

TEF 2023 – Provider Submission by Bridgwater & Taunton College/UCS

1. Provider context

University Centre Somerset (UCS) is part of Bridgwater and Taunton College (BTC), which is a large tertiary and general Further Education College. UCS is the trading name on the register of HE Providers held by the Office for Students (OfS) for the Higher Education (HE) provision at BTC, this is built on a long history of delivering high quality education, dating back to 1856. HE provision started with a partnership with the University of Plymouth in the 1970s delivering teacher training courses that are still running.

Currently, BTC has approximately 22,000 students. In 2022-23, at the start of the year 1131 students were enrolled on Higher Education (HE) and higher-level technical/professional and apprenticeship programmes (identified as those at level 4 and above). 807 of the above total students are enrolled on University or Pearson-validated programmes at level 4 and above. UCS is in partnership with four different universities who validate foundation degrees, 3-year honours degrees, level 6 Top Up Honours Degrees and PGCE/Cert Ed between them: The Open University (OU); University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE); University of Plymouth(UoP); Oxford Brookes University(OBU). UCS also offer HNC/D through Pearson.

Staff at UCS have been involved with designing, writing and delivering foundation degrees and degrees for many years. Through its work with OU, staff at UCS have also become very familiar with running their own Internal Scrutiny Panels to review programme developments and new curriculum design and running the preliminary validation events, inviting externals onto the panel in order to achieve externality. The final validation event is then conducted by OU in order for them approve qualifications in their name. Degrees, foundation degrees and apprenticeships have also been developed over many years with the other university partners, where a collaborative approach to programme design has often been adopted. In these instances, UCS academics have taken their proposals (informed by local employment/sector need, alumni and current student feedback and ideas) and worked on co-creating this curriculum with additional input from academics at the relevant university. The PGCE/Cert Ed provision was designed by and is franchised from the University of Plymouth. The teacher training provision is a collaborative partnership across the South West.

The HE provision has developed over time and is different in many ways to the historical data which extends back to 2011 in the TEF metrics. BTC was created in 2016 following the merger of two long-standing Further Education Colleges. An application to use the name University Centre Somerset for the HE provision was then submitted and approved. The TEF metrics date back well before this date and includes provision that stopped running some time ago. In considering the TEF metrics it is therefore important to understand the current nature of UCS within BTC.

BTC has three campuses all within Somerset. They are in Bridgwater, Taunton and Cannington. The majority of HE provision is delivered at the Taunton Campus. This includes the Centre of Digital Technologies digital hub, the Arts House, Sports, Early Childhood Education and Care, the Construction and Civil Engineering Centre and the newly established Nursing simulation suite with Trainee Nurse Associate and BSc (Hons) Nursing apprenticeships as well as direct entry BSc (Hons) Nursing, validated by UWE and approved for delivery by the NMC. This curriculum is taught by UCS staff in collaboration with Somerset NHS Trust and we understand it is the first college-based Honours degree Nursing provision to be approved by the NMC for delivery by a college rather than by the validating university.

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HNC/D Engineering is based in Bridgwater, whilst the National College for Nuclear Southern Hub is based on our Cannington Campus. Within this purpose-built facility housing a full flow-rig which replicates the system at the nearby Hinckley Point Nuclear Power plant, UCS delivers the BEng Engineering with Nuclear degrees/apprenticeships that were co-written with and validated by UWE in consultation with and supported by EDF. The first BEng degree apprentices in Nuclear Engineering graduated with first class Honours last year and have gone on to further their careers in very well paid high level positions.

The Cannington Campus also houses the Animal Management Centre and a fully operational farm that sells milk to Tesco. These facilities support the delivery of Foundation and Honours Degrees.

Professional courses are mostly run at the Bridgwater and Taunton campuses using the facilities relevant to their subject area. These include Certificates and Diplomas from a wide range of Awarding Organisations with a focus on being sector specific and employment-focused.

Strategic aims and their impact on students and the community

The mission and educational aims of Bridgwater & Taunton College (BTC) can be seen in the Strategic Planning Framework 2022-27¹. UCS has its own strand and vision within the overall BTC strategy².

The Vision is: Transforming lives and communities through innovative learning and partnerships.

The Mission Statement is: As a leading college of further and higher education, we will:

- Deliver inspirational teaching, learning and skills development
- Maintain a culture that promotes a supportive, inclusive, and safe environment
- Build highly effective partnerships that positively impact our students
- Positively influence the educational landscape.

Our Values are: Together, we are:

- Passionate and excited about learning
- Inclusive and supportive
- Responsive to student, employer, and community needs
- Always aspiring to the highest standards
- Professional and enterprising
- Innovative and creative
- Friendly and welcoming

The Cross Cutting Themes are:

- Digital Transformation
- Our response to the Climate Crisis
- Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

The overarching Strategic Aims 2022-27 are:

- Our People – Unlocking potential, enabling everyone to thrive
- Our Students – Inspiring our students to succeed
- Our Partnerships – Driving economic development, business innovation & individual success
- Our Operations – Enabling delivery of our Vision.

The Strategic Priorities by Provision Type are:

- University Centre Somerset – Transforming Somerset through University Level Education

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- BTC School Leavers – An Inspirational Experience
- BTC Apprenticeships – Transformational change for employers and apprentices
- BTC Adults – Deliver high quality, proactive, flexible learning programmes to support adults in achieving their potential
- BTC Land-based Strategy – The first choice for Land-based education & training

The University Centre Somerset (UCS) strand (on page 15) has the following strategic priorities:

- Establish UCS as the leading provider of university-level education in Somerset
- Deliver an enhanced student experience, so that students' progress in their careers and thrive
- Develop specialised higher technical, professional and degree programmes endorsed by employers and key stakeholders
- Raise academic reputation by promoting research and scholarship

This strategic framework underpins the educational strategy within UCS. The life-changing impact of this strategic framework on the quality of the student experience and student outcomes will be demonstrated within this document. The curriculum designed and delivered within UCS reflects key national priorities in relation to health, digital, energy and food security, in addition to local needs of employers and the community through strategic partnerships.

