

**Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance (UKPRN: 10008017) TEF Submission**

**Section 1: Provider Context**

Educational Mission and Strategic Aims

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music & Dance (Trinity Laban) is London’s Creative Conservatoire and is the UK’s only conservatoire of music and contemporary dance. We identify, support and develop a diverse student intake of talented and innovative performers and creators, wherever they may be found and throughout their creative lives. We instil creativity and technical excellence through our supportive atmosphere, world-class buildings and facilities and innovative curricula. We transform students with potential into resourceful, enterprising and adaptable artistic leaders who are able to succeed in their professions and make a positive change to society. We were granted Taught Degree-Awarding Powers in 2016.

In December 2022, we were designated by the Office for Students as one of only twenty world-leading Higher Education specialist providers meaning that we successfully demonstrated “a level and quality of expertise that gives a provider an on-going reputation internationally as being among the finest in the world.”<sup>i</sup> This world-leading status is a position we have proudly held through successive reviews since 2008.

While we have been designated world-leading, we are far from complacent. One of the two core aims of our Strategic Plan 2018-28<sup>ii</sup> is to ‘deliver outstanding artist training and development’. In pursuit of that continued excellence we have six objectives as follows:

<b>Objective</b>	<b>TEF sections</b>
To expand and diversify our programme portfolio in ways that encourage innovation and responds to artistic and educational contexts	SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4, SE5, SE6, SE7, SO3
To deliver a personalised and supportive learning and teaching environment that cultivates creativity, originality, technical excellence and partnerships with students	SE1, SE2, SE4, SE5, SE6, SE7, SO1, SO2, SO3
To advance our use of technology-enhanced and on-line learning	SE1
To reinforce connections between teaching, research and advanced creative practice, underpinning our pedagogy with research insights	SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4
To provide an exceptional student experience that supports well-being, achievement, inclusion and a sense of community	SE1, SE2, SE3, SE5, SE6, SE7, SO1, SO2, SO3
To enable access and progression in all our art forms for diverse constituencies of students and participants, applying the highest standards of artistic quality at all levels to realise individual potential.	SE1, SE2, SE3, SE4, SE5, SE6, SE7, SO1, SO2, SO3

By building on our proven success to date, we believe that Trinity Laban’s adaptability, open-mindedness and progressiveness will allow us to shape and respond to changing employment and social conditions for artistic practice; we position ourselves as the natural home for those who are motivated by excellence, inclusion and innovation in our art forms. Trinity Laban is a special community that draws strength from our shared purpose, our collective care for each other and our respect for every member’s individual contribution. Our confidence in the future rests above all in the inspiring creative talents of our students, graduates and staff, which provide the strongest foundation for achievement of our strategic goals.

In developing our Strategic Plan in the lead up to 2018, we identified the challenges and conditions for success to achieve our 2028 vision. These challenges remain but are much augmented by the impact and legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic. This impact means that our current and recently graduated students are entering their professional lives facing greater uncertainty; the legacy means that we must continue to adapt our learning and teaching environment to meet the different needs of current and future students. We have commented more fully within subsequent sections of our submission on the impact and legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic and the actions we are taking and planning to take in the short- to medium-term.

### Size and shape of provision

Trinity Laban was formed in 2005 by a merger of Trinity College of Music in Greenwich and the Laban Centre in Deptford, London. As at the start of 2022-23, our student population is as follows:

- **Total HE student population:** 1261 (1174.61 FTE)
- **Level of study:** 73% UG; 19% PGT; 2% PGR; 6% Other (i.e. foundation and professional development diplomas)
- **Discipline:** 57% Music; 28% Dance; 13% Musical Theatre; 2% Research Degrees
- **Domicile:** 70% UK; 12% EU; 18% other international
- **Ethnicity:** 17% BAME among UK domiciled students (where known)

Our student population is 30% international from 56 countries. Students with a declared disability form 33% of our cohort. The majority of Trinity Laban UK students (80%) are from the state school sector. This position is well above the average (for example the Royal College of Music 46% and the Royal Academy of Music 44%) of English conservatoires offering classical music, a field of study that faces the greatest challenges in broadening the demographic of the student and professional population.<sup>iii</sup>

Our current undergraduate provision comprises:

- BMus (Hons) Composition/Jazz/Performance (4-year programme) – 409 students
- BA (Hons) Contemporary Dance – 225 students
- BA (Hons) Musical Theatre Performance – 147 students
- BA (Hons) Music, Performance & Industry (started 2021-22) – 53 students
- BSc (Hons) Dance Science (started 2019-20) – 22 students
- Integrated Foundation Year in BA Contemporary Dance (provides direct entry to the BACD) – 23 students

Trinity Laban is based in three locations situated within a short distance of each other in South-East London. The Faculty of Dance is housed in the Laban Building which was designed by Herzog & de Meuron, the Pritzker Prize-winning (2001) Swiss Architects who also designed the Tate Modern and the National Stadium in Beijing for the 2008 Olympic Games. The building was opened in 2003 and won the Royal Institute of British Architects Stirling Prize. Musical Theatre is located in nearby Laurie Grove, a building that has seen significant investment in its facilities in recent years; musical theatre students also spend part of their time in the Laban and Music buildings. The Faculty of Music is situated in King Charles Court in the world heritage site of the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich. Music students also have access to Blackheath Halls, one of the most outstanding centres for music and the performing arts in London and is the city's oldest established purpose-built concert venue.

### Context of the submission

This institutional submission was led by a Trinity Laban Working Group including senior members of the Dance and Music Faculties, senior members of the Registry and the President of the Students' Union. We have very much benefitted from working in collaboration with the Students' Union President in the development of the institutional TEF submission and are grateful for her time. Our submission received final approval by the Principal's Management Group, following consultation with members of the Board of Governors.

## **Section 2: Student Experience: Academic Experience and Assessment**

### Teaching and Learning Practices (SE1)

Trinity Laban stands out in the international conservatoire sector for excellence in teaching and learning. As the leading British choreographer, Sir Richard Alston commented Trinity Laban "thinks bigger and reaches further than any of this organisation's peers in the country."<sup>iv</sup>

Our pedagogy is grounded in an intensive, practice-based training model that offers students individual attention to artistic development, rigorous technical preparation, and regular exposure to the demands of public performance in professional conditions. Music students receive weekly one-to-one tuition in their instrumental specialism plus doubling instruments or vocal coaching as appropriate. They participate in various types of chamber and large ensemble activity, the majority leading to public performances. Typically, dance students spend 30 hours per week in small group technique classes, creative workshops, performance projects and studio-based learning. This is necessary to build up their physical capability and stamina to meet the demands of professional practice, to master the requisite styles and techniques, and to nurture an individual creative personality through structured experimentation. The majority of formal learning for musical theatre students takes place within small group settings in which there is a high degree of collaboration, support for each other's learning, and a strong sense of team working towards a shared goal. These settings are complemented by individual tuition, workshops and student-determined learning which includes, for example, student-led dance classes and mini-Musical Theatre projects.

Creativity and innovation are at the core of our programmes, firmly preparing students for the demands of entering employment which is nearly 12% above benchmark (see SO3). Our External Examiners are consistent in commending the distinctive nature of our provision, for example:

*"I am impressed by the level of creativity and innovation in the programme, and the clear connection between theory and practice. This programme has adventurousness as a core part of its ethos, providing appropriate challenge to the students, balanced with creative freedom and a strong range of choice which enables them to explore their own areas of interest within a supportive and constructive environment." (Dr Carla Rees, BMus)*

*"The programme explores the creative roles beyond that of the Musical Theatre performer which, as well as giving a better understanding of the holistic process of creating MT, also allows students more pathways into employment." (Richard Mullholland, Musical Theatre)*

*"Students continue to have strong technical and practical training. The course has integrated some digital literacy and students can experiment with new ways of working. The structure continues to offer technical and creative education for performance and other careers in the dance sector. Students are encouraged to think critically and more deeply through modules such as Perspectives in Dance." (Professor Angela Pickard, Dance)*

Students value the distinguishing features of Trinity Laban. NSS outcomes across the past four years show overall high levels of student satisfaction (ranging from 76% to 80%) with the 'opportunities

they have to explore ideas or concepts in depth'. They particularly relish the exploratory opportunities offered through CoLab<sup>v</sup>, a teaching and learning initiative that has attracted widespread international interest, emulation and participation from the California Institute of the Arts, the University of Michigan, the University of Southern California, the Colburn School, Codarts Rotterdam, Korea National University of Arts and the Hong Kong Education University. The model has been directly adopted at Codarts and the Leuven Conservatoire in Belgium.

Over the course of two weeks each year, CoLab provides space for all students to work collaboratively across art forms on student-led performance-based projects, mentored by internationally renowned visiting artists/practitioners from the fields of fine art, theatre, science and business, as well as music and dance; staff are also heavily involved. The initiative is designed to extend practice and challenge all students to look beyond established repertoire towards a more dynamic, inspiring and empowering model that can help set the future direction of culture within the UK and abroad.

