

## University of Brighton TEF 2023 provider submission

### 1. Provider context

The University of Brighton's mission is to realise potential and shape futures through our applied practice-based learning and teaching, research, and knowledge exchange. Our strategy, *Practical Wisdom*, is underpinned by our core institutional values of Inclusivity, Sustainability, Creativity and Partnership [1]. Our vision is to be a sustainable institution and the university of choice for people who want to live, work, and learn in a vibrant city as part of a diverse, dynamic, and creative community, where curious minds meet to create, apply, and put knowledge to work. The student experience is central to *Practical Wisdom*; our Education and Student Experience (E&SE) strategic plan takes an evidence-based approach to support student experience and outcomes through co-creating our strategic priorities with our students and the Brighton Students' Union (BSU) [2]. We are committed to *Putting the Students at the Heart* of everything we do and our goal is that every student at Brighton is enabled to fulfil their potential, to achieve their academic and career goals, and is empowered to make a positive difference to their local and global communities.

We are proud members of the University Alliance (UA), a network of institutions which share our mission for delivering practice and skills-based learning and applied research. Our comprehensive undergraduate (UG) provision covers 28 of the 34 TEF subject areas, with 13,550 students across 241 UG courses (2021-22). Our strong professional and vocational focus is evidenced by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) recognition for 153 UG courses. In 2020-21, 35% of our students entered with BTEC, Access or other L3 qualifications, and 26.2% with A levels at BCC and lower. In 2021-22, 4,252 (31%) UG students were in receipt of bursary funds and 28.6% of our students come from TUNDRA (MSOA) Q1&2. We had 290 students enrolled on nine UG degree apprenticeship programmes (2021-22); of these, 55% are from TUNDRA (MSOA) Q1&2. Our eight academic schools, including the Brighton & Sussex Medical School (BSMS) which was established in 2002 as a partnership between the Universities of Brighton and Sussex, are spread over three campuses in Brighton and a campus 25 miles away in Eastbourne. From our institutional data, in 2021-22, 29% of our UG students commuted 15+ miles into their main campus base.

Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is evidenced by the award of an Athena Swan Silver institutional award in 2021, having achieved a Bronze award in 2013 (renewed in 2016). All our academic schools hold school-level Athena Swan awards (2 Silver and 6 Bronze). We were also awarded a Race Equality Charter (REC) Bronze in 2019. At the time of this submission, we are one of only 12 universities to hold both an Athena Swan Institutional Silver and REC Bronze. We are also a proud Stonewall Diversity Champion.

We were awarded a Silver in the 2017 TEF and used the exercise to identify areas for enhancement which were developed and implemented in the E&SE strategic plan. In 2018 we took this approach a stage further by undertaking a subject-level TEF mock exercise in 24 subject areas which resulted in improved institutional outcomes for all TEF National Student Survey questions in 2019, and an increase in overall satisfaction from 76.6% in 2018 to 80.3% in 2019.

The approach to the implementation of our E&SE strategic plan was updated in 2019 leading to our *Putting Students at the Heart* workplan, undertaken as part of the refresh of the institutional strategy *Practical Wisdom: Brighton 2025* [3], and further adapted due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In delivering the E&SE strategic plan, we have embraced a lifecycle approach to the students' journey into, through and out of the university, focusing on four key objectives:

- Enable all our students to succeed and achieve their goals.
- Empower our students in terms of their employability and the confidence and capacity to make a difference.
- Strengthen student engagement in their own learning and in shaping the wider student experience.
- Develop and value our staff in terms of learning and teaching excellence and innovation.

Cross-university workstreams have been developed to deliver on these objectives: *Brighton Achieves* (enhancing progression, continuation, engagement, inclusive practice and race equity); *Brighton Works* (embedding employability in the curriculum, access to real world experiences, employer engagement, and support for career planning); *Learning and Teaching* (enhancement and innovation through curriculum design and delivery, assessment and feedback); and *Digital Learning* (maximising the use of technology to support enhancement, innovation and inclusive practice). All the workstreams have steering groups which include academic, professional services and student representation. This work has ensured that the foundations to provide students with a distinctive, inclusive, and career-relevant experience are in place.

We work closely and very constructively with the BSU to enhance the student experience and student outcomes. BSU representatives contribute to all major university committees and strategic steering and working groups, and a comprehensive student representation and engagement system is in operation at school level. Outside the formal committee structure, BSU officers also meet regularly with our leadership teams, including the University Executive Board (UEB), to draw attention to matters requiring timely intervention at senior level. The preparation of this submission has been undertaken in collaboration with the BSU, with the BSU CEO as a member of our TEF project group.

The university was restructured in 2021 from thirteen schools to eight. New school management structures were implemented, with Associate Deans E&SE (ADs E&SE) appointed in each school who oversee the delivery of the E&SE strategic plan. The ADs E&SE are supported by a team of senior academics leading on areas relevant to the E&SE workstreams, and by appropriate professional service colleagues to ensure the achievement of the E&SE objectives. This devolved leadership structure has increased our ability to implement strategy, policy, and practice consistently.

We completed a £63m redevelopment of our Moulsecoomb campus in 2021, which included a new academic building and spaces for students including a gym and Students' Union facilities. Between 2018 and 2022 we invested £73.5m in our campuses to create inspiring environments for students and staff that bring wider economic benefits to the city and breathe new life into the local area.

Partnership is at the core of who we are, this is exemplified through our role as an HE partner within the consortium to develop and deliver the new Surrey and Sussex Institute of Technology. The University of Brighton International College (UBIC), situated on the Moulsecoomb campus, delivers courses that develop the academic and language levels required for HE study to ensure international students have the best possible opportunity for success on their degree level studies. Each year circa. 190 students progress from UBIC to the university at level 4 and level 5 UG study. The University of Brighton Academies Trust, sponsored by the University of Brighton, is comprised of fifteen Sussex-based infant, primary and secondary academies, the vast majority of which are rated by Ofsted as Good or Outstanding.

### **Comment on partner provision**

We maintain responsibility for, and oversight of, the academic standards and quality of partner provision through the University's Quality and Standards Committee. The implementation of our quality assurance processes includes, relevant academic and professional links, and the annual academic health process where reports and actions plans are subject to peer scrutiny. We have undertaken detailed analysis of the underlying data which form the indicators for our partnership (subcontracted out) provision. Two partner institutions contribute to the student experience dataset, East Sussex College Group (ESCG) Hastings, and Brighton Film School (BFS). There are outstanding student experience indicators for ESCG (Teaching +14% BM, Assessment and Feedback +23.5% BM, Academic Support +12.4% BM, Learning Resources +6.7% BM, Student Voice +14% BM) where students benefit from small group sizes and investment in dedicated resources. Continuation for the students at ESCG is broadly in line with benchmark and completion is above benchmark (+2.9%). Progression at ESCG is below benchmark, however 60% of the students in this denominator are mature students and studying Creative Arts subjects with differing objectives for studying the subject at a local Further Education college.

BFS has been supported by our School of Art and Media through dedicated link tutors to implement actions to improve the student experience and address below benchmark indicators. Continuation at BFS is 4.5% above benchmark. Although the progression indicator is below benchmark, a review of the individualised data reveal positive outcomes for 60% of students in the dataset (n=66), in that they are working in roles relevant to their courses within the Film/TV/Creative Media Industries. BFS ceased to be a partner in August 2022, and during the period of teach-out we remained committed to ensuring students were supported in their learning, we honoured commitments made to applicants and continued to assure the quality of the partnership provision.

In addition to our role in validating UG courses for ESCG in Hastings, due to the regional strategic importance of HE provision in this geographic area, we are committed to further developing strategic partnership working with regional colleges to strengthen the regional skills eco-system and meet the needs of learners and employers. This presently includes a Strategic Partnership Agreement with Chichester College Group to enhance progression pathways, credit transfer, and joint developments that respond to the changing policy and qualifications landscape.

### **Comment on apprenticeship provision**

Our Technical Education & Apprenticeships Hub supports our apprenticeship employer engagement and delivery. The indicators for our degree apprenticeship provision, established in 2016 in Health and Social Care, evidences both outstanding and very high-quality student experience and student outcomes for our apprentice students. Our data reveal above benchmark performance across the full range of student experience indicators; Teaching, and Assessment and Feedback (+0.6% and +1.9% BM) and our apprentices Student Voice outcomes are outstanding (+2.6% BM). Outstanding Academic Support (+3.7% BM) is achieved through a strong collaborative relationship with the Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) (SE5), who conducts the 12-weekly tripartite employer-student-tutor progress reviews. The PAT provides personalised coaching and support, which is informed by the students' initial skills gap analysis against apprenticeship standards, leading to outstanding continuation indicators (+11.3% BM and +14.4% BM for ABCS Q1 students). Students have access to a shared apprentice's area on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), and study skills sessions are held remotely to support accessibility and inclusion (+2.9% BM Learning Resources). There are outstanding completion indicators (+16.8% BM) which evidence the holistic support and relevant curriculum provided to our apprenticeship students. Finally, our above benchmark progression data

(+0.6% BM) confirm the very high-quality highly skilled outcomes that our apprentices achieve. A 'Good' in all areas was achieved in our 2019 apprenticeship Ofsted inspection and the report stated, "*Apprentices develop the academic and study skills that they need to undertake degree level work [...] for many of them this is the first time that they have been back in formal learning since their school days*" [4]. Our apprenticeship provision continues to grow, with courses now being offered in Construction, Engineering and the Built Environment, Education, and Business and Management.