Strategic partnerships with employers and their impact on the skills focus on the student experience

Strategic partnerships designed to meet local and national needs have a direct impact on student experience and outcomes. Two prominent examples are partnerships with the NHS and EDF energy. In both these instances an existing relationship with University of the West of England, Bristol (UWE) was able to support UCS initiatives to provide appropriately skilled and qualified graduates for employment in these sectors.

The Somerset NHS Foundation Trust was looking for a local workforce, who, once they have supported their training, do not simply return to the areas they come from. UCS students are predominantly local and stay locally after graduating.³ UCS had been involved with trialling the Trainee Nurse Associate programme in collaboration with UWE. UCS was therefore in a position to assist if permission could be obtained from the Nursing and Midwifery Council and if UWE approved UCS for delivery of its nursing programme. This was achieved in 2021. The Student Union President mentions in her student TEF submission how much she is currently enjoying her placement in the NHS and the experiences that she is gaining.

The OfS Capital Grant funding assisted considerably in making this a reality. £2million was received and enabled the creation of a simulation suite – a ward simulation with patient mannequins in NHS-style beds that are responsive to students interacting with them. This is in addition to separate arms and other interactive resources. This enables students to practice taking blood pressure, doing SATs checks, taking blood etc in as close to a real environment as it is possible to achieve. A home-style room also enables students to practice with a 'patient' in a community setting. Classrooms are fully equipped with interactive smart boards and further NHS-related equipment and resources to enable both adult nursing and mental health nursing degrees to be delivered effectively.

This health provision is a result of a ground-breaking innovative collaboration between UCS and Somerset NHS Foundation Trust. UCS spent seven years working towards this outcome including

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two years attending workforce planning meetings with the NHS and discussing internal workforce planning reports to understand the level of demand and how a collaboration could enable the NHS in Somerset to support the delivery of the programmes. The result is that students are able to attend a variety of settings, in hospital, in the community and within GP surgeries to gain experience, on the job training and skill development to supplement the academic and practical delivery in the classroom. The first TNAs are already in the workplace, although some have decided to return to UCS to 'top up' to gain a full Nursing Degree.

Similarly, from the planning stage of the construction of Hinckley Point C nuclear power station close to the Cannington Campus, EDF have engaged with BTC for more than 10 years. EDF funded the Energy Skills Centre at the Bridgwater campus. The result was the creation of the Southern Hub of the National College for Nuclear on the Cannington Campus of BTC with delivery of BEng Engineering with Nuclear degrees embedded into degree apprenticeships by UCS academics with initial support in delivery of some modules by UWE staff and the level 6 project supervised by UWE Engineering academic staff. These Engineering with Nuclear degrees were written in 2017-18 through a collaboration with UWE, EDF and UCS staff within the National College for Nuclear. The innovative UCS design for the delivery of these programmes resulted in UWE reconsidering the design of their traditional engineering degrees. The delivery was designed around key projects, bringing a variety of skills, people and subject knowledge together to solve the problem that the students are faced with. After the first year of traditional on campus delivery, utilising the additional newly built halls of residence, delivery moves to being block release with employed students being released to attend for five-week blocks. Virtual Reality facilities, a flow rig and use of iPads which can be used to cast documents and information onto smart boards in the classrooms, all contribute to this state-of-the-art facility and an exceptional quality of learning experience for the students. The first students graduated with first class Honours Degrees and Degree Apprenticeships in 2022. On completion, they were able to move into even more highly paid and responsible positions with the nuclear industry.

Impact of the partnership with the University of West of England, Bristol (UWE)

Partner universities have a close alignment to BTC/UCS strategic aims as well as being well-respected in the chosen areas of collaboration. The partnership with UWE brings specific academic expertise, experience, support, scrutiny, quality assurance and the validation of a range of BEng (Hons) Engineering with Nuclear programmes, Trainee Nurse Associate (TNA) and BSc (Hons) Nursing programmes. UWE run an annual event to support effective teaching learning and assessment and this is open to UCS staff who teach on UWE-validated programmes. The Learning Resource Centre staff at UCS have also attended an international conference run by the library team at UWE where they presented the Embedded Librarian Initiative. The aim of the project was to work closer with curriculum by uploading contextualised learning resources via the digital channels and use these platforms as an additional communication tool for students to contact librarians with any queries or follow-up questions. This sharing of good practice is integral to our working relationship with UWE and is beneficial to all staff and students.

This partnership with UWE has enabled UCS to develop, design and deliver the BEng Engineering with Nuclear to fulltime undergraduates and apprenticeship programmes over the last four years. From Sept 2022 students can also start on the Foundation Degree which will lead into a BEng Engineering with Nuclear Mechanical or Electrical degree awards. Accreditation has recently been received from IET.

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We understand that UCS is the first college in the country to gain Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) approval to deliver BSc (Hons) Nursing apprenticeships from Sept 2021 and direct entry BSc (Hons) Nursing degrees from Sept 2022. This would not have been possible without UWE's willingness to share their expertise and experience in working with the NMC and the delivery of their own nursing degrees. This area is set to grow further and is already having impact as it is enabling the local community to access Nursing qualifications without having to move away from the area to study and will provide a future workforce for the Somerset NHS Foundation Trust.

These high-profile examples are not unique, but exemplify the innovative approach of UCS. The partnerships are in line with the overall vision 'to transform lives and communities through innovative learning', 'our partnerships' aim 'to drive economic development, business innovation and individual success' and the aim for 'our students', 'to inspire our students to succeed'.

Since merger in the summer of 2016, the curriculum offer has been fully reviewed and considered in line with similar earlier strategic objectives. The result is that for the last four years particular parts of the curriculum being delivered has evolved and, in some instances, as illustrated above have been a step change from that seen in the TEF metrics. For an example of further curriculum innovations; The 'digital transformation', 'response to climate crisis and 'equality, diversity and inclusion' cross cutting themes within the strategic framework are seen within the curriculum. Across UCS, the curriculum is responsive to these and to employer/sector and student needs.