*"Everybody in the world should do CoLab. People need to learn how to work and interact with each other better and to have the opportunity to be creative."* Freya Hellier, Producer, BBC Radio 3<sup>vi</sup>

In NSS comments<sup>vii</sup>, our students say:

*"Collaborative opportunities and excellent professorial staff. CoLab module is a fantastic and enticing experience unique to Trinity Laban. Trinity Laban provides opportunity to build versatile skill set and prepare students for freelance career. Learning and participation department fantastic. Chamber music coaching and masterclasses fantastic."* (BMus)

*"I love how Trinity Laban gives the students opportunities to collaborate with different artists in Colab week. I think it is an opportunity for students to have network and learning the creativity from others. Colab gave me another pathway to do in my life which is collaborate with different artists after my career or being in a dance company."* (BACD)

*"I have had so many wonderful opportunities on my musical theatre course. I think Colab is fantastic and gives young writers like me a platform to produce new work."*(BAMT)

Students' opportunities for exploration go well beyond CoLab. Learning and teaching across all our programmes is primarily experiential where students' skills, knowledge and understanding is developed cumulatively through sustained participation in a wide range of learning activities.

Our students highly value their engagement with staff, many of whom are leading teacher-practitioners and whose collective achievements have a powerful influence on the development of our art forms. Our NSS results between 2018-19 to 2021-22 show students continually rating 'staff are good at explaining things' at 80+%, and that 'staff have made the subject interesting' at 80+% and 90+%. Many of our permanent academic staff are engaged in disciplinary and practice-based research (see Section SE3), and many of our part-time staff such as those who provide one-to-one tuition to music students combine their roles at Trinity Laban with their wider creative careers. Examples of the latter include staff who are principals in London's world-leading orchestras and ensembles (for example the London Philharmonic Orchestra), sought after soloists and recording artists, or eminent choreographers and composers<sup>viii</sup>. Our students therefore benefit from a vast range of academic and practice-based expertise that enables their artistic development and stretch, and they commend this setting in their feedback, for example:

*“Greatest strength to the course is the variety of teachers and their fields, it has allowed me to think and explore the things presented by them and has intellectually stimulated my mind, as well as bringing many people from different fields which are not just in music.” (BMus, NSS)*

*“Exceptional teaching staff. A great variety of opportunities. Encouragement to investigate one's own abilities. Push to stretch oneself.” (BACD, NSS)*

Students' exposure to leading professional practitioners is further extended through one-off engagements with visiting artists including instrumentalists, singers, musical theatre practitioners, conductors, composers and choreographers of international standing. Notable recent visiting practitioners include Sir Matthew Bourne, Lea Anderson, Candoco, Steve Reich, the Kronos Quartet and Tasmin Little. Settings involve students working in partnership with a visiting practitioner on activities such as the production of new musical or choreographic pieces; performance of existing repertory under the direction of a leading conductor, choreographer or stage director; or intense study in a masterclass or workshop. Participation in these 'real-life' professional scenarios enable students to develop their craft within the safe environment of Trinity Laban while also establishing core employability skills. Tasmin Little said of our students:

*“The level of playing as well as the engagement has always been excellent; but I have recently noticed with pleasure the steady rise in musical stature and technical prowess of the violinists. I am hugely looking forward to my next visit!” (Tasmin Little, International Violinist)<sup>x</sup>*

Students gain even further exposure to real-life opportunities through engagement with other organisations. Examples include:

- *Studio Wayne McGregor*, which regularly contributes to the curriculum through the BA Year 2 Dance Repertory Project. For example, students participated in the company's digital research during the first lockdown in summer 2020, which was led by Wayne McGregor, who is a Professor of Choreography at Trinity Laban, and his team of company dancers. There were many positive student comments, for example one student stated in the component monitoring exercise: *'McGregor's style was something I had never dreamed of attempting. I learnt a lot about what I could possibly achieve. The fact we made a solo in a living room exceeded my expectations of what I could have achieved in lockdown.'*<sup>x</sup>
- Placements undertaken by BA Dance students in Years 2 and 3. Students are supported by their personal tutor to find a placement host and funding is available to students to support travel and other expenses. Placement hosts have included leading national companies including Dance Umbrella, Fest-en-Fest and Lea Anderson's Costume Archive.
- BA Musical Theatre students delivering outreach workshops and educational visits in local schools.
- Our partnership with Greenwich Theatre where BA Musical Theatre students have the opportunity to audition and perform in the professional pantomime which can be assessed as an alternative to an in-house project.
- The Group Music Making module on the BMus programme where Year 2 students work with a local school to prepare a presentation or a performance.
- A partnership with world-leading Juilliard School in New York through which BMus students have the opportunity to work with members of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra.<sup>xi</sup>

Summing up the opportunities we provide our students to engage with professional settings, one of our External Examiners said “The [BMus] programme aims to develop musicians of the highest calibre. There remains a genuine commitment to offering students real life experiences of music making and creative practice.”<sup>xii</sup>

We use virtual delivery only where we believe it complements the excellence of our face-to-face provision and is of educational or professional benefit to our students. Recent examples we have tested and have proved advantageous are:

- The Digital Showcase for the Musical Theatre programme that was previously a one-off in-person event. Adoption of the digital mode has offered students more sustained communication with, and exposure to, external industry partners which in turn supports employment outcomes.
- Virtual delivery of one-off lectures and 'round tables' that have enabled greater diversification and outreach to industry leaders both nationally and internationally, thereby extending beyond the limitations of in-person delivery.
- Applied Musicianship modules that make extensive use of video guides, backing tracks, and software packages such as Aurelia and Musition that provide diagnostic data on student progress. The software enables teachers to use the data to provide personalised solutions for students' needs.
- In response to student feedback, live-streaming BA students' dance performances from the theatre to increase audience reach and to enable students to reflect on their work.
- The blended delivery of the Applied Musicianship Jazz module which emerged from the reconfigured delivery we operated during the pandemic lockdown and which is now embedded into the BMus programme<sup>xiii</sup>. This delivery was commended by one of our External Examiners who is also Head of Music at an entirely on-line provider<sup>xiv</sup>.

#### Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our students

At this point in our submission, it is beneficial to explain the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our students. In March 2020, as with all other HE providers, we moved our provision on-line in response to the national lockdown. While this transition was an unprecedented challenge for the sector, it metamorphosed the learning experience for practice-based institutions such as Trinity Laban which, as described earlier, is founded on a vibrant daily, face-to-face, collaborative and physical working environment. Our External Examiners were impressed with the way in which we transformed our delivery:

*"Within a number of performance projects and composition modules students responded proactively to the COVID-19 pandemic by considering new modes of working, disseminating materials and engaging with audiences. There has been significant disruption this year but it has been met by an equally significant creative response." (Professor Tony Whyton)<sup>xv</sup>*

*"Many institutions decided to offer the students the opportunity to take their assessments in the Autumn Term. However, of course, there is no guarantee that this will be possible. I therefore found Trinity's approach especially commendable – a huge amount of rewriting took place to allow students to complete their year of study." (Dr Paul Goodey-Avedisyan)<sup>xvi</sup>*

The cumulative impact on the learning experience and the general well-being of students who were in their second, third and fourth years was significant. Students completing the NSS 2022 were those who had experienced the impact of Covid on all their years of study; their views reflected the way in which Trinity Laban had responded to Covid restrictions:

*"Some of the organisation and communication when things have been affected by COVID hasn't been the best - but this wasn't entirely the school's fault. In my opinion, the school did a great job handling COVID, but there were times when I was questioning certain decisions."*

*“I feel like the course has done well at easing us back in contact work since the COVID situation. Contact classes have felt like a comfortable environment for us to move forward, playfully, experimentally, and safely, given the difficulty of the situation.”*

However, students’ comments also expressed anxieties and frustrations about the lack of face-to-face opportunities during the pandemic. The position was especially acute for many international students, a large proportion of whom were unable to re-join the socially distanced on-site engagement we operated in Autumn 2020 and Spring 2021 (after some UK restrictions lifted) because of lockdown restrictions in their home countries. This experience inevitably resulted in lower levels of student satisfaction.

The legacy of the pandemic that we see in students who have either recently completed their studies or who are currently with us, shows a significant increase in:

- The numbers seeking mental health and counselling support. While this topic does not fall within the ‘academic’ remit of the TEF, at Trinity Laban we consider there to be an integral link between students’ wellbeing and their study success (see Section SE5).
- Students’ anxieties about their professional futures and their associated readiness because (i) they did not experience the full face-to-face on-site experience and external performance opportunities they were anticipating and (ii) the on-going impact of the pandemic on the professions they plan to join, including public funding cuts in the arts professions.
- Their need for additional reassurance for example through the type of academic support and learning/assessment feedback we provide (see Section SE5).

We are firmly of the view that the impact of the pandemic on current and future students will remain for some time, and in response we are continuously adapting our approaches to best support them.

