

1. Provider context

The University of Westminster is a place where discoveries are made, barriers are broken, diversity is celebrated, and everyone is welcome. Our people stand out as significant contributors to their communities – through their innovation, enterprise and problem-solving – seeking to make the world a more sustainable, healthier and better place (Being Westminster, 2022/29).

1.1 Life changing and transformative

Since our founding in 1838, as London's first Polytechnic, to educate the working people of London, we have done much to break down barriers where none should exist, tackling social inequalities. As a **progressive, responsible, and compassionate** community we have become known for the many ways we enable our students to realise their full potential, regardless of background. We remain true to our original values and, today, the University of Westminster is global in outlook with a student population exceeding 20,323 students in 2021/22 from 164 countries and are recognised as one of the most internationally diverse universities in the UK by the Hotcourses Diversity Index.

In 2018 we launched our *Being Westminster* Strategy 2018/23 and in May 2022 we reviewed and renewed the strategy, launching *Being Westminster* 2022/29. In this submission we refer to both versions of *Being Westminster* where relevant. *Being Westminster* has transformed the way we work together, with wellbeing, inclusion, and sustainable development as our priorities. The strategy is designed to ensure continued growth in performance on our four key objectives: education; research and knowledge exchange; employability; and global engagement. The Strategy has moved us to a robust financial position (8th out of multi-disciplinary universities in the Higher Education Statistics Agency's Financial Security Index 2022) in a challenging external environment for the sector. Taking inspiration from the 17 United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) we continue to make strides in our performance against them. In 2022, we were ranked by the Times Higher Education as being among the **top 15% of providers globally** for impact towards meeting the UN's sustainable development goals, including being in the **top 9% in tackling gender inequalities (SDG5) and the top 4% for our commitment to reducing social inequalities (SDG10).**

London is our campus, we make full use of London's vibrant and diverse communities by connecting learning within and through London. Our wide-ranging portfolio is offered through three distinctive Colleges: Design, Creative and Digital Industries; Liberal Arts and Sciences; and Westminster Business School. Our Education Strategy (2020/23) focuses on delivering an outstanding authentic education, underpinned by an inclusive curriculum, to enable all our students from different backgrounds to engage in transformative learning and succeed in their studies and professional lives – achieving in careers that might otherwise have been beyond their reach. In 2021 the University of Westminster ranked **second in England for social mobility** – rated by the proportion of students receiving free school meals who have gone on to be amongst the **top 20% of earners by the age of 30**. The ranking, published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Sutton Trust, reviewed how university studies have helped move students from low-income backgrounds to high-earning positions.

We have transformed the way we work with business and industry: building on the success of our Creative Enterprise Centre through the creation, in 2020, of our new Business Engagement Directorate. This is enhancing graduate employability outcomes for our students as evidenced by our most recent progression metrics. The proportion of Westminster's leavers progressing into highly skilled employment or further study increased from 62% for 2018/19's graduates to over 66% (in line with benchmark) for 2019/20's leavers. We provide every student with the opportunity to be immersed in live partnership working with entrepreneurs, creators and inspirers who can help bring their ambitions to life. We recognise that our diverse student community, with 51% of entrants first generation in higher education during this TEF period, and 64% of our undergraduate students from BAME backgrounds - require specialist support and learning approaches to enable them to succeed and progress. **Our TEF very high quality outcome metrics for Black and Asian** student groups demonstrate the impact of this approach.

1.2 Connected, enterprising – bringing real-world experience to our campuses

Through the Westminster Enterprise Network (WeNetwork) our students are connected with the world of work to solve real-world problems and enhance their employability prospects. Student uptake is strong, with attendance growing from 290 in 2017/18, 450 in 2018/19, 1144 in 2019/20, 2245 in 2020/21 to 3080 attendees in 2021/22 (*WeNetwork Annual Reports*). Employability is embedded throughout the curriculum with every student benefiting from career-focused schemes, including the CV-enhancing Westminster Employability Awards, which support careers and personal development; our Westminster Working Cultures initiative provides students with access to a global network of alumni and partners, workshops and placements in the UK and internationally; our Future Ready Mentoring programme, providing direct partnerships with professions, was **shortlisted in the 2022 Times Higher Education (THE) Awards Outstanding Support for Students category**.

To provide a central focus for this engagement, we are investing in an iconic new Centre at 29 Marylebone Road for employability and enterprise. In December 2022 we were **granted £5.8 million capital funding from the Office for Students** to support the Centre's development. Due to open in September 2024, the £23 million building is being designed as a beacon to connect businesses with new talent in uniquely innovative and inclusive ways, leading to high attainment for our graduates. Westminster is the first London university to be awarded the **Social Enterprise Gold Mark** (2020) and we achieved the award for a second year in 2021. An internationally recognised accreditation, the award provides an independent guarantee that the University has met sector-wide criteria and is offering genuine social enterprise which is committed to providing positive social change through business endeavour.

Our *Being Westminster* Strategy, co-created with our students and colleagues, continues to transform our University, enabling the development of a curriculum equipped to meet the opportunities presented by the digital age, delivered in a way that enables our diverse and distinctive student community to continue successfully through their studies and progress with confidence in a challenging global economy.

In March 2020 we moved almost all our delivery online following the Covid-19 lockdown. Quality of academic experience and the safety, health and wellbeing of our community was top priority for our Coronavirus Response Group, chaired by our Vice Chancellor, which included senior academic and professional services colleagues and University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU) President and CEO. Partnership with UWSU was critical in ensuring we had access to live student views and in effectively crafting support initiatives. We kept in touch with all students through regular central communications on matters of paramount importance to them. We were pleased that, although the pandemic did have a significant impact on student satisfaction measures, our student outcomes remained strong, with **continuation and completion at 10pp or more above OfS B3 numerical thresholds**, and online engagement remaining very high (internal data shows that from September 20 to April 21, students were regularly accessing the Virtual Learning Environment). The interventions we made focused on academic experience, and health, safety and wellbeing. Those that supported academic experience are outlined throughout this submission. They include: over 1,000 long-term laptop loans (and Wi-Fi dongles where needed) to enable all students to learn remotely; virtual internships and fieldtrips; live-streaming of labs or workshops and virtual conversations with industry experts; a LibChat Library and Student Centre facility to provide academic support; regulations adjusted to allow self-certification of mitigating circumstances and trailing of additional credits; and extensive professional development for academic colleagues to support online learning through our Learning Innovation and Digital Engagement (LIDE) Unit, including the appointment of 12 Westminster Graduate Digital Learning Assistants to work with colleagues and students. With the exception of adjustment to academic regulations, all the above measures have continued post-pandemic, to further strengthen the student academic experience.

2. Student outcomes

At University level we have very high-quality continuation and completion metrics, including for IMD (Indices of Multiple Deprivation) Q1-2 students and BAME students (our majority group). Continuation metrics for mature students (21-30 years old; +0.7ppt), students eligible for Free School Meals (+0.9ppt) and in IMD Q1-2 (+0.6ppt) are in line with benchmarks. Rates for all ethnicity splits are at or above benchmark (Asian +1.1ppt and Black -0.5ppt) and we are encouraged that students in Q1 of Associations Between Characteristics of Students (ABCs) are continuing above benchmark (+2.3ppt). We have reduced continuation gaps between IMD Q1-2 and Q3-5. Our completion outcome metrics for disadvantaged students are either at or above benchmark; ABCS Q1 by +2.3ppt (57.1% at benchmark, 42.9% above); IMD Q1-2 by +2.2ppt (at benchmark 74.6% and 25.4% above); FSM by +2.4ppt (53.5% at benchmark, 46.5% above). Mature students (21-30) complete in line with the benchmark (+0.1ppt). Asian and White students have similar completion outcomes and at benchmark (+0.9ppt and +0.8ppt respectively). Our Black, Other and Mixed student groups (27% of UG entrants) complete at or above benchmark (+2.5ppt, +3.2ppt, +1.4ppt).

2.1 Educational Gain at Westminster

Our strategic purpose is to “*provide grounded, holistic education so that people from every background can realise their true potential*” (*Being Westminster 2018/23*). The diversity of our student body means that our articulation of and support for learning gain reflects the lived experience of applicants and students. We recognise, and build on, the resources, strengths and capabilities that our student body brings: articulating disciplinary expertise, employability and social responsibility as graduate attributes. These require students to be critical and creative thinkers; literate and effective communicators; entrepreneurial and global in outlook; community-engaged; socially, environmentally and ethically aware (*Graduate Attributes and Transferable Skills, Teaching Committee 2019*). We are very proud of our talented and diverse student body, and work to empower the individual to maximise their potential. Our students come disproportionately from disadvantaged backgrounds: an aggregate of all students during this TEF periods shows that **51% are First Generation to university; 64% are BAME; 56% from IMD Q1-2 and 67% of our students’ study locally with 73% commuting to the University in their first year.**

From our Added Value research, we learnt that when accessing HE, our students perceived themselves as having less familiarity with the standards and expectations of higher education institutions and less material assets (technology, language skills, understanding of support and processes and London life) than their peers (at other providers). Our students recognise that support mechanisms exist but described lacking the confidence to engage with them or recognise that those opportunities were ‘for people like them’. Developing confidence whilst with us is identified as being most critical to them achieving their higher education goals. Our students have a clear sense of the extent to which ‘people like them’ are supported to achieve in our society: and for some, this is discouraging. They identify that opportunities to develop ‘belonging’ and ‘to network’ are important for their employability from their first year.

The implications of disadvantage and underrepresentation are widely accepted (*Bathmaker, 2021; Universities UK, 2016*) and we understand the complex role that associations of characteristics play, such as between ethnicity, being first generation and living arrangements whilst studying (*Continuation Rate Gap Analysis 2019*). Our work is to improve the learning gains for our students, and it is positive that we have **narrowed the awarding gap between BAME and White students from 21.5% in 2017/18 to 14% in 2020/21** moving towards our target to eliminate all gaps.

