

SECTION 1: PROVIDER CONTEXT

This Provider Submission for the University of Kent was written in partnership by a joint working group of University staff and sabbatical officers of our students' union (Kent Union), who have submitted their own supplementary Student Submission. These submissions have been approved by senior leaders of the University and Kent Union, respectively.

The University of Kent was established in 1965. Our student community (2022/23) currently comprises 17,617 students in total, of whom 81% are undergraduates, are postgraduate taught and are postgraduate research students. The University has two UK campuses: Canterbury (est. 1965, 12,572 UG students, 132 nationalities) and Medway (est. 2005, 1,476 UG students, 62 nationalities). The latter is a shared campus with University of Greenwich (joint Pharmacy degree) and Canterbury Christ Church University (joint medical degree, but Canterbury-based) providing professionally orientated undergraduate and postgraduate courses (e.g., business, social work, criminology, journalism, music). In addition, there are two specialist postgraduate centres in Brussels and Paris. Following an institutional restructure in 2020, undergraduate teaching at the University of Kent is delivered by 27 academic Schools organised within six Divisions and one Directorate.

Our submission provides both a narrative analysis of our TEF datasets and additional evidence to support our features of excellence in both aspects – **Student Experience** (Section 2) and **Student Outcomes** (Section 3). In line with our previous submission (TEF Gold in 2017), we will focus on aspects of our provision that are distinctive and highlight, specifically, our trajectory in terms of changes in our demographic profile of students and staff, plus the innovations and challenges faced during the pandemic, to illustrate lessons learned during this period and the progress we have made towards achieving the goals of our Kent Strategic 2025 Plan. The University's educational mission remains grounded in our long-term ambition to serve an increasingly diverse population of students, adding value to their education and student experience. In taking forward this strategic vision, we seek to:

- continue to **combine our strengths in teaching and research** (rising by 11 places to 38th overall in the Times Higher Education's ranking for overall quality in the REF2021) to add value to both our education and student experience as a dual intensity University, by building aspiration and supporting ambition in partnership with students to develop employability and whole life skills.
- provide **education focused on individual needs** through the development of our portfolio in ways that serves our increasingly diverse student population, by adapting the ways in which we deliver teaching, assessment and student support, to close awarding gaps between under-represented groups and their peers in terms of access, engagement, and outcomes.
- cultivate and embrace **partnerships with our students and Kent Union** to develop more effective methods of responding to the student voice, to develop our curriculum and more integrated co-curricular education and opportunities, and to engage with organisations and employers in ways that strengthen graduate outcomes that underpin our economy, health and society.
- deliver **digital transformation** through effective, creative and innovative ways to enhance our students' learning and experience, that enrich learning opportunities for our

students and enhance activity to tackle global challenges, supported by improvements in our processes, infrastructure and physical estate.

- promote **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** to ensure that all students can achieve their potential, through tailored support and interventions that foster a sense of belonging and academic community, free of discrimination and bias, that harnesses the student voice through active participation and engagement.

‘We have ambition for our community and want to share knowledge to challenge and transform our students, giving learners of all ages and backgrounds the chance to contribute to positive change, improving their lives and those of others...through an approach that engages our students as active participants in their learning experiences’ (Kent 2025 Plan).

The key achievements in our mid-term review of the Plan include the following milestones. We have:

- enhanced our portfolio of courses and modules as part of our review of the size and shape of the University. We have grown our engineering offer, launched our medical degree (Kent and Medway Medical School, KMMS) and our Institute of Cultural and Creative Industries. Subjects including Computing and Sport and Exercise Sciences have been consolidated at our Canterbury Campus (2021). We have also enhanced pathways through education by expanding our Higher and Degree Apprenticeships offer, as well as our Foundation Year entry and ‘Year in’ options. (see SE1, SE2)
- expanded our staff development programmes to enable teaching of the highest quality and embedded innovative teaching methods across all courses, through acquisition of academic qualifications, plus enhanced leadership and scholarship. Using the Academic Career Map (launched in 2019), we reward and share excellence in teaching practice and innovation to develop a coherent and rewarding career pathway for our educators that deliver and support teaching. (see SE3)
- embedded our best practice in access and widening participation, supporting student attainment, especially addressing the BAME awarding gaps through our Student Success Project. Similarly, we have enhanced mental health support and through our Kent Inclusive Practices, ensured that all students have the opportunity to achieve their fullest potential.(see SE1, SE2)
- focussed on graduate outcomes to optimise student employability and career-readiness, through interdisciplinary learning and personal development opportunities that enhance their creative, digital, sustainability and entrepreneurial capabilities, in ways that are tailored to both student and employer needs. (see SE4-SE7)
- transformed our physical and digital learning landscape to improve online and flexible access to a range of resources that not only support teaching and learning, but enhance access for all students, in ways that support the wider student experience and educational gain. (see SE6, S04-6)

Since our last TEF, the University has continued to pursue its widening participation strategy, mainly concentrated in the South-East region, which has seen significant migration and coastal deprivation issues. Most notably, we have attracted students with increased ethnic diversity (specifically Black students), plus those from areas of social deprivation (e.g., POLAR/IMD). We have seen a small increase in the recruitment of students with disability,

with standard entry qualifications (e.g., A-levels) remaining relatively constant, but with some decrease in non-standard entry qualifications (see **Table 1**).

Table 1: University of Kent's changing undergraduate population - 2016/17–2020/21

Academic year	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
FT UK UG Entrants	4,090	4,330	3,956	3,740	3,945
% Black (Ethnicity)	16.3%	16.8%	17.5%	18.9%	21.5%
% Asian (Ethnicity)	12.2%	11.6%	12.6%	12.0%	12.4%
% Mixed (Ethnicity)	6.0%	5.8%	6.6%	6.3%	6.2%
% Disabled	15.7%	16.6%	17.3%	17.1%	18.8%
% POLAR4 1&2	26.3%	26.6%	25.7%	26.6%	28.0%
% IMD Q1&Q2	35.1%	35.0%	35.1%	36.7%	39.1%
% A-Levels	71.2%	73.0%	74.0%	73.8%	72.4%
% BTEC	19.5%	19.4%	17.8%	15.9%	15.5%
% South-East/London	72.9%	73.0%	75.9%	75.8%	78.6%

This submission will highlight how the University has used evidence-based and research-informed interventions to respond to these demographic changes, in particular the significant increase in the proportion of Black entrants since 2016/17, in order to ensure all of our students achieve their ambitions both in and beyond their studies at Kent. Kent is predominantly a provider of full-time undergraduate provision (FT UG; 85% contextual population). The submission does not consider the following courses: validated-only, transnational, higher education modules which do not contribute to an award, or higher degree apprenticeships (HDAs). Whilst HDAs are a growth area, numbers are still relatively small (continuation population 240) and data has been suppressed for most completion, progression and some student experience metrics. Similarly, Kent's part-time population has always been relatively small; which has resulted in none of the student experience metrics and few of the outcome measures having reportable data. However, it should be noted that overall continuation is above benchmark, with of the uncertainty distribution broadly in line with benchmark (population 610).

SECTION 2: STUDENT EXPERIENCE - *Features of Excellence*

Our Student Experience metrics for the majority of our provision (FT UG) stand **materially above or broadly in line** with the relevant benchmark suggesting our provision is very high quality overall, with evidence of some outstanding features of excellence emerging within the split metrics and through our practice, that will be explored further below (SE1-7).

Part of our success in this regard has stemmed from the institution-wide embedding of our Student Success Project to address the sector-wide and institutional barriers that trigger lower rates of attainment, continuation and progression amongst students from low socioeconomic or black and minority ethnic (BAME) groups, as well as those with disabilities. Commended in our previous TEF Gold outcomes, successful interventions, research, events and projects are now centrally coordinated by the central Student Success team and are mainstreamed across all Divisions to specifically reduce awarding gaps (see SE1, **Table 2**) as part of our Access and Participation Plan targets. This includes adapting

our various academic and support services for students to better address their specific needs and tracking student outcomes using evidence or research-led evaluations of student engagement, retention and attainment (SE1, SE3, SE5, SE7, S01).