## 2. Student experience

Through our portfolio and the delivery of practice, skills-based learning and applied research we provide a **teaching and learning experience** which is designed to support the achievement of the students who study at Brighton. Our approach is built on our knowledge and understanding of who our students are, their starting point studying in higher education, and how to develop their knowledge and skills to ensure the very best outcomes for each individual student. On graduating, our students have travelled a significant distance from their entry position, benefitting from our curriculum, teaching practices, academic support, and staff expertise. This is evidenced by their very high-quality and outstanding progression outcomes (SO3) and in their significant educational gains (SO4, SO5, SO6).

Our **Curriculum Design Framework** (CDF), approved in 2016, is at the heart of the student academic experience and underpins a distinctive, vibrant, and relevant curriculum, which meets the aspirations of our diverse student population (SE1, SE2, SE3). This prepares them to excel professionally as well as have the confidence and capacity to make a positive difference, in line with our university strategy *Practical Wisdom* (SO3, SO4). Underpinned by three themes, *Blended Learning*, *Sustainability*, and *Employability*, the implementation of the CDF 2016 provided courses and subjects with opportunities to redesign and re-conceptualise the courses content, learning, teaching, and assessment strategies. As part of this exercise authentic assessment was introduced and, where appropriate, the volume of examinations reduced, and mandatory formative assessments included to develop students' confidence and engagement. All UG modules were reviewed to align to the framework in 2017 [5]; examples of where there has been significant impact include Chemistry's innovative assessment approach (Assessment and Feedback +5.5% BM) which introduced a scaffolded 'best of' approach to weekly assessed tasks and the institution's first 'infinite' examination, where students could remain in the exam room for as long as they needed (SE1, SE5), and in the authentic assessment introduced in Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences (Assessment and Feedback +8.4% BM).

The CDF was refreshed in 2020-21 for implementation from 2021-22, building on the strength of the CDF 2016 by drawing on our existing institutional excellence in inclusive practice, research into learning and teaching, and support for student learning (SE1, SE2, SE3, SE5). We also embedded the theory of transition pedagogies to take into account our students' prior educational experiences and entry points into higher education (lower/mid tariff) (SE3, SE5). The CDF 2021 commits to embedding the knowledge, skills and values needed to address local, regional, and **global challenges** and to be change-makers for a sustainable future, connecting our curriculum where possible to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) (SE2, SE3) [6]. This commitment builds on existing practice, where the creation and application of research and knowledge related directly to the UN SDGs, offers opportunities which support students' employability (SO3), as articulated in our Graduate Attributes (SO4). Through our School of Business and Law, we are a signatory of PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education, a United Nations Initiative) and the UN SDGs underpin course design in the school and are embedded in

research and practice modules, leading to 102 modules having an association with a least one of the UN SDGs. Additionally, the recent PSRB report from Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) November 2022 accreditation visit [7] recognised the embedding of global challenges in the BA (Hons) Architecture curriculum: *“The Board commends the School’s focus and engagement in relation to its locality, local and regional communities, societal agendas, and its climatic and geographic conditions”* (SE2, SE3).

The scaffolded approach to students’ development through the application of the principles of transition pedagogies: a relevant, inclusive, and current curriculum, highly effective subject-relevant learning and teaching methods, and the use of formative assessment to develop students’ confidence and engagement, as determined by the CDF, has resulted in some outstanding outcomes for **Teaching on my course**’ (SE1, SE2, SE3). These can be seen in Economics (+9% BM), Combined and general studies (+7.4% BM), and Education and teaching (+4.7% BM), and in a further nine subjects with very high-quality outcomes. Our part-time (PT) cohort are also extremely satisfied with the quality of ‘Teaching on my course’ (+3.1% BM) and the split indicator for our black students is also very high-quality. Further improvements are expected in 2022-2023 and beyond as we fully embed the CDF 2021 through our curriculum review process and ensuring that good practice identified in the outstanding and very high-quality subject areas is implemented across the subjects.

Curriculum development and review is supported through ‘Co:Lab’, a new collaborative curriculum design and enhancement process led by our Learning & Teaching (L&T) Hub (SE4) and this approach is also expected to improve our completion indicators (SO2). A 2020 internal review of the staff development support for the CDF highlighted that this had been an opportunity for staff discussion and collaboration in areas including alternative assessment, formative feedback, ensuring consistency in feedback, cross-course collaboration, and the development of team teaching (SE1, SE3) [8]. An example of the impact of this supportive culture is demonstrated by the NSS outcomes for BA (Hons) Nursing where work on Assessment and Feedback contributed to a 17% rise in the NSS theme, and a 34% increase in Overall Satisfaction for this course between 2021 and 2022 (SE1, SE4).

Alongside the refresh of the CDF we undertook a detailed examination of our institutional **assessment and feedback** practices (SE1) which led to an update of our Assessment and Feedback Policy (2021-22). This new policy clearly sets out the principles of authentic and inclusive assessment design, support for student understanding of marking criteria, ensures feedback promotes learning, and a rigorous maintenance of our standards. Improved practices in Marking Criteria, Moderation and Double-Marking, implemented in 2022-2023, will reduce variability in practice across the institution as the policy is fully rolled out and evaluated. We are now supporting and monitoring its implementation to ensure we address the issues identified by our Assessment and Feedback TEF indicators, including our below benchmark outcomes for black, Asian and IMD Q1&2 students. The policy and its implementation plan have taken account of the practices across the institution which have led to outstanding Assessment and Feedback outcomes including Economics (+19.7% BM), Medicine and Dentistry (+18.5% BM), Geography, Earth, and Environmental Studies (+8.4% BM), Combined and General studies (+6.2% BM), Chemistry (+5.5% BM), Performing Arts (+5.3% BM), Mathematical Sciences (+5.2% BM), and Allied Health (+3.3% BM), and our further five subjects achieving very high-quality outcomes (SE1, SE2).

Analysis of our module check-in survey data (SE7), which includes single key questions on teaching; assessment; academic support; peer learning; and access to resources, also evidences increasing

improvements in our students' experiences (SE1, SE2). In 2020-21 we launched our new standardised centralised module evaluation survey system (SE7) and the data reveal year-on-year increases in the percentage of our students reporting '% agree' across all questions (2022-23 partial year data), including for example '**Teaching** on this module is creating a stimulating learning experience', from 71% to 75% to 79% (n=16399; n=10044; n=5125) and 'I know how I am going to be **assessed** and what I need to do, to do well on this module', from 73% to 76% to 80% (n=16444; n=10073; n=5136).

We undertook a university-wide research project in 2019 to identify actions which could help address the ethnicity degree awarding gap in preparation for the Race Equality Charter submission [9]. Focus groups with 46 students identified the Eurocentric curriculum as one of the areas to address (SE7). This resulted in the development of the **Inclusive Practice Partnerships (IPP) Scheme**, which also supports the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Inclusive Practice and Accessibility policy. The IPP Scheme is an innovative and ambitious university-wide initiative to co-create a more inclusive curriculum which supports targets in our Access and Participation Plan (APP) [10] and commitments in the REC [11] to narrow ethnicity degree awarding gaps (SE2, SE3). The scheme was launched in all schools in November 2020 following pilots in two academic schools. A framework for reviewing the representation of racial, ethnic, and cultural identities in both curriculum content and pedagogic practices has been developed by the L&T Hub, enabling student/staff partnerships in schools to make recommendations that will support module teams to engage in diversifying and/or decolonising their curriculum (SE4). During the first two years of the IPP Scheme, 120 students have been employed as partners and they have reviewed a total of 67 UG modules from across the university, impacting on 6,320 student module registrations. A Theory of Change underpins the evaluation methodology, which uses qualitative analysis of students' perceptions of representation, inclusion and belonging on their modules, and quantitative analysis of module attainment data. Data are collected by surveying students on modules prior to and following the review and recommendation process. Modules which underwent review in 2020-21 and implemented recommendations in 2021-22 were evaluated with comparative survey data (n=60 in 2020-21; n=102 in 2021-22), showing an increase in student perceptions of representation of racial, ethnic, and cultural identities, as well as feelings of inclusion and belonging (81.8% vs 69%). Evidence also suggested that there is a better overall pass rate on reviewed modules compared to a control group of similar non-reviewed modules (SO1, SO6). The same outcome was found for black and Asian students [12]. In 2022 we collaborated with four other University Alliance institutions on a funded project for Advance HE, where the IPP Scheme was included as a case study on how inclusive cultural change can be achieved through student engagement (SE7) [13].

In 2018-19 we developed our capacity to apply **anonymity in the submission and marking of summative assessments** to improve our performance in the 'fairness of marking' (Q9) NSS Assessment and Feedback sub-question (SE1). The perceptions of fairness were also highlighted by minority ethnic students in the ethnicity degree awarding gap research in 2019 (SE7) [9]. A drive to ensure compliance with the Anonymity in Assessment policy has seen rapid improvement in students' perceptions of fairness. For example, the School of Business and Law (subject areas Economics, Law, Business and Management) met the NSS sector benchmark for Q9 (NSS sub question) in 2022, with the BSc (Hons) Economics course increasing from 71.4% in 2021 to 100% in 2022.

