and experiential learning.
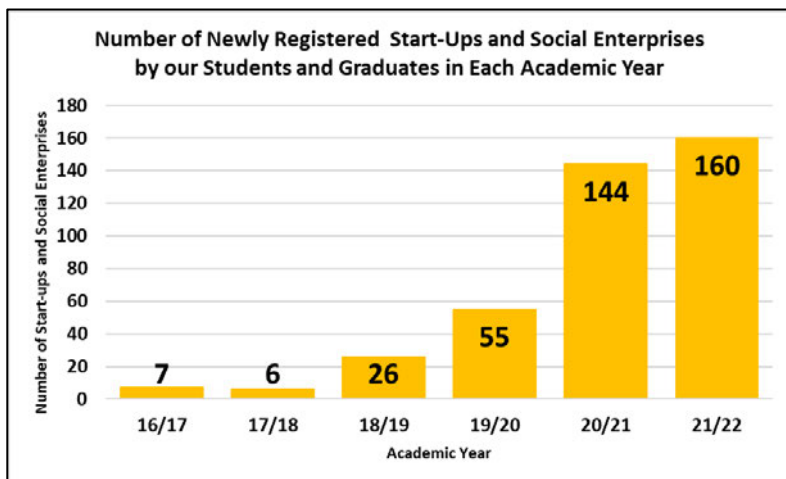

Figure 4 Growth in Graduate Start Ups between 2016/17 and 2021/22

We also have a pan-institution commitment to enterprise education. As part of our **transformation**, we have embedded enterprise and entrepreneurship education into every one of our degrees, to create impact, and drive economic growth through the creation of a new generation of diverse entrepreneurs. '**Enterprise for all**' is truly embraced in our curriculum. Regardless of academic discipline, all students are equipped with enterprising skills such as design thinking, market research and problem solving. Throughout their studies, students are empowered to take entrepreneurial action through embedded live briefs and opportunities to identify and solve industry wide problems. In 2020/21, we were ranked eighth in the UK for graduate start-ups in the latest published HEBCI return (21/22 pre-submission data suggest a continued increase too).[104] Our focus on incubating our students' entrepreneurial talents is shown in Figure 4 above.

In 2021/22, we launched an enterprise grant scheme called BACK:ED to stimulate cross institutional entrepreneurial ambition. The scheme invests small pots of money in fledging ideas and puts some serious commitment behind ideas that are market ready. It also provides a boost to existing businesses to help them grow. Of those who have been awarded financial support 74% are from minority backgrounds, 55% are female and we have been able to achieve parity across our six schools some of which previously did not engage at all.[105]

2.7 <u>Research-informed teaching</u>**:** Teaching enriched by research is central to our approach. The deep connections between teaching and research are central to our method and through this we ensure the currency and authenticity of our academic portfolio and the innovation of our practices. Research and teaching ensure alignment with and contribution to the talent pipeline for employment in Industry 4.0 and 5.0. Research excellence enriches the academic experience for students across the Institution. 56% of our research was rated **world-leading or internationally excellent** in REF2021.[106] The Institution submitted thirteen Units of Assessment (UoA), with **all rated as having world-leading outputs.** Furthermore, a majority of the thirteen UoAs were judged to have considerable or outstanding impact.[107] Research underpinning REF impact case studies is used in teaching and students are provided with opportunities to undertake independent research projects alongside existing research. For example, BSc Psychology with Child Development students

undertake final year research projects in the UEL Baby Development Lab which hosts several large-scale EU and UK funded projects (European Research Council, ESRC, Leverhulme) [108] and for example, UEL's Institute for Connected Communities' (ICC),

assessed the impact and sustainability of community-based mental health support service for marginalised residents disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.[109] Students complete their research projects alongside world-leading projects that involve strong local community engagement and deliver international impact particularly through our research institutes (REF2021).[110] In addition, extra curricula opportunities are provided to engage students with research including the Institutional **Funded Intern Scheme** from areas such as chemistry, civil engineering, graphic design, psychology, and landscape architecture. Our 2019/20 graduates who took part in the Funded Internship Scheme show a 16%pt lift in graduate outcomes when compared to the UEL population.[111] Furthermore, **educational stretch** is achieved through our research institutes, such as:

- Sustainability Research Institute (SRI): A world-leading institute that focuses on providing solutions to grand challenges such as, climate change, sustainable buildings, renewable energy, environmental science, smart construction materials, interaction of people and nature, ecology, energy and Carbon neutrality, green infrastructure, resource management, sustainable living, and social and environmental justice. This cutting edge applied research provides direct, practical, and inspiring support for students and the overall learning environment.[112]

- The Institute for Connected Communities (ICC): A world leading, multi-disciplinary research institute that responds to issues of current global importance including health, online harm, and wellbeing (online and offline), the human aspects of cyber and digital with a focus on youth, community cohesion and addressing inequality and sustainability. ICC research makes a significant impact upon policy and practice both nationally and internationally reflecting key global trends such as cyber and health and is in alignment with key SDGs. ICC research makes a direct contribution to the design and delivery of the undergraduate curriculum in aligned subjects such as health and provides a research training environment for students through internships linked to key research such as the EC funded Human Drivers of Cybercrime Project aiming to improve the trajectories of our students and the communities we serve.[113]

Through our real-world curriculum and our research informed practice, curricula and value-added activities are evolving pan institution to address global challenges such as climate change, sustainability, green agenda and Industry 4.0 and 5.0. This commitment is driving how and what we teach, how we operate our campuses and the courses we are developing. This activity presents to our students and staff new opportunities for research, knowledge exchange and careers. For example, we have recently added new degrees in Cyberpsychology and Environmental Psychology, each aiming to exploit growth areas and sectors in the industry 5.0 economy which will be attractive to employers.

3. Student Outcomes

In this section we develop our claim to be recognised as a **gold institution** by exploring how we have developed our **careers-1st** approach, how we support **diverse needs** in terms of employability and the impact this has on **social mobility** and **transformation** for our community.
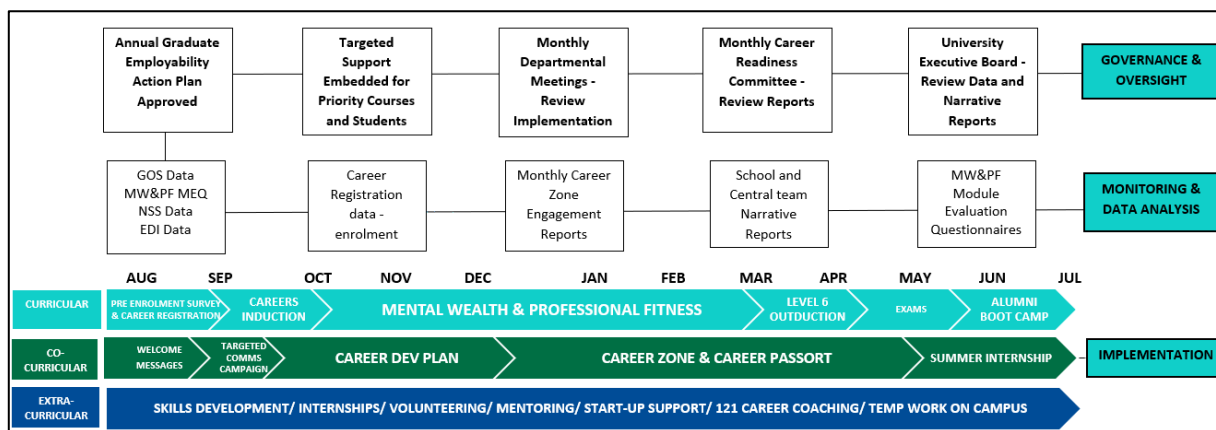
Figure 5 Graduate Employability Framework

In 2018 with the launch of our new **Vision 2028** strategy there was a significant shift in focus to becoming a **careers-1st** institution with progression outcome enhancements. To achieve this transformation, we implemented a robust whole-institution graduate employability framework to ensure meaningful and ongoing improvement in terms of graduate outcomes. The framework – shown in Figure 5 above – sets out clear processes to enhance skills development and embed work-based learning activity and industry engagement into the curriculum. At the heart of this framework sits our award-winning fully embedded and accredited careers and employability development programme: Mental Wealth and Professional Fitness (MW&PF) . Mandatory modules taken at each level of study across the University provide tailored careers and enterprise support as part of the curriculum. Developed by leading cross-disciplinary academics, career professionals and industry partners – the modules are designed at subject level to ensure relevance and enhance student engagement. An integral part of the employability framework is our flagship employer partnership programmes which promotes **social mobility** and diversification of the talent pipeline at each level. For example, the Funded Internship Scheme (section 3.4). These programmes break down barriers to employment and aid the 'levelling up' process. Our Practice Based Centres across the three campuses provide students with specialised work experience under the guidance and supervision of academics and professionals from industry (section 3.5).