2a. Academic Experience and Assessment

SE1 The provider has embedded outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting students' learning, progression and attainment

Teaching metrics

Overall, Kent full-time Teaching is 0.5% above benchmark with 100% of the uncertainty distribution broadly in-line with benchmark (population of 11,570). Below this level, 34 out of 55 of our split metrics are also materially above or broadly in line with benchmark (>95% uncertainty distribution). Only 7 indicators are below benchmark (>55% uncertainty distribution).

Assessment and Feedback metrics

Overall, Kent full-time Assessment and Feedback is broadly in line with benchmark (99.9% uncertainty distribution; population of 11,570). Below this level, 24 out of 55 of our split metrics are also materially above or broadly in-line with benchmark (>95% uncertainty distribution). 11 indicators are below benchmark (>55% uncertainty distribution).

The University's approach to teaching, learning and assessment has necessarily been multifaceted and has entailed engagement with multiple perspectives on what makes for innovative and effective practice. Cognisant of the continued diversification in our student demographic, we have sought to identify and contextualise the learning styles of our increasingly diverse student body and adapt our practices accordingly. The work of the Student Success Project, in particular the lessons learned from the specific learning needs of students based on their ethnic background or entry qualifications (e.g., BTEC), have been mainstreamed across the University (SE1, SE3, SE7). At the same time, developments in Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) have proven transformative to the student learning experience, particularly during the pandemic-affected years, with several of the technological enhancements being retained due to their effectiveness in meeting student learning needs and accessibility requirements (SE2, SE6). Of course, developments in teaching, assessment and feedback are subject to constant evolution as we continue to diversify our course offer into new formats and reflect on how to most effectively to support our students' learning, attainment and progression into professional-level employment (SE2, SE5, S04, S06).

The challenges of adapting our provision to respond to the Covid pandemic, whilst maintaining a high-quality student learning experience should not be underestimated. Against the backdrop of rapidly changing public health advice between March 2020 to April 2021, we successfully delivered our teaching in a blended format (pivoting between online and face-to-face mode as necessary), and supported remote study to ensure that all students could access learning and continue on their course or progress to graduation as planned. Of note were the positive responses received to the optional questions in NSS 2021, which revealed that 75% students agreed they had received 'useful' and 'timely' (67%)

information about the changes made to their courses to adapt to pandemic conditions; 79% agreed that they had been able to access the learning resources required for them to study remotely. Over 77% of students agreed that the University had taken sufficient steps to protect student safety, an outcome that reflected our ranked priorities of 'Safe, Study, Social' at Kent and the efforts we made to provide information and address concerns through regular student webinars. However, there was student dissatisfaction with learning online and the loss of the campus-based experience (average 45%). Building on some of these enhancements, the University continues to provide a range of academic and support services both face-to-face and online that has increased the engagement of students with their learning, through enhanced teaching practices and improvements to our learning environments and resources (SE5, SE6), which has resulted in improved student outcomes.

In 2022, all teaching delivery returned to in-person, with remote study and mitigating 'No Detriment' measures being removed, as we resumed business as usual. Having successfully transitioned to fully online examinations in summer 2020 using our VLE (Moodle), we continued to deliver online examinations for the academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22 (with a few exceptions for PSRB purposes), to ensure that students who were now accustomed to this mode of assessment were not disadvantaged in the completion of their examinations. The improved accessibility and change in assessment formats that this facilitated (e.g., open book), increased student engagement and supported better outcomes, including for those with protected characteristics (see **Table 2**). Some Divisions/ Schools have decided to continue to run online exams where there has been positive feedback from staff or students, but others will return to invigilated exams to meet PSRB requirements.

Table 2: Degree Awarding Gaps

Demographic split	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Asian/White	-14.2%	-14.1%	-15.8%	-8.7%	-6.0%
Black/White	-28.7%	-29.0%	-26.9%	-16.2%	-15.2%
Mixed/White	-3.6%	-6.9%	-7.4%	-3.2%	-4.4%
Other/White	-21.4%	-22.0%	-15.4%	-18.9%	-9.3%
POLAR 1&2 / POLAR 3,4,5	-3.3%	-1.2%	-0.8%	-2.9%	-1.7%
Disabled/Not disabled	-1.3%	-0.5%	0.6%	-1.0%	-0.7%
21 or over on entry/Under 21 years on entry	-8.1%	-3.8%	-0.5%	-5.7%	-2.3%

In terms of degree outcomes, the percentage of higher undergraduate degrees (1st/2(i)) awarded by the University that had been tracking ~2-4% above the national average, increased 3-4% to 87% in 2020-21. However, this increase occurred at the same time as significant reductions in many of the targets set by the OfS for reducing degree awarding gaps for students with minority backgrounds (**Table 2**). Within this, most notably the Black/White awarding gap has narrowed significantly over the last 4 years where there has been a programme of targeted Student Success interventions (SE5, SO1) and related research (SE3, SE7) aimed at raising awareness and improving our understanding of these gaps to better support students. The Asian/White awarding gap has also reduced over this period and is now similar to the Mixed/White awarding gap. Likewise, degree awarding gaps have narrowed for students coming from most deprived areas where there is lower higher

education participation. Students declaring a disability do not appear to be disadvantaged in terms of degree award outcomes, maintaining comparable rates of achievement with those with no known disability. This is due to the outstanding student support provided (SE5) and the embedding of our Kent Inclusive Practices (KIPs) that make learning more accessible with benefits for all students (SE2, SE6).

We investigated the reasons for the improved outcomes during this period, especially for students from minority groups, recognising there are several complex factors to be taken into account (i.e., application of Covid-mitigation measures, changes in format of assessment). Kent's 'No-detriment' (ND) policy, which became effective on 14/03/2020, continued to apply in 2020/21 (but without the alternative 'Safety Net' stage mark that was predicated on pre-pandemic performance). Analysing the results of the 2019-20 exams revealed that while percentage outcomes increased due to the safety net, (2,971 total) had a resultant increase in their degree classification. Therefore, other factors beyond these academic convention-related Covid-mitigations were influencing student outcomes. The new synchronous and asynchronous format of online teaching and the greater 24/7 accessibility that this afforded, along with the broadening of the format for end of year examinations (open book), appears to have benefitted those students whose background and pre-entry learning experiences had caused them to be less familiar than some of their peers with the traditional high stakes format of timed, closed-book examinations.

In 2018, the Student Success team produced a research report on experiences of BTEC students at Kent to improve retention and attainment. Students talked about the BTEC as a second-best option in comparison to A levels. *'When it comes down to the exams I don't do that well... I think it was good that I failed that year because I wouldn't have done the BTEC and I wouldn't be here now and doing a course which I really, really enjoy.'* Consequently, we have continued to address retention and/or attainment gaps between BTEC and A-level entrants, despite some reduction in numbers (**Table 1**). Specific interventions arising from this review included targeted Academic Excellence Scholarships (SE7), academic support through academic advisers, academic peer mentors and the Student Learning Advisory Service (SE5). These interventions, supported by our Student Success team across the University, have included bespoke welcome week activities, skills labs and development weeks, plus Embedding Academic Literacy in Stage 1 (EALS) and additional summer schools that have led to improved student performance.

Specific interventions at modular level have also led to some improvements in the number of BTEC students successfully completing their degrees. Additional sessions on *Recharging your programming* and *Recharging your Maths* in one Division led to attainment increases for all students (+6% and 11% respectively) and BAME (+7% and 10%) students, but especially BTEC students (+9% and 25%) across these modules. Another targeted intervention has been the Level Up Bursary for BAME students in the Kent Business School, for students who achieved between 55 and 59.9% at the end of stage 2. All 16 students (of which 8 were BTEC) achieved a 2.1 classification, thus fulfilling the aim of the intervention. Our research shows that BTEC attainment gap varies across modules, with the most impacted modules being those assessed by in-class tests or exams, which are not common in BTEC courses. Therefore, many Divisions have implemented preparations for exams to

address any skills deficit including 'Exam Buster' revision sessions, support for essay writing, avoiding plagiarism and wider skills development through online support (e.g., SE3, SE5).