### Assessment Practices (SE1)

Our approach to undergraduate assessment is deliberately demanding and designed to enable students to obtain the professional standards that will equip them to become rounded and versatile artists and practitioners. Assessment tasks facilitate students’ progress through their studies, building in complexity and scope to enable programme learning outcomes to be achieved. Students’ outcomes are highly impressive. In his final report, \_\_\_\_\_, External Examiner for the BMus said in 2020-21<sup>xvii</sup>:

*“I have been truly grateful to have listened to some inspirational recitals...I have read some extremely stimulating written submissions and watched captivating CoLab videos, the content of which was often professional and, at times, ground-breaking in its conception. I believe that Trinity Laban has something extremely special to offer students; an experience different from other institutions.”*

In consultation with students, we continue to develop assessment methods to reflect the diversity of skills they need to have flourishing professional futures. Our outstanding student employment outcomes (see Section SO3) show that we are highly successful in aligning our assessment strategies with the needs of the professions, and our External Examiners fully endorse this point:

*“There is an excellent range of assessment methods which encompass the practical skills needed by a professional Musical Theatre performer as well as the skills required to be a creative practitioner and entrepreneur. These transferable skills allow the student many and varied opportunities beyond performing upon graduation.” (Richard Mullholland, BAMT report 2020-21)<sup>xviii</sup>*

*“This is a well-structured programme which provides well-judged balance between practical and academic work. There is a clear commitment to developing creativity and adventurousness in the students and I feel the programme as a whole prepares students well for the demands of a career as a musician in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” (Carla Rees, BMus report 2020-21)<sup>xix</sup>*

*“Students have strong technical and practical training despite the restrictions of the pandemic. Students have built their digital literacy and experimented with new ways of working. The structure continues to offer technical and creative education for performance and other careers in the dance sector.” (Professor Angela Pickard, BACD report 2020-21)<sup>xx</sup>*

We take pride in the features embedded into our assessment strategies that distinguish us within the sector. These include the significant focus on independent critical self-reflection skills, the exceptional support that enables students to achieve professional-level production values in their practical assessments and the high volume of formative feedback that students receive in small group or one-to-one settings. We are currently in the process of reducing the summative assessment loads in each of our undergraduate programmes in response to student and staff feedback, with the BMus programme having completed this at its revalidation in March 2022 and BA Contemporary Dance proposing to do the same in its submission for revalidation in February 2023. Instead, we are placing greater focus on supporting students’ learning and confidence through formative feedback as well as increasing the time available for staff to provide higher quality feedback on what are fewer but more meaningful summative assessments to mark.

External Examiners consistently confirm that our programmes align with sector standards. Our standards are supported by institution-wide undergraduate assessment criteria which are supplemented by discipline-specific and task-based criteria. External Examiners for all programmes comment positively on the application of our assessment criteria, for example:

*“The assessment criteria is sound and used consistently by the programme teams. Marking, grading and feedback is fair, First, second and moderation is evident.” ( BACD report 2020-21)<sup>xxi</sup>*

*The appropriateness of the assessment criteria and the way in which they are applied by internal examiners is “an area where the programme excels.” ( BAMS report 2019-20)<sup>xxii</sup>*

*“The assessment criteria is entirely appropriate and was used effectively across practical, historical and analytical modules.” ( BMus report 2019-20)<sup>xxiii</sup>*

Fair assessment is critical to both securing standards and supporting students’ learning. Students are in almost daily receipt of feedback in one-to-one or group settings, and what they gauge from this environment informs their continual development. While we are fully confident in the application of our assessment criteria, we also acknowledge that students continue to seek greater transparency in how they are applied; we are therefore addressing their needs as a priority. Student satisfaction for assessment and feedback overall increased to 67% in NSS 2021, but in 2022 we experienced a decline to 54% including lower satisfaction that “marking and assessment has been fair” and that “assessment criteria have been clear in advance”.

There are some immediate contextual factors as to why satisfaction levels declined between NSS 2021 and 2022. Students have shared that they found it challenging to access assessment criteria on Moodle, and we also experienced some operational challenges with the introduction of a new approach to continuous assessment in the BA (Hons) Contemporary Dance; both these factors are being addressed for 2022-23.



More broadly, however, we are very aware that students receive feedback from different people in different settings, including from visiting professionals. This position requires us to successfully manage these environments to ensure on-going consistency of messaging to students. We therefore continue to adapt our approaches including, for example, in Music, team-teaching structures are now being used to facilitate greater consistency in marking and there will be new training for end of year assessment panels for 1-1 teaching staff. Work is also progressing on BA (Hons) Musical Theatre Performance to achieve greater clarity of assessment criteria, including staff talking through assessment briefs with students, and an overall review of the language used in criteria is also being undertaken<sup>xxiv</sup>.

The success of the innovative and interactive work with students about all aspects of the assessment process undertaken in Musical Theatre will also be considered for other programmes. Examples of such work include students actively writing a sample assessment task and working with staff to show how they would want feedback presented, the development of a Moodle video to help students learn more about the assessment tasks, and a forthcoming student-led working group that will look at how assessment can be reimagined in the future design of the programme. We see this active engagement with students as critical to better understanding what they need from us to provide them with an excellent experience in all aspects of assessment. From 2022-23, we are also re-applying our institutional policy on timeliness of feedback on assessment<sup>xxv</sup>, following challenges we experienced in doing so during the pandemic period due to staff absences.

### Course Content (SE2)

Our programmes offer students content that aims to inspire them to engage actively and commit to their learning. In turn, this approach supports their ability to gain employment for which our data shows extremely high rates of success (see SO3). NSS data from 2018-19 to 2020-21 shows students to be extremely satisfied with how “staff have made the subject interesting” including satisfaction exceeding 90% in each programme in 2020-21. While we experienced a small drop in our 2021-22 NSS results, satisfaction remains very high at 81%.

Course content is updated regularly to reflect the changing nature of the professions for which we prepare our students and its relevance to broader society. The fact that many of our staff are active practitioners in their profession (see Section SE1) ensures that we have direct expertise to ensure the relevance of the curriculum. More significant course changes are undertaken through revalidation, panel membership for which includes external practitioners or academics. All course changes are undertaken in consultation with student representatives who are also members of the respective Programme Committees; there is also student representation on revalidation panels. During the last four years, we have focused strategically on course developments that start to radically rethink the concept of inclusivity, to further embed entrepreneurship and to extend disciplinary boundaries. Such developments are purposely designed to support our students excel as artists and practitioners into employment.

### *Inclusivity*

In 2020, we established a Black Lives Matter Task and Finish Group, that included student membership, and created Our ‘Black Lives Matter at Trinity Laban (Public Action Plan) 2021<sup>xxvi</sup>. This Plan recognised that the canonised history of Western Art Music, Contemporary Dance and Musical Theatre has marginalised, and continues to marginalise, voices from outside the white mainstream as does performance traditions and cultures. We acknowledge the legacy of colonialism in much of the repertoire and pedagogical practices that we have inherited. However, we do not accept this situation as something that Trinity Laban cannot challenge, confront and transform.

As part of our response, we are now a formal partner with both Black Artists in Dance<sup>xxvii</sup> and Black Lives in Music<sup>xxviii</sup> the national organisations committed to dismantling structural racism in the respective industries.

Our sustained association with these organisations, as well as with artists with disabilities (e.g. in partnership with Candoco Dance Company<sup>xxix</sup>), are helping us transform curricula and pedagogical practices to better reflect the society in which we live, and to offer students a wider range of role models. Black Artists in Dance (BAiD) works in partnership with the Faculty of Dance on an on-going action plan and there are monthly AskBAiD Days which provide safe spaces for students and staff to talk with BAiD colleagues. External Examiners in both Dance and Music have been extremely supportive of the work we continue to undertake. In relation to just one example of curriculum changes made in the BA Contemporary Dance, in her report of 2022 said:

*“[Cultural] Perspectives in Dance is a component that should be commended for its insights into the landscape, criticality and opportunities it offers students.”<sup>xxx</sup>*

Of changes made in the BMus, who is also the Director of Black Music at the University of Westminster, in his 2022 report said:

*“As previously mentioned, my experience at the recitals, the internal examiners, and that of the programme board has all been positive. But I seek to add the proactive approach to EDI to ensure future taught content reflected a broader range of composition, performance, and musicianship, was commendable.”<sup>xxxi</sup>*

In 2022, a working group consisting of Trans and non-binary and allied students and staff was founded and has already produced several recommendations. These include future staff training and the development of an institutional policy to ensure that a commitment to gender inclusive pedagogy is fully implemented and supported.<sup>xxxii</sup>

### *Entrepreneurship*

We are particularly proud of our increasing efforts to support students developing entrepreneurial skills which in turns supports exceptional levels of employability. Since 2019, we have used Higher Education Innovation Funding to support six annual Innovation Awards<sup>xxxiii</sup> whereby students can compete for £3000 of project seed funding plus industry mentoring in their first year after graduation. The application process mirrors a typical professional funding application/pitch for a small-scale project. Supporting sessions have also been built into the curriculum that help all students gain fundraising skills. Recipients of the award have been very successful in finding follow-on opportunities and industry interest in their work beyond the initial seed project, confirming the validity of this initial stone. The impact of this initiative is evident in feedback from 2021 recipients<sup>xxxiv</sup>:

*“Without the Trinity Laban Innovation Award, I would not have been able to launch my career in the way that I have done over the past year since graduating and it really kickstarted my career both financially and in my confidence, knowing that I had the support and that belief in my idea was hugely beneficial.”*

*“The Trinity Laban Innovation Award was the perfect stepping-stone as an emerging collective. The prospect of graduating can be daunting to begin making a reality of your ideas, but the support provided by the award and our mentor was instrumental to our growing success.”*

In addition to this initiative, we have introduced a core Artist as Entrepreneur module for all Year 3 BMus students in which they create a business plan focused on supporting their post-graduation

employment<sup>xxxv</sup>. These plans form the basis of the Year 4 Artist as Innovator Capstone Project<sup>xxxvi</sup> where students are supported to initiate their post-graduation employment through a launch of a concert or a website, the release of an EP and so on. In Dance, Year 2 and 3 students complete the Dance Industry Engagement component which includes guest talks from a diversity of artists and industry experts, career tool kit sessions and mock auditions aimed at making implicit knowledge more explicit, breaking transitional phases down into clear steps and pathways, and raising awareness of accessible support mechanisms<sup>xxxvii</sup>.