As a practical and applied university, our course design is informed through employer/practitioner engagement, PSRB accreditation (153 UG courses) and, wherever possible, **Industry Advisory**

**Boards** (IABs) (SE2, SE3). This ensures our course content has the currency, rigour and stretch to meet the skills needs of employers as well as supporting students' knowledge of industry roles, career paths and opportunities (SE3). IAB members provide extracurricular opportunities for UG students, such as mentoring, careers advice, site visits, and networking opportunities. For example:

- four IABs support the Civil Engineering, Built Environment, Engineering and Mathematical Sciences subject areas. Board members regularly contribute keynote lectures and members of the Civil Engineering IAB also offer students weekly slots for mentoring, careers guidance, and mock job interviews for level 6 students.
- the School of Business and Law maintains an advisory board of local entrepreneurs, business leaders and professional practitioners, which include university alumni. They contribute to our research and education agendas to ensure that programmes remain relevant and up-to-date, and that our students, including apprentices, develop the skillset needed for future employment.
- the School of Education works closely with schools and local authorities to ensure the Teacher Apprenticeship course is tailored to the needs of local education providers and school leaders. Our strength in partnership work was cited in a 2018 Ofsted inspection report [14], where our Initial Teacher Education in Early Years, Primary, and Secondary was rated Outstanding.

**Inter-professional Education** (IPE) is an area of institutional strength that has developed over many years (SE2, SE3). Our innovative IPE programme aims to grow students' skills and knowledge through collaboration and multi-disciplinary working. IPE events include conferences for Health and Social Care students which are held at each level of study throughout the year, attracting around 850 students to each event. IPE for Medicine and Pharmacy students was recognised through a John Horder Award in 2020 from the Centre for Advancement for Interprofessional Education (CAIPE). In 2022 nearly 1,000 Medical and Allied Health students from the University of Brighton, the University of Sussex, and BSMS attended a series of dissection workshops held at BSMS. This unique learning experience was captured for the pioneering Channel 4 documentary *My Dead Body* broadcast in 2022. Students also develop knowledge and skills informed by current professional practice; for example, the unique *Time for Dementia* programme was developed by BSMS in partnership with the Alzheimer's Society. Since its inception in 2015, the programme has been delivered at seven universities and across nine different professional courses and has won five national awards including, in 2018, an Advance HE Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) (SE4).

Student academic experience is enhanced by our **strong links to our local communities** (SE3). The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) shows our very high engagement (Q5) with the Public and Community Engagement aspect, placing us in the top 10% of universities for this category [15]. Our performance is influenced by the university's Community University Partnership Programme (CUPP) which develops mutually beneficial partnerships between the university and its local communities. The CUPP is complemented by our Active Student Volunteering Service, which enables students to undertake community engagement through one-off and ongoing volunteering opportunities, and through modules available on 116 courses leading, in the last four years, to 2,118 students participating in community engagement modules.

**Research and scholarly activity** underpin our curricula and teaching and learning practices (SE3); in the most recent Research Excellence Framework (REF) (2021), 98% of our research was considered world-leading, internationally excellent, or internationally recognised [16]. Students are strongly connected to professional real-world practice, with academic staff across the disciplines



remaining engaged with professional practice which enhances the currency and applicability of the curriculum. The implementation of our Research Informed Teaching Policy (2009) and Curriculum Design Framework (2016, 2021) has ensured our students are exposed to the most relevant disciplinary research, innovation, and scholarship, in ways that enhance their academic experience and strengthen their engagement in our practice-based and applied curriculum (SE1, SE2, SE3). These include opportunities for UG students to work on projects alongside postgraduate students and staff research teams, such as those available to Engineering students in the Sustainable Technology and Engineering Projects (STEP) lab.

The **Brighton Student Skills Hub** (BSSH) supports the development of students' academic study skills, with designated BSSH tutors in each school offering 1:1 tutorials and group workshops (both co-curricular and in-programme) (SE5). The BSSH offers a Writing Advisory Service (WAS), where students submit work for general feedback from a BSSH tutor on structure, clarity, and writing style. Royal Literary Fund Fellows are also available to students seeking to develop further their academic writing. Recent internal evaluation (2021-22) of BSSH's Academic Writing provision analysed the outcomes of students who engaged in WAS, tutorials, and workshops (n=661) with a control group that did not engage. The data showed that students who engaged in the Academic Writing offer were more likely to continue at the university (+4%) and progress into the following year study (+15%) [12]. The BSSH also hosts online study skills resources which have seen over 14,000 visits to the landing page since its launch in March 2021 and is widely promoted to students through targeted communication campaigns. New entrants are also introduced to the offer through sessions delivered within their Belong at Brighton welcome programme (SO1, SO2, SO3).

In order to ensure a high-quality, and consistent learning and teaching experience throughout the pandemic, the changes to learning, teaching and assessment were underpinned by a set of **Digitally Enabled Learning (DEL) Principles** (SE1, SE2, SE3). These included creating a sense of belonging online, building interaction between students and staff, and offering high-quality content. Delivery in line with these principles was supported through a comprehensive programme of staff development and guidance, accessed by over 1,000 staff between spring 2020 and spring 2022, and were an integral part of the quality assurance and enhancement process for academic delivery in 2020-21 and 2021-22 (SE4) [17]. The approach to learning and teaching throughout the pandemic years was continually informed by feedback from students and staff by means of a comprehensive range of channels including regular engagement with the BSU, Student and staff COVID-19 Pulse surveys, module evaluation, Course Reps Forums, School Education and Student Experience Committees (SESECs), Student-Staff Forums, Student Support and Guidance Tutors (SSGTs) and the Course Leaders Forum (SE7). This feedback reinforced the central importance of the DEL principles, in ensuring a coherent educational experience, as well as further shaping our response to important issues such as digital inclusion and the No Detriment and Safety Net policies.

We also accelerated implementation of our **lecture capture** policy which was already being developed in response to the BSU's 2019-20 Educational Campaign (SE7) and the co-developed Learning and Teaching Inclusive Practice and Accessibility Policy. This enabled live synchronous teaching sessions held on MS Teams to be recorded to enable students who were unable to attend to continue with the learning (SE5, SE6). Other outputs during this period of **pedagogical innovation** in DEL included: "Telepresence Stage", where digital technologies are combined to create virtual performance spaces for collaboration between Design, and Creative and Performing Arts students, was awarded a UKRI/AHRC COVID-19 Rapid Response award in December 2020 to identify collaborative solutions for the performing arts, as well as a £1m Health Education England



funded project to live stream surgical training in Virtual Reality (VR). Other examples of digital developments include virtual simulation for final year Nursing students, virtual pharmacy placements and virtual field trips in geography and environmental sciences, and a range of live project briefs across subject areas through online collaboration with employers and community partners (SE1, SE2, SE3, SE5, SE6, SO1).

A range of self-help resources were rapidly developed for students to support **remote learning**. These were published on a blog site to maximise accessibility for all students and included study skills guides alongside advice on developing effective remote study habits (SE5, SE6). The resources reflected the needs of students and were regularly reviewed, enhanced, and updated through engagement with the BSU (SE7) and from feedback gathered through our COVID-19 Pulse Surveys (SE7).

To ensure that students' continuation and completion (SO2 and SO3) were not negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, we collaborated closely with the BSU to develop a '**No Detriment**' **policy** to ensure student outcomes from Semester 2 of 2019-20 were comparable to those achieved in the pre-pandemic Semester 1. On the basis that COVID-19 remained prevalent and its impact far reaching for students and their families, we adopted a '**Safety Net**' **policy** which we extended into 2021-22. The BSU acknowledged the significant benefit of the approach for all our students, and student support for the policy is evidenced in BSU reports to Academic Board [18]. Additionally, we partnered with the BSU to undertake an Equalities Impact Assessment for the post-lockdown return to campus (SE5, SE6). However, due to the timing of the 'No Detriment' student communications, the impact was not captured in the Student Voice NSS indicator in 2020 (SE7).

We rapidly established a **COVID-19 Student Support Fund**, proactively anticipating the impact the move to remote digital learning and teaching would have on our students. We also offered additional support to our students moving into NHS key worker roles on the front line of the COVID-19 response (SE5). The grants were available to any student who needed practical support to continue their learning or, if they were a key worker, to assist them with their travel, uniform, PPE, equipment, or other critical costs. By 20 March 2020, even before the start of the national lockdown, we had allocated £40,000 of support to students. Much of the funding was allocated for laptops, purchasing data/broadband or other IT equipment with 38% of the applications coming from IMD Q1&2 students [19]. Further financial support was provided in 2020-21 through our Digital Access Fund. Alongside the funds we also made provision for lending equipment and providing software licences to students on courses with specific resource requirements (SE5, SE6). We were awarded a Bronze CASE (Council for Advancement and Support of Education) Circle of Excellence award for our COVID-19 Student Support Fund in 2021.