We continue to monitor the impact on student continuation and attainment to address: 1) attainment gaps between White and BAME students; 2) differences between 1st/2(i) rates between students from the most deprived localities and those from the least deprived areas; and 3) comparative performance analysis to ascertain the links between higher UG degrees, assessment mode and exceptional measures taken during pandemic, so that we can ensure student continuation and progression, but without any compromise in standards. We anticipate that the return to timed, invigilated versus online open book (24 hour) exams may have some impact on attainment and contribute to returning degree outcomes to pre-pandemic levels, but we will need to ensure that the beneficial changes in awarding gaps are maintained as part of our Access and Participation Plan targets that seek to level up outcomes for all students.

We are currently reviewing our assessment and feedback practice in response to our experiences during the pandemic and the OfS B conditions, but specifically, our recent NSS 2022 results. Qualitative comments noted the detrimental impact of strike action, including a local marking and assessment boycott, on Assessment & Feedback (-5%), Student Voice (-5%) and Academic Support (-4%) satisfaction; but with significant improvements in Learning Resources (+6.5%, SE6). Having reviewed sector-wide practice in this area (SE3)¹, we are developing more high impact and authentic assessments in collaboration with Kent Union (SE7) that replicate activities, scenarios and performance standards found in the world of employment. Highlighted as a key characteristic of assessment design for improved learning and engagement, such assessments have been found to positively impact student autonomy, motivation, self-reflection and self-regulation, which are all key attributes related to employability (SO4). While some subjects have long-established authentic assessment practices in their professional education courses, such as moot courts in law education, the potential for authentic assessment to develop graduate attributes such as critical thinking, professional communication and collaborative skills in students is becoming increasingly common across the University and will be a key focus of our revised Assessment and Feedback Strategy.

The University has standardised and embedded electronic feedback mechanisms for relevant assessments via the 'Feedback Studio' in Turnitin. Before the pandemic, 56% students viewed their feedback, but this increased to 71% (2018/19) and 80% (2019/20) during lockdown. In 2021/22, students viewed their similarity reports and feedback in 79.5% of all submitted work. Students use the rubric provided by staff to evaluate their own work and make sure their assignment fulfils the requirements before submission. During marking, academics can select the criteria box so that students are able to view the marked rubric alongside their feedback. Some staff use short video or audio recordings to provide more personalised feedback to students, where the common format for feedback on assessed work tends to be tripartite: (i) What was done well; (ii) What was done less well; and (iii) How to improve on this performance. Divisions have established various developmental activities for students to help them gain an informed first-hand perspective on the uses and functions of feedback, involving forms of peer assessment against pre-set grade criteria and other

iterative review exercises in which formative work might be improved upon and resubmitted in the light of feedback received. This type of feedback is having a positive impact on developing assessment literacy in ways that are personalised and can improve student performance. All students have access to the *Understanding and Avoiding Plagiarism* module (with 9,804 users/53,592 views in 2021), completion of which is now mandatory in some Divisions.

SE2 Course delivery & content inspire the provider's students to actively engage in & commit to their learning to stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential

Over the last few years, the University has adapted its modes of course delivery in a variety of significant ways and for a number of relevant purposes. Firstly, as discussed, we deployed new forms of Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) in response to the pedagogical challenges we faced during the pandemic, of which much practice has been retained (SE1, SE6). Secondly, based on the lessons learned from making reasonable adjustments to course delivery in order ensure equality of access for students with learning disabilities, we undertook the deliberate step through the introduction of Kent's Inclusive Practices (KIPs) to make teaching and learning universally more accessible for all students. Thirdly, we have developed new courses of study in new formats, the addition of which is intended to provide content in an appropriate format tailored to the learning needs of our broadening demographic of students, such as those cohorts engaged in work-based learning. Finally, new course content has been developed in response to initiatives to fill knowledge and skills gaps identified in the graduate workforce nationally, such as the Q-Step project launched by the Nuffield Foundation and the ESRC for the purpose of providing a systematic response to the shortage of quantitatively-skilled social sciences graduates. Similarly, the establishment of the BM BS degree at the Kent and Medway Medical School was undertaken specifically to address the chronic under provision of GPs throughout the county of Kent. By taking these steps, our strategic intention has been to provide opportunities for all students to develop the skills and knowledge necessary for them to fully realise their potential and educational gains as set out in our Graduate Attributes (SO4).

Following a pilot project in 2017/18, we commenced the implementation of the Kent Inclusive Practices (KIPs) on a university-wide basis (SE6). These practices are simple but powerful mainstream adjustments to learning and teaching delivery at Kent. Identifying common Inclusive Learning Plan (ILP) adaptations and delivering them through an anticipatory approach that are inclusive by default has proven an excellent way to enable all students to achieve their fullest potential. KIPs maximise the use of electronic resources that meet accessibility standards by supplying learning materials digitally in advance of lectures and seminars, ensuring documents and presentations are easy to navigate and understand, providing alternative media that utilise text labelling to supplement images or audio when used in teaching, varying assessment methods to improve their accessibility and promoting the use of assistive technologies (such as text converters as tools) that can improve productivity for all learners. Our KIPs are now mandatory for all teaching activities. The extensive use of digital learning resources (e.g., library reading lists, online resources, lecture recordings), along with more varied and inclusive assessment design, has promoted better student engagement and improved student outcomes by ensuring that learning is fully accessible to all students (see SE6).

By improving access or breadth of study in higher education, we have continued to provide content in an appropriate format tailored to the learning needs of our broadening demographic of students to inspire them to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to their fullest potential. For example, we have expanded our provision of integrated foundation courses across our STEM, Business and Social Science subjects to strengthen access to specialist pathways (30 course entry pathways) which build the core knowledge and skills required for undergraduate degree-level study. We have also introduced a range of education and student experience enhancements to strengthen the coherency, design and delivery of our foundation year curricula and student experience to better support the transition to HE. Our expansion of foundation entry also includes development of a one year full-time international Foundation Programme (IFP) designed specifically for international students to bridge the gap between current knowledge and qualifications and undergraduate study at Kent. The IFP offers progression routes to undergraduate courses at Kent, where each subject pathway defines its own progression requirements. All international students can engage with modules that support the development of English Language and Academic Skills, plus in-session credit-bearing options related to the humanities and social sciences, as well as more tailored provision to address technical language and report writing in the sciences. In 2022, 100% of our IFP students successfully progressed onto an undergraduate degree course.

Kent has embedded its quantitative methods (Q-Step) delivery into five social sciences courses to ensure that students have the opportunity to develop the relevant data skills that underpin successful employment in the social sciences sector. This equips students with a deep and secure grasp of the skills needed to make sense of data in both research and professional settings, as well as boosting their employment prospects. During the period under review, the course offer has evolved into two routes: firstly, an adapted joint-honours course in the social sciences and secondly, a specialist 'Year in Data Analytics' course. Students who choose to convert from their single honours course to the joint-honours route do so in their first or second year, taking bespoke modules in each stage of study that culminates in Stage 3. This entails writing a relevant dissertation or attending a work placement and leads to a degree title 'with quantitative research'.

Launched in 2018-19, the 'Year in Data Analytics' course is offered on an interdisciplinary collaborative basis between the School of Mathematics, Statistics and Actuarial Science and the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research and comprises a full stage of relevant modules amounting to 120 UG credits. For successful students, the outcome results in an amended field of study in the title of their award of 'Main Degree with a Year in [*for example*] Data Analytics.' The Year in Data Analytics is one of a number of specialist 'Year in' courses that the University's students may apply to take on an intercalated basis in addition to their primary degree, either between stages 2 and 3 or after stage 3 of their main degree course. The University's full intercalated 'Year in' offer includes single stage courses in Computing, Journalism, Languages and Television and Online Broadcasting. Almost 750 students have enrolled on these courses since their launch, with 217 of these studying in the current academic year (2022-23). An intercalated Year in Management will be available from 2023/24. The provision of specialist vocational courses, which are open to all qualifying UG students at Kent, creates opportunities for strengthening the work-readiness of our

undergraduate cohort and therefore for achieving the educational gains set out in our Graduate Attributes (SO4).