### *Extending disciplinary boundaries at undergraduate level*

In 2019, we launched a BSc (Hons) Dance Science programme, the first of its kind in a conservatoire. Trinity Laban pioneered dance science as a discipline in 2001 with the world's first MSc Dance Science programme which applies a scientific approach to the study of dance and dancers combined with research-informed practical application of scientific principles to enhance health and wellbeing, optimise performance and help reduce injury. The BSc Dance Science offers a unique opportunity to study biomechanics, exercise physiology, fitness and wellbeing alongside daily technical practice in an artistic setting. Specialist technical practice classes focus on the application of dance science principles to dance technique which is a unique feature of this programme. Students participate in lab-based curriculum work including applied research and regular Open Lab sessions support student learning. These sessions give students the opportunity to familiarise themselves with lab protocols outside taught lectures.

Trinity Laban launched a new BA in Music, Performance & Industry in 2021. This programme offers a unique learning environment through the opportunity to collaborate across disciplines within a community of conservatoire musicians and dancers. Study on the BA MPI programme is not bound by genre and celebrates musical difference as a strength, which leads to original departures through individual and collaborative learning. The programme values excellence in originality, the ability to communicate original ideas, identify markets, engage with audiences and relate to the industry with imagination through the creation of new work. It considers popular music from two perspectives: music for the people, with its array of genres and sub-genres; and secondly, music of the people, such as traditional music, folk song and global roots music. As BA MPI students engage with students from other programmes this unique sensibility is further shared.

### Research, Innovation, Scholarship, Professional Practice, Employer Engagement (SE3)

Trinity Laban is fortunate to draw upon the cumulative impact of staff research, professional practice, scholarship, employer engagement and innovation to contribute to an outstanding academic experience for our students. As illustrated in earlier sections of our submission, this position means that we can provide highly informed and relevant programmes delivered in a way that best supports students' success.

We have shared examples of sector innovation such as CoLab and entrepreneurship. Such leadership also extends into how we apply staff research to our programmes with examples including:

- The technical training in the BA Contemporary Dance programme is based on principles of periodisation which is acknowledged as instrumental in optimising performance and reducing the risk of injury in sports and dance science research; we are the first conservatoire faculty in the UK to embed this into our curriculum design for technical training.
- In the new BSc Dance Science, we have adopted a unique approach to Technical Practice which examines dance training in the context of detailed application of dance science principles. The

studio-based practice includes discussions and modelling of dance science principles led by a member of staff who is recognised internationally for her scholarship in safe practice in dance training.

- In Music, Professor Sophie Fuller, an international authority and researcher on 19th and 20th century women composers, served as the institutional lead for Venus Blazing, a bold initiative that mandated that at least half of the music programmed in 2018-19 be by women. This was the first such commitment by a conservatoire in the world and concerts were broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 from Trinity Laban's historic Peacock Room. Critically, the initiative has contributed to curricular innovation and included the collation of previously hard to access scores that remain as a unique resource for Trinity Laban students. Students have benefited from the opportunity to perform more inclusive repertoire for their end of year recitals<sup>xxxviii</sup>. Trinity Laban's efforts in expanding student end of year recital repertoire to address historical gender and race imbalances in music, sets an important example for the conservatoire sector.

The latest QS World University Rankings place Trinity Laban in the top 30 performing arts institutions in the world. The Research Excellence Framework (2021) exercise confirmed that 68% of our research was assessed to be world-leading and internationally excellent, with the proportion deemed world leading increasing from 18% in 2014 to 28% in 2021. All our research was ranked at the top two grades 4\* (world-leading in its significance and rigour) and 3\* (internationally excellent) for impact in the REF exercise. We recruit academic staff who have significant standing and expertise in their discipline to ensure that students can access a comprehensive range of skills, knowledge and practice. For example, students' final year independent research projects are supervised by staff with research interests or recognised scholarship and professional experience in the topics. In addition, students have the opportunity to participate in research projects led by Masters students and staff. One of our Post-Doctoral Fellows conducts his research with student co-researchers and they have presented their work at conferences.

Many of our staff are actively engaged with professional bodies and learned societies, including: BAFTA, British Education Research Association, Dance HE, Directors' Guild of Great Britain, Equity, Incorporated Society of Musicians, International Association for Dance Medicine and Science, Royal Academy of Dance, Royal Musical Association, Royal Society of Arts, Royal Society of Musicians, Society for Dance Research, Staff and Educational Development Association, Theatre and Performance Research Association, and the UNESCO World Dance Council.

Several of our academic staff hold appointments as external examiners at other conservatoires and universities<sup>xxxix</sup> and periodically act as externals on revalidation panels. These positions mean that our staff can provide their expertise in the development of performing arts curriculum at other institutions but can equally bring back practice and innovation to enhance the programmes at Trinity Laban. Alongside this work, many staff also contribute to the work of discipline-specific quality networks, subject associations, and other HE and professional arts sectoral bodies, including: the National Association of Music in Higher Education, One Dance UK, QAA, Association of European Conservatoires, and European League of Institutes of Arts.

## Resources, Support and Student Engagement

### Support for Staff Professional Development (SE4)

Trinity Laban offers outstanding staff development opportunities for all staff. This ranges from multiple courses on our Virtual College on safeguarding, business compliance, personal and professional development, leadership and management, and health and safety, to supporting staff for international presentations of their research/practitioner wisdom at conferences and arts festivals around the world. To help promote inclusive teaching and assessment ethos and practices, successful staff development initiatives have been held to upskill the teaching team and create a forum for collegiate exchange and reflection on recent developments and their impact on student experiences. Activities include antiracist training over the last two years and development opportunities related to disability and neurodiversity, such as workshops with charities *Mind*, *Autism Awareness* and *Deaf Umbrella*.

In the past two years there has been a rising interest from BACD Year 3 students in student-led research of learning differences and on evaluating strategy to create more inclusive learning environments. Co-led by a Post-Doctoral Researcher and Learning Support Advisor, a new way of sharing this knowledge has been implemented. As part of the BACD Year 3 *Research Methods* component recent graduates presented their projects to current students with the support of teaching staff. The event was additionally supported by a workshop led by (Candoco associate artist). The aim was to harness high quality student-led research, facilitated by staff, which explored dance students' experiences of learning differences within dance, including developing rare insight into how support for learning differences can be included within dance classes.

Our provision has clear and transparent policies in place to give all full-time, part-time and hourly-paid staff equitable access to development funding and opportunities. The pedagogical development of staff is embedded in institutional life, and personal development objectives are set within the annual appraisal process. Termly activities for staff in each Faculty ensure currency of knowledge in relation to key institutional initiatives and discipline-specific developments. The sharing of best practice in learning and teaching is included as a standing agenda item in many academic staff team meetings.

The long-standing culture of continuing professional development at the highest level is demonstrated by our continuation of TL: Augment – our HE teacher development programme matched to Descriptors One, Two and Three of the UK Professional Standards Framework which received accreditation from the HEA in 2017. It focuses on promoting links between staff members' established artistic practices and creativity in teaching, underpinned by pedagogic research and scholarly activity. The HEA noted that the 'provision has been designed to suit the context of this specialist institution' and that its focus on 'equality and diversity ... promotes an inclusive approach to suit the needs of a diverse student population'. Highlights of the programme include: a peer observation scheme; support for the induction and mentoring of new teachers and academic leaders; and skills development support in areas such as embedding technology in teaching, facilitating peer mentoring among students, and supporting students with specific learning challenges. Many of our staff now hold a Fellowship or Senior Fellowship of the HEA and help to mentor new staff as they undertake the programme. The External Examiner for TL: Augment said:

*"Each year I continue to be impressed by the care and commitment, and enhanced expertise shown by all involved in this programme – especially those giving their time as assessors and managing the programme."* (Andy Peisley, 2022)<sup>d</sup>

Our suite of internal recognition schemes has been designed to reward and promote excellence in teaching and learning. This complements external awards and fellowships awarded to TL staff. We have developed a peer-led system to confer the titles of Teaching Fellow and Senior Teaching Fellow to recognise academic and support staff who make significant contributions to the student learning experience. A Learning and Teaching Awards Scheme has been created to celebrate individuals and teams who transform and enhance our institutional learning and teaching.