We have renewed our curriculum and support provision to ensure our students can overcome the nuanced challenges they face. The 2015 Learning Futures Programme focused on transforming the student experience by providing strategic academic leadership in learning and teaching and space for pedagogic reflection. It laid the foundation for our 2015/20 Learning and Teaching Strategy and subsequent Education Strategy 2020 in which we deliver an experience that is practical, personalised, flexible and with employability and enterprise embedded. Our aim is to ensure that students build academic capital through the construction of powerful knowledge, while

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also enabling them to acquire the social and educational capital that will help them successfully navigate the challenges that lie ahead. Our interpretation of the Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions (NERUPI) Framework (*Hayton and Bengry-Howell 2016*) ensures students have access to the forms of social and educational capital (employability and social responsibility) they require to succeed, alongside building academic capital (disciplinary expertise).

Our curriculum and support provision renewal process has focused on three parallel initiatives – the introduction of our **Foundation provision**; the embedding of **employability and enterprise** interventions into the formal curriculum; and the refining of our teaching approaches to focus more on **authentic and transformational learning**. Our intent for **transformational learning** means we partner with students to build their confidence, secure supportive networks, understand the unwritten rules, values and normative patterns of higher education and develop their capacity to negotiate future challenges (further study/employment). By embedding these opportunities in the curriculum, we are remediating some of the known time and economic constraints faced by our students. We observe how this approach enlivens learning, boosts engagement, and creates social responsibility. Our students recognise that our education focuses on the practical application of knowledge, skills, and behaviours: with scores for the NSS question ‘my course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt’ at **sector benchmarks, for each of the last five years**.

2.2 Evaluating Educational Gain

The extent to which our students accrue academic capital is evaluated through the delivery of our curriculum and the maintenance of academic standards. Strategic Planning and Performance monitor academic capital through a suite of QlikView dashboards related to; University Performance Indicators, Planning and Operation, Learning and Teaching and Access and Participation. Effective use of real-time student data is reflected in the narrowing of outcome gaps for some student groups, for example over the three years of **Graduate Outcomes data, the outcome gap between the most (IMD Q1-Q2) and least (Q3-5) disadvantaged graduates has declined by more than a half and between BAME and White graduates by 38%**. Whilst dashboards provide us with a range of methods by which we can understand gains in academic capital, we are also seeking to evaluate the gains made by our students in relation to those other forms of (social and educational) currency which are so crucial to their success and progression.

As part of the Value Added research, focus groups and interviews were carried out with undergraduates, postgraduates, and alumni to explore their experiences at Westminster, and to understand the values and qualities our students consider important and personally valuable to their success in the future. This has informed our approach to evaluating **social and educational capital**. Our Student Experience and Opinion Panel (SEOP) is a Westminster tool for understanding student voice, utilised by ourselves and the SU to engage students in primary research projects that are linked to our strategic priorities. It reflects the diversity of our student body and is used to tailor what we offer and annually monitor gains qualitatively.

One way we have responded to the findings is to launch our longitudinal **Transformation in Students Survey**. Launched as a pilot in 2021/22, the survey captures student perceptions of their development in relation to social and educational capital gains. The survey design reflects the values and qualities our students have articulated to us as important to be gained during their time at Westminster– their confidence, sense of belonging, connectedness, resilience and understanding of future opportunities. Undergraduate students are sent the survey annually and we intend to embed this form of gain evaluation in the curriculum as a reflective learning exercise. Survey repetition across the student lifecycle means we can measure the distance travelled by our students towards achieving their gains. Data from the pilot suggests students have gained skills in the categories of ‘working with others’, ‘sense of belonging’ and some gains in confidence and time management. 2023/24 will be the first full cycle of data where we can evaluate gains within a year group and will be used as our benchmark. The insight from this dataset will be used to; identify students who self-report at lower starting points and/or report lower gains in the duration of their studies; evaluate gains between and across different student groups and respond with targeted

support such as through personal tutors; improve course content by conducting social and educational skill audits and to equip our graduates with evidence of their gains at Westminster for employability. For example, if a student reports low gains in terms of developing 'valued friendships', we will be able to signpost them to one of our peer-to-peer support programmes. We comprehend the value that this insight will have for improving the gains of disadvantaged and under-represented students throughout their study; ensuring they receive an impactful combination of our access and participation interventions.

We evaluate social and educational gains in many ways; embedded from our student's first interactions with us; collecting Type 2 Narrative evidence to understand the distance travelled of our Foundation Programme students on their Pre-Enrolment Programme and throughout our student's employability journey. When accessing employability activities, students self-identify their current status of 'plan, decide, sorted' and activities are promoted to them on this basis. We measure the associated knowledge and skill development of each employability activity. To enhance our evaluation of educational gain, we have developed programme and intervention-level Theories of Change for our success and progression activities. We have mapped our expected intervention outcomes in line with TASO's Evidence Toolkit (Transforming Access and Student Outcomes). This has moved us from understanding gain at individual intervention level to a multi-intervention approach: the combination of interventions (hours of participation etc.) our students need to sustain their gains. In 2021/22 300+ colleagues received one-to-one or group evaluation training. The NERUPI Framework has improved our content and 'logic model'; ensuring that what is delivered reflects the 'gains' we want for our students. To ensure students have equal opportunity to achieve gains, we have adapted provision and shifted resourcing, widening the bursary provision criteria, and developing course specific Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) interventions. For 'gain' evidence we prioritise impact data collection when engaging student voice directly and improve longitudinal data tracking and monitoring to account for process evaluation. In practice this means we collect more student reported data on the knowledge gained and skill application from interventions than insight into the logistics of activity. We have an evaluation culture of using qualitative reflective statements written by students, which has emerged in response to our deep understanding that the lived experience of our student contextualises the ambitions they have and thus the gains they make. This step-change in evaluation is evident in our approved Access and Participation Variation for 2023/24.

2.3 Very High Quality Continuation and Completion

Measures taken to support continuation and completion are extensive and embedded in our overall approach and **our students achieve very high-quality outcomes for continuation and completion**. In this section we outline some strategic measures to support students at the start of their journey. Interventions throughout the whole student journey include extensive support for academic/personal tutors; student peer mentoring for all new students; a one-stop shop for help and advice; comprehensive wellbeing support and academic skills support. These are outlined in the Student Experience sections of this submission, (see *Academic Support that Enables Success*, p. 17) Here, we outline some University-wide strategic measures and the impact of these.

Building on the recommendations of an internal retention audit in 2019, the University's Retention Task and Finish Group worked in 2020 to lead change in three areas: data use, academic/pastoral support, and transitions and processes. Actions included: a review of welcome and arrivals communications to ensure that they were clear, inclusive and accessible, the development of a single Welcome to Westminster web page which linked through to all resources and welcome events, a commitment to longitudinal (over the first few weeks) induction set out in the Welcome and Arrivals Policy and the development of a standard template for Course Arrivals Timetables (over the first few weeks); a review (ongoing) of the academic calendar to support continuation. We ran a 'Student Pulse' survey in October 2020: data showed that **85% agreed that peer mentors (FANS, see below) fully answered questions or concerns and 65% of new students attended the majority of these events**.

Pre-arrival induction starts with a 'Learning at Westminster' course containing multimedia learning objects to support transition and understanding of Higher Education learning. This has good

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engagement: in 2021/22 67% of undergraduate students accessed this before the first week of the academic year. Students are introduced to Blackboard through the mentorship of our Friends of Arriving and New Students (FANS) project, jointly led by the University of Westminster Student Union and Professional Services teams during their Arrivals Week. **In the 2021/22 Digital Insights survey to the question - 'How well do we support you to learn effectively online' - 70% of students rated the support good or above compared to 66% for the wider sector (JISC Digital Insights Survey: 2021/22 analysis).** Our new pre-enrolment programme, 'Being Ready: A strong start to study and belonging' (created 2021/22), focusses on increasing continuation rates among new students from under-represented groups and from courses with high withdrawal rates. This two-week online programme targets students prior to enrolment and supports transition. Facilitators are current students who receive training from academics, learning technologists and the Students Union. In September 2022, the programme targeted 297 students across 12 courses with high withdrawal rates. It is expanding further in January 2023. 80% students taking part said this programme prepared them well for university and that they felt more confident overall.

2.3.1 Student success through our Foundation Programme

In 2017/18 we developed a shared-provision foundation programme, building on our existing standalone programmes, which introduced a consistent approach to curriculum development. University level modules focus on enabling innovative forms of student support, authentic skills development, career development, and enrichment through tailored learning opportunities. The programme provides an entry point to university study for students who lack the formal qualifications for immediate entry to study at Level 4, are returning to study after periods of absence, or feel they are not yet ready for degree-level study or looking to enter alternative professional fields. A Director of Foundation Pathways oversees implementation, providing a central contact for learning and teaching, student support, and portfolio development for foundation years across the University. Support roles, led by the Director, are in place for students and teaching staff. These roles are key in managing progression and retention on the programme. In 2017/18 only 4.7% of our total undergraduate, UK domiciled population had taken a foundation year at the start of their studies at Westminster. By contrast, in the current 2022/23 academic year, this figure stands at 15%. The expansion of the programme has provided access to high-quality learning and transformational personal development opportunities to 3,393 students over this period who otherwise would not have had the opportunity to study at Westminster. These opportunities are reflected in performance metrics and in student impact evaluation:

"As a mature student, doing the Foundation year helped me to refresh my skills, gave me the entry requirements needed for my degree, and improved my confidence. The level of encouragement and support I received as somebody with extra learning needs was beyond anything I would have expected, and I appreciated the friendliness of the Westminster staff and the positive environment." – BA Business Management with Foundation

"Studying a Foundation year... prepared me to write in academic language, reference, work effectively in groups and research for projects using academic literature. My favourite thing about the year was the sense of belonging and unity between the students, and the support and encouragement from our tutors." – BSc Psychology and Counselling with Foundation

Over the period 2016/17 to 2019/20 our programme expanded from 122 entrants to 796 and was demonstrably successful against its primary aim in improving level 3 student retention, with internal continuation rates increasing from the baseline rate in 2016/17 of 69.7% to 79.1% for 2019/20 entrants.