Despite these mitigations, adaptations and innovations, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns on students' practice-based learning can be seen in '**Teaching on my course**' time series full time (FT) splits, with a high-quality experience in years 1 and 2 and below benchmark in years 3 and 4 and the same pattern replicated in the 'Learning Resources' indicator. Our outcomes for the 'Teaching on my course' NSS question theme have traditionally always been strong, and for the eight years preceding the pandemic were 80% and above.

We have a multicampus estate with buildings of varying ages and sizes, and we made rigorous assessments of our spaces in line with government guidance. The widespread use of CO<sub>2</sub> monitors helped determine the appropriate levels of occupancy and this resulted in the imposition of capacity limits on teaching spaces. These restrictions particularly impacted the Creative Arts subject area,

with small teaching spaces and ventilation issues related to the age of the buildings (SE6). The impact is noted in Creative Arts and Design (-3.4% BM), Biosciences (-6.2% BM) and Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmacy (-6.5% BM), where hands-on practice-based application of learning and its practical reinforcement is tied to access to studios, labs, and workshops. The impact is observed particularly in the demographic splits for students from IMD Q1&2 (-5.3% BM) and FSM (-6.1% BM). These are the students who rely more heavily on the provision of campus-based resources, facilities, and equipment. The 2021 NSS Learning Resources sub-question (Q20) reflected the less than expected access by students to our specialist learning and teaching resources and the students did not have the 'Brighton' in-person learning experience that they had expected and wanted. This led to a Learning Resources outcome of 59.2%, whereas this had been a pre-pandemic area of strength with 87.2% achieved in 2019, above both sector average and our benchmark. With the return to an in-person experience on campus and the continued implementation of the E&SE strategic plan, NSS 2022 led to improvement in all institutional NSS metrics. A particularly significant improvement in the Learning Resources theme (+13.9%) was observed, double the sector average increase (7%) during the same period. A significant proportion of our students also responded neutrally, resulting in only 9% disagreeing in 2022 compared to 22% in 2021.

We note the impact of the pandemic on the 2022 NSS outcomes for **Assessment and Feedback** (A&F) and relatedly, Student Voice in Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmacy (A&F -8% BM and Student Voice -9.2% BM) and Biosciences (A&F -10.3% BM, Student Voice -8.9% BM). These students, in their course-level feedback in 2021-22, expressed a strong preference for open-book style assessment undertaken remotely in 2020 and 2021 to continue. However, PSRB requirements meant we had to revert to traditional in-person examinations in 2021-22. To address students' concerns, workshops were provided by the BSSH on examination preparation and revision strategies, and well-being workshops were provided by the Student Support and Guidance Tutor (SSGT) (SE5, SO1), however students did not consider that our responses had adequately addressed their concerns (SE7). In 2022-23 further support for in-person exams has been embedded throughout the curriculum.

We have also recognised the impact of industrial action on our students' satisfaction with their experience. Despite mitigating this impact, by providing additional supervised access to specialist facilities, additional learning resources on the VLE, and by providing tutorials/workshops to supplement teaching activity, our analysis of the 2022 NSS free text comments indicates a negative impact on learning and teaching, and assessment and feedback NSS indicators. 10% of all respondents provided a negative comment relating to the strike action, increasing to 43% in the most affected school.

The experience of the pandemic provided us with the opportunity to think differently and creatively about how we engage with and support our students and our approaches to pedagogy and assessment. Our approach to digital learning has moved at pace during the period since March 2020 (SE6). We are building on our learning to continue our trajectory to a digitally enriched learning and teaching experience, that is active, inclusive, and real world, one that brings the *Practical Wisdom* strategy to life.

### **Developing and valuing our staff: learning and teaching enhancement and innovation**

Our **learning and teaching staff development programme** is coordinated by the University's L&T Hub (SE4). In 2021-22, 78% of full-time staff held a teaching qualification, +5% from 2018-19. 53% of salaried academic staff currently hold an Advance HE Higher Education Academy (HEA)

Fellowship, against a sector benchmark of 46% and a member of staff has been awarded an Advance HE National Teaching Fellowship (NTF) in each year since 2018. New staff with less than three years teaching experience can complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, which has seen 123 colleagues graduate since 2018-19. New staff with substantial experience but no teaching qualification are supported to complete the HEA Fellowship (D1, D2, or D3) via the Professional Recognition and Development (PRD) Scheme. Since 2018-19, 157 colleagues have been awarded a category of Fellowship through the Scheme. Existing Fellows are encouraged to be assessors as well as mentors for new applicants, creating a community of colleagues who promote excellence in learning and teaching.

**Academic practice** is enhanced through a programme of workshops, seminars, and events, including the *Talking About Teaching* online sessions (attended by 206 staff in 2021-22) and our annual Education & Student Experience Conference (attended by an average of 355 staff each year since 2019). Tailored workshops for Course Leaders cover topics such as yearly planning, assessments and examinations, student induction, retention, and engagement. Additional specialist workshops are run for Course Leaders involved with apprenticeship delivery. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) (PVC E&S) holds up to five Course Leader forums a year, to promote dialogue between senior university leaders and academic staff which ensures that Course Leaders have the opportunity to shape policy and practice developments (SE4).

Staff professional development is offered in relation to **race equity and inclusive practice**, which supports the university's commitment to addressing differential outcomes and experiences of minority ethnic students (SE4, SO1, SO5). Established in 2019, our Race Awareness Speaker Series (RASS) aims to facilitate culture change and positive discussion around issues about race, ethnicity, and race equity, with presentations from internal and external speakers. The sessions moved online due to the pandemic, and since 2020 have been attended by over 500 staff, with video recordings gaining a further 246 engagements. RASS is complemented by the wider activities held during Black History Month in October and the outcomes of the institutional Race and Faith Commission which took place in 2021. We also offer race literacy and race allyship training opportunities for all staff. Additionally, external facilitators have provided bespoke race equity training to support teaching staff to develop confidence in talking about race and ethnicity, and to take local actions to improve the experience of minority ethnic students (SE3, SE5, SO1, SO5). The positive impact of this can be seen in the narrowing of the ethnicity degree awarding gap in our APP data set (SO4, SO5, SO6). Staff also have professional development opportunities as part of the IPP Scheme to gain further understanding of decolonising and diversifying the curriculum (SE3, SE4, SE7, SO5).

### **A great place to learn: supporting and empowering our students to succeed**

Our **supportive learning environment** (SE5) has been developed to meet the needs of all our students, recognising their diverse backgrounds, entry qualifications, and prior educational experiences. The support offered looks to develop our students' sense of belonging, maximise their confidence, and enable them to succeed and achieve their goals. Eighteen of our twenty eight subject areas achieve outstanding or very high-quality outcomes for Academic Support, and we have very high-quality indicators for our part-time students, accomplished by a multifaceted and integrated support infrastructure.

Through our **Personal Academic Tutor** (PAT) system, all UG and apprenticeship students are allocated a named PAT who supports students' academic development (SE5, SO1, SO5). The PAT system is implemented across the university in ways that reflect a student's subject discipline or

mode of study, whilst meeting a consistent framework. An example of this approach is the embedding of PAT in taught modules to build supportive learning communities which responds to students' needs in Allied Health, where this has led to outstanding indicators in this subject area (+7.8% BM FT, +3.9 BM PT). The PAT refers students to pastoral support offered by the SSGT and wider Student Services. PAT discussions are facilitated by two online dashboards, the "student look up" which includes ratified grades and details of Learning Support Plans (LSPs) and, since 2021-22, the Engagement Monitoring Dashboard (SE5, SO1, SO5).

UG students can access **information and literacy sessions** delivered by Information Advisors in our four libraries. These include library inductions and in-depth literature search sessions, which are embedded into modules around assessment periods (SE1, SE2, SE5, SO1, SO5). There were 569 teaching sessions delivered in 2021-22 engaging with 7,434 UG students, up from 5,801 in the previous year (2020-21), attributed to the return to campus-based provision.

Support for our **disabled students** is provided by our specialist Disability and Dyslexia team (SE5). We have a higher proportion of FT UG students with a reported disability (22%), cognitive or learning difficulties (8.5%), and with declared mental health conditions (8.1%) than the sector (all OfS registered providers) [20]. Students with declared disabilities can access a LSP and additional support funded by the Disabled Student Allowance. Each year we fund access to dyslexia screening and diagnosis for around 600 students. FT student experience indicators for disability demonstrate very high-quality outcomes in Teaching, Assessment and Feedback, Academic Support and Student Voice, evidence our supportive approach and the impact of LSPs, our Learning and Teaching Inclusive Practice and Accessibility policy, as well as our institutional focus on inclusive practice within the curriculum (SE1, SE2). Additionally, we have collaborated with institutions within the UA on two QAA-funded projects: 'Inclusive Assessment Attributes' [21], and 'Making the Language of Assessment Inclusive' (SE4) [22]. To further support our students' different learning needs, we have introduced Blackboard Ally, a tool which works with the VLE (SE5, SE6). This enables students to view and download course materials in a variety of accessible formats that support different learning needs and requirements. It is widely promoted to students, including those with LSPs and those commuting to university as a tool to support a range of contexts; as a result, between 2020-21 and 2021-22 student downloads of alternative formats increased by 46,255 (from 39,023 to 85,278) [23].