The Centre for Digital Technologies is the digital hub for students studying on digital HE courses validated by The Open University at UCS. It is also used by T Level digital students. All HE students have daily access to state-of-the-art technology to support all modules on the current Computing and Digital Technologies Degree programme and the Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ) at Foundation Degree level, reflecting the current technologies, tools and techniques used within industry. Students have access to a variety of specialised digital classrooms and labs, including the new Apple Development Suite, containing high-specification Apple M1 Macs to support development of iOS applications. UCS is one of seven UK-based Apple Authorised Training Centres for Education (AATCE), and with several Module Leaders qualified as certified Apple Development trainers, students are fully supported by highly-qualified lecturers, and the requisite high-performance devices.

Students have access to a full Virtual Reality (VR) Development Lab, including a range of HTC Vive Cosmos Elite VR headsets with wireless adapters, driven by high-specification desktops. Alongside this, students can experience – and develop for – the cutting-edge Kat VR omnidirectional treadmill, delivering enhanced realism within VR. During these modules, students are supported by highly-qualified and experienced technical design lecturers.

All students have access to the new eSports suite, featuring a range of top-of-the-line gaming desktops, high refresh-rate gaming monitors, and Razer peripherals. Gaming enrichment activities between student cohorts support a feeling of inclusion and community between digital HE students, enhancing confidence and creating friendly rivalries! The suite is also utilised by final-year students as their main classroom, where the most powerful equipment is required for individual projects. The eSports suite is a key driver within our employer engagement strategy – UCS is the Somerset hub for the South-West eSports Festival in 2023, with local employers engaged in friendly gaming competition and networking opportunities with students, alumni and other employers.

Employer engagement is at the heart of digital curriculum development, with all members of the curriculum team meeting with local digital employers on a very regular basis to discuss opportunities for placements and graduate positions, as well as technical skills training and the constant cycle of ensuring the curriculum is utilising industry standard practices and techniques. The digital curriculum team recently presented at Digital Somerset to dozens of local digital employers, to expand the range of organisations with whom the curriculum team can draw knowledge and experience. UCS is very proud of its links with key employers for its digital programmes such as Numatic, Somerset County Council, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, MK Test and Evo. These partnerships and staff development (through the strategic aim for 'our people' to 'unlock potential, enabling everyone to thrive') and highest industry-standard technical facilities and resources have a clear impact on the student experience and their progression into highly skilled graduate employment. They are also having a positive impact for the local community as a number of employers have visited the facility in order for their IT teams to explore the latest possibilities and to consider how they might upskill their workforce to take advantage of the latest technology that they have been shown by the UCS curriculum team in the Centre for Digital Technologies.

Within the Strategic Planning Framework 2022-27, page 21 sets out the priorities for Land-Based provision. Food security, biodiversity, sustainability, the climate crisis and the support and development of the farming community are national priorities and local ones too. The land-based curriculum delivered at Rodway Farm Agriculture Innovation Centre and the Animal Management Centre provide students with outstanding facilities and resources and support their development within the industry and into further post graduate study. The farm has the Red Tractor mark for dairy, beef and sheep demonstrating welfare compliance. It is a sustainability and carbon foot printing barometer farm for the South West Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. A recent graduate of the BSc (Hons) Agricultural Management degree, validated by the University of Plymouth put forward a sufficiently robust business plan to Devon County Council that he was successful in being able to lease a farm as someone new to farming. The majority of students already work on family farms and are developing their knowledge to take back into the farming community, to increase modern and highly beneficial management techniques to increase profitability within biodiverse methodologies.

Impact of the partnership with the University of Plymouth

The partnership with the University of Plymouth is the longest standing and started in the 1970s with the Cert Ed teacher training qualification. The university validates foundation degrees and level 6 Honours degree Top Up at UCS in Public Services and Criminology and Agricultural Management. Innovation continues as the university also collaborates in other ways that benefit students in addition to its quality assurance mechanisms and the support of its pro-active students union in engaging with and supporting partner college student unions. The lead University of Plymouth student rep attends Joint Board of Studies with key staff from both institutions so that the student voice is heard directly as well as through the notes made during the Programme Committee Meetings in the Autumn and Spring and the student surveys. The university introduced the idea of the Student Perception Questionnaire (SPQ) for those students not eligible to undertake the National Student Survey (NSS). This is an idea that UCS extended many years ago to the students on all its university-validated and Pearson provision. The results have fed back into improvements and developments across this provision over the full timescale being considered by the TEF. In the last two years a similar survey was created by UCS to reach the voice of the

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students on professional HE courses at level 4 and above from Awarding Bodies other than Pearson and the universities. So, this good practice from the University of Plymouth has been taken by UCS and extended to impact significantly across the whole of the HE provision within the scope of this exercise.

The current areas of collaboration are joint involvement with Next Steps South West (NSSW), the local version of the national Uni Connect project supporting underrepresented groups to enter HE. The Somerset Team Lead, employed by the university is hosted at UCS and UCS also employs three members of the project team to deliver interventions both within BTC to FE students to encourage progression into HE, but also to local schools for the same purpose. Current UCS students are employed as Student Ambassadors to share their experience of being a UCS student with school children and FE students, not only in Somerset but across the South West through this project. This is an opportunity for these students to build their skills and confidence in public speaking and supporting the delivery of sessions as thereby adds to their experience at UCS.

The University of Plymouth also collaborates with UCS in relation to the South West Institute of Technologies (IoT) as both are members. Funding was received through the IoT to support the purchase of the flow rig for the National College for Nuclear and the development of the Centre of Excellence in Welding that has also been supported and is used by EDF in relation to the development of skills needed in welding to support the development of Hinkley Point C.

The quality of the student experience at UCS has been and still is positively impacted by the experience of former collaborations with the University of Plymouth. The university was previously successful in obtaining national funding for the Higher Education Learning Partnership Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning (HELP CETL). She was successful in receiving one of the last research funding awards offered by the HELP CETL. She used this funding to carry out an action research project exploring the embedding of sustainable development across the HE curriculum and wrote a chapter which was published along with a number of other staff from the College at the time⁴. However, the main impact of this research award was that she gained the knowledge of how the university managed the process and engaged staff from across their college partnership in carrying out research activities. Thereafter she developed the Research Scholarship and Ethics Committee and has run an annual bidding round to support staff scholarship and research within the college each year. This results in a Research and Scholarship Showcase publication⁵ to gather and disseminate the research, and an annual research conference where award holders and others share their scholarship and research activities. Staff are also encouraged to share their research more widely and this year the committee supported two members of staff in attending an international conference to share their research and learn from others. They will be sharing this knowledge with engineering students and staff at the upcoming staff development day and will be sharing the experience of writing for and presenting at an international conference with UCS staff at the updating and sharing of good practice annual HE conference in February. Staff in other subject areas who have delivered presentations at conferences have also shared their experiences with staff and students.