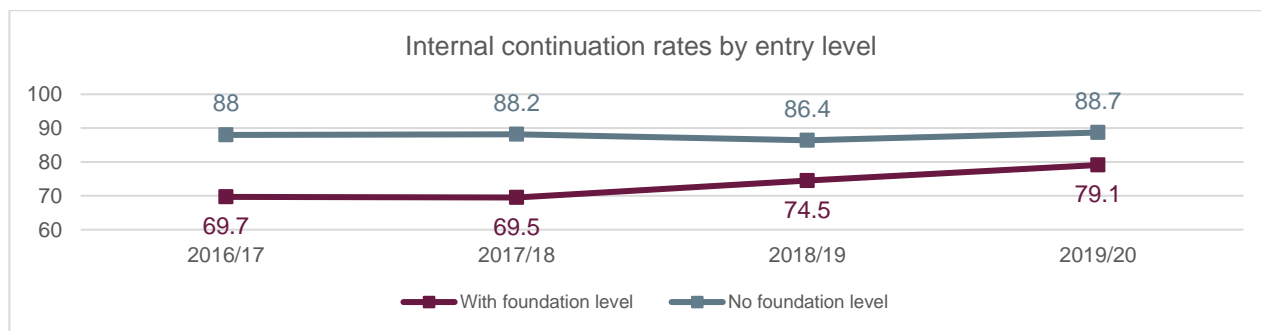


Fig.1. Foundation entrant internal continuation alongside rates for level 4

Students entering on a foundation year are now more likely than others to achieve a good honours degree upon successful completion of their studies. **72.5% of foundation entrants awarded in 2021/22 received a first class or upper second-class honours degree compared to 71.1% of other entrants** awarded in the same year. This has increased significantly from the 46.2% rate seen in 2016/17 before our shared-provision model was implemented, and it demonstrates the value-added to students who historically would not have been able to access our provision.

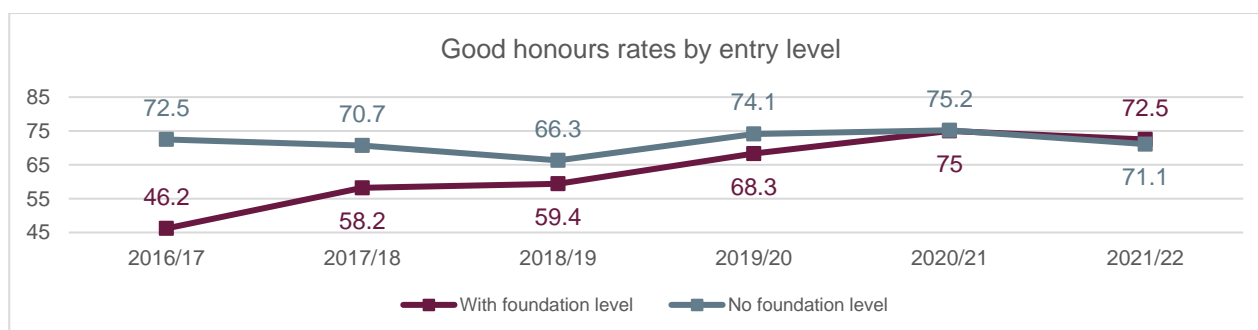


Fig.2. Good Honours degree rates split by students who undertook a foundation year at the start of their studies and those who did not.

2.3.2 Financial support that improves student outcomes

We analysed the impact of our financial support packages on student outcomes over the period 2014/15 to 2017/18. Positive impact was found, but bursaries below £2000 were less effective. In a survey of financial support recipients (167 respondents out of the 499 invited to respond), 85% reported a positive impact on wellbeing and ability to participate more fully in their courses and the wider university community. This analysis also supported the quantitative findings that bursaries of more than £2,000 per year enhanced student retention. Based on the findings we adjusted financial support allocations to increase the number of students receiving early financial support from the University, particularly during the pandemic where bursaries were vital to support students in financial hardship.

Data suggests that receiving a bursary in the first year is associated with a significantly higher likelihood of continuation relative to a low-income student who did not receive a bursary after controlling for course and student characteristics (+4.3% likelihood). This indicates that these awards are effective in assisting students to overcome the impediments to continued study. There has also been a general increase in recent years in the number of scholarships awarded on the basis of financial need as well as academic merit with a concomitant reduction of other types of scholarship.

Scholarship/recipient type	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Great Start / Access scholarship		29	56	85	76
Other low-income students	54	24	10	14	24
Other students	86	33	30	47	0

Fig.3 Distribution of scholarships since 2017/18 by number of students.

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Recipients of Great Start or Access scholarships were significantly more likely to continue into the second year and significantly more likely to progress to the next level than low-income students without a scholarship (+10.3% likelihood | 95% confidence interval: 4.1-14.3%).

2.4 Developing Progression

Developing successful progression is central to *Being Westminster*. It is underpinned by work on employer engagement, entrepreneurship, authentic learning and professional practice. Our very substantial work in this area is having impact: **our most recent progression metrics evidence very high-quality progression**. Progression for Black students that is consistently at benchmark also attests to our work in this area. Progression outcomes for mature students (21-30 and 30+) are at or above benchmark and for all non-white ethnic groups progress is in line with the benchmark. We acknowledge the work still to do but are encouraged by this progress.

Professional, community and external engagement is increasingly supporting improved progression. For example, Fashion graduates are in highly skilled employment an increase from 87% over the TEF period. Many work in studios including Givenchy, Louis Vuitton, Burberry, Lanvin, Alexander McQueen, Balmain, Versace, Calvin Klein. Alumni include the recipient of the LVMH Prize for Young Fashion Designers, and who graduated from the BA Fashion Design and was awarded the British Fashion Council's Chanel scholarship. 77% of Architecture graduates find themselves in highly skilled employment after graduating and the Architecture School has a distinguished history of winning the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) President's Medals open to students from over 350 schools of architecture worldwide and seen as the most prestigious of any student architecture awards. awards have been made to Architecture students over the TEF period.

Our strategic aim is to ensure “all our students benefit from employability-led learning and purposeful engagement with employers, business and industry, to give students from every background the best possible preparation for the world of work and enable the best possible employability outcomes”. Our strategic ambitions are operationalised through School Employability Plans, supported by our Careers and Employability Service and Business Engagement Directorate: students are supported to progress through a wide range of in-course and extra-curricular programmes extended and embedded across the University.

2.4.1 Award winning employability mentoring

We have expanded our Westminster Employability Award and Future Ready mentoring provision to support our progression activities, especially in relation to students from marginalised groups, and across all levels” (*Employability Workstream Charter, 2022/24*). One-to-one support is offered via our Mentoring programme, which began in 2010 as a small career mentoring programme, focussed on matching students from underrepresented backgrounds to industry professionals in a relevant field, in order to enhance their employability (*Future Ready Mentoring Annual Highlights, 2021/22*). Mentors are University alumni, and former mentees, with direct experience of studying at the University and overcoming the challenges that students may face, create an environment where students feel comfortable discussing their future aspirations:

“My mentor offered a non-intimidating professional mentoring experience which allowed me and my peers to really benefit from our discussions as it felt like a space where we could all give valuable points” – Business Management BA student.

The programme now partners with a network of 1992 mentors. In the academic year 2019/20, 408 mentors were matched to students and recent graduates. By 2020/21, this was 601 mentors. By 2021/22, 743 mentors were active, and matched to our students and recent graduates on either a 1:1 or group basis. Of these 743 mentors, 65% (483) were alumni (*Future Ready Mentoring: Student Participation Report, 2020/21*). Each application is read and considered on an individual basis, to create a personalised match for mentors and mentees.

Participation in employability mentoring is growing strongly from 581 students in 2019/20 (398 in scope for TEF) to 1320 students in 2021/22 (936 in scope for TEF). Proportion of disadvantaged

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students (BAME, first in family to go to university, a care leaver or come from IMD Q1-2) has also increased from 73-78%.

Metric	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
No. of students	581	950	1320
Total students in scope for TEF	398	639	936
% Disadvantaged	73%	77%	78%

Fig. 4: Student/graduate take up of mentoring opportunities 2019/20-2021/22

The programme now includes the Ask a Mentor service to respond to specific needs. In 2021/22, we piloted in-curriculum Group Mentoring, targeting courses where students needed extra support to progress into highly skilled employment, according to Graduate Outcomes 18/19 findings. Our first pilot targeted 350 Level 6 students on BA Business Management, and BA Business Management and Marketing programmes. These courses represented particularly large cohorts, where graduate career paths are often varied and not necessarily linear. Students had three mentoring sessions across a 6-week period and were supported by 44 mentors. An evaluation of the pilot took place in December 2021: we received 225 Self-reflection exercise (pre-mentoring) submissions from student participants before the mentoring sessions, with 26% (58) submitting a Self-reflection exercise (post mentoring) evaluation (*WBS Group Mentoring Self-reflection Exercise, 2022*). Of the 26% who completed the evaluation, 90% (52) of students felt confident or very confident in their ability to communicate effectively, 76% (44) felt confident or very confident in their ability to develop resilience and adopt leadership skills and 72% (42) of students felt confident or very confident in exploring career pathways related to their degree, after taking part in group mentoring. As a result of this positive impact on students' perceptions of their professional and personal growth, in-curriculum group mentoring has been scaled up in 2022/23 to all Colleges in the University.