3.1 Graduate Employability Framework: The framework sets out processes for the Schools and central services to work together to deliver career enhancing activity relevant to students' course and level of study. To ensure our **careers-1st** mission oversight and governance is achieved through the Career Readiness Committee which reports monthly to the University Executive Board.

3.1.1 Implementation: Launched in 2019, our MW&PF modules provide the vehicle to deliver embedded and accredited support, ensuring our graduates have the inter-personal competencies, social capital and networks to not only have access to, but to flourish and thrive in a rapidly-evolving job market. The programme encompasses eight core competencies and intelligences that graduates will need to succeed in the future economy including emotional and social intelligence, resilience, digital proficiency and enterprise and entrepreneurship. Our annually updated 'Graduate Employability Action Plan' determines how delivery is enhanced in areas where performance is not meeting requirements.[114] Written at course level and informed by data from the Graduate Outcome Survey, National Student Survey and MW&PF MEQs – the action plan enables us to effectively tailor and target support where it's needed most. This includes embedding key components such as professional mentoring, one-to-one career coaching, professional development workshops, industry projects and events and start-up support into relevant courses.

3.1.2 Monitoring: To monitor engagement and encourage students to become career minded, data from our careers management platform (Career Zone) is used to create a Careers-Dashboard for students.[115] An algorithm combining platform logins, event attendance and one-to-one Career Coaching appointments is used to create their engagement score (excellent, good, moderate and low) and advice is given about the appropriate levels of activity required to be successful in preparing for and securing a graduate job. The dashboard also tracks progress on their MW&PF modules. This data is used to create monthly reports which are shared with the Schools, allowing us to track engagement, understand the impact of our work and recalibrate where necessary. Students have access to their own career-readiness data and their benchmark, together with personalised advice and signposting through Track My Future.

3.2 Employment and Progression: As a result of this transformation, we have seen improved graduate outcomes over the last three years by 2.2%pts, placing us only 1.1%pts below the TEF benchmark (on aggregate) and above the TEF benchmark in our most recent results. Ten (over 54%) of our nineteen CAH subjects that have data scores exceed the institutional benchmark for Progression. Our highest distance above the excellence benchmark is with Allied Health at 10.4%pts above followed by Health and Social care and Medical Science at 9.1%pts. In addition 33% of our CAHs secure excellent careers outcomes.[116] We have made significant improvement of 5.8%pts in aggregate distance from the benchmark in highly skilled employment since our previous TEF assessment.[117] The enhanced results – **a top 10% improvement compared to all universities** – are accredited to our **Vision 2028** strategy, giving us confidence that our cross-institutional graduate employability framework, with detailed monitoring and oversight at both operational and executive board level, will ensure we continue with this upward trajectory - exceeding the TEF benchmark and fully realising the impact of our **careers-1st** approach. We are fully committed to continuing this upward trajectory and seeing the impact of our **careers-1st** approach.

3.3 Analysis of the split metrics: Alongside our approach to achieve equity in educational outcomes that aid **social mobility**, we have a strong Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy, aimed at improving outcomes for priority groups. Within this context and commitment, we nonetheless have two specific areas with negative flags in the split metrics. Asian students are 2.6% below the benchmark for Graduate Employment, and those in the category 'Other' are 3.3% below the benchmark.[118] For those priority groups, we have analysed GOS data and introduced detailed action plans at course level to close IMD and ethnicity gaps to graduate employment. Our commitment to represent the student body is underpinned by topical research and evidence from our OIE around relatable role models for students. For example, our Professional Development Sessions and Industry Speaker Series are led by a variety of internal and external trainers and for 2022/23 we are committing to ensuring that speakers are from a diverse range of backgrounds, ensuring we are representing our student body in the experts we are working with. Reflecting on GOS results for the 2019/20 graduates, we continue to take positive action around our support for those from GEM and lower socio-economic backgrounds. UEL has one negative marker in geographies of employment for quintiles two to three. For that grouping, the population represents 8.5% of our respondents; by contrast, quintile one is 8.8% and quintiles four and five are 82.6%. We believe this corresponds to our improvements over the last six years, where we have sought to develop local employer partnerships in London based on our students' being based in the capital. However, we continue to advance our offering and we have committed to the following: Further Access and Participation Plan (APP) Projects and increased Employer Positive Action Initiatives. We will continue to proactively

