

Student Submission for TEF 2023

1. Approach to evidence-gathering

This is a student submission created by _____ is
also involved in creating the submission.

_____ one of the student representatives and leading a new role for the Careers and Employability team as their ambassador. As a team, we work towards a collective goal of the LIBF Student Charter representing our shared values of the university to develop and maintain a stimulating, diverse and supportive environment that is conducive to learning and gives every learner the foundation to succeed.

Our mission is to enable greater transparency between the students and the university, allowing the actions that need to be taken to create a better student environment and helping our students' voices, opinions and concerns are heard. The strategic aims of the co-voice student directors are to improve the educational experience and help our students succeed beyond their studies.

To reach our mission and strategic aims, we have collaborated with the university resulting in the creation of the following support strands being introduced:

1. Newly designed New Student Induction Programme (Partnership and Active Engagement)
2. New Student Centre with a one-stop shop approach to service extended opening hours to meet student needs
3. Maths Peer-Mentoring Programme
4. STEPS Programme – kicked off in Teaching Week 6
5. Membership to Senate House Library
6. Student Voice Campaign
 - a. Student Rep Programme
 - b. Students Union Formation
 - c. Students Activities & Trips

The implementations provide the foundation for student experience and outcomes in this submission.

As a bespoke finance university in the heart of London, the courses offered can naturally challenge students, meaning our university and students face different obstacles to other universities in England.

This submission will cover the following undergraduate courses:

- BSc (Hons) Finance, Investment & Risk
- BSc (Hons) Banking & Finance
 - Professional Qualification: Level 4 Certificate in Relationship Management (CertRM)

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We have decided not to include any optional courses due to not providing additional extra evidence contributing to this student submission.

This submission has been completed by students at The London Institute of Banking & Finance, working in collaboration with the university to gain student data (Cohort numbers, no. of people on each course / additional module etc.) and information to provide structure to our findings. To maintain the independence of our student submission, all new evidence/information gathered was through the student representatives. We did not seek input or advice from our university in the preparation of our submission. In addition, we did not allow the university to review or edit our submission prior to it being submitted. We took full responsibility for the accuracy and quality of our submission, and we are confident that it reflects our independent views.

We collected information from various sources to gather feedback and address issues related to students. Every two weeks, we held student representative meetings where we discussed issues related to students and any questions or concerns to keep the team informed and up-to-date in the broader student body. Additionally, we participated in the Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) where academic staff and students met to raise and discuss teaching, learning, and student support issues. We also served on the Student Experience Committee (SEC), which aimed to promote student engagement and a sense of community by enhancing student satisfaction and all aspects of the student experience. We also engaged in informal conversations with students after lectures or seminars, making it easier for them to contribute views and share sensitive information. We also held drop-in sessions and one-on-one, face-to-face meetings to gather course feedback and address any rising concerns. We also utilised "Lecture Shout Outs" where we went in at the end of a lecture and interacted with our peers, asking questions or prompting them to take advantage of the group being together. Furthermore, we compared the previous semester's orientation structure to the new version to gather feedback and improve the induction program.

In addition to the previously mentioned methods of gathering evidence, we also conducted additional ways to improve the current evidence for the student submission on the TEF. We utilised anonymous surveys sent to qualified students' emails to complete via google forms. We also held focus group sessions to gather a group perspective on specific issues. We also conducted individual surveys to gather feedback from a larger pool of students. Furthermore, we contacted alums and former student representatives through informal conversations via email messaging and in-person conversations to gather their input and perspectives. Lastly, we held additional drop-in sessions to gather feedback and address any concerns. These other methods allowed us to gather a broader range of views and feedback to improve our student submission on the TEF.

The range of students that our pre-existing and extra evidence-gathering covered included current 1st year to 3rd-year students. Additionally, we reached out to alums in previous years to gather their feedback and perspectives. All the students included in our evidence-gathering efforts would have studied either Banking and Finance or Finance, Investment and Risk courses. This range of students allowed us to gather feedback and address concerns from diverse individuals, providing a comprehensive perspective on the issues at hand.

2. Student experience

For this academic year, there have been numerous new support strands for students and more developed support methods improving on previous years. The following is detailed below:

2022/23 Induction Programme

The implementation of the newly designed student induction programme. This programme has been present in previous years; however, there have been extensive upgrades and improvements for students. We gathered our findings to gauge the impact this has had on students through various methods. Including a focus group of 3-4 students per year to analyse what they previously experienced in their induction programme. We looked at the templates supplied to students over the past two years and the current year of what their induction programme included. We wanted to analyse what activities were taking place, how long this programme ran, and what steps were taken after this initial 'welcome week' to induct students.