Future Ready Mentoring at Westminster has received strong external endorsement as an exemplary higher education mentoring programme through **our nomination in the Times Higher Education Awards 2022 in the Outstanding Support for Students** category. The original mentoring pathway, the Career Mentoring Programme, won a Gold Award in the global CASE Circle of Excellence Awards 2018. Of the 349 Circle of Excellence winners 2018, 90% were US/Canada based and we were one of only 9 UK based institutions to be recognised, and one of just 3 who won a top tier 'Gold Award'.

"The commission agreed that this model mentoring program targets specific constituencies, especially those who need support to reach their full potential." - Judges Report in the CASE Circle of Excellence Awards 2018

2.4.2 Employability driven awards scheme

The Westminster Employability Award supports our students' career and personal development by formally recognising the extra-curricular activities completed during their time at university. It is designed to help students gain experience and develop key skills that employers look for in potential employees. Students are encouraged to collect Award points by engaging in employability activities and can progress from a Bronze to a Platinum Award. Award activities have been expanded from 50 to 200. While all students are able to register for the award – and more and more do - the growth of the award has also been enabled by embedding it in modules from 2020/21: to date, the Award has been embedded into 26 courses.

Participation in our Employability Award has grown very significantly over this TEF Period. In 2018 44 students completed the award. This rose to 195 students in 2019/20, 780 students in 2020/21 and **1380 students in 2021/22**. In 2021/22 800 of those completions came from courses using the award as part of their assessment. The Award has been adapted to meet needs across our student body: for example, points can be gained for engagement in course-specific employer activities such as engagement with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and Hackathons or specialised training such as Amazon Educate, and the Racial Equity programme. Digital badges enable students to showcase achievements to prospective employers on LinkedIn. Qualitative

feedback shows students are very positive about employability awards, for example, one student said:

“The award has truly enhanced my experience on various fronts... especially for having a seamless transition from a university student to working person and how I can make the most out of that stage and experience too.” - BSc Biomedical Sciences,

Embedding enterprise and employability activity into our courses is fundamental to our approach. The Westminster Enterprise Network (WeNetwork) allows students to engage in activities as part of their courses through access to live events and briefs via Blackboard. Around 100 events are delivered each year. WeNetwork has seen the number of students engaging with activities **increase from 2245 in 2020/21 to 3080 in 2021/22**. WeNetwork has worked with Santander on the Big Idea Competition to support entrepreneurial activity; in 2021/22 20 students shared a prize fund of £24K. Students who engage in the network report:

“a great opportunity to learn from guest speakers in areas you might not necessarily cover in your degree. Something I learned from the enterprise programme is how to communicate my ideas more effectively”

The expansion of these programmes, alongside our continuing work to embed work-based learning, contributes to our improving performance in the UG progression metrics. The impact of the expansion of enterprise support to all students can be seen in the growth of entrepreneurialism amongst our graduates: 16% of graduates from 2019/20 reported that their primary activity 15 months after leaving was self-employment, running their own business or developing a creative, artistic or professional portfolio. This is significantly above the sector benchmark.

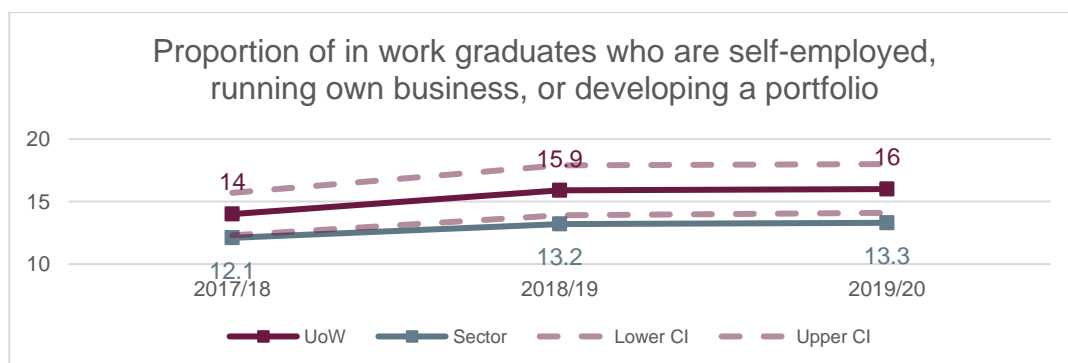


Fig: 5 Proportion of graduates in work who are self-employed, running a business or developing a portfolio, taken from Graduate Outcomes data

3. Student Experience

3.1 Course design for Authentic Learning

Our Strategic commitment is to develop an outstanding teaching and learning experience that is authentic, practical, active, inquiry/problem-focused, and socially engaged. Authentic learning affords our students the opportunities to construct and apply knowledge with leading organisations in their professional context, through live projects, consultancy modes, clinics, partnerships, and knowledge exchange activities. Developing employability, enterprise and global fluency is core to our Education Strategy 2020/2023 and acts as a driver for very high-quality course design and delivery which broadens students' academic, professional, and personal horizons. This focus on active application of knowledge is recognised by students. In 2021/22, as we emerged from the pandemic, 77% of 11,808 responses to our Student Module Evaluation survey agreed with the statement 'The module has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt'. NSS scores for the question 'The course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt' are also consistently in line with benchmarks.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is integral in course design. Assessments recognise diversity and our inclusive curriculum framework supports curriculum design, delivery, and student engagement. Interventions across the University are led by School staff, EDI leads and paid Student EDI

Champions. We ensure that assessments are socially, culturally, and globally relevant and take into account students' identities and learning needs. For example, we partner with Employ Autism to enable students with autism to access internships where they can apply knowledge and skills learnt (*EDI Research Report, 2022*). TEF metrics suggest that this work is recognised by students with very high-quality student experience metrics for 'teaching on my course' as experienced by Asian, Black and Free School Meal (FSM) eligible students, and very high quality 'assessment and feedback' as experienced by mature (21-30), Black and FSM students.

3.2 Embedded work-based learning

For our students to be able to successfully apply their knowledge, they require support to develop their confidence, contextual awareness and understanding of how to navigate challenges that confront them (see Educational Gain at Westminster p3). We therefore embed employability interventions throughout the curriculum. Our Work Based and Placement Learning project started in 2019/20 and required all courses to include these forms of experiential learning at Levels 4 and 5. By the end of 2021/22, all courses had made substantial progress to fulfilling these requirements through the re-validation process and 78% had fully met requirements. As a result, all undergraduate provision features mandatory short-term placements or work-related projects alongside optional year-long experiences.

The expertise of our employer partners enables the continuation of meaningful employability experiences. During the pandemic we developed virtual internships: **5,259 students registered for internships with Forage, a provider of virtual internships, with 3,441 completions. A further 2,066 students accessed virtual internships** and academy pages resources through the Bright Network during the pandemic. A BSc Finance student spoke about how this gave them *"an amazing insight into the investment banking career path and made them feel far more confident about my future career choices"*. We are working to embed virtual internships in courses, (18 courses so far with embedded internships) to ensure equality of access. In-person short term placements have also increased from 586 in 2018/19 to 841 in 2021/22. Students also regularly work on live briefs set by our employer partners. These enable the student to develop their communication skills including networking and collaboration, alongside honing their presentation skills, plus problem solving and resilience.

An example of this is the Humanities Hackathon in which, in April 2022, 120 Level 5 Humanities students were set challenges by employers including Meta, Channel 4, BBC News, WaterAid, Brand Advance and Mind. Students worked in teams to interact with employers and produce solutions. One student spoke about how impactful it was to *"engage professionals (who) I would not usually have the opportunity to meet with, hearing their opinions and conversing freely"*. Students who have engaged in employability activities within the curriculum have been found to have a significantly higher likelihood of achieving positive graduate outcomes than other students when we have controlled for course and student characteristics. Internal analysis of Graduate Outcomes data for UK-domiciled FT-UG leavers between 2017/18 and 2019/20 shows **Westminster Employability Award recipients were found to have +28.1% higher likelihood of attaining highly skilled employment or further study** relative to other graduates (95% confidence interval: 9.9-40.0%) and for those who undertook work placed learning the estimated impact was an increase in likelihood of 15.2% (3.3-25.1%). Our Student Module Evaluations show that students value the impact of these approaches: positive responses to the question 'the module has provided me with experiences applicable to the workplace' improved from 74% in 2018/19 to 80% (of 18,289 responses) in 2021/22.

3.3 Authentic Learning and Assessment

The emphasis on professional life as a central part of the student experience is further bolstered by our approach to assessment. In 2020, we mandated a consistent approach to the application of knowledge through assessments and authentic approaches are now in use in all courses. During 2020/21, 65% of student FTE at levels 4 to 6 was spent on modules with explicitly authentic assessments. By 2021/22, this had increased to 77%. In total, 856 of the University's modules included authentic assessment in 2021/22, up from 663 the previous year. Internally funded

research – *Ramen and Raphael (2021)* - alongside analysis of data from dashboards suggests that authentic assessment is helping to narrow award gaps. For those who joined Westminster with BTEC entry qualifications, the estimated effect was an increase in the likelihood of passing of nearly 2% relative to a student on a non-authentically assessed module (+0.591 to +3.272).