Good practice is actively shared between partner colleges at the termly University of Plymouth Partner Forum. This regular meeting⁶ enables key changes within the sector to be discussed and resulting changes to university policies and processes which impact students on courses validated by the university. Any issues or difficulties experienced by staff or students with new processes can be aired and solutions found.

Impact of the partnership with Oxford Brookes University

The partnership with Oxford Brookes University supports UCS, its staff and the student experience because it facilitates UCS staff being able to engage with a different set of colleges and ideas. The pre-pandemic annual conference has also always been an excellent forum for UCS Course Leaders and other staff to meet those from other partner colleges in another region along with colleagues from the university faculties and to share good practice and ideas to feed back into UCS and its provision to students. The university works with UCS in a franchised model although UCS staff have been involved with the development of the curriculum, particularly the Sports provision. Through working with the university, the Motorsport Engineering Foundation degree and level 6 Top Up successfully went through accreditation with IET and IMECHE during the period covered by the TEF. The university is very well respected in relation to its Motorsport provision and this collaboration has enabled local people in Somerset to have access to this provision without having to travel to study.

Impact of the partnership with The Open University

The fourth university partnership is with The Open University (OU). This is a devolved responsibility model of working and is therefore unlike the partnerships with the other universities. To be approved by OU to run courses that they validate it is necessary to undergo Institutional Approval and then re-approval every 5 years. The next event is taking place on the 24th January 2023. In order to gain initial approval and to maintain it, UCS has to demonstrate that it is sufficiently experienced at running effective HE programmes against an extensive list of criteria, very similar to those used for awarding powers applications. With other university partnerships UCS is generally required to use the policies and processes set out by the validating university. However, with OU UCS has to demonstrate that it has its own policies and processes in place that are sufficiently in line with the requirements of the UK Quality Code for HE and sector good practice as well as OU expectations, that they can be approved by OU. Expert Readers review each policy and provide feedback which is then acted on by UCS. This is a very high level of scrutiny and ensures that policies and processes are robust, effective and in line with best practice in the sector. This has a resulting positive influence on the quality of the student experience at UCS.

Because of this process, UCS developed and has recently updated all its own HE policies and processes. This includes the UCS HE Admissions Policy, the UCS HE Assessment Policy, the UCS HE Extenuating Circumstances Policy, the UCS HE Complaints Policy, the UCS Scholarship and Research Policy, UCS HE Academic Misconduct Policy, UCS Additional Learning Support Policy, UCS Student Engagement Policy and others⁷. UCS produces the paperwork for and chairs the Award Boards for OU-validated programmes in line with the OU academic regulations. These are attended by OU representatives as well as External Examiners. The OU have asked UCS to share their good practice in running these events and the effectiveness of the online nature of them that was introduced during the pandemic.

As UCS works with four different universities staff need to meet their different quality assurance processes and methods of carrying out annual reviews. In order to achieve consistency of approach and to have the same information across all university-validated and Pearson course UCS adopted Programme Committee Meetings across all this provision. The annual review documentation of each partner university is completed, but staff add to this so that the end result is consistent information and data across them. The annual review of the previous year's data,

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module leader comments, student survey results, current student feedback and External Examiner reports and the Course Leader's response to it are all reviewed at the Autumn PCM. An action plan is drawn up. This is then reviewed at the Spring PCM where staff and students review the current programme and make any in-year adjustments appropriate to students' comments. In this way there is a dialogue maintained in-year between staff and students which supports and can have a direct effect on the student experience in a positive manner.

HE at UCS is overseen by the UCS Senate which is the senior academic authority for HE at BTC. The Principal chairs the Senate and three Governors attend these meetings to ensure appropriate scrutiny and challenge, in addition to the Heads of all areas related to HE at UCS. of the Governors are senior academics and have experience as QAA reviewers,

. The minutes⁸, key reports and the annual UCS Self Evaluation Document for HE are reviewed and discussed at Senate and then provided to the Quality & Standards Committee of the Board of Governors for further scrutiny with any appropriate matters thereafter reported to the full Board of Governors.

This model of working has significant impact on the quality of the student experience, on all students at level 4 and above at UCS. This is because the model adopted for OU courses has been extended by UCS to cover all HE provision. The Senate reviews the NSS and SPQ student satisfaction surveys and also introduced a Student Experience Questionnaire (SEQ) for students on professional courses from Awarding Organisations other than universities or Pearson. Between these surveys, all HE students are encouraged to respond so that the results can be analysed and discussed not only at programme level, but also at a senior level at the Senate. At programme level any resulting actions are added to the programme action plan. At the top level any actions that involve a cross-college approach are added to the annual HE Enhancement and Action Plan⁹

Student reps attend the Programme Committee Meetings (PCMs) for every university-validated and Pearson course in the Autumn and Spring. They come prepared having been given a prompt sheet that contains the areas covered by the NSS survey. They are shown the NSS and SPQ results from the previous year and are asked to comment on them and their own experience of their course at UCS. The notes from these discussions are recorded within the PCM documentation. Any resulting actions are added to the programme action plan.

The Head of each curriculum area that has HE provision, plus the Heads of the key support areas related to HE all produce an annual self-evaluation of their area. The Director for Staff and Quality Services and the Head of HE meet each Head and their SMT lead to discuss their self-evaluation and to ensure it is as robust and effective as possible taking account of the data made available. It is based on the information from the student voice, module leader comments and other questions considered at the PCM¹⁰, so that an overview of the provision and the student experience can be understood. Finally, the Head of HE produces the annual UCS HE Self-Evaluation Document¹¹. This document analyses and evaluates key data such as numbers, withdrawals, in-year retention, number of 'good degrees' (2:1 or first), numbers of and reasons for valid Extenuating Circumstances claims, any complaints or academic appeals data with lessons learned, and student satisfaction survey results. The SED is being extended during 2022-23 to include the professional courses in more detail than was previously achieved. The UCS HE Student Governor is a member of the Senate and provides feedback at each meeting in addition to consideration of the student voice through surveys and PCMs. Their opinion is therefore asked for at each level, is taken seriously and is acted upon directly and through the action plans mentioned. Alongside staff and

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employer feedback on curriculum this plays a significant part in informing developments and improvements to HE courses and to the student experience.