From our findings, the evidence of support we gained includes a detailed word document of past and present induction programmes. There was a clear an improved structure in 2023. In past years this programme was only running for a condensed two days and previously had two separate groups, so the cohort was split into two induction programmes. This may have been due to COVID-19 guidelines. However, students from our focus group from past inductions had stated that few people were interacting on their programme, and it did not feel very interesting. They said overall that the only time they spent with their new peers was during lunch when no icebreakers made it quite awkward for them to introduce themselves.

Whereas new students on the updated programme (introduced in 2022) were taken outside by the university to The Monument, where they had to line up in birthday order, forming a great icebreaker. As well as then, back in the lecture room, they had to stay standing for how many languages they spoke, which showed similarities and diversities in their cohorts. These students said this made things much easier during the breaks and group activities.

In the old programme, students said in the focus group that they did have four days of a welcome week induction. However, two whole days were filled with maths and academic sessions, which felt overwhelming for them and made a few students consider dropping out.

In the new induction programme, students stated that although these two maths days remained the same, the sessions were split up with activities and talks from other support staff, making their experience more engaging and less overwhelming.

Another finding of the focus group was that the new programme went further than just the 'welcome week' induction. These students stated they had a week four check-in. This addressed any concerns raised by students thus far. For example, a few students were worried about a particular maths module, 4POF (Principles of Finance) which had been a reoccurring issue for students in the past who did not take A-Level maths. Previously not much has been done to resolve this. But, in this new check-in, they said they would hire maths tutors from higher-year groups to support them. (Maths Peer-Mentoring Programme details further below). A referencing workbook was created for new students to help them. A senate house library trip, this was a new library that the university acquired memberships for any students who wanted a different place to study (More details on the Senate House Library membership to follow). Although this new scheme was open to all students, the first

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years, as part of their induction, were taken on a trip to gain engagement and see what it was like for themselves. Finally, a great new initiative, said one of the students in the new induction focus group, was the first-year class photo. This was when all first-year students took up the sky garden for a class picture and time to get further to know their peers.

New students who experienced the updated induction programme stated that they felt supported by staff for any issues they had faced thus far. They felt very comfortable with their new peers after countless icebreakers, meaning getting started on group assessments was easier. Whereas past students stated their induction did not make them feel very comfortable in a new environment, it was tough to find students in their groups for assessments as they didn't know who they were. Overall, staff lacked support in engaging students and helping them overcome initial fears or worries, such as the maths module stress.

The evidence and findings of the new induction programme show there have been fewer students dropping out of their degree courses compared to previous years. Due to feeling, there had been adequate support and action taken on any issues they had. Most of the students who did drop out this academic year were due to wanting to take another route, not down to lack of support or understanding. From these results for the module, feedback has been more positive, and students stated that any issues they had, they knew whom to contact and most felt these issues they raised were acted on in a timely manner.

There has also been a vast improvement in student progression, with more students engaged and doing well in their academic studies. Those who didn't do as well stated they received better feedback than in previous years. Concerning the induction programme, students felt supported in starting their studies. They were not as anxious or as likely to drop out as in last years, showing this newly updated system already having an impact.

STEPS

Another newly improved support strand available for students was the STEPS programme which stands for 'Support To Enhance Performance and Success'. Students from POLAR4 scores 1 & 2 or from a household income of below £25k annually qualify for this support strand. Although this has been available for past academic years, we wanted to analyse and gain evidence for what has changed, if anything. Is it better for students' experience and development now? We approached these findings by contacting past alums from our university who had been on the scheme to gain insight into their experiences and talked to new students using the scheme currently. We also sent out surveys to those currently participating in the scheme and those students still at the university who have used it in the past to see if they are still using it or what might have made them stop. This survey was anonymous to those who responded to gain valuable non-bias information.

Our findings on the previous STEPS programme show there is meant to be supported to enhance performance and success. From conducting surveys and speaking to alums, we found that there needed more information and support on the programme in previous years. One ex-student stated their first email about the STEPS programme eight months into the term, and the only email they received was regarding the STEPS requirements. This meant that the previous student on the programme had received little to no support or guidance for nearly eight months.