98% (of 117 reports received) of External Examiners confirmed in the last academic year that the standard of marking was appropriate for the level and subject area and 98% considered that student performance was comparable with similar programmes experienced at other UK HE Institutions, highlighting that our processes protect the value of degrees and support the success of our students. 92% expressed satisfaction with the design of assessments and alignment with learning outcomes. Analysis of qualitative comments shows that undergraduate external examiners particularly commend course content as relevant to industry, professional practice, and employability skills.

Authentic assessment is supported by a wide variety of authentic learning activities. Student art and performance is shared through partnerships with the BBC, Aardman Academy, and the British Film Institute, as well as the award-winning Smoke Radio which is integrated into the Media and Communications curriculum (968 students). Consultancy modes are used successfully in Fashion (632 students) through long standing partnerships with John Lewis and Balenciaga, and in Project Management with the Olympic Park on a similar basis. Live Projects are utilised with community partners in Architecture (765 students), and with Selfridges in Marketing (690 students). These approaches are welcomed by external examiners, for example:

“Simulating industry practice within design briefs: e.g., brand identity/product identity-collaboration projects are an excellent way forward in preparation for final year portfolio work.” and “moving of the students ‘end of study’ catwalk show and its inclusion in the London Fashion Week schedule was ground-breaking” (Fashion External Examiner

3.4 Professional partnerships that enhance learning and teaching

Partnership infuses our curriculum. For example, Entrepreneurship students have devised a social enterprise that enables Kenyan Women to support themselves economically through fish farming; have buddied young entrepreneurs in Rwanda; and have competed to run successful charity and third sector funding campaigns. The award-winning *Democratic Education Network (Democratic Education Network, Runner up, ‘Student Experience’ category, Guardian University Awards 2019)* connects students in Liberal Arts and Sciences with peers and communities across the world, with whom they work together on research projects that enhance social justice.

Our students are also actively engaged in facilitated learning opportunities with a range of institutions and organisations connected to the pulse of London. Student learning is encouraged through engagement with London’s network of organisations, businesses, and communities including TATE Britain, Imperial War Museum, British Library, Bank of England, and the Houses of Parliament. We actively encourage students to examine London through the tools of their chosen disciplines and have final year projects based on fieldwork exploring gentrification and regeneration, inequality, leisure, social justice, and many of the inclusive themes developed across our courses (supporting our commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals). All our West End Schools utilise fieldwork and field tours within modules to introduce students to major London institutions. Our unique partnerships with London prisons give Criminology (326) students an understanding of lives very different to their own, while Law students are initiated into pro-bono services in the city through our own dedicated Legal Clinic (1031 students). Our assessments are informed by long established London institutions, including the Victoria and Albert Museum in English Literature and Architecture and the Royal Courts of Justice in International Business Law, as well as by more recent entrants including The Carbon Trust, who offer assessment input and placement opportunities across a range of fields. In Marketing Management (4,125 UG students), field tours to companies such as Mercedes Benz Factory, Eden Project, Tower of London, Theatreland and various London museums are used to familiarise students with the inner workings of particular organisations. In Architecture, weekly site visits enable students to understand building processes and challenges. In Sociology, (417 UG students) field work in Brick Lane alerts students to inequalities in the context of food production and consumption. In Biological Sciences

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(327 UG students) students tour environmental interventions in and around the campus to inform their understanding of sustainability.

All of this activity is innovative and deliberately transformative, and we are encouraged that, as well as contributing to strong student outcomes, our internal data suggests this authentic approach is starting to positively impact student perceptions. In our latest Student Module Evaluations 83% (12,997 responses) of students agreed that their modules were intellectually stimulating (82% in 2020/21); 80% (12,927 responses) agreed that modules had challenged them to do their best work (75% in 2020/21); 80% (2611 responses) agreed they had opportunities to work with other students (68% in 2020/21) and 80% (12,915 responses) agreed that modules had provided opportunities to apply what they had learnt (77% in 2020/21).

3.5 Academic Professional Development to support innovative practice

The Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation (CETI), the Learning Innovation and Digital Engagement team (LIDE) and our Organisational Development team support Colleges in ensuring outstanding academic professional development, where good practice is shared, excellence is celebrated, and reward and progression are clearly articulated. CETI manages Prestige, our Professional Recognition and Enhancement Scheme, which incorporates a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education and portfolio routes to Advance HE Fellowships. Since 2018, 73 colleagues have completed a PG Certificate, 127 achieved Associate Fellowship, 159 Fellowship and 28 Senior Fellowship. The figures show year-on-year growth with an even distribution across our three Colleges and including colleagues from Professional Service departments.

In 2020/21, CETI worked in partnership with Advance HE to run 12 Awarding Gap workshops in each School. Advance HE EDI workshops, alongside sessions on authentic assessment, active learning and 'inspirational teaching' are now embedded into CETI's Open programme. In 2021/22, 248 colleagues engaged in the programme. Progression pathways have achieved greater accessibility since a review of routes to Professor/Reader in Learning and Teaching in 2020. Three colleagues achieved Professorial status on this basis in this period. Our Westminster Learning and Teaching Excellence Awards offer winners individual grants of £3,000 to further their pedagogical innovations. We support colleagues with national and international awards and achieved four National Teaching Fellowships (NTFs) in this period.

Partnership underpins our approach to academic professional development. CETI leads and co-ordinates our Student Partnership activities, including the Students as Co-Creator Projects, and has introduced an innovative staff secondment scheme – the Academic Professional Development (APD) Fellows. This team of annual secondments of colleagues provides a network approach to innovation and the sharing of good practice. APD Fellows work with key stakeholders across the University to design, deliver and evaluate interventions aligned to strategic priorities, as well as addressing context-specific needs at School level. Since 2020, CETI has engaged seven APD Fellows each year, who have helped establish a range of interventions: pilots for Course Leader inductions; marking and moderation workshops; inclusive assessment workshops and inclusion cafes; and a suite of feedback interventions across the Colleges, covering feedback approaches, rubric design and digital feedback tools. Building on the pilot work, a new Course Leadership development programme was introduced in November 2021. Two cohorts ran in the first year and cohort three is currently running. To date 75 colleagues have engaged. Evaluations suggest that colleagues are changing practice as a consequence.

"Getting to talk to other Course Leaders in a protected environment was very freeing. Rather than being an academic's grumble-fest we were able to work towards problem-solving with shared wisdom and strategies from Course Leaders, support/Professional Services." (Course Leader)

Professional Services colleagues are regularly seconded as APD Fellows and the joint work that results directly benefits our students. For example, the 2021/22 pilot of our 'Being Ready' project which targeted 297 students across 12 courses with high withdrawal rates was developed by a

3.5.1 Technology enhanced learning professional development

The Learning Innovation and Digital Engagement (LIDE) Team provides extensive one to one and group professional development support for technology enhanced learning (TEL). Demand for this has increased markedly as a consequence of the pandemic. Capacity been enhanced by our investment in 12 Westminster Graduate Digital Learning Assistants (GDLAs) to the team in 2020. From September 2020 to March 2021 there were 1660 attendances spread across a portfolio of 20 distinct workshops. In addition, 180 academic colleagues attended one to one clinic sessions, offered as follow-up to the workshops. Following the workshop programme, between 2020 and 2021 there has been a marked increase in the use of a number of the TEL tools that we have to support student learning. For example, the number of students keeping student journals moved from 282 in 2019/20 to 3058 in 2021/22. Workshops and 1:1 clinics on online marking and the use of rubrics have supported rapid positive change: in 2018/19 116,649 student online coursework submissions were made. Of these, 49,807 were marked up with feedback comments and 14,549 had an online marking rubric. By 2021/22 there was significant improvement: of 164,575 student submissions, 101,539 had feedback comments and 34,235 had an online marking rubric.

As the sector went into lockdown in March 2020, the University offered a more substantive online staff development course called 'Getting Started with Online Learning'. Some 188 academic colleagues attended this two-week asynchronous course. Later, between June and September 2020 the University designed and delivered a more substantive and bespoke four-week asynchronous course 'Planning and Implementing an Online Course'. This covered models for learning design and best practice in online distance learning, and comprised asynchronous learning units, live sessions, and bespoke consultations with external critical friends run separately for each School, the course attracted enrolments from some 724 academic colleagues across the schools and external partners. The School of Media and Communications published an evaluation of their experience of the development provided and concluded:

'Student and staff feedback confirms that the training and support provided in the summer of 2020 for the school was generally successful, ensuring academics were capable and confident in delivering online learning'.

Through the first semester of teaching fully online, this School maintained year-on-year satisfaction scores through module evaluations, and **79.5% of students** within the School reported feeling engaged with their online learning, compared with **just 41% nationally** (2021).

3.6 Professional Practice and Employer Engagement

Professional practice and employer engagement lie at the heart of a very strong academic experience for our students. At University-level, a University Industry Engagement Board, comprising senior employer partners from sectors that reflect our course portfolio and graduate employment destinations helps shape our strategy for employability and employer engagement. As one member of the Board, has commented:

"The past two years have brought huge changes to the way in which we operate in the healthcare sector, and the skills and mindsets we expect of graduates entering the industry has evolved in new ways. The ability and opportunity to shape various student curriculums based on existing and forthcoming trends is vital to enable an adaptable framework of new course development based on real life industry needs."

As part of our strategic commitment to embed Work Based and Placement Learning (WBPL) into every Undergraduate course, employers work alongside academic colleagues to deliver outstanding experiences for students. Every School has its own Employer Advisory Board (EAB) comprising employer partners who provide Schools with critical insight into current and future workforce demands and enable Schools to shape employability-related practice, within and outside the curriculum. For example, EAB members in the School of Management and Marketing encouraged portfolio growth into digital and data marketing. Authentic assessment in that School is strengthened by employer engagement including use of live client briefs. The School of Life Sciences have used their EAB to collaborate with industry in learning and teaching innovation and new course design, including the design of a new core level 4 Professional Development for Scientists module. The academic experience of every student at Westminster is positively

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impacted by WBPL, ensuring all students receive employability and enterprise interventions in the formal curriculum.