The other university partnerships referenced in the TEF metrics ceased to exist prior to merger in 2016.

Underrepresented groups and widening participation

Widening Participation and the support of those from underrepresented groups to enter, succeed in and progress effectively from HE is very important within the strategic thinking of BTC/UCS. The Access & Participation Plan approved by the OfS sets out the commitment and interventions in place.

personally asked BTC to write a case-study sharing effective practice with the sector at the Insight conference where he launched his new direction for Access & Participation. The case study was published on the OfS website as one of the supporting documents. It showcased how BTC set up and sponsors a Multi Academy Trust and thereby has been supporting attainment in schools for many years. UCS has a higher number of mature students than the sector average as well as the majority of students being from Quintiles 1 & 2 as can be seen in the Access and Participation Plan.

Apprenticeships

BTC has an established and well recognised (Ofsted Outstanding) provision for over 2900 apprentices in 2022-23, 128 of which are degree apprentices and 358 at levels 4 and 5. The refocused strategic aims clearly identify the importance of career-focused HE education at UCS, directly building knowledge, skills and behaviours to meet local, regional and national needs, clearly exemplified by the Nursing and Nuclear Engineering degree apprenticeships. The provision of high-quality education at the appropriate level, co-designed with employers and built to provide apprentices with the experience, education and skills, knowledge and behaviours to become core employees within their organisation. HE graduates engaged in UCS degree apprenticeships are employed, valued by their employers and have progression routes built into their programmes from the very start, with the progression data for the degree apprenticeships reflecting this.

Student TEF submission

The Student Union President was asked to lead on the production of the student TEF submission. She agreed and met with the Head of HE and HE Student Engagement Officer to discuss the TEF, what is required and what evidence and assistance is available to help her.

On discussing how she could reach the maximum number of students to understand current opinion about their academic experience at UCS, she decided that a survey would reach more students and could be more representative of all campuses, courses, types of student and reach the full range of university-validated courses as well as those awarded at HE level by a range of Awarding Organisations. An anonymous survey was therefore compiled through use of MS Forms using the question set contained within the NSS survey which are part of the TEF metrics. Two surveys were run (with identical questions) in order to ensure that the experience of both students on partnership courses (validated by a University Partner or Pearson) and students on professional courses (awarded by other Awarding Bodies) were clearly apparent. The surveys ran during December and January and the results were used within the student submission. students responded overall to the Autumn TEF Survey. 35% responded from the

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partnership courses and 29% from the professional courses. Despite being lower response rates than was hoped, the results gather the opinion of more students than could have been captured by focus groups and are still representative of the student body. Students from all university-validated partner provision responded. Students responded from HNC/D, Foundation Degrees, Honours Degrees, PGCE and professional Certificate and Diploma courses. This includes both full time and part time courses. This Autumn TEF survey is also representative of the nature of the students who responded. This includes male, female and other, those with a disability and those without, mature and young students as well as both those receiving some additional support and those without.

The survey results showed that of those completing the survey:

69% of partnership students and 15% of professional students were full time.

51% of partnership students and 100% of professional students were mature students (21 years old or more on the first day of their course).

45% male, 54% female and 1% other completed the partnership survey, whereas 22% male, 76% female and 2% other completed the professional survey

8% of partnership students and 12% of professional students have a registered disability with the college.

18% partnership students and 15% professional students receive support from staff other than teaching.

Overall, 86% of partnership students and 97% of professional students are satisfied with the quality of the course.

These results therefore capture opinion at this point in time and therefore give a more up to date view of the student experience than the annual NSS and SPQ survey results held by UCS and are a good comparison with these other survey results.

A writing day was organised by the HE Student Engagement Officer with the SU Student President. An MS Team had been set up in advance with key documents provided that evaluate UCS provision and have been considered by the Senate over the last four years. This included annual Self-Evaluation Documents, NSS survey results, Student Perception Questionnaire (SPQ) results which capture the opinion of HE students who are not eligible to undertake the NSS. Minutes from Programme Committee Meetings were made available from across the different partnerships. The evidence also included annual 'good degree' analysis indicating the percentage of students achieving a 1st or 2:1 each year and in-year retention rates. The Head of HE joined the start of the meeting so that she could further explain the information provided and could answer any questions. She then left the SU President to write the submission but was available, if required, to explain anything necessary or answer any questions that the SU President might have.

The HE Student Engagement Officer helped by checking through the TEF Guidance on student submissions and highlighting a structure that could work for the student submission. She was available for support and discussion throughout the day.

Given other commitments, the submission was written on that day and the Head of HE responded to questions when asked. The student submission was shared with UCS and some suggestions were put forward in relation to formatting and clarity for consideration. The SU President was able to consider these and to finalise and upload her submission. In this manner UCS supported the

student submission, whilst ensuring that there was no influence on the SU President and that she was free to write the student submission in whatever way she felt appropriate.

2. Student experience

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, cyber incident (Jan 2021) and arson attack (Feb 2021)

All lectures went online over the weekend of the first lockdown. Staff and students were supported for the fortnight before lockdown to learn how to use MS Office 365 and Teams. This enabled lectures to continue after lockdown with synchronous and asynchronous delivery. Each course was reviewed to see if the learning outcomes could be met without access to physical resources. Adaptations were made where necessary with the approval of the validating university and External Examiner. During the height of the Covid-19 pandemic when the country was in lockdown, UCS adopted a problem-solving approach to support students producing a spreadsheet of difficulties experienced by students through Extenuating Circumstances process. In this way solutions could be found and the lived experience of students understood and proactively responded to, rather than simply giving extensions which would not have helped overcome the problems many were facing. This was very much appreciated by students.