However, on the STEPS programme this year, students who qualify stated they received an email in the first week of November at the end of teaching week 6. Although the number of qualified students who agreed to participate was a lot less this year, they stated there was a real push for

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them to do well with reminder emails that they had to complete three meetings per semester with their mentors and careers coaches. There were a lot fewer students participating in the programme this year because of the lack of support students said they received in previous years. Past students stated they forgot they were even on the scheme, didn't really know what it was, or emails they sent had not been responded to. Therefore, they "didn't see the point in joining the programme for their second year".

We found from the evidence and findings that the students who qualified and undertook the scheme feel more confident in their studies due to enhanced support from faculty. These students stated that they were hesitant to contact support before they were told about the programme. However, with the programme giving them a mentor specifically, they could easily have their queries answered. Students who had been on the programme in the past and continued for a second year stated they felt much more engaged with support staff and their lectures, as they knew they had support regarding questions being answered. In previous years, they said it was harder to gain this support as they were unaware of what to do.

Maths Peer-Mentoring Programme

At the beginning of 2022, due to a lack of communication between the staff and students, as Student Voice Co-Directors, we increased current student representatives from 3 to 20. This increase meant the feedback gathered through weekly student representative meetings held more weight as it was more diverse and broad in terms of access to a bigger pool of student representation.

Through informal conversations, we noticed first-year students struggle to understand one of the core modules. Because of this, during an August 2022 student representative meeting, we asked our Year 1 student reps to talk to their cohort of 118 students and relay their feedback and findings back via a survey, as it would give us a better overview of what areas needed support.

We found that 30% of them struggle with one of the course modules, which increases stress. This is a 9% increase compared to the previous year's groups. Although the course should be challenging, after relaying this information to the university, a Maths Peer-Mentoring Programme was introduced. This unique programme allowed flexibility of learning and progression, creating a course that can engage students and develop their knowledge and skills from other students who are more comfortable with the content.

Through drop-in sessions and information collected from a focus group in the December 2022 meeting, we found that 82% of those students struggling felt an increase in academic support and a more supportive learning environment since August.

As student co-voice directors, we wanted this increase in supportive learning to remain. The focus group and drop-in sessions conducted in December 2022 were to gather views on how this programme could add to further studies and its practicality.

In the drop-in sessions, there were three separate groups of Year 1 students from various backgrounds from both undergraduate courses. The focus group consisted of 20 student representatives, and the student reps represented a well-diversified group comprised of an equal weighting of females and males.

In the focus group and drop-in sessions, Finance, Investment & Risk students were slightly over-represented, and those on the Banking & Finance course were under-represented. However, the

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FIR course is a more analytical-based degree with higher entry requirements, which would be why there was more of an overrepresentation of these individuals.

The findings were written in a report for us, the Co-Voice Student Directors, to track the improvement of their educational experience in our strategic aims. The main results were:

- All students felt more confident in the university providing the requested support to succeed in their studies.
- The increased confidence has resulted in many students considering enrolling on the additional professional qualification in Year 2, Level 4 Certificate in Relationship Management (CertRM).
- Students across both courses felt a sense of belonging and improved skills in communication and presentation, as the programme is peer-to-peer.
- Students mentioned that this experience could aid them in their personal development and employability course and provide an example for showing leadership and teamworking skills when applying for spring/summer internships.

New Student Centre - Peninsula House 7th Floor

The New Student Centre at Peninsula House is a massive asset to the student experience at our university. Previously we only had access to 4 floors of study space on Lovat Lane. Since returning to campus in September 2022, the university has introduced a new study area with a one-stop shop approach that provides easy access to various resources, help and support that students need daily.

This includes:

- *Extended opening hours*
- *One-stop shop for students*
 - *Access to Student Support Team / Library Team / Careers & Employability Team / Counsellors*
- *Quiet Study areas*
- *Group Study Rooms*

The extended opening hours give students more options to access different areas to study at all times of the day. Furthermore, the opportunity to seek help and advice from other on-campus teams. The Student Support Team is also highly supportive and helpful. They are always available to answer any questions or queries that students might have, and they are knowledgeable and helpful when providing advice about academic and personal issues. The Library Team is always available on their desk on the 7th Floor to help students with any queries or help to access our digital resources: eBooks, industry-related websites, and courses to improve commercial awareness. The Library Team runs various workshops assisting students with referencing, best exam practices, study skills and usage of online resources. The Careers & Employability desk always has a member of the team on hand to ask questions and advice related to internships and graduate jobs. Students can book in 1-1 careers meetings to get personalised CV and Cover Letter advice.