SE3 The provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to outstanding experience for students

The University is a dual-intensive institution and the results of REF 2021 confirmed Kent's position as a leading research university, with the Times Higher Education ranking 8 subjects in the top 10 in the country for research quality and a further 7 in the top 25. These world-leading researchers are also teaching our undergraduates, *'adding value to both our education and student experience, building aspiration, developing employability and whole life skills'* (Kent 2025 Plan). Consistent with recommendations in Kent's Framework for Powerful Learning Experiences (2019)², most undergraduates on our traditional courses gain first-hand experience of research by working alongside these outstanding scholar-educators on final year projects or increasingly, through summer research placement projects, which are evaluated very positively by our students (see SE7). We are also increasing students' exposure to employers and staff with professional practice backgrounds to strengthen work-based learning, skills and behaviours that develop work-readiness (SE2, SO4, SO6).

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE), situated in the Education Directorate, is dedicated to conducting both innovative educational research on higher education and providing evidence-based professional development for graduate teaching assistants, lecturers and other academic staff (see SE4). The Centre supports the University in generating and using educational research to contribute to outstanding student experiences, where various research projects have contributed to enhancing educational policy and practice. For example, empirical evidence of students' perceptions of the value of non-anonymous marking³ showed that it helped strengthen relationships between students and teachers and supported an ongoing, personalised dialogue on students' performance. This led to a local policy decision not to implement anonymous marking. We have also investigated the impact of the shift to online exams, demonstrating how these new formats have reduced awarding gaps (SE1, Table 2). These findings are being used to inform ongoing exam policy, alongside those from the Advance HE literature review on assessment and feedback practices¹ to disseminate good practice through the University's 2022 Learning and Teaching Conference and our staff development programmes (SE4).

Integration of the Student Success Team (SE5) into the Education Directorate has also helped to embed inclusive teaching practices and curricula across the University, with common interventions aimed at reducing attainment gaps (see SE1, Table 2; SO5). Our Diversity Mark project started in 2017-18 as a research-based, collaborative inquiry intended to raise academics' awareness of the importance of creating more racially inclusive and culturally sensitive curricula^{4,5}. The Diversity Mark project employs student interns to work with module convenors to assess the diversity of reading lists, capture BAME students' experiences and make suggestions for curricular revision. This experience has been transformative for the student Diversity Mark Officers who have participated in projects (5) and research (7) over the past 4 years: *'This role has increased my drive to continue to do what I can, to help challenge and push diversity, and make a positive contribution to the BAME student experience'*. These student-led reviews of BAME authorship on reading lists

stimulated conversations with module convenors and library staff to curate a more diverse set of learning resources for curricular reform (SE6).

In 2020, Kent secured a £60,000 grant from the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO) to evaluate the impact of the pilot of Diversity Mark on degree-awarding gaps in 21 first year social science modules. The implementation and process evaluation led by Kent staff was vital in expanding understanding of how to create more culturally sensitive curricula, how BAME students experience their curricula and how to effectively implement and evaluate such initiatives^{6,7}. For example, students in focus groups repeatedly emphasised that seeing people like themselves reflected in the curriculum excited and inspired them. Related collaborative research through NERUPI (Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions) with seven other HEIs, also focused on understanding how the cultural sensitivity of curriculum impacts on students' experience⁸. This study found that BAME students, and particularly black students, perceive the curricula as less culturally sensitive than their white peers. Improving the cultural sensitivity of the curriculum showed that when students (both Black and White) perceive their curricula as more culturally sensitive, they also report higher interest in the subject, thereby enriching their educational experiences. Many schools have now adopted Diversity Mark as part of their Access and Participation Plans, with 55 module convenors from across all academic Divisions now working actively toward Diversity Mark Awards. Diversity Mark is also becoming increasingly embedded into institutional practice (SE6) and is included in Kent's PGCHE (The Inclusive University module, SE4) and Antiracism Strategy objectives, where its impact will inform our Race Equality Charter submission.

2b Resources, support and student engagement

SE4 There is outstanding support for staff professional development and excellent academic practice embedded across the provider

The University has made a strategic and substantive commitment to the development of staff that teach and support learning. This includes our Advance HE accredited taught courses: our Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE; D2 Fellow) for new lecturers and Associate Fellowship Scheme (AFS; D1 Associate Fellow) for graduate teaching assistants, plus our CPD scheme (Route to Recognition for Experienced Staff RRES; D3 Senior Fellow), alongside a range of other non-accredited offerings that support excellent academic practice. Since 2001, the University's probation requirement that all teaching staff must hold a recognised teaching qualification has resulted in incremental increases in the number of Kent staff holding Advance HE Fellowships (D1-D4), with our rates being consistently above the sector average (68% vs 46%; HESA report 2022).

'The impressive number of staff holding an appropriate category of Fellowship indicates the institutional commitment to the professional development of staff and confirms the high levels of staff engagement in the professional learning opportunities that are on offer... both through accredited provision and wider opportunities to share innovative practice that is central to promoting teaching excellence'... 'The UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) is clearly embedded within institutional structures, which is further evidenced by the development of the Academic Career Map and promotion policy' ... 'The innovative new programme, Leadership in Education and Academic Practice (LEAP) provides an opportunity for staff to develop their leadership

and scholarship in practice towards Senior Fellowship' (Advance HE, Accreditation Report, 2022)

Our Academic Career Map (ACM, launched in 2019) maps education, research and leadership expectations for all contracts (Education and Research E&R; Education, Scholarship and Professional Practice ES&P) and levels (lecturer to Professor) against explicit descriptions and examples of evidence required for promotion. This aims to create greater parity of esteem and opportunities for the advancement of staff on different types of contract that has contributed to reducing gender or ethnicity gaps, as evidenced in our Athena Swan award (Silver 2021) and Race Equality Charter preparations. We have noted a steady increase (82%) in ES&P applications over the last 4 years and specifically, a doubling in successful outcomes. Since the launch of our Advance HE accredited CPD programme (2017-18) for experienced staff who did not hold a teaching qualification, we have greatly increased the number of staff Senior Fellowships across the institution (91). These Senior Fellows remain in good standing by mentoring early career staff seeking teaching qualifications and serving as reviewers for the CPD scheme (i.e., 62 SF/PFHEAs) and act as internal referees for promotion applications, particularly on the ES&P pathway. This scheme also recognises the contributions of a wide range of staff who support teaching and learning or student experience, including learning technologists, librarians, and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) tutors, as part of their professional recognition and development.

In addition to courses leading to teaching qualifications, we offer a variety of complementary support for professional development both centrally and within the Divisions. CSHE offers a PGDip, MA and PhD in Higher Education, regular research seminars and symposia on higher education. Our Annual Learning and Teaching Conferences at Canterbury (June) and Medway (September), provide opportunities for staff to share good practice that contribute to an outstanding experience for students. Topics have included *Kent Graduate Attributes* (SO4), *Kent Inclusive Practices* (SE2, SE5) and our framework for *Powerful Learning Experiences* (SE3).² This year, the conferences focused on *Reimagining Assessment and Feedback* based on our research (SE3)¹ and *Student Voice* (SE7) respectively, as these are the areas that are attracting consistently lower scores in our NSS results. The Student Success team also provide regular seminars on diversity-related matters in education, which involves consultations around diversification of the curriculum across the University (SE3). Discipline-sensitive opportunities for CPD are also organised by the Divisions, through regular teaching forums or specialised developmental workshops for staff and students, which offer opportunities to showcase local innovations, seed new ideas from elsewhere through guest presentations or our Inspirational Speakers programme, and to share good and promising practices (SE3, SE5, SE7).