**Physical learning resources**, including purpose-built academic spaces, continue to be progressively enhanced across our multi-campus estate, supported by external and university funding (SE6). A systematic £8m Space Modernisation Programme is ongoing, with investment in learning and teaching spaces, which includes digital technologies and experimental room layouts designed to facilitate active and collaborative learning. The programme receives input from Campus User Groups which includes representation from the BSU (SE6, SE7).

The **Lecture Capture** policy sets out an intention to provide students with an opportunity to review a teaching session following attendance via recording (SE5). The university has committed to provide facilities to record in all learning spaces with a 30+ capacity. As part of an ongoing programme of work, 70% of eligible rooms have now been equipped as part of a £515,000 investment. Since our initial implementation, we have continued to enhance our support and guidance for staff to expand the volume of recorded lectures (SE4). In parallel we are continuing to address student feedback expressing concerns that not all sessions are recorded (SE7). We want to ensure that students fully understand the purpose and scope of the policy and that, for pedagogical reasons, not all teaching sessions are in scope for recording. Recent evidence from our *Checking In*

*With You* (CIWY) Autumn 2022 student survey confirms that lecture capture enables improved engagement from students and supports their learning and revision [24].

Other developments in our **physical resources** have had demonstrable impact on our students learning experience (SE6), for example:

- Elm House, our new academic building, opened at the start of academic year 2021-22 and is used predominantly by our School of Business and Law. At over 7,000sqm, it is a collaborative, practical working environment, with teaching delivered in Technology Enhanced Active Learning rooms. The positive impact on the student experience of the new building and its resources can be seen in the improvement in the NSS 2022 Learning Resource theme versus the 2021 response for Business and Management (+15.6%), Economics (+36.6%), and Law (+28.6%) and the specialised equipment sub-question: Business and Management (+14.9%), Economics (+50%), and Law (+22.8%).
- Investment of £45,000 in the 'QLab' (2019) in the School of Humanities and School Science has provided a shared "living room" space for simulated role play to support social work learning and teaching and dedicated qualitative research methods facilities for all students. In 2021-22, additional investment was made in specialist child-friendly digital learning tools and play equipment to support student research with children. The impact can be seen in the school-level NSS Learning Resource specialised equipment sub-question which increased by 24.5% (from 49.5% in 2021 to 74.3% in 2022).
- The Psychology Lab includes the Creative Methods Lab and Applied Cognition Lab, with individual booths for data collection, and computer access. Over £50,000 has been invested in specialist research-quality equipment (bench-mounted and wearable eye trackers, and behaviour and psychophysiology monitoring equipment) and specialist software packages, this resulted in the BSc (Hons) Psychology NSS Learning Resource (specialist equipment) question achieving of 95.2%. In 2020-21 we invested an additional £7,000 in VR, electroencephalogram (EEG) and other equipment in response to student research interests and curriculum developments. This equipment enables staff to perform live experiments in lectures and the eye tracking and psychophysiology kit enable students to generate meaningful data in research methods classes and experience using the equipment first hand. The impact of this investment can be seen in the BSc (Hons) Psychology specialist equipment NSS outcome in 2022 of 82.6% (up from 36.4% in 2021 where the lack access had significant impact).
- We also have a dedicated clinical skills suite, with simulated pharmacy, patient mannequins, control and observation rooms, and a bespoke feedback/streaming room, the impact of which can be seen in the NSS Learning Resources (specialised equipment) outcome for the Pharmacy course which achieved over 90% in 2017, 2018 and 2019.
- Dedicated, purpose-built facilities support our Performing Arts subject area to achieve outstanding TEF indicators (+9.1% BM). Learning resources include four digital production/post-production studios, two recording booths, a sound diffusion lab for spatial projection experimentation, multichannel sound, and unconventional speaker configurations.
- Students in BSMS benefit from substantial investment in digital resources leading to innovative teaching (SE1, SE2, SE3). The use of 3-D printing of anatomical structures for learning and teaching was a recipient of a 2018 Advancing Scholarship in Medical Education Award (SE4).

With a **library** on each campus, the student and staff-centred ethos of our library team is recognised in their continued certification to the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Standard, which a 2022 external assessment described as "*fully justified and well deserved*" (SE5). Student feedback is

considered by the Customer Service Planning Group (SE7). Library opening hours are also reviewed each year, taking student feedback and usage statistics into consideration. Further examples of where student feedback has led to changes include:

- A 'Suggest a book' service, linked from the library catalogue, so students can request acquisitions in any format, any topic, and from any publisher. Over £41,000 has been spent on suggestions by students since its launch in 2017, resulting in 806 acquisitions.
- A 'Scan and Deliver' service to provide students with scans of print journal articles and book chapters when they could not visit the library.
- Continued investment in e-resources to support student learning, resulting in a 65% increase in expenditure between financial year 2019-20 and 2020-21 (from £201,900 to £333,900).

In December 2021 we were awarded a £1.695m **OfS capital grant** to invest in multi-disciplinary advanced simulation facilities, including augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and extended reality (XR). New state-of-the-art equipment and software has enhanced our visualisation and simulation suites particularly in Health and Engineering subject areas. This includes the modernisation of our Digital Construction (DigiCon) Lab, where students focus on aspects relating to digitality in the built environment, architecture, and construction. The grant has also enabled the purchase of additional patient simulation mannequins for our clinical skills suite to offer students a more immersive learning experience. £800,000 has also been invested in specialist robotics equipment to support Advanced Manufacturing, Computing, Electronics, and future planned developments in Mechatronics (SE2, SE3, SE6, SO1, SO5).

### **Working in partnership with students to enhance their experience and outcomes**

The university enjoys a positive and mutually beneficial **partnership with the staff and sabbatical officers in the BSU** (SE7). Alongside representation on all committees and strategic steering and working groups, the BSU holds student positions on Academic Board and the Board of Governors. The BSU Education campaigns have led to impactful change in our policy and practice, including, in the last four years:

- anonymity in assessment (SE1, SE2) and the introduction of anonymous exam boards
- enabling student self-certification for our extenuating circumstances process
- co-production of the Lecture Capture policy, implemented in 2020-21
- consistent approaches to student representation on school level committees from 2019-20
- implementing, in phases from 2019-20, a new mid-module check-in survey.

There has been significant impact arising from the partnership with the BSU in the work to support **differential student experiences and outcomes**. This includes the work relating to commuter students, repeating students, minority ethnic students, *Belong at Brighton*, and *Belong at Brighton Extra*, our approaches to welcome, induction, transition and developing a sense of belonging (SE5, SO1, SO5).

In collaboration with the BSU, we have a well-developed **Course Representative** system. There are approximately 650 UG course reps, including those in the university's partnership provision. The university supports the BSU in recruiting reps during the welcome programme, and the BSU is an integral part of the *Belong at Brighton* induction and welcome framework. The operation of school Staff-Student forums at course level are formalised with a consistent agenda. Excellent practice in the Education and Teaching subject area (+3.4% BM Student Voice) is being shared across schools,

which includes reps meeting regularly with year leaders, students involved in agenda setting, and supportive pre-meetings held in advance of whole-school Education and Student Experience committees. We have eight subject areas, and our PT cohort with outstanding Student Voice indicators, and a further four subject areas with very high-quality outcomes. In the Economics subject area (+7.9% BM) student feedback led to the replacement of general skills modules with subject focused modules, while Town Hall structured forums, introduced during the pandemic, have continued post-COVID-19. In Nursing and Midwifery (+4.6% BM) Course Leaders meet monthly with course reps and issues raised have been acted on swiftly. Course reps are invited to meet regularly with the PVC E&S and provide input into the development of strategically aligned initiatives. The Vice-Chancellor also regularly meets with her student reference group, which is made up of a cross-section of students (SE7).

We adopted a universal online systemised approach to **mid-module surveys** in 2019, with questions that aim to identify issues being experienced during the module so that tutors can respond in-module to facilitate timely improvements (SE7). The approach, developed in partnership with the BSU, helps to ensure that the feedback loop is closed and supports a consistent student experience. During the pandemic, student feedback was also captured using three **pulse surveys** which informed planning for 2021-22 (SE7). Data were analysed at institutional and school level, and by student characteristics (ethnicity, gender, disability, age), to understand the differential impact of the pandemic on different student groups [26]. Survey responses informed the development of the DEL resources (SE4). Negative comments received chimed with the NSS outcomes for Learning Resources and the NSS 2020 COVID-19 questions. We established our **Checking In With You (CIWY)** survey in autumn 2021 to develop our understanding of students' self-perception of their sense of belonging, self-confidence, and engagement, which are all shown to be key predictors of student retention and success (Advance HE 2012 What Works project [25]). This internal survey runs twice each year to provide ongoing monitoring of trends [24]. Outcomes of the survey have informed the developments of BSSH workshops to improve academic confidence (SE5, SO1, SO5) and development of DEL resources (SE4).