Whilst still in lockdown, in January 2021 a cyber incident took place resulting in the IT system shutting down and needing to remain shut down for a number of weeks whilst the incident was investigated and the back-up records saved 24 hours before the incident were able to restore all functions without a loss of data and without confidentiality having been breached. Mitigations were immediately put in place, but access to the VLE and other resources were temporarily unavailable whilst the system was rebuilt securely. This incident had an impact on the NSS scores.

Just as BTC was recovering from the cyber incident, an arson attack took place in February 2021 which burnt down the Motorsport workshop. Huge support was received from the motorsport community and partners and the students were able to successfully complete their studies, but their experience was clearly affected by this incident. Although it is not a necessary part of the programme, Motorsport students particularly enjoy racing the team race car. This had not been possible once lockdowns started and all racing stopped. Then the race car was destroyed in the fire that burnt down the motorsport workshop. The fire also destroyed some student work, jigs and templates, machinery and equipment that had been built up over many years. Students were supported to successfully complete their studies and fed back positively during their time at UCS. However, the NSS results clearly demonstrate their feelings about this series of events. No complaints were received relating to any of these incidents and the way that BTC/UCS handled the situations. Students were appreciative of the support and hardship bursaries provided. If the motorsport results are removed from the overall NSS results from 2022, the overall satisfaction score jumps from 70% to 78% (2% above the national average, which is where it usually is).

The NSS survey is not representative of all students at UCS, which is why UCS also surveys its students with the Student Perception Questionnaire to gain the views of those not eligible and uses these for its internal monitoring and evaluation.

SE1: Assessment and Feedback: The metrics show the UCS satisfaction rate for assessment and feedback to be 77.7%, slightly higher than the benchmark of 77.1%. However the The Autumn TEF survey showed even higher results with 78% of partnership students and 90% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that the criteria used in marking has been made clear in advance. 80% of partnership students and 94% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree

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that marking and assessment has been fair. 74% of partnership students and 87% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree feedback on work has been timely. Some students would like to have their feedback more quickly than the 20 working days stated in the UCS Assessment Policy. Sometimes this is possible but not always so realistic expectations need to be managed. 76% of partnership students and 91% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree they have received helpful comments on their work.

The 7 ways-Evaluation of Teaching Learning and Assessment (TLA) Policy¹², the UCS HE Assessment Policy¹³, Teach Meets (where staff get together regularly to share good practice in teaching) and TLA Insights briefings¹⁴ (regular emails sent to all curriculum staff with ideas, links and updates related to the latest thinking in effective TLA) work together to foster outstanding teaching learning and assessment. On site teacher training courses enable those new to teaching to become qualified and there is an expectation that they achieve this.

A week-long Common Inspection Review¹⁵ into HE enables a particular theme to be explored across the provision to see where best practice lies, any areas for development and what can be shared across teams. Peer observations are encouraged as well as developmental observations to assist staff in developing new areas of practice with support from their peers.

Teaching staff are expected to provide feedback on formative and summative assessed work that feeds-forward to enable students to understand how to develop their approach to achieve higher marks in the next assessment. Across the provision External Examiner have commended staff at UCS for the quality and detail of their feedback to students. One advantage of having smaller group sizes is that staff are able to provide this level of feedback. This is important as students enter HE at UCS with lower UCAS tariff points than a university (e.g. OU FD 64, BA(Hons) 80). Students are supported in class and in tutorials to become independent learners able to achieve their qualification and progress into highly skilled employment or further study. Tutorials enable individualised guidance and signposting, both in relation to academic and pastoral matters, as appropriate to the individual student. This is built into the Access & Participation Plan as a way in which underrepresented students are supported without being singled out from the rest of the group.

The UCS HE Assessment Policy is put into practice with a wide variety of assessment methods used, appropriate to the subject area and the skills, knowledge and understanding being assessed. This range of assessment builds expertise as well as assessing for example the use of presentations where students build confidence and perfect the skills to stand up in front of a group of people and deliver a presentation effectively. This policy which is actively put into practice across the provision ensures that Condition B4 is met. External Examiner reports¹⁶ across the provision confirm that students are assessed effectively. Internal Verification (IV) of assessments are carried out before the assessment is shared with the External Examiner who is asked to review assessments before they are given to students. IV records are kept. The checklist template specifically requires the IV to check the assessment meets the learning outcomes, that the assessment is valid and reliable and is appropriate to the subject matter and level of assessment. The generic grading criteria in UCS HE Assessment Policy includes references to technical proficiency in the English language in way that appropriately reflects the level and content of the course. Different courses are subject to the academic regulations, guidance and policies of different university partners and Awarding Organisations. The staff follow these and are further supported by the standard working practices set out in the UCS Assessment Policy. Together the

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UCS strategic planning framework, academic regulations and policies ensure that all HE provision builds skills, knowledge and understanding appropriate to the subject area and level and ensure that awards are credible. This is demonstrated by the examples given in section 1 on pages 3-7 of close working with employers and different sectors across all UCS HE provision. The result is highly effective and tailored to supporting students' learning, progression and attainment.

SE2: The Teaching on my course: The metrics show that the UCS satisfaction rate is 82.7% which is below the benchmark of 83.1%. However, the Autumn TEF survey showed that 87% of partnership students and 98% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agreed Staff are good at explaining things. 89% of partnership students and 96% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agreed staff have made the subject interesting. 90% of partnership students and 97% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agreed the course is intellectually stimulating. 90% of partnership students and 97% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree their course has challenged them to achieve their best work. These results are substantially higher than benchmark.

Course content is designed and developed through engagement with employers, alumni, current students, Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) such as EMSI data and other research and exploration of the given sector. Programme changes and new programme proposals are considered by the Academic Planning and Development Committee (a sub-committee of the Senate). This committee ensures that proposals are academically sound, financially viable and that the resources needed (both human and physical exist or can be put in place in order to support the development.) This ensures that only carefully thought through proposals are accepted for development to ensure that they will be fit for purpose for students and in line with the strategic aims. Examples of collaborative engagement with employers and consideration of sector information influencing course content are highlighted in the context section of this document. For example Nursing Degree Apprenticeships which took 7 years in total to bring to fruition with extremely careful planning and collaboration with the NHS and then with UWE to ensure outstanding quality of content, delivery, resources and placements. BEng Nuclear Engineering Degree Apprenticeships is the other example given above. However, the principle of curriculum design runs across all programmes where staff are able to design and write their own programme. UCS does not have its own awarding powers, so it is necessary to either work with a partner university to create it or use an existing qualification from an Awarding Organisation to deliver HE curriculum.