Academic staff are invited to apply for the titles of Professor and Reader on a regular basis. These titles are conferred to acknowledge significant contributions by individuals to their specialist fields, which include both learning and teaching and research. In addition, academic staff who wish to become research-active, can apply for a research allocation on their workload which significantly supports their production of research outputs at international and world leading status for the REF.

### Learning Environment and Academic Support (SE5)

An objective of our Strategic Plan is 'to deliver a personalised and supportive teaching and learning environment that cultivates creativity, originality, technical excellence and partnership with students'. The comprehensive academic support model we provide our diverse student body is therefore designed to optimise learning and graduate success; this is illustrated in student continuation and progression outcomes (see Student Outcomes sections). Furthermore, in 2021 we undertook an internal audit of the systems we have in place to support student retention that resulted in an outcome that had *substantial assurance* in our management of student retention<sup>xii</sup>.

Our NSS results between 2018-19 and 2021-22 for the academic support questions show some decline in student satisfaction from the 80%+ levels that we were receiving previously. These questions relate specifically to one part of the support we offer students, and we know that this slight drop is due to some specific operational matters that occurred due to staff illness. As noted earlier, we are also of the view that students are seeking greater levels of support and reassurance as a legacy of the Covid-19 pandemic. We are highly confident in the model we currently use to best support students' success but continue to engage with students and review their needs.

Our academic support model starts at the pre-entry recruitment and selection stage where we take up references and review students' personal statements to facilitate the early identification of any challenges that may impact on their continuation and progress. The support model then adapts to subsequent parts of the student journey and the different needs students may require. We place a significant focus on transition and induction, recognising the challenges that entering Higher Education can present. A prime example is the implementation of the core Transition to Higher Education Module in the BMus programme<sup>xiii</sup>. This module, introduced in September 2022 in response to student and staff feedback, provides a safe environment in which students can explore and address potential skill gaps. We will be reviewing its impact during 2022-23. In Dance, initial diagnostic tasks and tutorials with subject tutors and individual learning support sign-ups provide space for students' support needs to be addressed early on.

The intensive teaching and learning methods as described in Section SE1 illustrates the high level of support that students receive on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, every student has access to personal support from permanent Faculty<sup>xiiii</sup>. All undergraduate students have open door access to Programme Leaders and, in the larger dance and music programmes, additionally to Year Coordinators and/or Personal Tutors. Programme Leaders and staff undertaking pastoral roles meet regularly in each Faculty to review the progress of students, and to identify any barriers to learning. Additional support is put in place for students facing specific challenges or at risk of non-continuation. Student attendance is also monitored closely.

The Learning Support Team works closely with Faculties to provide students with further tools to reach their potential, and to increase their skills and self-confidence. Support is available to all undergraduate students and the Team continually look at ways in which they can maximise their reach. For example, events that support the growing and changing student population are held throughout the year in collaboration with teaching faculty. These events range from understanding plagiarism, research proposal writing, guidance on writing a literature review, understanding methodology, essay writing skills, time management, how to work effectively in a group, study specific skills for first year students and matters relating to perfectionism and anxiety in performance in music. One Trinity Laban Learning Support Tutor holds a PhD in Performance Science and specialises in mental skills training for optimal performance which has further tailored our bespoke provision for music students.

Beyond these open events, the Team provides individualised support to students. During 2021-22, the Learning Support Team provided just over 700 one-to-one tutorials<sup>xliv</sup>. The Learning and Teaching Board receives annual reports from the Learning Support Team which often includes feedback that has been received from students<sup>xlv</sup>:

*"I just wanted to say a huge thank you for all of your help in writing my thesis. I have just received my transcript and I've never had such great feedback on a piece of academic writing. I am so grateful for your support and guidance; it was lovely working with you." (BACD student)*

*"I can't thank you enough for the help you've been giving me with my dissertation. I don't know how I would manage without this support, thank you. (BMus student)*

*"I just want to thank you for the help and support you are always giving to me and how you encourage me to get better in the best of my capacities." (BMus student)*

As noted at the start of our submission, currently 33% of our students have a declared disability which requires us to further tailor the support that we provide; this figure is more than a 10% increase on 2021-22. Historically, approximately 30% of the learning support that we offer focuses on working with and supporting neurodiverse students; this is likely to increase. Examples of the innovative and impactful work we have or are undertaking includes:

- Developing our approach to the specific manifestations learning differences can have when applied to music learning (for example, through supporting students with musical dyslexia). The use of ear training and music theory specialist software in learning support sessions has been key to our success, alongside the flexible provision of both face-to-face and online support.
- Bringing together past final year Dance students, who had undertaken their final year projects on how neurodiversity can impact dancers in the studio, with the Chair of the British Dyslexia Association who was undertaking research into dance and neurodiversity/dyslexia. Findings from these projects represent a valuable resource due to providing localized insight into how learning takes place within dance studios. Possible benefits include short term and long-term impacts on student engagement. Similar work will now be done with other programmes such as Musical Theatre.
- Collaborative work between Learning Support, Faculties, Digital Support and the Library to create a dyslexia-friendly lending policy and on-going work in the Library to further enhance accessibility to best support students' learning.

The support is highly regarded by students and can generate significant impact. For example, in a report to the Learning and Teaching Board in 2019, students' feedback included:

*“I was extremely stressed, anxious and overwhelmed by the information from emails. I find the information hard to read and digest because of my dyslexia. [X] showed me multiple ways to help with my organisation. I now feel I can independently organise myself through any stress, as I know exactly what I need to do in order to organise myself. I can take these skills into third year as studio classes begin again. [X] has had a very big impact not only in terms of my dyslexia, but also my mental health. Since having the sessions with [X], my anxiety has decreased massively due to his help in my organisation.”*

In collaboration with individual students, we put in place reasonable adjustments and personal study plans where these are necessary. Examples of actions we take in the context of our disciplines include different methods of learning/assessment to explore the principles of contact/partnership for students who struggle with touch, additional rest breaks for students recovering from fatigue or injury and use of audio assessments (rather than video) for students who have body image-related conditions.

While counselling and mental health support does not fall strictly within the definition of the TEF, we have made a purposeful decision to include reference to it in our submission. In our experience, there is an inextricable link between students' wellbeing and their capacity to engage in their studies successfully; this is particularly true in relation to the demanding nature of our undergraduate programmes. 25% of undergraduate students access counselling and mental health support within Trinity Laban and we have recently invested in staff resources to meet additional demands. Our students say:

*“I can honestly say having counselling at Trinity Laban has been one of the best things that has happened to me in my life. I have personally tried counselling in the past and it was nothing compared to the counselling services at Trinity Laban. Without counselling at Trinity Laban I don't think I would have survived or stayed during my first academic year...I feel extremely lucky to be a part of Trinity Laban, mainly due to the incredible pastoral care the school provides.” (BAMT student 2018-19)*

*“On my final year of the course I fell into a really worrying state of mind. All the issues that I was dealing with seemed to pile up and I could not see any solution for them. My anxiety reached the point that I could not help myself any longer...It was my very first time that I did counselling and I had no idea what to expect. Nonetheless, my counsellor did an amazing job taking me through the whole process and week by week I started to feel much better. I am grateful for the time during my meetings with my counsellor. I am not sure if I would have finished my degree if it wasn't for the counselling.” (BMus student 2018-19)*

*“I have experienced many counselling services, none of which compare to this. [My counsellor] is the greatest counsellor I have worked with. My life is changed from what he has taught me.” (BACD student)*

#### Physical and virtual learning environment (SE6)

The learning and teaching experience is underpinned by some of the finest educational facilities. During their studies, and upon graduation, students move seamlessly between proto-professional spaces and performances at Trinity Laban and real-life venues and engagements outside the institution. This builds their familiarity with working protocols and conditions in the arts industry and develops their stagecraft and performance skills in different settings. The employability outcomes that our students achieve (see Section SO3) show the value of the resources we provide.

Our students also tell us that they are extremely satisfied with the physical and virtual learning resources we offer. The NSS data, for example, shows that we perform materially above our



benchmark for learning resources. We are proud of these on-going high levels of student satisfaction, particularly within the context of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our estate includes some exceptional buildings for study. Undergraduate music programmes are housed at King Charles Court, part of the Old Royal Naval College World Heritage Site in Greenwich. King Charles Court's dedicated spaces provide our students with 102 music studios for teaching and independent practice including discipline-specific facilities for brass, harp, jazz, early music, percussion and amplified music; a 100-seat recital room; a theatre studio; the specialist Jerwood Library of the Performing Arts; composition suite; recording studio; and keyboard laboratory. The magnificent Chapel of St Peter and St Paul offers another performance venue on site, for which Trinity Laban provides the choir master, organist and choral scholars, and programmes a regular series of student concerts that are open to the public.