We held a **Black Lives Matter (BLM) Action Forum** in July 2020 in partnership with the BSU, to listen to the voices of our minority ethnic students so that their experiences and needs directly informed future actions (SE5, SE7). The forum enabled students to meet with UEB, following which, UEB made ten commitments which were added to the REC action plan. A key action was determining a more appropriate term than *BAME*, which was completed in 2022, with student engagement through the BSU resulting in the adoption of the term minority ethnic. A further key action was the institution-wide roll out of the Inclusive Practice Partnerships Scheme, an immediate acceleration against the planned phased implementation. A follow-up Anti-Racist Student forum was held in March 2021 to provide an update on the commitments. Ongoing actions include holding school level staff/student anti-racist forums, monitored by REC Steering Group.

In Allied Health, the '**Bridging the Gap to Leadership**' placement (in collaboration with Canterbury Christ Church University and funded by Health Education England) enables students to create resources for educators which address the experiences of racism, microaggressions and unconscious bias faced by minority ethnic students on Health and Social Care practice placements. The resources have received over 4,000 views and through sharing at practice educator training sessions have reached over 700 practitioners to date. 'Bridging the Gap' won the University Alliance "Alliance Award" (June 2022) and was shortlisted for an HE Innovate Award (December 2022) (SE3, SE4, SE5, SE7).



Through our co-produced and co-owned (with the BSU) **Student Engagement in Quality policy** students are recruited annually to be paid student representatives on all validation and periodic review panels. Training gives these students the confidence to use their voice effectively and fully participate in the review and approval process. The BSU also nominates students as full members on disciplinary panels, while BSU-nominated officers are members of the appeals panel and can observe the operation of our extenuating circumstances process (SE7).

We have recently launched a strategic **Academic Optimisation project**, in partnership with the BSU (SE7), which seeks to improve the student experience and student outcomes through changes in our academic year structure, course structure optimisation and improvements in consistency and efficiency of educational delivery. This includes addressing matters raised by students such as the timing of our referral assessment period and exam timetable communication. Within this project we are also picking up on our pre-pandemic work to further improve the design of timetables to support our students' study/work/life balance, which also recognises the cost-of-living crisis and its impact on our students (SE5).

We have developed and implemented a robust **communications plan** to close the feedback loop to students throughout the year, to enhance student understanding of how their voice has shaped our university and our approaches (SE7).

### 3. Student Outcomes

#### **Continuation, Completion and Progression: realising potential and shaping futures**

Through our E&SE strategic plan and most recently our *Putting Students at the Heart* workplan we have developed an **evidence-based student experience which supports our students in achieving their educational and career goals**, evidenced by our very-high quality and outstanding progression indicators (SO3). Using sector and internal research and evaluation we ensure that we are developing and implementing practices which support continuation, completion, and progression, based on our knowledge and understanding of who our students are. This approach has also led to outstanding educational gains for our students as evidenced in a range of data sources (SO5, SO6).

**Student Support and Guidance Tutors (SSGTs)** are a key part of our approach to supporting the continuation and completion of our UG students by offering support to all students, with a particular focus on those from under-represented groups (SO1, SE5, SO5). SSGTs are part of the central Student Wellbeing service and support students with a range of matters, referring on to further support where required. Each subject area has a dedicated SSGT with a unique knowledge of their subject area and focuses on enabling students to navigate challenges that may arise, whilst continuing with their learning and achieving their potential. In 2021-22 30% of the entire student body engaged with their SSGT (n=5,661). All students who engage with a SSGT are invited to complete an anonymous online survey at the end of each academic year, 78.7% of the 460 students who responded in 2021-22 agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, *'This support enabled me to continue as a student at the university'* [27]. In spring 2020 we increased our capacity to deliver wellbeing workshops within the curriculum which aim to improve students' continuation. In 2020-21, 793 students engaged in academic wellbeing workshops and 1,476 in 2021-22. Workshops are developed in partnership with Course Leaders; examples include building resilience, managing exam stress, and giving oral presentations. Workshops are also developed in collaboration with other teams, as part of our holistic support for student achievement and employability. These include a

“Confident Transition into Work” workshop delivered with the Careers & Employability Service, and “Managing Time and Revision Schedules” in collaboration with the BSSH.

**Belong at Brighton** is our longitudinal approach to student transition, spanning from acceptance through to the end of the first semester (SE5, SO1, SO5). The aim of the programme is to improve students’ sense of belonging. At course level this is delivered through a consistent, university-wide framework with welcome activities focused on active student engagement. The course-level framework was developed in 2020 from existing discipline-based approaches, and considered recommendations made in the ethnicity degree awarding gap institutional research to make induction processes more inclusive (SE7) [9]. The framework includes pre-entry academic activities for new students and a welcome week programme for all students. All UG students also have access to online resources to further support their transition into and through the university (SE6). An extended course-level induction programme for level 4 and Integrated Foundation Year (IFY) students is a timetabled, non-curriculum touchpoint with course teams, which the 2020 COVID-19 Pulse Survey (SE7) indicated that students valued. An extended induction introduces support for student continuation, completion, and progression such as Student Money Advice, the SSGT, and the *Brighton Works* programme (SE5, SO1, SO2, SO3, SO5). Evaluation of the course level framework, underpinned by a Theory of Change, will establish if there is an association between engagement and students’ continuation and completion. Evidence of the impact of *Belong at Brighton* can already be seen in the autumn 2022 *CIWY* survey (934 level 4/IFY responses), 86.3% had a positive response to the *Belonging* theme, with 90.4% stating the university felt welcoming [24]. Our most recent *CIWY* survey (autumn 2022) demonstrates the impact our approach has on developing a student’s ‘sense of belonging’. Our UG students reported an overall 81% agree score for belonging, a 7% increase over last year’s results (1,800 responses, 13% response rate) (SE7, SO1, SO5).

**Belong at Brighton Extra** was developed in response to student feedback in the COVID-19 Pulse Survey (SE7), which highlighted that remote teaching was leading to feelings of isolation and disconnectedness due to fewer opportunities to engage with peers outside of (remote) module contact. In October 2020, working in partnership with the BSU, *Belong at Brighton Extra* provided funding for student-led peer to peer, co-curricular and extracurricular activities to develop students’ sense of belonging and sense of community (SO1, SO2, SE5). *Belong at Brighton Extra* continued in 2021-22, planned and delivered by Course Leaders, to provide students returning to an in-person academic experience with curriculum enrichment and student engagement activities which developed a sense of belonging and connectivity to their cohort to support continuation and completion (SE5, SO1). A post-activity survey (in 2021-22) demonstrated that 94% of level 4/IFY students who responded (n=49) stated that they “began to feel part of my peer group, my environment or my subject area” and 96% of students from level 5/6 (n=75) stated that “the activity has helped me to feel I belong to my course community/learning community”. The programme will carry on in 2022-23, with a continued focus on funding activities that support student continuation and completion (SE7).

**In-Year Module Retrieval** (IYMR) supports effective transition to HE by encouraging Integrated Foundation Year (IFY) and level 4 students to engage with academic feedback to improve their work, and to retrieve early failure (SE1, SE5, SO1, SO2, SO5). A small pilot in 2016-17 was broadened to the whole institution in 2017-18 and included a wider range of assessment modes. Evaluation undertaken in 2018 demonstrates that the impact of the IYMR on student progression is positive [28]. 73% of eligible students who engaged with IYMR converted their failed assessment into a pass grade. IYMR was paused during the pandemic, having been superseded by the ‘No Detriment’

policy; it has since been reinstated as a mechanism to support transition for our students, and to develop early academic confidence.

The university monitors student **attendance and engagement** with the VLE to facilitate the identification of students who are at risk of non-continuation through the development of data analytics and their presentation via a student engagement dashboard, launched in November 2021 (SE5, SO1, SO2, SO5). This gives staff access to course-level aggregated VLE engagement data and the ability to identify students with no/low engagement relative to their cohort. "Checking-in" emails are sent in stage 1 of the process which aim to motivate students with low engagement and signposts the student to the SSGT, PAT, or Course Leader. We have set our threshold for 'low engagement' at a level which ensures that we identify the maximum number of students who would benefit from support. Between its launch in November 2021 and June 2022, over 4,000 'checking in' stage 1 emails were sent to students with low/no engagement, resulting in students using the prompt to engage with the SSGT and/or PAT tutor and raise concerns/barriers to engagement which have led to support interventions being put in place. Students who continue to present with low no engagement receive stage 2 and stage 3 communications, in 2021-22, 1200 progressed to stage 2 and 313 stage 3, indicative of the impact of the system has re-engaging students. We have added the identification of **repeating students**, who we have recognised are at greater risk of withdrawal particularly at level 4 (SE5, SO1, SO2, SO5), to the dashboard to enable PAT tutors to identify students in this group and facilitate earlier intervention. Student attendance data was added to the dashboard in 2022-23, enabled by the delivery of an attendance monitoring system and return to on-campus teaching. We are using a Theory of Change evaluation methodology to measure the impact of the stage 1 emails on student continuation and completion (SO6).

Our very high-quality **student progression** indicators (+1.5% BM FT and +1.2% BM PT) indicate the impact of our approaches to support student progression (SO3). The *Brighton Works* programme aims to support our students to achieve their personal and professional goals and aspirations from the moment they enter the university. The programme, overseen by the university's Careers & Employability Service, seeks to embed employability in the curriculum and empower students to build confidence, enhance their employability, and enable them to make a difference to the world. Our Careers & Employability Service was awarded the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services Quality Mark Award in 2022. This follows changes to the Service made in response to an extensive review in 2018, which included external scrutiny of our provision across the institution. Careers & Employability has also engaged with the BSU and employed Student Ambassadors to support the further development of services in ways that take account of student voice. In addition, during summer 2022 (SE7), two interns were recruited  
to develop resources related to the university's Graduate Attributes (SO4).