Our annual University Teaching Prizes recognise staff that have demonstrated excellence/innovation/leadership in their teaching and/or learning support. With 30 awards since 2017-18 and a record 34 applications in the pandemic year (2020-21), alongside the Above and Beyond awards run by Kent Union, these have led to national individual and team awards

The University has signed up to the national

Technician Commitment and

, was commended for developing practical research-led and enquiry-based classes with students that deliver cutting-edge technical skills expected by employers. This included recognition for engaging students in filming, demonstrating and narrating instructional videos, a practice adopted across the Division.

'Kent has an outstanding approach to teaching and embedding practical skills. All students must complete a skills matrix, which is managed by the student and the relevant demonstrators'
Accreditation Report 2019).

SE5 The provider ensures a supportive learning environment and its students have access to a wide range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs

Academic Support metrics

Overall, Kent full-time academic support is broadly in line with benchmark (100% uncertainty distribution; population of 11,570). Below this level, 27 out of 55 of our split metrics are also materially above or broadly in line with benchmark (>95% uncertainty distribution). 12 indicators are below benchmark (>55% uncertainty distribution).

We have continued to enhance the academic support provided to students in order to provide a highly supportive, personalised learning environment that embraces and values diversity. Kent won the THE award for Outstanding Support for Students (2017) for our Student Success Project that helps students gain maximum benefit from their study. The judges said that *Kent 'stood out from the pack with its impressive and innovative approach to improving academic outcomes for the least advantaged students. By creating a comprehensive network of tailored support and dedicated institutional research opportunities for such students in nine pilot schools, the University has made outstanding progress in narrowing the attainment gap and has created a model that can be rolled out across the institution'*. This work has now been fully embedded across the institution, with staff and students working in both the central and Divisional teams (with dedicated Student Support and Attainment Managers) to deliver interventions that improve student success and outcomes (SE3, SE7, SO1).

For example, the Student Success review of the University's Academic Advising system indicated the need for Divisions to tailor their support according to their own student needs, demands and related skills development. To address the challenges of supporting the greater number and more diverse range of students, we have embedded more effective learner analytics (e.g., Progress Profiles that display student attendance and attainment) to personalise advice and guidance at key stages throughout the student journey. We have also developed online systems for better student communications, appointments, query management and professional service referral that provide more proactive, timely interventions that can support student success. All staff have access to the University's Academic Advising training module in Moodle, and some Divisions have developed bespoke Academic Advising and Skills modules for their students that are being shared and adapted more widely across Divisions.

Another Student Success intervention is the innovative and award winning *One Hour Degree* (Guardian University Award for Digital Innovation 2020), an online simulation game designed

to provide insights into the university experience for those contemplating a University degree. Developed the global reach of the game has been phenomenal (9,075 players in 131 countries; 7,391 in UK) and has been beneficial to both current and prospective students. The Guardian described the game as one that introduces key concepts, terminology, locations and processes to new students before they arrive, while images of the campus help those who have been unable to attend an open day. *'An easy-to-read narrative takes players through five "quests" covering welcome week, the first assignment, first-year exams, year two and year three, offering choices between hundreds of different scenarios'*. (Guardian 2020)

The University provides a range of student-facing services that support student continuation (retention), completion (attainment) and progression (employment). Whilst these services are available to all students, engagement with these services depends on individual student needs or may be linked to particular skills development for specific cohorts in Divisions.

The Student Learning Advisory Service (SLAS) at Kent offers study skills, writing, maths, assignment and revision support to all students, from foundation to PhD, including those studying part-time or on apprenticeship or access courses. This central team provides opportunities for academic development at all stages via workshops (either embedded in the curriculum or offered centrally), with individual one-to-one appointments (2,159 in 2020-21) that are supported by a range of online learning resources. SLAS coordinated the Value-Added Learning in Higher Education initiative (VALUE), that was designed to provide students who were 'at risk of failure' with general and subject specific revision and exam strategies for end of year exams in conjunction with their academic school, that had a positive impact on both retention (>97%) and achievement (>65% merit or distinction). However, this was accessible only to small numbers of students (~250 per annum) and often came too late for students at risk of failure. During the pandemic, these sessions were replaced by more proactive approaches to academic support from the point of student registration with two all-year-round Online Bitesize courses in Moodle (e.g., for Skills Development and Maths & Stats) that are available to all students regardless of location or course of study and are run every weekday from September to May (> 8,000 students views per annum). These appear to be more conducive to learner development with some of these sessions being delivered directly within the curriculum as part of students' course of study (i.e., as embedded workshops with 221 sessions reaching 6,151 students in 2020-21) to ensure students have developed core skills that can better support their performance and preparation for examinations.

SLAS also delivers the Academic Peer Mentoring (APM) Scheme that involves training second- and third-year undergraduates to provide academic support for first years on the same course, in partnership with academic staff in schools. Mentor training is available to all students online, completion of which is recognised on the students' Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) transcript. Over 200 students successfully complete this annually (270 in 2020/21), with co-ordinated monitoring through our central and Divisional Student Success teams. APM provides students with opportunities to engage more fully with their academic studies, enhance their study skills and academic confidence, that improves

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student retention and attainment. Mentors gain employability skills such as leadership, problem solving and communication for mentors that can enhance their CV.

Recognising the significant role the service plays in taking forward and coordinating student employment activity across the institution, Kent's strong Careers and Employability Service (CES) was a finalist for the Best University Careers Service

with plans in hand to enhance this service further in future years (SO4-6). Every Division has staff dedicated to placements and employability, providing locally delivered support and specialist information to their students. The Careers and Employability Service adopts a student-first approach, with significant growth in one-to-one support between 2017 (4,138) and 2022 (9,019) and in event attendance (6,673 to 14,828) over the same period. One of its key initiatives is the Work-Study Scheme (WSS) launched in 2014, in response to feedback from Widening Participation (WP) students and graduates who reported a lack of understanding of the graduate jobs market, low confidence in their skills and abilities, and the inability to vocalise their skills and experience in applications or at interview. Over 10,000 students have enrolled in the WSS, undertaking over 250,000 hours of work and earning themselves over £2 million. In 2021-22, the scheme provided ~75,000 hours of work across 1,696 roles. In 2022, the decision was taken to proactively align our efforts with Kent Union by moving vacancy management to their Job Shop, leaving the WSS Advisers to focus on one-to-one support. This decision was taken because of the significant impact of the pandemic on these groups, particularly in their confidence, resilience, commercial awareness and workplace skills. In the past year (2021-22), 5,286 students were signed up with JobShop with over 20,569 hours worked via our temp service, which was similar to pre-pandemic levels (2018-19; 5,500 students; 19,491 hours).

The Careers and Employability Service coordinates an annual Employability Festival, which comprises circa 150 events over 10 days, that runs at the start of the academic year to get students thinking early about their career prospects. This is then followed by a programme of workshops and events, totalling more than 700 activities every year including 12 themed career weeks looking at topics like 'volunteering and working in the third sector', 'careers with social impact', 'law and social justice', 'inspiring women', and 'environmentally friendly careers'. These weeks enable students to frame their careers by thinking around their values, personalising and bringing to life their next steps after education. Alongside this, we have a suite of co-curricular opportunities for students to gain experience through our Study Plus programme, which focusses on delivering training and development on workplace skills like 'using Excel for business', 'World class manager', leadership', 'developing a strategy', or 'navigating the workplace as an introvert'. Our new Employability Strategy will take us further in supporting students to better reflect on their strengths, understand the employment landscape and make positive plans for their future, that will act as a foundation to articulate, support and evaluate educational gain for our students (see SO4-SO6). The Employability Points Scheme has operated since 2010 and rewards students for participation in activities that enhance employability. In 2021/22, 7,327 engaged in the scheme, which provided 849 rewards from 72 SMEs, including paid internships, work experience, insight days and training and development experiences. In 2021/22, there was a significant increase in the average point accrual of students, rising from 29% of students having 50 points or more pre-

pandemic, to 33% in 2022. We have ambitious plans around the growth of the scheme to develop Graduate Attributes and support educational gain (SO4).