UCS has found that although the strategic plans of other institutions often align with its own and effective collaboration can take place as already demonstrated, this is not always the case. This is one of the reasons for UCS to work with a number of universities including OU. Where there might be a conflict of interest or unwillingness to engage in the development of a particular curriculum, UCS is able to design and write its own HE courses validated by OU with content that meets subject benchmarks, but goes beyond this to be fully up to date and fit for purpose for the sector the students wish to enter. The current computing provision is a good example of this. The engagement with employers in the design and through their engagement in placements and as visiting speakers within programmes positively impacts the content and certainly inspires students to actively engage in, commit to their learning and stretch them to develop their knowledge and skills to their fullest potential. The impact of the strategic planning framework is that this experience is not limited to computing, it is replicated across the provision.

An underlying principle of the provision validated for UCS by OU is that UCS designed its provision to embed a foundation degree into its 3-year Honours Degrees. This was not an approach that OU

had previously validated and it took some negotiation to enable it to happen. The impact on content and delivery of this innovative design is that students on the foundation degree (FD) are able to be taught alongside the students on the Honours degree. The FD students do not have to achieve as high a number of UCAS tariff points as those entering the Honours Degree route. However, when they demonstrate that they have passed the FD and have built up their skills and knowledge to be able to succeed at level 6 they are able to progress to the Honours Degree Top Up.

A further impact on students is that because the FD meets the Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement the students on the 3-year Honours Degree route also gain the advantage of building their employability skills and meet the same learning outcomes and carry out the same placements as those on the FD. Indeed, the FD is the official exit award for the Honours Degree routes validated by UCS with OU because of this value added, which is above and beyond what is necessary to gain a standard DipHE. This innovative design puts the BTC and UCS sector-focused skills agenda into practice in a highly obvious manner. The most recent UCS course to be revalidated in 2022 by OU is Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), like its predecessor, Early Childhood Studies which has been running over the last 4 years, the course has embedded the Occupational Standards within it. Students on ECS were able to gain an additional skills-based qualification through their assessed work in the workplace. The new programme extends this further but with the same remit that the course content and delivery is designed to inspire students to study and to gain the skills, knowledge and additional qualifications needed to enter employment ready and able to make an immediate contribution to the workplace. This approach is inherent throughout the provision.

The one downside of the FD embedded within the Honours Degree design is that courses rarely have a sufficient number of students completing the NSS on each of the routes to enable programme level results to be published. But internal SPQ results are available and it is a price worth paying to enable underrepresented groups and other students to enter HE, progress and succeed¹⁷ with employability skills and experience built into their programme.

The course content is reviewed in the PCMs annually. Module Leader comments show where changes may be necessary. Small updates that do not affect learning outcomes can and are actioned¹⁸. However, if a significant change is needed (be it a minor or major change as defined by the relevant university) an application is made to the relevant university where a formal process can be followed to bring about the change¹⁹. For professional courses and Pearson courses the curriculum is set by the Awarding Organisation. Suggestions can be raised and discussed with External Examiners / the Awarding Organisation directly to impact a change. Some staff at UCS have been involved in re-writing curriculum for some Awarding Organisations where it needed updating.

HNC/D Engineering students are almost all already employed within the sector or MOD. Their employers request additional modules to be covered in order to ensure that their employees gain all the knowledge needed for their work. Additional Pearson modules are therefore added to the standard curriculum in order to meet this demand and to ensure the curriculum content and delivery is fully fit for purpose and what the students and employers desire.

Part time, full time and block release models of delivery are used as appropriate and delivery is also routinely covered within 2 or 2.5 days so that students can manage their other commitments

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and independent study around this. This is particularly welcomed by mature students and those needing to work in addition to studying. This is also part of the Access & Participation Plan measures to support underrepresented groups.

The Nuclear Engineering and Nursing qualifications were discussed in detail in the context section. It was shown how in these areas as in all others across UCS the content is inspiring, engages students and stretches them to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential.

SE3: As mentioned above and in the context section, the BTC/UCS strategy across all courses is to engage with employers, LMI, specialist staff knowledge of the relevant sector and build current skills needs into the curriculum, designing and writing new foundation degrees and honours degrees validated by partner universities where appropriate and needed.

The understanding of the sector, discussions with employers and focus on the skills agenda are fundamental to the development of curriculum to provide an outstanding academic experience for students that will enable them to enter the workplace confidently.

Staff who are intending writing new curriculum engage in a period of research and development to inform their design and content. The first draft is reviewed by an Internal Scrutiny Panel (a sub-committee of the Senate) who check and challenge to ensure that the appropriate levels of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications have been used in the writing of the learning outcomes at each level. Those new to writing curriculum are supported by the Head of HE and other experienced staff so that they learn how to write appropriate content and complete the validation process. Course Leaders who are due to go through (re)validation for their curriculum are invited to be an observer of a (re)validation event. They are able to put this professional learning into practice when (re)validating their own curriculum.

Staff share their research activities and industrial skills and knowledge with their students. Many staff are active within their sectors as well as being academics and they bring this wealth of knowledge into the classroom. The annual Research and Scholarship Showcase publication²⁰ highlights examples of UCS staff research into both their subject areas and in effective teaching learning and assessment.

Research funded by UCS exploring effective pedagogy in the last 4 years: Does your feedback work?; Observing online teaching; Adding Value in A-levels: Be The Change; “Changing Minds” project – adopting ‘Brain Gain’ strategies to help improve outcomes for maths GCSE learners; How do we provide an innovative, sustainable model for Creative Arts Higher Education delivery; Enhancing students’ apprenticeship skills and competence in the workplace through case study research; Relational pedagogy and its role in the development of academic resilience for students in HE.