A large, diverse group of Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) approve, recognise or accredit a wide range of our courses. A quarter of undergraduate students are on courses that are accredited by a PSRB. In Westminster Business School, BSc Accounting enjoys the maximum possible exemptions from The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA). The Chartered Financial Institute (CFA) has also granted Westminster the coveted status of Affiliated Program partner. BSc Psychology is accredited by the British Psychological Association: students who achieve at least a Lower Second-Class Honours degree and pass their project are eligible for the Graduate Basis for Chartered Membership of the British Psychological Society, the first step towards becoming a Chartered Psychologist. In Life Sciences, our BSc Biomedical Sciences degree, and our apprenticeship programme, are accredited by the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS). A recent accreditation report from the Institute of Biomedical Sciences commended practice related to assessment and feedback:

“Development work with all staff on providing clear, consistent and detailed feedback is a welcome development and should support the positive trajectory of the NSS scores on assessment and feedback.” (IBMS accreditation letter December 2022)

Our Architecture courses are accredited by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) enabling qualification to RIBA Parts 1,2 and 3 culminating in a final examination (Part 3) to qualify for registration as an architect with the Architects Registration Board (ARB). A recent RIBA accreditation board:

“Commends the school on the outstanding community of practice (between the staff and students) resulting in an excellent student experience.” (RIBA Accreditation Report 2022)

Honours graduates can apply for registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) as Biomedical Scientists, provided they fulfil competency requirements. All our Computer Science and Engineering courses are accredited by the British Computer Society (BCS). Our LLB Law meets the requirements of several professional bodies such as the Bar Standards Board and the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives regarding the academic stage of legal training.

3.6.1 Meeting the needs of different disciplines

We adapt our approach to employer engagement and professional practice to meet the needs of students from different disciplines. From 2017/18, the Creative Enterprise Centre (CEC) has supported students in creative disciplines to develop their skills and networks to succeed as professional freelancers. The CEC connected students to creative briefs from employers, providing opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to professional briefs and assignments. Evidence of the impact of this approach can be seen in the increase in graduate start-ups in the annual Higher Education and Business Community Interaction (HEBCI) Survey and associated KEF dashboards: in 2017/18, the University returned 11 graduate start-ups, **but by 2020/21, this had grown to 137** (HEBCI Survey results 2020/2021; KEF Dashboard). The CEC has since grown to become the Westminster Enterprise Network (WeNetwork), supporting students from all disciplines across the University.

BA Sociology students produce an annual journal of student work which develops and extends skills of social advocacy, community engagement, and knowledge exchange beyond the classroom. In the Humanities, a New Festival of Writing brings aspiring student writers into contact with published professionals. The Democratic Education Network (DEN), supported by and supporting students from across the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences engages in research and knowledge exchange through publication of eight, student-authored and edited, books and magazines since its inception in 2014. DEN was runner up in the ‘Student Experience’ category of the Guardian University Awards in 2019. We also have three Prisoner-University Partnership projects led by the Criminology team. The projects are at HMP Pentonville, HMP Coldingley and HMP Grendon. 40 Westminster students typically take a Level 6 module at HMP Pentonville, delivered at HMP Pentonville alongside inside learners.

In our Legal Advice Clinic, Law students provide free legal advice to the public, under the supervision of a practising solicitor or barrister. Students have played an active role in the Windrush Justice Clinic which assists victims of the Windrush scandal to obtain compensation. In 2022 the Windrush Justice Clinic won an award in the LawWorks and Attorney General Student Pro Bono Awards for the 'Best New Pro Bono Activity' category.

During the pandemic we organised virtual fieldtrips at College, School, and course level. This was to ensure that students maintained direct access to industry and developed for success in highly skilled employment. Between 2020 to 2022 we organised three virtual field trips on Refugee Rights and Humanitarian Responses for students in Social Sciences. Over 150 students enrolled on the Level 6 Learning from NGOs in an International Context module, through which they met a selection of human rights NGOs, British and UN diplomats, refugee activists and academics over five days. Making optimal use of their digital connectedness, students met refugees living in camps in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. They spoke to UN diplomats in New York and journalists who work for Human Rights Watch in volatile conflict settings. They reflected on their own values and relations with others, especially refugee youth who share similar aspirations in very different contexts. Inspired by this, a 'Students as Co-Creators' podcast series, Let's Talk: Students and Refugee Activism, was led by Westminster students in which they interviewed the speakers from the workshops. One of the students who attended the field trip commented:

"This experience has provided me with specific knowledge on a number of international organisations to which I aim to work for in my near professional future. The trip added quality to my final months as an undergraduate at the University of Westminster, further defining my future area of interest and specialisation."

3.7 Research Engaged Teaching

Research and innovation, alongside professional practice and employer engagement, are at the centre of the academic experience at the University. Our *Being Westminster* strategic plan (22-29) states: "our excellence in research and knowledge exchange will infuse our education endeavour, equipping our students as agents of change". Since 2018, reflecting our principles of partnership and empowerment, we have shifted emphasis from *research-informed* towards *research-based* and *research-oriented* aspects of Healey's (2005) research-teaching nexus. This greater integration crystallised in our new Framework for Research and Education, approved in May 2022, which ensures that "the findings of our Education researchers directly impact the quality of the student experience". For example, two Impact Case studies in our 2021 REF submission, judged to have demonstrated outstanding or very considerable impacts in terms of reach and significance, typify our approach to knowledge construction. ground-breaking history of the

British Mosque led to a series of unique collaborations with the Victoria and Albert Museum

Case Study acknowledges the role that his Architecture students played in negotiations with the Museum, raising critical questions through visits and assessments, facilitating major change to the V&A's approach to curating its Islamic Collection. Similarly, work on university-prison partnerships,

has paved the way for Criminology students to work inside institutions with prisoner students through experiential modules at Level 6

Their work is also the inspiration for pilot work with Access/Foundation learners in HMP Pentonville which began in 2021/22. Our world leading research (REF 2021) therefore directly informs the curriculum to create transformational experiences for students, on our campuses and beyond.

In parallel, our Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation (CETI) has created a framework and culture to support pedagogical research and scholarship. Since 2019, our Westminster Learning Communities scheme has enabled 100+ colleagues to engage in scholarship activities. Themes have included virtual reality labs in the School of Life Sciences; mobile learning and gamification, originating in Computer Science and Engineering; the FabLab in Architecture and Cities (an experimental centre for teaching, research and knowledge exchange), and employability and international experience in the Business School. Findings and **outcomes of two communities, focusing on inclusive curriculum design and compassionate pedagogy, have been mainstreamed through new curriculum design materials** and adaptations to modules across

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the institution. Opportunities to meet, share and collaborate are offered through the online Westminster Conversations on Education Research. Research and its practical implications for learning and teaching are shared in the annual CETI Symposium and regular #talkteaching events. Research funded by our Diversity and Inclusion Research Community is shaping practice on developing a sense of belonging through tackling imposter phenomenon
the role of assessment in eliminating awarding gaps
and developing inclusive practice through colleague workshops to develop empathetic imagination

Our Students as Co-Creator (SCC) Projects provide opportunities and resources for students and staff to work together on research projects that enhance the curriculum. In the four years under review, 133 colleagues and 349 students have worked together on research projects, focusing on Learning and Teaching Research, Disciplinary Research, and Curriculum Design Collaborations. Projects facilitate partnership, but also lead to direct interventions in learning and teaching. These include, but are not limited to, projects on Enhancing the Academic Experience of Students whose Language is Not English (2018/2019); Decolonial Approaches to the Legal Curriculum (2019/20); Decolonising UG Media (2020/21); Decolonising Psychology Curricula (2020/21); Architecture Design Studios: Re-framing with the Empathetic Imagination in Mind (2020/21); Understanding Genetics to Counter Racial Discrimination (2020/21); and Evaluating Assessment for Learning in Foundation-level Modules (2021/22). **Each has had an impact on design and delivery of our curriculum in their subject area through refreshed learning outcomes, new module resources and changes to structures through revalidations.** SCC Projects are inspiration for further professional development and innovation. In 2022, the School of Architecture and Cities won a national *Research and Education Award* at the *Design in Mental Health Awards* for a learning and teaching collaboration with Imperial College, which centred on a co-production workshop involving 40 colleagues and **over 600 students from six courses at both institutions.** This innovation began as an SSC project in 2019/20. We develop cutting edge ideas with our students and ensure that this knowledge is shared for the benefit of all.

3.8 Academic Support that Enables Success

Our commitment, in *Being Westminster*, to ‘...enable all our students, from all backgrounds, to engage in transformative learning and succeed...’ requires us to adopt a holistic approach to academic support, working across organisational boundaries with strong collaboration between Colleges and Professional Services teams. Our academic support structures include personal tutoring and learner analytics, the retention and engagement team, academic study skills support, digital skills development and pre-enrolment mentoring programmes. We have brought together teams that deliver academic support with those that are responsible for student wellbeing under a single Directorate to ensure wrap-around academic support for students.

Underpinned by our extensive academic support structures and professional development, our **Personal Tutoring** model is an essential part of our commitment to student success. Every student has a personal tutor who supports them with module choices, study skills and opportunities to enhance career-readiness. Personal Tutors signpost to specialist support services, such as wellbeing support or disability services. Our students’ voice informs developments: for example, data from our review of Personal Tutoring suggested that all students were not sufficiently clear on what support their Tutor could provide and often lacked confidence in accessing it. To support students’ understanding, a series of short videos was developed in 2021/22 in which a UWSU Officer, a Personal Tutor and a current student talk about how meeting with your Personal Tutor can help you to succeed. These went live shortly before the start of the 2022/23 academic year and were viewed over 200 times between mid-September and mid-October 2022. The Personal Tutoring policy was reviewed in 2020/21, with input from UWSU and the refreshed policy also now clearly articulates how Personal Tutoring is delivered and the benefits for students (*Personal Tutoring Policy 2021*).