Kent also leads the sector in 'internationalisation at home' activity through leadership of the UUKi's Internationalisation at Home Working Group (which comprises members from 20 UK universities), and through Kent's Annual *Innovations in Internationalisation at Home* conference, with a recently published book⁹ and contribution to a UUKi sector report resulting from this activity¹⁰. Kent staff represent the needs of international students for UKCISA on the UCAS Council and provide initiatives that are specifically designed and tailored to international student needs. These include our Global Officer's Leadership Development programme (50 students each year), who lead campus-wide internationalisation activity through events and focus groups. There are 85 Global Engagement modules that provide credit-bearing opportunities (SE2) that support curriculum internationalisation (with 1,844 registrations so far for 2022/23). World Fest provides a week-long series of events (~30) at Canterbury and Medway in the Spring term, with 5 student-led events funded each year. International Network events include Kent Global Hangouts (600 attendees) and our annual Innovations in Internalisation at Home conference (100 attendees; 4,000 views). Our staff lead, Dr Anthony Manning (Dean for Global and Lifelong Learning) gained his National Teaching Fellowship for this work (2021).

SE6 Physical and virtual learning resources are tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning

Learning Resources metrics

Overall, Kent full-time Learning Resources is 2.6% above benchmark with 100% of the uncertainty distribution broadly in line with benchmark (population of 11,570). Below this level 42 out of 55 of our split metrics are also materially above or broadly in line with benchmark (>95% uncertainty distribution) and none of our indicators are materially below benchmark (>40% uncertainty distribution).

Kent won the THE award for Outstanding Support for Students (2018) in consecutive years with the success of the OPERA (Opportunity, Productivity, Enragement, Reducing barriers, Achievement) project. Working with both visually and hearing-impaired students, as well as those with physical disability, this University-wide project aimed to mainstream accessibility, embed anticipatory reasonable adjustments and improve inclusive access to learning for all students. Overall, accessibility scores in Moodle (using BlackBoard Ally) stand at 82%, with closed captioning options and excellent usage of our related accessible formats by students and staff (over 19,768 downloads in accessible format, 3584 users in 2022). This is an integral part of our Kent Inclusive Practices (KIPs) that are now mandatory for all teaching activities (SE2) and provide a range of productivity tools to all students and staff - tools that support more varied and inclusive assessment design and promote better student engagement with learning. For outstanding work that positively transforms the experience of students, academic and professional staff, the University won two categories in the 2022 UCISA awards. These awards recognise, celebrate and promote the outstanding achievements and innovations of staff working in or supporting technology in UCISA member organisations. The Transformation Award was for our collaborative work aimed at sharing emergent and sector-wide best practice with accessible content across our digital platforms,

including our public website (with Kent County Council and the Cabinet Office) and within Moodle. The second award for Sustainable Digital Project or Initiative was for our online tool, Software Finder, as a scalable initiative that empowers students and staff to find, access and install the software they need on their own devices remotely, and so supports those requiring assistive solutions by including accessibility and productivity tools. Software Finder has been accessed over 95,700 times since launch and is externally recognised for its '*comprehensive and accessible*' features.

We have also invested in capital projects that enhance our facilities and resources to support teaching and learning, including the completion of the extended Templeman library, new academic buildings (e.g., Sibson/Kennedy/Pears that have been designed for specific disciplinary needs in business and maths, economics and medicine), plus a substantial refurbishment of specialist teaching laboratories (e.g., sciences); and social spaces, such as the Parkwood Student Hub. Kent's extensive Digital Library (512,000 e-books purchased 2018-2021) is tailored to academic need and supports wider demographic shifts on our student profile by embedding inclusive resources. Through engaging students in purchasing schemes and resource decisions, we have procured 2,049 e-book titles and embedded disciplinary-focused information skills training for students in the curriculum (librarians delivered 8,400 sessions in 2021). This supported access to, and critical appraisal of resources, that included 2,385 academic reading lists for course and modules alongside disciplinary research databases (e.g., for final year dissertations).

In 2019, our library team won the THE Outstanding Library team award for their '*collaborative working in the digital and physical environment*' to '*transform the student experience*'. Supporting both the OPERA and Student Success projects, they also received the Talis Aspire User Group Award for Creativity (2019) for their work to diversify library collections and promote more inclusive student learning experiences. (i.e., Diversity Mark - SE3). Through the provision of enhanced teaching and social spaces, increased Digital Library resources and access to remote work and study facilities, the library ensured continued support for teaching and learning throughout the pandemic. Our special collections provide access to unique archives both physically and online (e.g., Cartoon Archive, Canterbury Cathedral manuscripts) that enhance research-led teaching and provide powerful learning experiences for our students. Another example is the Prescriptions: Artist's Book collection, which explores the connections between artists' books, health, illness and medicine from interdisciplinary perspectives (SE3). Aligning with OPERA and Student Success Project, the library continues to deliver accessible and diverse curriculum content through Diversity Mark and digital content for students with ILPs through mainstreamed anticipatory adjustments (158 accessible reading lists since 2019). The University has adopted a digital-first approach, which includes an IT voucher scheme to ensure parity of access for students affected by the digital divide. Of the 458 students supported during the pandemic, 22% were registered disabled, 58% female and 68% BAME. The positive impact on student retention has led to the voucher scheme being continued, benefitting a total of 869 students to date (391 loans and 478 new laptops).

In response to the pandemic, there was an increasing focus on the enhancement of pedagogical practices using technology enhanced learning (TEL), specifically to support

online teaching and assessment (including exams) from March 2020 (SE1). Two new online courses were developed in Moodle to help us adapt to our new circumstances and to enable successful teaching and learning experiences online. The staff-focussed *Digitally Enhanced Education (DEE): A Guide to Teaching Online* and the student-focussed *Online Learning at Kent (OLAK): A Guide to Successful Study Online* were both developed with staff and student input, respectively. Even with the shift back to face-to-face teaching, these are still being used. For 2021 (2022), the staff course had 826 (139) unique users and 1,497 (262) views and the student course had 11,291 (6,069) unique users and 29,611 (17,219) views. Students first access this material in a Welcome Week webinar (3,300 views). Kent's eLearning Team created the *Digitally Enhanced Education (DEE)* webinar series in 2020, an online event bringing together experts and prestigious speakers from around the world to share practice, exchange ideas and forge professional relationships. The DEE webinar series continues and has attracted a global audience of 4,779 people (with 2,612 attendees) and has focused on a range of topics including online pedagogy, digital accessibility, electronic assessment and post-pandemic teaching. This webinar community includes representatives from 96% of large UK HEIs/65 FE institutions/68 countries worldwide and has run 17 webinars to date, with a total of 5,976 attendees and 130 speakers, with 20,879 YouTube recording views and 9,100 in 2022 alone. The Association for Learning Technology recognised Dr Phil Anthony (Head of Technology Enhanced Learning) as ALT Learning Technologist of the Year 2021 for '*sharing practices in TEL with a global audience*', that also demonstrates Kent's ongoing commitment to delivering an outstanding digital teaching and learning experience for our staff and students.

SE7 The provider embeds engagement with students, leading to continuous improvement to the experience and outcomes of its students

Student Voice metrics

Overall, Kent full-time Student Voice is broadly in line with benchmark (99% uncertainty distribution; population of 11,570). Below this level 17 out of 55 of our split metrics are materially above or broadly in line with benchmark (>95% uncertainty distribution). 9 indicators are below benchmark (>75% uncertainty distribution).