The various rooms and spaces available provide a range of different atmospheres to suit different needs. For example, the quiet study zone is perfect for those who need a few hours of peace to finish their work. In contrast, the meeting rooms are ideal for groups of students who need to collaborate with others, whether society or Group project related.

From the perspective of the majority of 3rd and 2nd Year Students who experienced the previous facilities at Lovat Lane Campus, there was access and use of the Library and Study room available.

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However since this transition to the New Study Centre at Peninsula House through informal conversations with peers, we found the following views:

- More optional rooms for study use and specific rooms have multiple purposes to suit different needs e.g. Presentation work with interactive whiteboards/society meetings / Formal Career Coaching sessions / 1-1 counselling sessions.
- Increase overall sense of community and interaction with the support desks due to accessibility. It is easier to approach and solve questions and queries rather than everything being in different places.
- Increased socialising between the year groups as students felt previously there had been a separation or divide into the year groups due to being a small university and not 'one' place to all go to.

All in all, the New Student Centre has been an invaluable addition to the student experience at our university, providing students with the support, resources and guidance they need to succeed.

Membership to Senate House Library

Access to Senate House Library has been an enormous benefit for students studying at our university or college. As well as helping to create a more supportive learning environment, it has enabled students to access a wealth of resources for their studies. Using the library space to study, including the downstairs café, helps to create a relaxed atmosphere in which students can focus on their work away from the university setting. Furthermore, having a space to study outside the college campus is beneficial for those studying in the evening, as the library is open late. Alongside being able to interact with different students from different universities due to our university being a specialised financial institution, it is good to have a place that is a fresh environment for our students. The feedback we have heard as Student Representatives from our peers has been positive. Several students continuously mention how important it is to have a different/additional place of study in a new environment, and they feel a benefit of student wellbeing. Many students, through informal conversations, also mention that the library is open at weekends, providing extra piece of mind if put under tight deadlines.

The faculty shared some statistics with the student representatives stating that as of the 1st December, 53 students made 166 visits within 6 weeks since we gained membership with 550+ hours total spent.

Having access to UCL's Senate House Library also provides students with great academic support. The library is staffed with knowledgeable librarians who can help with any student queries. It also houses a wide range of books, journals, and other resources to help students with their research. All in all, the library is a valuable asset for students seeking additional support for their studies

Student Voice Campaign

From 2021, through to 2022, student experience in both courses was very low. With no structure in place, through informal conversations with peers and higher year groups, it is clear all students needed more support.

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To back up this feedback and to help create a solution as Co-Voice Student Directors, we compiled a list of 2 individual surveys for Year 3 and 2 students, asking them about their experience throughout their years of education. There was a fair mix of students from both courses, and most responses came from Year 3 students.

Out of 96 Year 2 students, 56% completed both surveys, and out of 64 Year 3 students, 66% completed both surveys. The main findings are:

- Poor timely responses from the university Higher Education team for student enquiries. Students felt their voices and concerns needed to be heard.
- No student centre to work in and the university library was tiny.
- Poor communication leads to confusion between contact points, with most students not knowing who their student representatives are.
- It was clear that Covid-19 also had a negative impact, and studying from home creates a poor learning environment.
- Upon returning to university from Covid-19, each year group felt secluded and had a low sense of companionship.
- All students also felt they missed out on vital networking and event opportunities.

During the start of the semester in September 2022, the university implemented initiatives to help improve and rectify the many issues. They introduced a Student Voice Campaign that consisted of a Student Rep programme, Student Union Formation and new Student Activities and Trips.

The development of the Student Rep Programme was created to bridge the gap between students and faculty. Student representatives have increased from 3 to 20. This has resulted in better communication and a fresh flow of ideas to the university, which has been implemented in 2023. Students across all years feel their voices are being heard.

Creating the Student Union and implementing Student Activities have resulted in bringing students together. Both have helped students identify more with their peers and the university, building a solid foundation for networking.

Activities include:

- Monthly student trips, exploring what the city has to offer. Some of these have been aimed at international students, as coming to a new country can be daunting.
- Societies have been motivated to hold events and grow participation.
- More university events have fostered greater participation and attendance, providing another route of education for industry leaders.
- Creating a Student Centre has meant more involvement and a common place for socialising and networking.