Employability is one of the themes that underpins our curriculum design (SE2, SE3). **Placements, internships, volunteering**, and opportunities to engage in **work-related learning** are available to all UG students through the implementation of the CDF. Biosciences (+6.4% BM progression) is an outstanding example of embedded employability, where career progression is introduced from welcome week and continues throughout the curriculum. CV workshops are delivered within the curriculum and a Careers Day for all students on Ecology is coupled with an MS Teams area which serves as a jobs board (SE5, SO3, SO5). Authentic assessments and live briefs enable students to develop employability skills which are supported by a monthly cross-level timetabled journal club (SE1, SE2, SE3).

**PSRB courses** with placement elements lead to outstanding student progression outcomes (Education and teaching +10.5% BM; Health and Social Care +5.6% BM; Allied Health +4.5% BM; and Nursing +1.3% BM). An optional year in industry is available to students studying STEM and Business and Law subjects and this leads to outstanding progression, with over 93% of STEM students who completed a placement year in 2018-19 and 2019-20 gaining highly skilled employment. Outstanding progression in other subject areas for example, Sport and Exercise Science (+5.9% BM), is supported by professional practice. Shorter placement modules also lead to very high-quality progression in Media, Journalism and Communication (SO3, SO5).

Our student business **start-up support service**, Beepurple, is available to students and alumni. In the last four years Beepurple has delivered 38 extra-curricular workshops, attended by 1,804 students and 66 in-curricular entrepreneurship lectures on self-employment, entrepreneurship, and small business innovation (SO3, SO5). The Beepurple team also offer one-to-one support to students and alumni wishing to start a business, freelance project, or community project, with 693 individual support meetings taking place over the last four years. Each summer, Beepurple hosts a three-day start-up course for final-year students and recent graduates. In the most recent Graduate Outcomes survey, 9% of our graduates (FT, first degree, home) reported they were either running their own business, self-employed/ freelancing, or developing a creative, artistic, or professional portfolio, 2.2% points above the sector average. The proportion of our graduates in this type of employment has also increased over the past three years (+ 7.6% in 2017-18) [29].

Our **mentoring schemes** aim to support students to continue, achieve, and then progress into graduate level employment or further study (SE5, SO1, SO5). Our schemes support students in working towards their goals and objectives by working with a trained volunteer professional mentor. 661 students have been mentored in the last four years, and more than a quarter (28%) of these students were mentored by university alumni. Our mentoring programme *Momentum* is open to all students, although priority is given to students from under-represented groups. Four additional programmes target specific groups of students:

- Identity Match Programme: students are matched to a mentor according to their background heritage or a shared experience of being racialised.
- Graduate mentoring: for final year students.
- Men in Primary: male students are matched with a mentor who is a male primary school teacher.
- LGBTQ+ Uni-Amex mentoring: LGBTQ+ identifying students are paired with professionals from the American Express LGBTQ+ Pride Network.

An evaluation conducted in 2021-22 compared students who engaged with the programme to a control group of students with similar characteristics. This demonstrated a positive association between engaging with mentoring and achieving improved outcomes. Mentored students (n=124) were more likely to achieve a 'good' (first or a 2:1) degree (+12%) and progress into the following year of study (+17%) than those in the control group [12] (SE5, SO1, 2, SO5, SO6).

Our solid and consistently very high-quality performance on the indicators for the **continuation** of our students is clear and is visible across all different student characteristics, with all demographic split data revealing outcomes broadly in-line with our benchmarks and, for some, more positive continuation rates for our students with a disability, that are minority ethnic, and that are from Quintile 1 ABCS and Mature students (21-30 and 31+). The continuation rates for our PT students also follow a similar strong pattern, with outstanding outcomes (+5.4% BM). Of the 11 subject areas materially below benchmark, four (Economics; History and Archaeology; Biosciences; and Sociology, Social

Policy and Anthropology) have improved in the most recent year of the aggregated data to be very high-quality when compared to the benchmark with further work being undertaken through the *Brighton Achieves* workstream to continue to improve continuation rates. These include BSSH interventions and Attendance and Engagement monitoring (SE5, SO1, SO5).

We have traditionally measured our performance on **non-continuation** through assessment of the HESA sector non-continuation performance indicators, where our outcomes at the institutional level for all FT first-degree students show a historic trend of broadly in line with or below (i.e. positive for non-continuation) benchmark (SO2). These indicators have also enabled us to closely monitor the outcomes of our entrants from low participation neighbourhoods, which subsequently became one of our institutional targets in our APP with an ambition to reduce the gap between POLAR Q5 and Q1 students. The most recent release of the OfS APP data reported that we had narrowed the gap to just 2%, below the sector average of almost 4% (SE5, SO4, SO5, SO6).

**Completion** for our PT students is of outstanding quality (+9.2% BM), our FT completion has been below benchmark for those with a census date of 2019-20 and 2020-21, where previously our outcomes were of very high-quality. However, our FT provision has very high-quality completion rates for our students of Asian, mixed and other ethnic backgrounds, as well as for our mature students (SO2). This reflects our coordinated efforts in *Brighton Achieves*, and in our APP work, to address inequality gaps at the institution where these groups have been specifically monitored (SE5, SO5). Eleven of our FT subject areas are of very high-quality completion, and all but one PT subject areas are of outstanding quality. Several FT subject areas are increasing in completion over recent years, despite being below benchmark in their aggregated indicator, and have become very high-quality in the most recent year of data, such as Chemistry, Philosophy and Religious Studies, and History and Archaeology. Performing Arts and Combined and General Studies have also improved in the most recent year of underlying data to outstanding quality.

Strong positive outcomes for our students are also evident as determined by the OfS in their metric on projected completion and employment from entrant data, **Proceed**, a composite measure of projected completion and progression [30]. The university's overall score was 64% in the latest dataset, which is 3% above sector average, is above our benchmark, is in the upper quartile compared to all English institutions, and also higher than any post-92 university. Over half of our subject areas reveal above sector average outcomes for our students, including for example: Allied Health (almost 20% above); Education and Teaching (10% above); and we have four subject areas where our scores are in the top ten highest percentage Proceed in the sector (Nursing and Midwifery 2/48; Allied Health 5/49; Education and Teaching 6/46 and Sport and Exercise Sciences 10/46) (SO1, SO2, SO3).

Our above benchmark performance over all years is testament to the work undertaken to ensure all our graduates are fully supported to succeed in their future activities of choice (SO3). The **Progression** to highly skilled employment or further study is our strongest TEF indicator, with outstanding progression in our split indicators for black students (+4% BM) and Asian students (+2.7% BM) and students aged 31+ (+3.7% BM).

Many of our students have engaged in, or completed, some form of study (including 12-month PGT Masters) between graduating and the census date of the Graduate Outcomes survey. We consider interim study to be a positive outcome for students following completion of courses at Brighton (SO1). When this **interim study** outcome is included 23 of our 28 subject areas have outstanding or very

high-quality progression indicators, and the university's overall aggregated indicator demonstrates outstanding quality.

In addition to the very high-quality outcomes for those entering highly skilled employment/further study, we also have outstanding outcomes for the proportion of our FT first degree graduates entering **employment or further study** with above sector average outcomes across all three years (University of Brighton: 92%; 89%; 91%) (Sector: 90%; 88%; 90%) and above our University Alliance mission group and all post-92 institutional comparators. Not only do high proportions of our graduates go into work or study and, of those, significant numbers into highly skilled employment, we ensure that their time with us means that they go on to activities that are meaningful to them (86%), that fit with their future plans (77%), and that they utilise what they learnt during their studies (71%) [29]. The majority of our outcomes on these indicators have every year been above sector averages (SE2, SO3).

Our graduates not only succeed in gaining meaningful, relevant, and highly skilled employment but they also continue to thrive long after graduation (SO3). Our performance in the Department for Education's **longitudinal education outcomes (LEO)** data has consistently demonstrated the long-term educational gains that the University of Brighton experience offers. The 2022 LEO data show that three years after graduation the median earnings for a Brighton graduate is £26,700 which ranks in the top third of all institutions (46/150) [31]. Our outcomes are strong, not only at institutional level but also across the majority of our subjects. 70% of our subject areas are in the top 50% of all HEIs for median earnings three years after graduation; within these, our graduates' earnings from Architecture, Building and Planning; Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmacy; Allied Health; Education and Teaching; and Sport and Exercise Sciences subject areas are among the top 25% of institutions.

The LEO data (2022) also now include further analyses that reveal more about the **outstanding educational gain** made by our graduates and their distance travelled, with the inclusion of outcomes that take prior attainment into account (SO3, SO5, SO6). Our data show that across a range of disciplines, our students' median earnings three years after graduation, when compared to other providers in the same prior attainment band, are in the top 10% of all institutions for Education and Teaching, Business and Management, and Psychology. Our strong longitudinal educational gains are also well evidenced in another metric included in the DfE's LEO data analysis, where 86.2% of our graduates five years after graduation are in sustained employment or further study, just above the sector mean.