Whilst King Charles Court and the surrounding Old Royal Naval College site provide an inspiring setting for the study of music, maintaining the infrastructure added to the Grade I listed building to meet accessibility needs is a challenge. Recently we experienced some significant issues with the operation of the lift in King Charles Court, including some short periods of time when it has been out of action. For students who have health conditions that make the lift a necessity, we made every effort to schedule activities on the ground floor. However, this was clearly not an ideal nor sustainable position, and fell short of our commitment to making our institution accessible to all. Fixing the issues was an institutional priority and significant works to restore the lift long-term were completed in December 2022 when the lift was returned to use.

Music students also benefit from our ownership of Blackheath Halls, one of the outstanding centres for music and the performing arts in London, and the city's oldest established purpose-built concert venue. Its renowned acoustics are favoured by world famous orchestras, ensembles, record labels and conductors. Performance facilities, which have undergone a recent £2m refurbishment, comprise the 600-seat Great Hall for large-scale performances and 160-seat Recital Room. Both settings are used for teaching and concerts alongside a professional programme of events.

Our undergraduate dance programmes are housed in the purpose-built Laban building, designed by Herzog and de Meuron. During a residency at Trinity Laban, internationally acclaimed choreographer Karole Armitage described the Sterling Prize winning Laban Building as *'the greatest Shrine to Contemporary Dance in Europe'*. A specialist 300 seat theatre forms the heart of the building, complemented by with professional standard production and costume facilities. The building also houses 14 dance studios, a performance science laboratory, strength and conditioning health suite, research hub and the largest dance library in Europe. The theatre and associated specialist departments provide a professional working environment for students which enables them to experience production processes and performances from world class companies such as Company Wayne McGregor, Candoco Dance Company and Ballet Boyz.

The musical theatre programme is housed at our Laurie Grove site. The building is leased from another HEI and is located somewhat distant from our primary locations in Greenwich and Deptford. It is not regarded as long-term premises for Trinity Laban but is undergoing maintenance and upgrade works, including in response to feedback from students which has included the redecoration of studios and voice labs and the instillation of LED lighting. A more substantial upgrade and re-modelling of the reception, waiting room and staff room is currently in the concept design stage and has been identified as one of Trinity Laban's priority pipeline projects<sup>xvii</sup>. The intention remains to transfer the musical theatre programme to one of our primary sites as soon as that becomes feasible.

Student satisfaction with library facilities is consistently noteworthy, including +90% from dance students. Our outstanding specialist libraries enable students to access scholarly resources, enhance their specialist subject knowledge and carry out independent research. The Jerwood

Library of the Performing Arts at the Faculty of Music holds musical and musical theatre collections of international significance – including rare and in some cases unique items – all of which are available for study and research. Most of these collections include material that could be used as the basis of a dissertation or thesis, or for researching unusual repertoire. It is a three-time winner of International Association of Music Libraries (UK&Ir) Excellence Award for Music Libraries (2019, 2014 and 2010).

The Laban Library and Archive offers the largest and most varied open-access specialist research collection on dance and related subjects in the UK, covering many aspects of dance in a variety of formats and languages. As well as vast information resources on all aspects of dance, including ballet, contemporary dance, choreography, dance health and dance teaching, it holds a wealth of contextual material in support of the programmes of study at Trinity Laban. Subject areas include fine arts, sociology, education, philosophy and history. An institutional video-streaming service, available on and off-site, allows staff and students to view and download their class videos. We also provide on-site access to dance-related TV broadcasts as well as student and professional performances held at Trinity Laban.

### Student Voice (SE7)

The Trinity Laban Strategic Plan 2018-2028 commits to providing “a voice for students that is respected and responded to.” Our students have shared with us that while they are broadly satisfied with the opportunities to feed back on their course, they have far lower opinions of how we value their views and are also disappointed with the lack of clarity we provide about actions we take in response. We have therefore placed institutional priority on making change<sup>xlvii</sup>.

Opportunities for students to share their views and to contribute ideas for the future occur informally and formally. Informally, students have easy access to full-time teaching and programme management staff either on a one-to-one or group basis. Experience of student rep attendance in Dance, Music and Musical Theatre shows that students value the regular informal meetings with the Programme Leader because it enables dialogue that is uninhibited from the more formal format of a committee setting. Student representatives also meet regularly with Programme Leaders and the Students’ Union President meets regularly with the Principal. Students are also consulted on programme changes, including revalidation proposals, and there is student membership on revalidation panels<sup>xlviii</sup>.

Formally, there is student representation on all programme-related committees up to and including the Academic Board<sup>xlix</sup>. Additionally, the Students Union President and Vice-President are both members of the Board of Governors<sup>l</sup> and there are open invitations for them to attend other corporate committees (other than the Remuneration Committee which is closed business). There have been challenges for students and for Trinity Laban in maximising student contributions to formal academic committee meetings which we have identified as:

- Committee business being paperwork-heavy to meet the needs of the quality assurance framework and therefore creating a somewhat unengaging setting for students;
- Meetings being scheduled during teaching time and students rightly prioritising their classes; actions are being taken to address this for 2022-23 meetings.
- The need to streamline the business of some committees to make best use of students’ time and to route the right issues through the right committees.
- Students not always having the capacity to take on the student representative role resulting in the load being shared amongst fewer students, which in turn creates capacity challenges for them.

We are therefore reviewing part of our academic governance review structure in 2022-23 to explore how we can better work in partnership with students. The review, discussed by Academic Standards and Quality Board in November 2022 and approved by the Principal's Management Group in December 2022<sup>i</sup>, sets out a proposal for the future roles of Programme Committees, Staff-Student Liaison Groups and the Student Experience Committee to ensure we can better draw in the informal settings that work much better for our students from 2023-24 onwards. We are currently consulting the Students' Union and will draw upon wider student input to look towards how we can be more creative in our future approach. Our aim is to provide a regular but more relaxed and entirely student-focussed setting for discussions between Programme Teams, Faculty staff and students, with staff and students together producing an action grid from each meeting. The Academic Standards and Quality Board monitors progress against Faculty actions termly and ensure that action taken in response to student feedback is communicated back to students in a clear and consistent format and in a timely manner. As our students prefer the more informal settings for providing feedback to the formal committee meetings, we are confident that the change in the format of the meetings and the action grids coming out of them will be welcomed by students and we look forward to working in partnership with the Students' Union in implementing and evaluating these changes.

Enhancing our approach to formal module evaluations and wider student surveys is also being addressed. Historically, these mechanisms resulted in relatively high response rates as the exercises were paper-based and took place in class. However, following the Pandemic we took the decision to move the processes online and that has resulted in a far decreased response rate. While we consider the collated outcomes of the evaluations and surveys that we do receive at Programme Committees, they do not provide us with the wide data set we would like. During the 2022-23 academic year, we are therefore reverting to inviting students to complete module evaluations in class time on their phones or laptops and will be doing likewise for the wider internal end of year surveys<sup>ii</sup>.

Adopting these changes in governance and surveys should result in students feeling more positive about our approach. However, we are also realistic that our students will only likely participate if they consider it to be worth their while. Our NSS data shows that across the last four years, students have shown increasing dissatisfaction with their opinion that staff value their views. Our analysis of this position, which combine views of staff as well as from the Students' Union, are that:

- There were some specific operational matters that were not possible to address in the 2021-22 academic year which caused disappointment to Music students. These matters are in hand for 2022-23.
- Musical Theatre students have shared that they do not feel as valued by the institution as Music and Dance students partly as a result of their current location.
- In Dance, students can be disillusioned when part-time staff are not always equipped to respond to their feedback.

This position is exacerbated by students feeling highly dissatisfied about the clarity with which their feedback is acted upon. We recognise that while our student representatives and the Students' Union play an important role in reporting back to students on matters that they have raised through them, Trinity Laban has a wider responsibility to report back to the student body. Initiatives have been attempted including the weekly Friday email in Musical Theatre as well as the institution-wide student bulletin. However, student satisfaction levels show that these approaches have proved ineffective and that alternative approaches are required.

It is critical that we address this position, firstly to regain the confidence of our students and secondly because there is much action that we have taken in response to their feedback. While some of these actions relate to previous cohorts and may now seem distant to our current students, other points

are more current. Combined, they demonstrate a picture of our responsiveness to operational, academic and well-being matters. Examples include:

- In Music, providing more one-to-one tutorial support for core modules in music to support less experienced students reach threshold levels and provide more stretch for other students.
- Enhancing the transition and induction process (see Section SE5)
- Appointing a new post in Registry to provide additional support for international students
- Appointing a new Mental Health Adviser to create greater capacity to support students (see Section SE5)
- Enhancing the facilities for Musical Theatre students (see SE6)
- Taking steps to decolonise the curriculum (see Section SE2)
- Development of a shared music and dance elective to start 2023-24
- Making the assessment process more transparent (see Section SE1)
- Reducing assessment loading across all programmes (see Section SE1)

Our Student Engagement Plan 2022-25<sup>liii</sup> will guide our approach to addressing the key challenges with student voice. The previous incarnation of the plan (2018-2022) has been revised through the Student Experience Committee<sup>liv</sup> in recent months and in partnership with the Students' Union. The Plan, of which student voice forms one part, is focused on the development of learning communities, in which students and staff can support each other to develop their creativity, individuality, diversity and originality, including the incorporation of students' voices through feedback and representation.