The **Student Retention and Engagement Team** supports the Personal Tutoring process and intervention for disengaged students. The Team checks in with students at levels 3 and 4 who have 0% attendance after the first week of teaching to offer support as they settle into their studies.

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Student engagement monitoring is based on a holistic view of a student's activities, with referrals to the team also coming from Personal Tutors. In the 2021/22 academic session the Team initiated 149 formal interventions which were successful in re-engaging 86 students. The University's Learning Analytics Dashboard (LAD) enables Personal Tutors to take an overview of tutees' attendance and attainment records. Engagement with the dashboard is positively correlated with students' success: a 10% increase in the proportion of tutors using the LAD was found to be associated with a increase in continuation within one school (*Student Retention Data 2022*).

Senior Tutors provide induction and guidance to Personal Tutors and are available for escalation of casework. A two-year project was initiated in September 2021 to develop a CPD programme for personal tutors supporting Level 4 students. Topics included understanding our duty of care, communicating with empathy, setting boundaries, referral practice and safeguarding escalation. 438 personal tutors participated with 90 also joining additional live sessions. Feedback included *"I feel more confident in how to support students struggling with issues as well and keeping an eye on my own mental health and making sure to look after myself by setting boundaries"*. An effective wellbeing service enables Senior and Personal Tutors to refer concerns to experts so as to ensure that they can focus on academic support. Students' mental and physical health and wellbeing is critical to their continuation with mental health being reported as the most common reason for considering leaving University in the Student Union's Checkin Survey at the start of 2022/23. In April 2019, student health provision was reviewed and refocused as a new **Wellbeing Adviser team**, complemented by strengthened relationships with NHS service providers. Wellbeing Advisers provide holistic casework support with vulnerable students, received through referral from personal tutors and other student facing roles. In the 2021/22 academic year, 495 referrals were made to this service, with the primary issues relating to student mental health and student concerns such as risk of homelessness (*Progression vs LAD, 2021/2022*). The success of our approaches is demonstrated through students declaring a disability (SpLD, physical and mental health) being **more likely to achieve a good degree** (*Access and Participation Dashboard 2022*). It is also positive that TEF metrics now indicate very high-quality academic support experience for students declaring a disability.

Student feedback has informed our multiyear project to create **new Student Centres for student support**. Planned through 2021/22 and launched across our campuses in September 2022, providing a single point of contact for our students. The model builds **on the success of our live chat service**, developed rapidly at the start of the pandemic, as well as the Welcome Desk at our Harrow campus which replaced disparate contact routes with a single service point in 2017. The new model provides live chat, email ticket and in-person desks. In the first weeks of operation, **57% of student queries were answered immediately**. The other 43% were referred to colleagues with specialist knowledge. The service dealt with 29,500 queries in the first six weeks of operation which is twice the number previously answered. The feedback from students is positive with 76% of students rating the support via live chat as excellent: *"Very helpful and fast replies no issues or improvements needed this was great"*

3.9 Physical and Virtual Learning Resources

Our very high quality TEF metrics demonstrate the high regard that our students have for our learning resources, including for students declaring a disability, all ethnic groups, and students from IMD Quintiles 1 and 2. In the qualitative analysis of our NSS 2022 students wrote positively about *'learning resources, 'our physical and digital facilities for their learning experience', 'availability of books in the library/digital versions', 'availability of equipment and computers onsite, laptops or cameras for rent'* (NSS 2022- Qualitative). In NSS 2022 83% of students agreed that library resources supported their learning well and 81% agreed that they had been able to access course specific resources when they needed to. Below we outline different aspects of this very high-quality provision, and its impact on students.

3.9.1 Developing digital Skills – online learning and E-book provision

We have invested strategically in learning resources for enhanced student continuation, completion, and progression. For example, in 2021/22 we invested £6.5mn of capital budget, including almost 1,000 loan laptops for students, 234 additional software applications, and over

1,000 pieces of equipment to support teaching. This is well used: for example, 8660 students are actively using Adobe Creative Cloud in their studies. We support colleagues to inspire students through a range of third-party resources (including Padlet, Menti, Flipgrid, Adobe Creative Cloud, Microsoft 365, and Google Apps). Blackboard is heavily used, with average daily page views around 500,000 and daily logins at an average of around 27,000 per day. As a consequence of our investment, students rate their online learning experience highly. In the **2021/22 Joint Information Systems Committee's (JISC's) Digital Insights Survey**, 78% rated (of 1010 responses) the online learning environment at Westminster as good or above (compared to 77% for the sector - 32601 responses) and 70% rated our support for their online learning as good or above (compared to 66% for the sector). Proportionately more Westminster students agreed that they were given the chance of being involved in decisions about learning platforms (43% at Westminster versus 36% for the sector); and recognised that the University provided collaborative applications to support their learning (40% at Westminster versus 30% for the sector).

We are committed to supporting students to access and develop the digital skills which benefit them whilst studying and prepare them for success. This is achieved through embedding digital skills in the curriculum, as part of our work on authentic learning, and through the use of the JISC Digital Capability Framework and Digital Discovery Tool to support a programme of digital skills development via the Westminster Digital Academy. Over 100 courses are available and have been mapped to the framework. Student success is recognised by award of a Westminster Digital Badge that can be added to their CVs and which feed into the award of the Westminster Employability Award. In 2019/20 410 digital badges were awarded to students. **In 2020/21 this had increased to 803 and in 2021/22 to 1148.** Analysis of the institution's JISC Digital Insights survey data in 2021/22 shows that Westminster students (n=1010) **gave higher than benchmark scores** for questions on the degree to which we provided them with an opportunity to assess their digital skills (42% agreed we did compared to 33% for the sector) and the degree to which we provided recognition for their digital skills (32% agreed compared to 24% for the sector). In addition to our own digital skills courses, we support students to engage with others. Over the Summer of 2022 over 1000 students signed up for accredited Microsoft Fundamentals courses in Artificial Intelligence and Cloud Technology.

To support inclusivity, lectures are recorded and, since 2020/21, students can access Blackboard ALLY which allows them to download content in alternative formats. The number of recordings available to our students has **increased from 12,788 in 2019/20 to 48,607 in 2021/22.** Use of ALLY is now significant with typically 450,000 alternative file downloads each academic year. In the colleague-facing part of JISC Insight Survey, in 2020/21, **70.5% of academic colleagues rated the support for teaching online as above average** (best imaginable, excellent or good). This compares to 48% for the wider sector (JISC Teaching Staff Insights Report 2021/22).

3.10 Extensive and accessible library resources

Our e-book provision ensures equity of access for our student body. We have increased spending from 2019 to 2022 by 20% (to £2,379,427) and at the end of this academic year, the increase will be a total of 45% (to £2,867,133) compared to 2019. **E-book usage increased by 90% from 2019/20 to 2020/21.** In 2022 for the period 1st September to 11th November we have seen an **81% increase in registered users** compared with the same period in 2021 and a continued upward trend in engagement with **a 102.6% increase in the number of pages accessed** across the academic year in 2021 compared with 2020, and a further 18% increase when comparing the start of term in 2022 with 2021. Individual e-book related study sessions **increased by 76%** from 2020 to 2021, and we have seen a further 42% increase when comparing the start or term figures in 2022 with the same period in 2021. Where e-books and standard texts are less used, such as in Fashion and Music, we have invested in new e-journal and database subscriptions. Our resource provision is driven by online reading lists that are created by academics drawing on library expertise, usage data and borrower driven acquisitions.

We are also developing and diversifying our library collections and acquisition processes to support decolonisation of learning and teaching in the University. We have created processes for student led requests in relation to decolonisation and purchasing interlibrary loan requests that relate to or support our EDI goals. For example, the Westminster Menswear Archive sought out

and acquired over 15 garments by Black British designers in 2020/21 (including Joe Casely-Hayford, Martine Rose, Nicolas Daley, Grace Wales Bonner, Ahluwalia), as well as adding face masks by Off White, Ahluwalia and Black Lives Matter to the collection. Our unique Westminster Menswear Archive enables students to engage in authentic garment primary research within their course and strong links with the fashion industry inform teaching. Every year, the archive chooses at least one outfit from the University of Westminster's BA Fashion Design course to add to its collection of graduate work. Students are commenting on the impact of these change in the NSS qualitative analysis *"The content is diverse and inclusive, and always consistent in including non-colonial perspectives..."* (NSS 2022). Underpinned by investment the Library and Archive service has developed training and engagement sessions for academics aiming to promote understanding of approaches to decolonisation.

3.10.1 Technology enhanced classroom learning

Four pilot technology enhanced Active Learning Classrooms (ALCs) were developed in 2017/19. They foster student collaboration through screen sharing management systems. Following the success of these, an additional 100 classrooms received screen sharing solutions supporting active student-centred learning. Colleagues are supported to move away from the lectern in learning spaces, instead screensharing and mirroring to enable input from students during flipped modes of learning. Since 2021/22, with our Student Classroom Digital Ambassadors, we have been able to build a set of case studies that show how a wide range of subject areas (Photography, Food Nutrition and Business) are making use of the active learning classrooms with positive impact (Student Digital Ambassadors: Student Driven Digital Teaching and Learning). This includes *'the ease with which students can critique each other's work'* and that the *'rooms break down barriers and silos directly supporting the multi-national composition of the student group'*.