### **Educational gains: transforming lives**

Our strategic approaches are built on the principle that we understand who our students are, their diverse backgrounds and entry qualifications. This knowledge provides us with the context to develop and deliver an education and student experience which enables them to travel a significant distance to fulfil future ambitions. Our E&SE strategic plan **articulates the range of educational gains** we intend our students to achieve and how we support our students to achieve those gains [2] (SO4).

Further articulation is provided in our **University of Brighton Graduate Attributes**, a set of qualities and characteristics that students develop or build on, through the knowledge, skills and experience they gain while a student with us [32]. The Attributes are transferable beyond the discipline studied and were developed through research with employers about what they want from a graduate, talking

to teaching staff about what students learn and how transferable skills grow, and by engagement with our students themselves (SE3, SE7, SO5).

Our APP identifies the groups of students who benefit from **tailored approaches to achieve the gains** (SO5). Others are identified through the strategic work of *Brighton Achieves*. Since 2019 we have had a strategic focus on narrowing the **Ethnicity Degree Awarding Gaps** (white/black and white/Asian) as identified in our APP [6] and REC action plan [11]. The approach, informed by our institutional research (SE7) and underpinned by the UUK/NUS “#ClosingTheGap 5 steps” [33], includes activities and interventions detailed elsewhere in this submission, including Inclusive Practice Partnerships Scheme (SE2, SE5), Anonymity in Assessment (SE1), Attendance and Engagement (SE5, SO5), the Belong at Brighton Framework for transition and welcome (SO1), BLM Forum adding to REC Actions (SE7), Staff Development opportunities and RASS (SE4), Identity Match Mentoring (SO1), Lecture Capture (SE5, SE6), Blackboard Ally (SE5, SE6), COVID-19 Equalities Impact Assessment (SE5, SE6, SE7), and the introduction of online EDI training on which, to date, over 900 students have self-enrolled (SE5, SE6).

Students entering with low UCAS tariff scores in seven subject areas (18 courses), including Engineering and Pharmacology, Toxicology and Pharmacy, study on an **integrated foundation year (IFY) degree** to secure additional knowledge and skills before embarking on level 4 study (SE1, SE2, SE5, SO5). IFY students experience a curriculum and teaching practices which bridge between level 3 and level 4, using the principles of transition pedagogies. This approach has been highly effective in delivering positive student outcomes. In 2019-20, the first year of available data, students who studied on the IFY had a 5% higher rate of 1st class degrees compared with the non-IFY students in the same subjects. Overall, IFY students have 80% 'good' degrees, 1% higher than non-IFY in the same subjects [34]. The Institution of Mechanical Engineers stated in their 2020 PRSB visit report, “*The Panel was impressed with the inclusive nature of the programme design, specifically the foundation year which allows for students with non-traditional backgrounds to benefit from and achieve a high-quality degree*” [35]. This commendation was also echoed in the report from the Institution of Engineering and Technology [36].

Our approach to supporting **disabled students** over the last three years has seen the 'good' degree awarding gap between UK domiciled FT students with disability declared versus no disability declared close from 6 percentage points in 2018-19 to 1 percentage point in 2020-21. Achieved by a cohesive wrap-around support package for students, with the Disability and Dyslexia team sitting within the Student Wellbeing Service, and the introduction, in 2021, of academic Inclusive Practice (IP) Leads in each school. The IP leads oversee LSP implementation, improve consistency, and further mitigate barriers to learning and teaching by facilitating connections between the students' academic experience and the holistic support from the wellbeing and disability support teams (SE5, SO1, SO5).

We are committed to supporting **estranged students** and **care-experienced students** as a signatory of the Stand-Alone Pledge (2017) and the Care Leaver Covenant (2020). We are also a member of the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL). Estranged and care-experienced students are eligible for £1,000 university bursaries in each year of study, as well as guaranteed year-round accommodation. These students have a dedicated SSGT, who provide wellbeing support and guide their transition into higher education. Academic skills support is available from the BSSH, with each care-experienced student offered six hours of 1:1 tutorial time



with a BSSH tutor. Both groups of students have priority access to the university's mentoring schemes and have guaranteed interviews for paid Student Ambassador roles (SE5, SO1, SO5).

In the last year we have focused on the experiences and outcomes of students who are **repeating a year of study**. Student withdrawal data, considered monthly, have shown that in the academic years 2020-21 and 2021-22, students who were repeating level 4 or IFY were at greater risk of non-continuation. A set of recommendations was developed by a task and finish group to support the repeating students experience, with the implementation tailored within schools to suit the specific disciplines. These include direct and supportive communications to repeating students from the SSGT, BSSH group tutorials and 1:1 tutorials to support academic development, repeating students' drop-in sessions to build a community of students with shared experiences, and the designation of an academic staff member as the primary contact for repeating students, all of which complements actions taken as part of the Attendance and Engagement monitoring project (SE5, SO1, SO5).

We have a well-established approach to **evaluation and evaluating education gains** made by our students (SO6). A **Monitoring and Evaluation Framework** (MEF) was initially designed in 2016-17 to meet the evaluation requirements related to the APP. The MEF now guides the evaluation of our E&SE activity, through an annual process informed by sector guidance from the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO). The MEF is part of our university Evaluation Strategy, which has three main areas of focus: increasing the level and volume of evaluation, increasing the dissemination of evaluation outcomes within and outside of the institution, and promoting collaborative evaluation. We seek to keep building a culture of evaluation across the university and develop an evidence-based understanding of what works in enabling our students to achieve the educational gains we articulate to them (SO4, SO5). This also ensures we continue to make progress on our E&SE priorities and meet our APP targets and milestones.

We have employed the Guardian University League Table methodology to demonstrate and enhance our understanding of our student's educational gains using their now well-established '**value added**' (**VA**) **indicator** (SO6). This measure assesses the likelihood of a student achieving a 'good' degree relative to other students with similar entry qualifications. For an individual student, we compare their success to similar students, i.e. those studying the same subject and with similar entry qualifications across the sector; for a group of students, we measure the group's success to the proportional sector average for students studying the same subjects and with similar entry qualifications.

The **VA scores** for our FT first degree UK-domiciled students have revealed consistent positive outcomes across both the 2018-19 and 2019-20 graduating cohorts (the most recent data available) [37]. This means that our students were more likely to achieve a 'good' degree than the sector average for students with similar entry qualifications. These positive VA scores for all of our students were also true across various student characteristic groups; whether young or mature, a disability or no disability, male or female, students were more likely to achieve a 'good' degree at Brighton than students with similar entry qualifications across the sector (SO6).

Our students' educational gains and achievements can also be evidenced in our **degree outcomes** and the proportion of 'good' degrees awarded over time (SO6). The latest year of (OfS) data, 2020-21, showed that 86% of our first-degree undergraduates achieved a first or upper second-class degree, taking our students outcomes to be broadly in-line with sector averages [38]. Whilst these outcomes are positive for our total student population, ongoing analysis of our APP milestones and targets identified some statistically significant gaps between several student groups (for example,

between white and black, and white and Asian students, and those from IMD Q5 and Q1). The most recent data from the OfS Access and Participation dashboard [39] reveal not only a narrowing of gaps between these groups, including the black/white degree awarding gap from 30% points in 2018-19 to 11% points in 2020-21 (vs sector 17.4% points in 2020-21); as well as between young and mature, and those with no disability reported and disability reported, but also that none of the remaining gaps across any of the different groups were statistically significant. These extremely positive student outcomes have been an area of focus for the university, having set ambitious institutional targets in our five-year APP [10]; that all milestones were met and exceeded in the latest year of published data, as well as moving us to an improved position in comparison to sector outcomes where gaps remain wider and significant (SE1, SE2, SE5, SO1, SO4, SO5, SO6).

## Concluding comments

We are committed to *Putting Students at the Heart* of everything we do to ensure outstanding student experience and outcomes. We have a clear understanding of who our students are and the critical importance of inclusivity and belonging as principles which underpin our delivery and our continual enhancement of the educational experience. Our pedagogical approach to support transition into, through and out of the university, combined with our highly applied practice-based learning, means our students achieve outstanding graduate outcomes. Our students commence with predominantly low/mid entry tariffs yet their 'distance travelled' and educational gain is compelling evidence of excellence.

We have a robust evidence-based understanding of our current student experience and student outcomes positions, which we use to inform actions to continually improve the quality and consistency of our students' education across the university and within the academic schools and subject areas. In 2022-23 we have introduced a revised Annual Quality Assessment process, through which we are using OfS student outcomes and experience indicators, to further assure and enhance our provision. In doing so, we will continue to work in partnership with our students, as well as our staff community. As demonstrated, our targeted activity has already had positive impact on student experience, student outcomes, and the narrowing of degree awarding gaps. We will continue to build on existing areas of strength and excellence as demonstrated in the Educational Gains evidence.

Moving forward, the implementation of our *Practical Wisdom: Brighton 2025* strategy, facilitated by our new school structures and leadership models, provides energy and focus to ensure an outstanding student experience and outstanding outcomes for all our students.

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