### **Section 3: Student Outcomes**

#### SO1: Continuation

Overall continuation at 89.1% sits moderately below benchmark (-2.5), although not to a statistically significant extent. This outcome is skewed by untypically poor performance in one of the four years under consideration (2017-2018 entrants with a continuation rate of 83.1%). Such outliers can be the result of relatively small student populations within which the outcomes of a few individuals can exaggerate percentage changes. Nevertheless, we responded seriously to the annual decline and reinforced academic and pastoral support measures and induction processes. The most recent two years show a return to more usual performance at benchmark levels.

Continuation of students declaring a disability is especially strong at 93.5% over the four years, above benchmark and higher than their non-disabled peers. This reflects well on our disability support (see Section SE5), especially so since continuation of students with disability lags at the sector level. We also show positive performance among students from deprived areas (IMD quintile 1 or 2) where the continuation rate of 90.7% is very close to that of Q3-Q5 peers; again, we buck the whole sector trend which shows students from disadvantaged backgrounds are much more likely to drop-out than their peers.

We acknowledge that there remain challenges in ensuring consistent performance across all our student demographics, particularly in respect of international students for whom the continuation rate of 82.7% is well below UK-domiciled students. In our view, this may, in part, be attributable to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on Years 3 and 4 students. We were gratified that overall success was maintained at a high level despite the immense difficulties in transferring the conservatoire education model to virtual delivery. However, as noted in Section SE1, inevitably, distance from family added particular stress for those international students who were able to base themselves in the UK, while remote learning for those unable to travel deprived them of the sense of creative

community which is central to conservatoire training. These external factors would have influenced decisions to discontinue study.

Limited TEF data on ethnicity demonstrates higher non-continuation of students in the 'mixed background' than for white students. This is consistent with a gap shown in the access and participation data set where the three-year aggregate percentage difference in the continuation rate of white students and BAME students for 17-18 to 19-20 entrants stood at 5 points. Reduction of this gap is a priority in our 2020-2025 Access and Participation Plan with an objective '*To eliminate any difference in the continuation rates of White and BAME students by 2025*'<sup>iv</sup>. We commenced in 2020-21 a long-term research study, Understanding and Addressing Variations in BAME Student Success, to explore variations between White and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students' academic success at Trinity Laban. The study is using a range of qualitative methods to explore student experiences across different ethnic and social groups, with a focus on variations in students' sense of belonging within the institutional and disciplinary learning community. On the basis of project findings, some practical changes to institutional practice and policy are already being made and developed. This project is the first in the conservatoire sector to address differential success between students. It is directly engaging students and recent alumni as co-researchers and via smaller and complementary student projects.

Research findings have highlighted the importance of student induction and transition in shaping variations in student belonging and success, leading to the creation of a new cross-institutional working group tasked with improving student induction. This activity will harness plans for a new transition experience, co-designed with student representatives and key staff, in order to socialise all students into critical pedagogy and inclusive learning and build links within and between different student groups. The new core induction and transition module in Music, highlighted in Section SE5, provides an example output of our work.

As set out in Section SE2 (course content), we are engaged in intensive reflection and renewal with a view to diversifying and decolonising our curricula and pedagogic practices. Access and inclusion was a significant theme of the BMus revalidation in January 2022. The revalidation submission reflected a desire to decolonise the curriculum, particularly in relation to music history and, importantly, to allow a free-choice final year repertoire encouraging students to specifically choose works by underrepresented composers. BA (Hons) Music Industry and Performance also features a wide and increasing range of musical genres. Within the Faculty of Dance, the undergraduate technique curriculum has also been updated with an aim to diversify and decolonise the content. Hip Hop is taught across all years in the BACD and BSc programmes and this will be introduced at Foundation level in 2023. BA Year 2 Repertory Project and BA Year 3 Commissioned Works include works created by makers from the global majority and other underrepresented groups. Lecture-based components and Independent Research Projects are focusing on previously hidden voices and examining why their narratives have not been heard before.

## SO2: Completion

A high proportion of Trinity Laban students successfully complete their programmes (91.3%), which is at benchmark. Performance has been consistent across the four years covered by the TEF data. Completion among students with disability is marginally above benchmark although the absolute percentage is slightly lower than for those without disability (90.7% v 91.4%). Students from disadvantaged areas (IMD Q1 Or Q2) also perform above expectation.

There is, of course, a correlation between continuation and completion rates, and lower continuation among international students and BAME students translates into less strong completion outcomes than their peers. Completion is also the only measure that shows significant under-performance by students who were in receipt of free school meals, although the sample size is small. Percentage

completion exceeds percentage continuation, suggesting that the main issue for Trinity Laban is transition into the Conservatoire and successful navigation of the first year of study into year two, hence the intensive focus on induction and belonging noted above. Once this transition has been achieved, students in higher years generally progress and complete their programmes with a high level of achievement.

### SO3: Progression

Progression to professional employment or higher study stands at the exceptional level of 80.9% which is +11.8 pp against benchmark. Most recent performance is even stronger at 83.4%; the overall average is influenced by a small dip for Year 2 (the 2021 survey) which reflects the Covid impact on employment in the performing arts when the result was still +9.5 percentage points above benchmark. These outcomes are a powerful validation of Trinity Laban's success in delivering our mission for our artforms and our promise to students of teaching that prepares and equips them for high-level creative careers. Our own institutional data from the Graduate Outcomes survey shows that a three-year average of 75% of those graduates in employment after 15 months are working in the arts and arts education.

Graduate success is uniformly strong across all student groups. We are especially proud of the fact that students from demographics that suffer significant disadvantages in the employment market are showing positive outcomes that match, or indeed exceed, other more privileged groups. 82.3% of graduates with a reported disability progress to professional employment or higher study while the figure for graduates from IMD quintiles 1 or 2 is an exceptional 88.3%, well ahead of our overall average and +18.4 pp above benchmark.

### **Educational Gain**

Trinity Laban's commitment and ability to develop talent from diverse backgrounds is a defining institutional characteristic and a large majority of our students come from the state sector placing Trinity Laban well above its peer institutions (see Provider Context). Our audition processes are inclusive with audition content, scoring guidelines, and moderation designed to evaluate the potential of applicants rather than limiting it to solely existing skills and training. This distinctive holistic approach has helped the institution identify students with exceptional promise. Once at Trinity Laban, students are trained in an inquiry-based curriculum delivered by internationally renowned artists and educators enabling students to swiftly achieve high standards of performance ready for transition into the profession. Our case studies show that often, the distance travelled is significant and remarkable.

Repertory Dance Projects and Commissioned Work projects are led by external international artists and companies and students work as if in a dance company over four-five week periods. Commissioned Work pieces tour in London venues culminating in performances in Trinity Laban's Bonnie Bird Theatre, recognised as one of UK's finest dance stages. The sets and costumes are from the original repertory or designed specifically for the shows, allowing students experience working in full theatre productions at the highest level. We believe this experience is unique in dance in HE at this significant level and enables students to work at professional level and to build up relationships with internationally renowned artists and companies.

This progressive ethos, appetite for risk taking and immersive creative training encourages and supports students to pursue novel paths and generate opportunities for themselves and others. Both Colab (see Section SE1), which enables the student voice to emerge through artistic risk taking, and modules such as the Artist as Innovator (see Section SE2), which requires students to be forward looking, externally facing and realise their artistic aspiration through an innovative project, contribute

to Trinity Laban's success in graduating students who pursue new creative paths with assurance and vision. Since 2019, the TL Innovation Award has also championed creative entrepreneurship through a unique scheme that sees both music and dance students pitch artistic and business projects to an expert panel and win professional mentoring and seed funding to bring their idea to fruition (see Section SE2).