3.10.2 Course-specific facilities and resources

We maintain a strategic focus on active, practical, and authentic learning, and our extensive resources provide learning spaces, software, equipment, and collections to enable this. The value of these resources is recognised by students. In the **NSS 2022, 81% agreed that they have been able to access course specific resources** when they needed to. In 2021/22, **84% of 11,602 responses in Student Module Evaluations were positive** about studios, classrooms, and laboratories (a 22pp rise from the previous year, which was largely online). This was 86% (from 12,857 responses) in Semester One, 2022/23.

On the majority of our courses students have access to industry standard, authentic learning spaces. For example, our Fabrication Laboratory (FabLab) enables Architecture and other design-centred students to exploit advanced fabrication in combination with analogue techniques, material- and environmental-testing, AR, VR and 3D-scanning. A recent Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) accreditation visit board commends:

"the world class fabrication facilities that enable students to produce innovative and exciting project work". (RIBA Accreditation Report 2022)

Our Film and Television Production courses operate from large purpose-built film and television studios, a set construction workshop, a 3D workshop, and extensive post-production facilities. This enables students to learn to collaborate creatively as they develop production specialisms in areas such as writing, producing, cinematography, directing, production design, editing and sound. Our studio facilities also offer unique opportunities for students to collaborate with students across other academic disciplines including film, TV, radio, fashion, media, and animation in an authentic way producing output that would otherwise not be possible working in isolation.

Our Life Sciences laboratories have been designed for team-working and collaboration, and research laboratories also accommodate final year project students, providing them with authentic experience of research. The analytical instrument suite, fermentation suite and new clean room and cell culture facilities provide students with opportunities to work with industry relevant, and industry standard, equipment. Students can also access physiology and human performance laboratories. Bodywork rooms and an onsite clinic facilitate hands-on anatomy teaching and patient contact for our students on health-related pathways. Specialist spaces are utilised for Students as

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Co-creators projects including “Gene Editors of the Future”, “Antibiotics Undersea”, “International Genetically Engineered Machine, iGEM”.

Immersive teaching in Law takes place in the mock County Court and Moot Court room spaces. Our LLB Law courses are taught within a professional legal teaching suite which includes a law office, interview rooms, and small conference style spaces in which transactional legal learning takes place. The Westminster Legal Advice Clinic is a public-facing facility in Central London in which students are taught in a professional setting in which they provide legal services to the public alongside qualified lawyers.

Our Business courses are enhanced by specialist facilities on campus, and engagement with London employers. Bloomberg suites replicate the stock and forex trading environments found in global financial centres; London, New York, Singapore, and students learn on tools found in the professional environment. Simulations, using large datasets and drawing on specialist technical support, allow students to learn first-hand by experiencing a critical incident: a global currency crisis, a stock market crash. In Switch 23, students solve employer-based problems in a creative agency environment, using industry-standard digital tools. Both environment and learning within it is developed with employers. The Business Boardroom offers a digitally enabled space that authentically replicates a major global operational environment; here students gain the confidence to challenge and defend decisions, learning in ways that feel real in every respect.

3.11 Student Engagement and Partnership

A key enabler in our 2020/23 Education Strategy is to “embed partnership with students in all we do”. This commitment encompasses our strong partnership with University of Westminster Students Union (UWSU), our Students as Co-creators work and our Student Experience and Opinion Panel (SEOP). Our independent, internal auditors highlight the value of our approach:

“The university has a number of student focus groups, demonstrating constructive consultation with students, which were facilitated well by the Strategic Planning and Performance (SPP) department, resulting in detailed analyses and reporting”. (Student Voice Internal Audit Report 2021/22)

Our Student Module Evaluation results show that in 2021/22, 75% of responses (13,651) on UG modules agreed that they “contributed to and engaged with the module”; up from 71% the previous year (19,784 responses). The level of student agreement at Westminster that the UWSU effectively represents students’ academic interests has been broadly in line with sector subject benchmarks since this question was introduced in NSS 2017.

University of Westminster Students’ Union (UWSU) is a key critical friend. We partner with UWSU to recruit in excess of 700 course representatives each year (*Student Representatives database*). Additionally, 48 remunerated School Representatives raise student feedback with Heads of School each semester and join Sabbatical Officers on our Student Voice Forum, a University-level committee co-chaired by the DVC Education and the UWSU President. The Forum enables student representatives to raise issues directly with University management. Student membership of all committees within our formal governance structures further strengthens student voice in developing the educational experience. The UWSU President is a full member of our Court of Governors and Academic Council. Student representatives sit on re-validation panels and our Course Validation Standing Panel (paid roles) and impact on curriculum development.

Our strong partnership with UWSU enables the University to enhance the student experience. UWSU Voice weeks during 2021/22 UWSU highlighted employability as a key theme for students (94 mentions), so the University re-communicated the many opportunities it offers to students, which contributes to increasing student uptake (pgs 8-10). From 2019/2021 the UWSU President was an integral member of our Being Safe Feeling Safe group which oversaw our pandemic response. As a direct result of University of Westminster Student Union input, the University adjusted mitigating circumstances regulations during the pandemic and developed a laptop loan scheme to ensure that every student could access online learning and supported the distribution:

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laptop long-term loans are now over 1,000 p.a. As TEF metrics demonstrate, continuation remained very high throughout the pandemic.

Established in 2012, the Friends of Arriving and New Students (FANS) programme is one of the most successful partnerships between the University and UWSU. Each year around 120 students are recruited as FANS to provide **peer support to all new students** during the critical first six weeks of the academic year. An extensive training programme ensures FANS have the knowledge and skills to deliver an engaging and student-led welcome in which they each work with a course-based group of new students. FANS support students in making friends and in developing a sense of belonging within the Westminster community as well as helping them to become familiar with facilities and the academic support which is available. The commitment and skills development of FANS are recognised in the Westminster Employability Award. Both FANS and new students regularly provide very positive feedback on their experiences:

"I appreciate this program very much. Not only is it beneficial to incoming students, but to current ones (the FANS) as well. I developed friendships with several students, other FANS and students of FANS, that may last for the rest of my life. Thank you for launching FANS"

"Our FANS were not only super helpful and detailed in their tours, tutorials, emails, and answers to our questions about the university and course, but they were extremely enjoyable to be around and made our Welcome week very fun and exciting start to uni life. My experience with them as our FANS has been entirely positive"

In addition to partnership working with UWSU the University draws on its student voice in a number of other ways. We have invested in a Student Experience and Opinion Panel (SEOP), recruiting Westminster students to participate in surveys, focus groups, or interviews, in exchange for a financial incentive. The SEOP is available for UWSU as well as the University to understand the student voice (*Voice Week reports*). Around 20 primary research projects since 2019 have focused on improvements, including those related to:

- Personal tutoring, leading to changes to the personal tutoring policy
- Employability initiatives, which were given more publicity and increased the number of views of induction videos
- The Student Hub: feedback from the panel has influenced the design of the future physical space

Since its inception in 2019, over 400 students have taken part, covering all levels of study from Foundation to PhD, across all 12 Schools and a range of demographics. For example, in 2022/23, 48% of panellists are from the UK, and of those 64% self-reported being from a WP background.

Our Student as Co-Creator projects act as a model for partnership working between staff and students. They are emblematic of our empowering approach, and consistently generate outputs that stimulate curricula change. A regular seminar series attracts 450 colleagues per annum. The success of the projects has spawned further partnership initiatives, including Pedagogies for Social Justice (PSJ), in which eight colleagues and 22 students from Westminster have collaborated with peers from other UK institutions and internationally. Collectively they have identified and developed resources for decolonisation of the curriculum. PSJ has worked with students from all Schools to develop tools for decolonisation, and a series of supportive resources including seminars and podcasts. The podcast series has had 1231 episode plays and reached audiences in 46 countries. A student-led discussion group - Decolonisation and Anti-Racist (DAR) - is another partnership activity, and in 2021/22 a pilot for this initiative reached a further 43 staff and students.

4. Conclusion

As one of the most internationally diverse universities in the UK and with many of our students joining us disproportionately from disadvantaged backgrounds, we are proud that during the review period - with the added challenges of the global pandemic - we have enabled our students to achieve very high-quality outcomes for continuation and completion whilst our focus on professional, community and external engagement has also resulted in improved progression. Indeed for the latest TEF year, very high quality progression, at benchmark, has been achieved.

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We have, and are, continuing to transform the experience and outcomes for our students by delivering on our strategic purpose (*Being Westminster* 2018/23): “to provide grounded, holistic education so that people from every background can realise their true potential” and our strategic aim “for all our students to benefit from employability-led learning and purposeful engagement with employers, business and industry, to give students from every background the best possible preparation for the world of work and enable the best possible employability outcomes.”

Our authentic learning and assessment is embedded and enhancing our student outcomes. We are providing every undergraduate student with an opportunity to be immersed in live partnership working with employers, entrepreneurs, creators and inspirers who can help bring their ambitions to life; whilst being supported by our academic community, engaged in our outstanding academic professional development programme, where good practice is shared, excellence is celebrated, and reward and progression are clearly articulated. Our sound financial position with significant investment in our digital and physical estate is providing access to cutting edge spaces and technology in the heart of London. All our students are supported to achieve their ambitions in an inclusive environment where barriers are broken, diversity is celebrated and everyone is welcome.

“As a woman in a male-dominated industry, I’m passionate about encouraging more women to join the computer science and engineering sector. The variety of assignments will help me to stand out in a competitive market and find a job after graduation. The support I have received while studying at the University of Westminster has been incredible. I will always be grateful to my personal tutor who helped me to develop my time management skills and career aspirations. I feel proud to be part of the Westminster community!” BSc Business Information Systems student,

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