work with organisations such as Sanctuary Graduates, Bright Networks and upReach who provide additional training and work-based learning experience to students who are underrepresented in their industries to aid the levelling-up process.[119] As a result of these changes, we assert that we will continue to see improvement in our overall and split metrics. The trajectory will continue as seen in the increase of Asian Graduates'

Figure 6 Improvement in Progression over the Last Three Data Years

Progression score from 55.4% for 2017/18 graduates to 63.3% for 2019/20 graduates.[120] Also, graduates that identify as 'Other' ethnicity have improved over the same period by 13.0%pts to 70.9% as shown in Figure 6 to the right.[121]

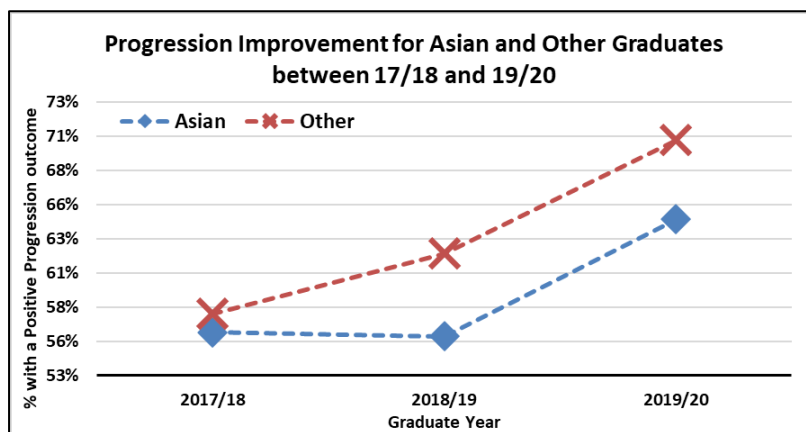3.4 Diverse needs and employability: In equipping our students for success, and to aid the 'levelling up' process, we offer a wide range of tailored flagship programmes to support students' diverse needs. In addition to providing quality 24/7 online careers resources, a walk-in Career Zone on each campus and infusing careers into the curriculum, we offer the following flagship initiatives:

- Supporting **social mobility:** Recognising that in some industries there remains significant underrepresentation of priority groups, **The Broadgate Prize** was launched as our Architecture department's flagship employer partnership project.[122] Now in its seventh year, it has given over 3000 students the opportunity to present their ideas to top architects, contractors, and developers in the country. Students who have won this prize have gone on to highly paid graduate jobs, with recent paid placements being obtained in Copenhagen (3XN), Rotterdam (Office for Metropolitan Architect) and Tokyo (Kengo Kuma) as well as numerous placements in London (AHMM, Forster and Partners and Zaha Hadid). The key prefix of the prize is that the winners of the prize are paid the equivalent or more than the sum of their final year's fees while in a three-month placement over the summer.[123]

- **Paid Work Experience:** Our Funded Internship Scheme which has been running since 2015 provides students with flexible paid internships, within UEL and externally.[124] Our 2019/20 graduates who took part in the Funded Internship Scheme show a 16%pts in lift in graduate outcomes when compared to the UEL population. Approximately 96% of interns progressed to the next level of their degree, which is 14% above the institutional average. Due to the positive impact of the scheme, we offer over 140 paid internships each year, some of which are sponsored by our strategic partners.[125]