These educational activities extend beyond the curriculum of the course and support career development and employability by developing networking and interpersonal skills. Students also feel more confident approaching lecturers for help, improving their academic skills for all courses, such as critical thinking and problem-solving.

3. Student Outcomes

This submission has covered all the support strands introduced and we have evaluated the student experience and outcomes. This section will now summarise the themes we have encountered relating to the TEF indicators in terms of continuation, completion, and progression.

Students have indicated that certain activities have helped them transition throughout their education and have been an essential factor in their experience, such as:

Societies:

The President of the Women in Finance Society stated that from her findings, students have said that having this support network has improved student engagement. Speaking to peers in different year groups who have faced similar challenges before. As well as the events building up engagement and confidence. Students we talked to through 1-1 conversations and focus groups stated they always had someone to speak to about issues. Especially as there are fewer females at the university, they felt comfortable approaching society. This has helped the progression and completion of students in their studies as they feel confident that they can raise any issues with a trusted peer or mentor.

Careers & Employability Team:

The careers and employability team at LIBF plays a crucial role in helping students achieve educational gains by offering various resources and support. Through the PDE module, the team helps students develop personal development and employability skills that prepare them for their future careers. Additionally, the team offers 1-1 coaching and a mentoring scheme to help students improve their personal development gains. Furthermore, the university has recently introduced the careers ambassador role, which increases the communication and impact to the wider student body regarding networking events and workshops. These efforts by the careers team, along with the university's focus on student success and progression, contribute to the educational gains of the students and support them in achieving their goals beyond their studies.

Alumni Networking Events:

They have provided an opportunity for current students to connect with alumni who have been successful in their career endeavours, allowing them to gain insight and guidance from those who have already navigated the professional world. These events can be particularly beneficial for students as they provide a chance to learn from the experiences of those who have already been successful in their chosen fields. This can motivate and inspire students and give them a sense of the possibilities available to them. Furthermore, Alumni can provide mentorship, and guidance to current students, which can help current students develop the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in their careers. These events can also provide a valuable opportunity for students to practice networking, which is an essential skill for success in any profession.

The findings from this submission reflect students' views and concerns regarding getting advice and support from Alumni. This theme has resulted in creating a student Alumni party that is currently being coordinated and arranged. As Student Voice Co-Directors, we hope this will allow current students to network with Alumni in all areas of Finance, improving work readiness. This includes commercial awareness and employability skills.

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The student experience strand supports have helped develop personal growth for students, and the findings in this submission have resulted in the following:

Academic Development:

Most strands, especially the implementation of Maths peer-to-peer mentoring, have helped develop subject knowledge. Others, such as the Student Voice Campaign, have helped provide students with extra support regarding academic writing and research skills.

Personal Development:

The Student Activities & Trips have helped all cohorts communicate and work together. Regular student committee meetings now mostly end with requests for other activities, as students feel these activities are helping them break down barriers, developing networking skills and soft skills, for which they can use in the future workplace.

Work readiness:

As the new one-stop-shop approach was introduced through the creation of the new Student Centre, students have clearly expressed their desire to continuously use the space as a way to improve coursework. This includes presentation and time management skills for presentation assignments, resulting in increased confidence.

Overall, Student Engagement Has Increased

- The use of the 7th floor has provided a unique place for students to collaborate. This environment was not available before.
- Senate house membership has increased, and data shows it is being used regularly. This also correlates with the increase in exam and assignment quality.
- Social events, such as a year group welcome back party. Here, students are in a less formal environment and feel less pressure when conversing with different individuals.
- From the induction week students felt more engaged in their studies due to the overwhelming support they received and the variety of people they were introduced to so soon to starting their course. This improved continuation of studies as students could happily know whom to contact to raise issues rather than struggling alone in their first few weeks needing to figure out whom to approach.
- Student support officers are on-hand (still building the team). As student support officers are now always on-hand, all cohorts feel a sense of belonging and support. This is a vast improvement from previous years. Following on, the university is still building this team, which can only result in better backing into the future.

The option to withdraw from the course is also a topic of discussion. There has been expressed support for the opportunities to withdraw from the course as the university understands that life proposes many challenges in different ways. Now Students feel more comfortable making hard decisions regarding their future progression and careers.