Trinity Laban's distinctive approach to helping students achieve significant educational gains is evidenced by the following case studies:

- Trinity Laban's programmes have nurtured an outstanding generation of young British black and female performers and composers who have injected new ideas, energy, diversity and confidence that has made London a hub of innovation in the discipline to rival its US homelands. Graduates such as Cassie Kinoshi, Nubya Garcia, Ayanna Witter-Johnson, and Laura Jurd are acclaimed artists charting new paths, providing leadership and helping to redefine the art form both nationally and internationally. Marcus Moore of The New York Times writes of Nubya Garcia's album *Source* that it is 'another grand achievement for the British Jazz scene. It's time to make way for Nubya Garcia, London's other major voice on the saxophone'. And pushing boundaries is also evident in the Jamaican born singer, songwriter, pianist, cellist and international touring artist Ayanna Witter-Johnson who regularly performs with Andrea Bocelli, Anoushka Shankar and Jools Holland and has been commissioned to write for The BBC Symphony, the Kronos Quartet, The Royal Philharmonic Society and recently, *Dream City* was conducted by Sir Simon Rattle and the London Symphony Orchestra.
- Protein Dance, founded by alumni Luca Silvestrini and Bettina Strickler. Under Luca's continued leadership, Protein has toured throughout the United Kingdom and internationally, with performances in Italy, Spain, Denmark, Switzerland, France, Germany, Croatia, Malta, Czech Republic, Holland, Canada, China, Palestine and the USA. Among its many awards are Best Independent Dance Company in National Dance Awards, Jerwood Choreography Award, British Council New Connections Award and Premio della Critica, ANCT Awards 2020, Italy.
- As an exemplar of distance travelled, baritone James Newby came to Trinity Laban as an undergraduate singer who within several years became the youngest winner of the prestigious international Kathleen Ferrier competition. He was also the recipient of the Wigmore Hall/Independent Opera Voice Fellowship and has been a BBC New Generation Artist. Fellow voice graduate Nardus Williams was a finalist in the Ferrier Awards and is currently an ENO Harewood Artist, having previously completed the Jerwood Young Artist programme at Glyndebourne.
- Tom Dale Company, one of the UK's leading contemporary dance companies. By combining dance, electronic music and digital media, TDC is a leader in the field, producing world-class work which is simultaneously bold, exciting and constantly evolving. The synergy between dance and the digital arts is woven into all its programmes of work. The company's vision, through its collaborations with the digital arts, is to re-imagine dance.
- Whilst still completing her undergraduate degree at Trinity Laban, Noelia Cotuna joined the world-renowned Karajan Academy of the Berliner Philharmoniker where she performed and toured extensively with celebrated conductors Kirill Petrenko, Sir Simon Rattle, Daniel Harding, Zubin Mehta and Christian Thielemann, amongst others. She recently served as principal harp for a special broadcast performance of the works of John Williams conducted by the composer.
- Back on the Map Project, set up by a group of 2021 graduates, has just been awarded Arts Council of England funding for a Community Festival for the local communities in South East London to be hosted in the Laban Building in 2023. Tough Boys Dance Collective, also founded by 2021 dance graduates, has been selected as a finalist in the prestigious Sadler's Wells Young Associates scheme. These are outstanding achievements in the first year after graduation. All these graduates joined Trinity Laban with limited dance experience, many are from under-

represented groups, and their final year was strongly affected by the pandemic. Through their proactive engagement with the programme, as well as extra-curricular activity they have developed their experience, skill and network, which is now evidently shaping their emerging professional practice as dance artists.

- The Hermes Experiment, a contemporary quartet made up of harp, clarinet, voice and double bass was co-founded by alum Heloise Warner, won the Royal Philharmonic Society Young Artist Award 2021 and the Royal Over-Seas League Mixed Ensemble Competition 2019. ‘Britain’s music scene offers numerous dynamic small-sized groups, but The Hermes Experiment so spellbinding, so imaginative, continue to stand alone’ (The Times).
- Dance alum Lewis Sharpe was the first person in his family to go to University. He came from a drama background and did the BA CD and MFA in Dance Performance. He was in the New Adventures 2020/2021 cohort of Overture <https://new-adventures.net/take-part/projects/overture> and teaches for the Royal Ballet School on their on demand primary programme etc.

## Section 4: References

*All documents unpublished and held in the internal Registry files unless link provided.*

<sup>i</sup> Specialist Provider outcomes letter from Lord Wharton (Chair of Office for Students) to Professor Anthony Bowne (Principal, Trinity Laban, dated 29/07/22. See also <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/7bd645bb-079e-42a8-b061-5710b96ecc11/world-leading-specialist-provider-funding-outcome.pdf>

<sup>ii</sup> Trinity Laban Strategic Plan 2018-2028: [https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/sites/default/files/strategic\\_plan\\_2018-28.pdf](https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/sites/default/files/strategic_plan_2018-28.pdf)

<sup>iii</sup> HE Performance Indicators 2022, HESA

<sup>iv</sup> reference accompanying Trinity Laban’s OfS World-Leading Specialist Provider Funding Submission 2022

<sup>v</sup> CoLab Module Specification

<sup>vi</sup> OfS World-Leading Specialist Provider Funding Submission 2022, page 6

<sup>vii</sup> NSS comments, 2020

<sup>viii</sup> Teaching staff directory: <https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/study/teaching-staff/>

<sup>ix</sup> OfS World-Leading Specialist Provider Funding Submission 2022, page 26

<sup>x</sup> Historical Project Module Survey results 2020

<sup>xi</sup> News release “TL Trombones’ visit to Juilliard School” (16 November 2022): [https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/news/tl-trombones-visit-to-juilliard-school/?dm\\_i=1OT3,845DV,7A21ZJ,X853N,1](https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/news/tl-trombones-visit-to-juilliard-school/?dm_i=1OT3,845DV,7A21ZJ,X853N,1)

<sup>xii</sup> External Examiner report for BMus (Hons) Composition/Jazz/Performance/Performer-Composer, 2019, page 3

<sup>xiii</sup> BMus (Hons) Composition/Jazz/Performance/Performer-Composer Programme Specification

<sup>xiv</sup> External Examiner report for BMus (Hons) Composition/Jazz/Performance/Performer-Composer, 2021, page 5

<sup>xv</sup> External Examiner report for BMus (Hons) Composition/Jazz/Performance/Performer-Composer, 2020, page 4

<sup>xvi</sup> External Examiner report for BMus (Hons) Composition/Jazz/Performance/Performer-Composer, 2020, page 2

External Examiner report for BMus (Hons) Composition/Jazz/Performance/Performer-Composer, 2021, page 16

<sup>xviii</sup> External Examiner report for BA (Hons) Musical Theatre Performance, 2021, page 4

<sup>xix</sup> External Examiner report for BMus (Hons) Composition/Jazz/Performance/Performer-Composer, 2021, page 3

<sup>xx</sup> External Examiner report for BA (Hons) Contemporary Dance, 2021, page 4

<sup>xxi</sup> External Examiner report for BA (Hons) Contemporary Dance, 2021, page 6

<sup>xxii</sup> External Examiner report for BA (Hons) Musical Theatre Performance, 2020, page 4



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- xxiii External Examiner report for BMus (Hons) Composition/Jazz/Performance/Performer-Composer, 2020, page 4
- xxiv BA (Hons) Musical Theatre Performance Annual Programme Evaluation reports from 2020-21 (e.g. pages 3-4) and 2021-22 (e.g. pages 7-8)
- xxv Trinity Laban Policy on the Return of Assessment Feedback, updated December 2022
- xxvi Black Lives Matter at Trinity Laban (Public Action Plan) 2021: <https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/news/black-lives-matter-at-trinity-laban/>
- xxvii News release (19 April 2021): TL announces partnership with Black Artists in Dance <https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/news/tl-announces-partnership-with-black-artists-in-dance/>
- xxviii News release (19 March 2021): TL becomes first London conservatoire to partner with Black Lives in Music: <https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/news/tl-blim-partnership/>
- xxix Memorandum of Understanding with Candoco Dance Company signed 31 October 2011
- xxx External Examiner report for BA (Hons) Contemporary Dance, 2022, page 9
- xxxi External Examiner report for BMus (Hons) Composition/Jazz/Performance/Performer-Composer, 2022, page 5
- xxxii Trans and Non-binary Working Group reports to Equality & Diversity Board on 18 May 2022 and 1 November 2022
- xxxiii TL Innovation Award website: <https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/creative-innovation/tl-innovation-award-2022>
- xxxiv TL Innovation Award (2021) recipient testimonials: <https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/creative-innovation/tl-innovation-award-past-winners/>
- xxxv Artist as Entrepreneur Module Specification
- xxxvi Artist as Innovator Capstone Project Module Specification
- xxxvii Dance Industry Engagement Component Specifications
- xxxviii BMus Programme Handbook 2022-23: Year 4 Final Recital assessment requirements
- xxxix Register of Trinity Laban staff External Examiner appointments at other institutions, 2022
- xl Andy Peisley's External Examiner report for TL: Augment, 2022, page 8
- xli Internal Audit Report: Student Retention (2021)
- xlii Transition to Higher Education Module Specification
- xliii Academic Support - section in all Undergraduate Programme Handbooks, 2022-23
- xliv Learning Support Team Annual Report to Learning and Teaching Board, 2022, table on page 2
- xlv Learning Support Team Annual Report 2019-2020 and e-mails received from students in 2022
- xlvi Capital Planning Group notes, November 2022
- xlvii Academic Board minutes, 26 October 2022, minute 4.4, page 2
- xlviii Programme Revalidation reports from 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 evidencing student membership on the Panels
- xliv Academic Board Committees Handbook, September 2022: <https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/FINAL-Academic-Board-Committees-Handbook-Sept-2022.pdf>
- l Terms of Reference and Membership of Board of Governors 2022-23
- li Academic Standards and Quality Board minutes (30 November 2022) and Principal's Management Group paper: *Improving Student Voice & Quality Monitoring in the Committee Structure – A Proposal* (December 2022)
- lii Interim Annual Monitoring Oversight Report 2021-22 (paper to Academic Standards and Quality Board, 30 November 2022)
- liii Student Engagement Plan 2022-2025
- liv Student Experience Committee papers and minutes related to Student Engagement Plan from 2021 and 2022
- lv Access and Participation Plan 2020-2025: <https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Access-and-Participation-Plan-2020-2025-July-2022-revision.pdf>