- **Alumni and Professional Mentoring:** Our impactful Mentoring Programmes, for example 'Diversity of Thought', together with industry themed group mentoring sessions, saw over 3000 students engage with mentoring in 2020/21.[126] We know that mentoring is one of the most impactful employability initiatives, so we recruit paid student ambassadors to engage students in our programmes and to become peer mentors themselves. To deliver these programmes, we work with high profile graduate employers such as Siemens, AWS, Coca Cola and Maddison Square Gardens. To encourage organisations to 'recruit based on skills', we have developed an innovative alternative recruitment practice called 'Talent Hack', which uses a 'Hackathon' methodology to showcase students' skills through a series of carefully designed activities which mirror the skills profile of the opportunities on offer. One of our recent 'Talent Hacks' in partnership with Coca Cola engaged our Business and Marketing

students and saw a cohort of students go through an intensive day of debates, research and presentations.[127]

3.5 Creating industry opportunities: We have created Practice Based Centres across our three campuses to provide students with work experience under the guidance and supervision of academics and professionals from industry. The Centres remove barriers to employment, build social networks whilst providing a safe and supportive environment for students to flourish. Our Practice Based Centres include:

- Legal Advice Centre: (LAC) provides free legal advice to members of the community by students under the supervision of practising solicitors. The LAC also runs in partnership with local charities, the Magistrates Association, Canary Wharf Group, local MPs, Councillors and City Hall.[128]
- Tax and Accountancy Clinic: (TAC) engages with students, practitioners', employers, academics and professional accounting bodies to provide services for business growth and support to local low-income individuals. The practical experience helps students to build long-term relationships with local businesses and enhances their employment prospects.[129]
- Business Advice Centre: (BAC) supports students and the community by offering a free service of advice to SMEs and start-ups. Advice is delivered by our UG and PG students, under the supervision of academics and business experts.[130]
- Criminal Justice Project: In a unique partnership with the charity APPEAL students work on real life miscarriages of justice cases.
- Wellbeing and Psychological Services Centre: (WPS) provides spaces and support for skill development in counselling and coaching and are utilised by both UG and PG trainees, pioneering placement, internship and work experience opportunities.[131]
- UEL Sport's impact: A further feature of our vibrant curriculum is how it relies upon both partnership with industry professionals, real life working practices and also the student voice. We see this in our engagement with the impact of sport as a curriculum driver:
  i. Sport In Your Futures is currently working with more than twenty-seven schools, eight community partners and fifteen student volunteers to inspire more than 1,500 children and young people annually from East London through the power of sport and active participation.[132]
  ii. Via the UEL Career Zone, a Work-Based Learning programme offers sports students the opportunity to gain practical experience with 170 employers, including, for example, Sport Science & Physiology, Sport Development, and Sport Coaching & PE. East London Sport additionally provides a range of voluntary and paid work internships and placements within the Service, to develop students' life and employability skills.[133]
  iii. East London Phoenix is one of only four professional women's wheelchair basketball franchises in the country, and is the world's first para team sport professional league. The Phoenix franchise is run as a living lab, enabling students to gain experience running all elements of the franchise from event management to performance analytics.[134]

These are some examples that demonstrate our role as an **anchor institution** supporting health gains and employment, strengthening resilience for our community, transforming **social mobility** and demonstrating our **careers-1st** approach.

Conclusion

We assert that our student outcomes performance, value-added, transformative impact and provision to our students throughout their learning journey, makes us a TEF **gold institution**. Our

inclusion agenda, drive for **social mobility** and **community giveback** is evidenced through our learning and teaching, civic engagement and more, as outlined in this narrative. As such, we have continued to enhance the outcomes for our students over the past four years. This is largely attributable to: participatory course development, **innovative curriculum design**; delivery in **partnership with employers and other external stakeholders**; tangible career pathways for students and graduates, robust measures in place to monitor and ensure student engagement with their learning and our extensive institutional support mechanisms. Working collaboratively with our students and alumni, we have created a culture that continues to challenge our **pedagogies to be innovative, rigorous, and relevant**, all through continuous reflection, being data driven, accountable and investing in staff continuous development with a focus on student wellbeing, experience, and outcomes. The TEF metrics demonstrate this too with the strong performance we have achieved as the majority of our provision is either outstanding or of very high quality.

The issues set out in this statement have been deliberated on by Academic Board for both expert opinion and as part of the assurance process for delivering effective academic governance.

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