Our partnership working with students at Kent is strong – no more so than during the pandemic, where Kent Union took a pro-active role in gathering feedback from students about their preferred modes of delivery for the academic year 2020-21. Students are represented on all our Governance committees and strategically, we share similar priorities around teaching quality, assessment and feedback, academic and mental health support. Students play key roles in enhancing our provision through engagement with our quality processes (as specified in our Codes of Practice, Annex N), by engaging in quality reviews and surveys, as well as bespoke projects (SE1, SE3, SE7). For example, as part of our Sustainability Policy, 16 student interns led a curriculum mapping exercise to audit 1,291 undergraduate modules against the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Results varied across Divisions but showed that overall, 69% of modules contained some reference (implicit or explicit) to topics related to one or more of the SDGs, where students are supported to 'think critically' (85%) and incorporate one or more sustainability-related learning skills (95%), such as experiential project work, problem-based learning and simulations.

Understanding the experience of our students is an important step in tailoring support to enhance their experience and outcomes. For example, the Student Success team have followed the student experience of 25 high-potential undergraduates

from 2019-20 academic year, who were all recipients of an Academic Achievement Scholarship (AES). Using in-depth interviews conducted before and after Covid-19 lockdown in March 2020, and a questionnaire undertaken during the lockdown itself, our research has identified the significance of students' loss of relatedness to university resources, newness to campus life, transition to online learning, reduced sense of autonomy, financial pressures of part-time work, competence and belongingness. AES students were encouraged to participate in internal projects (SE3) and to support the external dissemination process, by taking part in conference presentations and roundtable discussions. Some of these students are currently engaged in the evaluation of the British Sociological Association (BSA) Race in Sociology Teaching website called 'acKnowledge', aimed at better understanding the barriers to inclusivity in education and how we can best address these.

Similarly, the Powerful Learning Experiences project² (SE3) engaged more than 700 first year students across 11 different subjects to provide feedback about what makes lectures interesting¹¹. Overall results were fed back to academics across the institution through a variety of local teaching events as part of Kent's commitment to use educational research to promote continuous improvement and to enhance practice (SE3). In a separate collaborative study between CSHE, the Careers and Employability Service, the Planning Office and three large schools (partially funded by a HECSU grant), more than 600 students from across the university were engaged in reflecting on their career interests and how their university experience supported their career development. More in-depth studies were done in three courses, reaching another 500+ students through surveys and 30 students through individual interviews¹². The results were fed back to students in those courses, including suggestions for how they could use university resources to enhance their experience and graduate outcomes. Students' perspectives on and experiences of career development were shared with academic staff and career advisors, with suggestions for enhancing teaching practice and shaping the University Employability Strategy¹³.

As part of our review of Assessment and Feedback at Kent¹ (SE3), Kent Union conducted an initial study to identify the types of assessment that students found the most interesting and engaging. Most tended to have a practical relevance to real world employment conditions and used non-conventional assessment methods (e.g., mock trials, field work, experiments), although the outcomes for group assessment were varied. Assessments that allowed students to choose their own topic of personal interest (such as research dissertations) were evaluated more positively and conducive to student engagement (SE1). This survey is being run across all Divisions with staff and students to see how our assessment and feedback practice in disciplines can be further developed, to enhance student satisfaction (NSS) and engagement for more positive outcomes as part of our Assessment and Feedback review.

Similarly, the BAME Voices Project (2016-17) was a student-led research project funded by the University and delivered by Kent Union. This project was carried out by student

researchers and involved in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with students that identified as black or minority ethnic, to investigate and understand the complexities of the experience of BAME students at Kent. Led by a working group from Kent Union and the Student Success team, students were employed to work directly with module convenors and the library teams to successfully increase the diversity of resources (SE3, SE6). This research has been refreshed in 2022-23 in response to our changing student demographic, given the impact of the Black Lives Matter movement (2020) and the launch of the University's Anti-Racism strategy (2021). This new 'Black Student Voices' research is once again being delivered by Kent Union, but with a specific focus on the lived experiences of black students to identify, and remove, barriers to success.

SECTION 3: STUDENT OUTCOMES

3a Positive Outcomes

Our Student Outcome metrics for the majority of our provision (FT UG) stand **materially above or broadly in line** with the relevant benchmark suggesting our provision is very high quality overall, with evidence of some outstanding features of excellence emerging within the split metrics and through our practice, that will be explored further below (SO2, SO3).

SO1 The provider deploys and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies

We have embedded various enhancements in our academic support (SE5-7) in order to provide a highly supportive, yet personalised learning environment for all students, with tailored support for minority groups (e.g., disabled, BAME, BTEC - see SE1, SE5-6) to ensure students engage with and succeed in their studies, as evidenced by the narrowing of the attainment gaps (**Table 2**). In addition, Academic Advisers are provided for all undergraduate students at Kent to support their academic and personal development (SE5) by encouraging them to develop their independent learning and personal planning skills and raising their awareness of the opportunities for developing graduate attributes and skills necessary for successfully progressing beyond their studies (SO3-SO5).

All of our Student Success research involves widening participation students through Kent's work-study scheme (SE3). These students are closely mentored and introduced to qualitative and quantitative research skills including conducting literature reviews and data analysis; transferable skills for future research careers or employment. Diversity Mark officers develop a range of skills including critical thinking, communication and report writing that enhances their confidence and improves their CV (SE3, SE7). Similarly, SLAS supports the academic achievements of students through its blended approach to delivery of bespoke services (e.g., APM, embedded sessions in the curriculum) at key stages in the student life cycle that support learner development from transition and welcome, to building disciplinary and generic skills, that improve retention and academic achievement of students (see SE5).

In terms of progression, the Student Success team have piloted a project with our Graduate and Researcher College to address the black postgraduate 'broken pipeline' project. Leading Routes (authors of the Broken Pipeline report) are working in partnership with Kent on black-led undergraduate and postgraduate workshops on improving access to and experience of doctoral education. Bespoke training and supervision sessions for staff have been designed

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to improve cultural understanding and a Black Inspirational Speaker series for all will begin in 2023. Student participants will be part of ongoing research to reduce the race equality gaps in scholarship applications for PGT and PGR degrees and so further address meeting our Access and Participation Plan targets.

SO2 There are outstanding rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses

Continuation metrics

Overall, Kent full-time continuation is 1.5% above benchmark with 100% of the uncertainty distribution broadly in line with benchmark (population of 18,450). Below this level, 53 out of 61 of our split metrics are also materially above or broadly in line with benchmark (>95% uncertainty distribution). Only 3 indicators are below benchmark (>50% uncertainty distribution) and two of these are small populations (<50) with one of those also having a high benchmark (96.1%).

Completion metrics

Overall, Kent full-time completion is 1.0% above benchmark with 100% of the uncertainty distribution broadly in line with benchmark (population 18,810). Below this level, 50 out of 61 of our split metrics are also materially above or broadly in line with benchmark (>95% uncertainty distribution). Only 3 indicators are below benchmark (>30% uncertainty distribution) and two of these have high benchmarks.

Given that our overall metrics for continuation and completion are broadly in line with the benchmark (100%), with some materially above and few indicators below, we have continued to respond well to our changing demographic to ensure that students succeed in their studies, particularly with those from minority groups and low participation backgrounds (see SE2, SO1). We have systematically investigated the reasons for the historically lower achievement rates for these groups of students and put in place a wider selection of targeted solutions and support, through which outcomes are monitored to assess impact (SE3-7, SO4-6). This period also coincides with reductions in our tariff entry where the proportion of entrants with good A-levels between >BCC and <ABB has dropped by 6% to 30%, whilst the proportions of >+CDD and the DDD have broadly stayed the same.

SO3 There are outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses

Progression metrics

Overall, Kent full-time progression is on benchmark with 100% of the uncertainty distribution broadly above benchmark (population of 6,040). Below this level 34 out of 57 of our split metrics are also materially above or broadly in line with benchmark (>95% uncertainty distribution). Only 8 indicators are below benchmark (>50% uncertainty distribution).

Kent's Careers and Employability Service have a refreshed Employability Strategy (shortlisted at the National Recruitment Awards 2022), detailing the significant steps taken by the institution in supporting all students to achieve their potential (see SE5). However, we are aware that the move from DLHE to Graduate Outcomes (from 6 months to 15 months post-graduation) has impacted on these metrics, with students needing to be in sustained

employment, further study or both. While we had double flags for core and split metrics in our previous TEF, we are now broadly in line with benchmark overall under the new methodology. Therefore, we have taken significant action to ensure that our graduates are employable and can be supported into employment by having staff dedicated to placements and employability in each Division for all students. In addition, our Careers Advisers provide tailored support for specific student groups to address their needs and inequities in terms of employment (SE5). For example, there is central support for POLAR Q1&2 finalists and 'at risk' graduates with a specialist team (GradCore) who deliver a programme targeting unemployed or underemployed graduates (~500 per year), plus our Destination Success Bootcamp for POLAR 1&2 students around career readiness. In its third year, participants (~20) found the team-work exercises and CV/cover letter support most useful, with 75% or more reporting an increase in confidence in creating a good CV and finding employment, *'A brilliant 3-day course and friendly and supportive environment which has significantly increased my skills and confidence in gaining employment.'*

We also have two specialist Graduate Outcomes Careers Advisers. In 2021/22, they moved 68.3% of graduates in this group into positive outcomes, and of the graduates who found work, 71% went into highly skilled employment. When working with finalists in POLAR Q1 and 2, 77.7% had positive outcomes, and of those in employment, 77% went into highly skilled employment. Both cohorts combined consisted of 306 individuals, who received 2,104 instances of support via one-to-one advice by appointment (802) or by email (1,302). Student participants reported that they were more confident (97%; Graduate Attribute 1, SO4) and most (87%) felt their Careers Adviser had been *'instrumental in their success'*.

3b Educational Gain

SO4 The provider clearly articulates the range of educational gains it intended its students to achieve and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions

The University of Kent was one of 10 HEIs to take part in the national Mixed Methodology Learning Gain Project (NMMLGP) with HEFCE/OfS to measure baseline knowledge and the development of academic and personal developing skills (i.e., distance travelled), made by students in Higher Education (2016-18). However, student engagement was poor (Year 1 – 9%; Year 2 – 0.7%) and the methods too narrowly defined and prescribed (*OfS evaluation report*). The concept of educational gain is more holistic and seeks to define both academic (knowledge and skills) and personal (behaviours and attributes) development, plus work readiness (careers registration and engagement), for which a range of interventions and metrics may be relevant.

In terms of articulating educational gain, we have established Graduate Attributes with Kent Union and employers (2018) that support students in understanding themselves and the skills and attributes that employers are looking for and how to develop these at Kent. Our seven graduate attributes are: 1. Confidence, 2. Creativity and Innovation, 3. Critical Reflection, 4. Global and Cultural Awareness, 5. Integrity and Accountability, 6. Intellectual Curiosity and 7. Resilience. Students are aware of how they can build and gain these Graduate Attributes through a mix of their academic studies, engagement in extra-curricular activities (e.g., sport, societies, volunteering), as well as specific training from the Careers and Employability Service (SE5). Several academic disciplines have conducted an

employability skills/Graduate Attributes mapping exercise at module level, so students understand the ways in which skills are being acquired and attributes are embedded across their course. Academic and personal development is further supported by our Academic Advising and peer mentoring systems (SE5, SO1), where students are encouraged to reflect on the progress they have made, identify where they need to improve and be signposted to relevant opportunities. In addition, our Careers Registration process provides indicators of career readiness, identifying the specific employability needs of groups leading to more targeted interventions (SO6)^{12,13}.

Monitoring student engagement and outcomes provides some measure of educational gain and the effectiveness of our processes. Current measures include Academic Development (e.g., attendance monitoring/learner analytics/academic advising/retention and attainment); Personal Development (e.g., engaging in volunteering/societies/placements); and Work Readiness (e.g., students in paid work on or off campus i.e., work-study/internships/jobs). For example, with the steep rates of increased engagement in careers activities (SE5) plus targeted interventions, we have started to see a slight increase in students gaining graduate employment (SO3). However, we need to remember that each student's learning journey through higher education is unique and involves far more than their measured experience(s) on our degree courses, through interventions or organised extracurricular activities.

SO5 The provider's approaches to supporting its students to achieve these gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points

Bringing coherence and coordination of interventions that contribute to educational gain, requires successful collaborative working between academic and professional support staff who provide academic and student support, wellbeing, careers and employability throughout the student lifecycle (see SO4), that spans from registration to graduation. To understand this better, Kent engaged in the Collaborative Retention Project (Advance HE, 2018) to assess the factors that contributed to educational gain, with staff and student surveys and combined institutional visit, to identify the key factors that promote student engagement, retention and success within the student life cycle, and beyond into employment and future life. Building on our previous TEF submission we have developed a whole institutional approach to supporting student success, one which draws together a growing number of initiatives in our academic schools that are embedded across Divisions and professional services and are tailored to address increasingly diverse student needs and any barriers to engagement (SE5-7).

Our deliberately flexible and personalised approach ensures that initiatives can be tailored at subject level in both timely and meaningful ways with trusted peers or academic staff, to best support individual students in developing their academic, personal and employability skills that contribute to educational gain. Evaluation of these initiatives is already outlined (SE3-7), showing how we intervene with different student groups to ensure they succeed and progress. In 2020, our enforced Digital First approach due to the pandemic led to the design and development of a remote registration process and a pre-arrivals student experience activity programme that included University Student Services Fair, with online guidance and advice about adapting to University study and life. We have continued this extended transition support both before and after Welcome Week with refreshers sessions, including

an events calendar, arrivals guide and online resources and activities promoted via dedicated Welcome webpages (92,000 views between the end July and the start of term in September 2022) and supported by the Uni Kent Student App (8,400 users in September 2022; 7.5% increase from 2021). Sessions such as the '*Online Learning at Kent*' module received 700 views on the first day of launch in Welcome Week. More broadly, we have included more academically focussed Divisional Welcome Fairs for our students, plus Kent Union coffee mornings and College and Community Life events, all aimed at creating a sense of belonging and community. Similarly, improving access to student support (SE5) and learning (SE6) has been critical in enabling students to engage more fully with their studies through developing their academic and digital literacies.

S06 The provider evaluates the gains made by its students and demonstrates its students are succeeding in achieving the intended gain

Kent has committed to upskilling academic colleagues in embedding and extracting employability from the curriculum by building on our existing employer engagement. Our Careers and Employability Service runs a wider range of activities (SE5) including work readiness training for our students and recent graduates, alumni-led job focused workshops centred around embracing diversity, plus practical training workshops on work and dining etiquette, commuting and traveling to work, as well as advice sessions on appropriate attire. Study Plus now provides sessions on leadership and management, effective use of Excel for business, marketing, networking, coding, and self- management. More than 2,000 students engage with these programmes every year, and the numbers are growing. Our target is to double engagement by 2026.

We are currently embedding processes that will assess the career readiness of our students through Careers Registration. As students sign up to the careers service platform (Target Connect), they are asked a few simple questions to assess student self-reported 'career readiness' which allows us to categorise students as either Competing (have a job or close to), Planning (have ideas and gaining experience) or Deciding (no clear career ideas). Working directly with Divisions, we will use a range of metrics including both student experience and progression patterns to work with our students to plan specific interventions, so that distinct employability needs can be met within cohorts by tracking progress on career preparedness and employment outcomes. Using this Careers Registration process, we can evaluate the effectiveness of different employability initiatives (SE5, SO3), in order to better plan and adapt our services to support student cohorts in Divisions or to identify individual students that may benefit from one-to-one careers advice.

Conclusion

Kent TEF metrics for student experience and outcomes are very high quality for most groups of students, with examples of sector-leading, award winning (outstanding) practice in this submission. We are confident that we deliver an excellent education by providing broad and innovative curricula, with a wider range of co-curricular opportunities that increase student confidence and skills. Embedding proven interventions and tailoring digital and physical learning resources that support student engagement and achievement ensures that all our students can fulfil their potential and achieve their ambitions.

SECTION 4: REFERENCES (Kent staff are shown in **Bold**)

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