Subject specific research funded by UCS in the last 4 years: Measuring student academic performance through the “Embedded Librarian” concept – pilot study; Supporting the Access and Participation Plan through the evaluation of the HEADStart programme; Developing alternative energy sources for Further Education sites: a case study of BTC’s waste-to-energy prospect; Measuring environmental sustainability and energy efficiency performance in College buildings; Research-led teaching through the study and development of the prototype vehicle air intake system; A literature review on the influence of technology and social media on mental health and

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wellbeing; A pilot study on Environmental awareness of students at Rodway Farm; Energy retrofit options for achieving net-zero energy buildings - a case study; Comparative analysis of the building's thermal performance on occupant comfort – a case study; Work in Preparation - a studio-based arts project; The cost of using environmentally sustainable energy.

The curriculum at UCS is innovative as shown in the examples cited in section SE1, SE2 and the context section. Further examples are the approval in the first wave of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQ) of a digital HTQ. Early Childhood Education and Care is currently under review as an HTQ and others are planned. UCS is also exploring short courses and validated its first Animal Management and Wildlife Conservation Professional Certificate at the same time as the validation of this provision. The first students started this route in 2021-22 and of them enjoyed this taster so much that they transferred to the foundation degree. This really demonstrates the power of providing short courses as tasters to give mature students the confidence to take their studies further. As has been seen, students and employers are partners in the co-creation of and development of HE courses at UCS. This all contributes to an outstanding academic experience for UCS students.

SE4: A sub-committee of the Senate is the Research Scholarship and Ethics Committee. This committee organises a bidding round every year to fund research projects, the results of which can be seen in the annual Research and Scholarship Showcase publication. It also organises the annual Research Conference held in August each year. The feedback²¹ from staff about this event is extremely positive and within their evaluation forms they record the impact of the conference on them. Staff comment on how it inspires them to get involved when they hear what others are doing. Teaching contracts have scholarly days built into them and staff use these as well as the funding available to engage in their scholarship activities, sector updating and research. This approach is set out the UCS Scholarship and Research Policy²² and is widely put into practice across UCS. PCM documentation and staff appraisals capture staff engagement as does the ITrent CPD log.

The Research Scholarship and Ethics Committee also support staff to apply for Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. This is both through funding the application and providing support from those who have already achieved Fellowship or Senior Fellowship of the HEA. At the Feb HE Conference last year a representative from Advance HE talked to staff about what is on offer as UCS is a member and also provided more information about applications for fellowships. members of staff recently attained Senior Fellowship and others achieved Fellowship. This is across subject areas within UCS.

Staff are encouraged to disseminate their research more widely and many have presented at external conferences. The most recent examples of this are members of staff being sponsored by UCS to attend the 27th Ka and Broadband Communications Conference in Italy in October 2022 to deliver their research. They are currently organising to share what they learned with engineering staff and students. They will be talking at the February HE Conference to the wider staff audience about how to go about preparing a paper to present at an international conference. More locally, presented at the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network (ECSDN) in January 2023

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SE5: In relation to Academic Support, the Autumn TEF survey showed that 90% of partnership students and 99% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that they have been able to contact staff when they needed to. 92% of partnership students and 95% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that they have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to their course. 90% of partnership students and 95% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that good advice was available when they needed to make study choices on their course. These current student results demonstrate satisfaction with academic support well in excess of the benchmark and significantly higher than the indicator rate in the TEF metrics where the UCS rate was 79.4% in comparison with the benchmark of 81.5%. The SPQ rates were also higher.

UCS is a very supportive environment for students with small friendly groups and accessible and supportive staff. Module Tutors and Course Leaders get to know students well and student feedback confirms it is a supportive environment.

The HEADStart (Higher Education Academic Development) sessions run by the Learning Resource Centres (LRCs). HEADStart sessions are aimed at students new to HE, are tailored to suit each programme and feature examples and practical activities associated with specific research needs. Refresher sessions are delivered to 2nd and 3rd year students and are tailored to their study needs. This is achieved through a close collaboration between the library staff and programme leaders/module tutors. The HEADStart sessions include: an introduction to the UCS library resources (printed, electronic and audio-visual); accessing and effectively searching for resources via partner university portals; Harvard referencing; Avoiding plagiarism; Evaluation of information; Academic writing. The aim of these sessions is to help HE students to search, evaluate, select, ethically use and present information in their academic work. They develop HE students' independent study and research skills, critical evaluation skills and contribute to their information and digital literacy skills.

Students provide very positive feedback on this Service. 261 students completed HeadStart evaluation forms during the 2021/22 academic year. Of these 258 students found the sessions useful, equating to a 99% satisfaction rating. Students provided qualitative feedback about what they have learnt from the sessions and additional comments. Their responses refer to the impact of the sessions in them learning about in-text citations and building reference lists; effective searching skills; structuring assignments and searching electronic libraries for academic information.

The LRC also offer individual sessions to support individual students where required. These sessions are tailored to the individual students' needs. This service was set up approximately 10 years ago to address the issue of when students might have a learning difficulty that is not sufficiently severe that they are eligible for DSA support, but they could still do with a greater level of advice. The Additional Learning Support Team support students on an individual basis and guide them in applying for DSA. A bursary is available to fund the necessary assessment. To further improve the support and links between the students and the ALS Team a new post has been created this academic year (2022-23) of HE Learning Resource Advisor, this should further improve the tailored support already available to students.

In 2021-22 the LRC ran a project funded by UCS of the Embedded Librarian. This highly successful project was set up to work directly with students on programmes that did not seem to want to engage with the LRC, this enabled library staff to post resources and provide support via the dedicated channels on MS Teams and Google Classroom. This enabled librarians to provide

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course-specific library resources, upload asynchronous study skills resources, seek feedback from HeadStart sessions and disseminate relevant library news and updates. This activity was complemented with librarian “pop-ins” to classrooms to promote library services and support students with study skills at key stages of their study. The feedback from the project has been extremely positive and the written Evidence is published on the [CoLRIC website](#); [IS Oxford website](#) and [UCS website](#). An article about the embedded librarian initiative has been submitted to the *Impact* magazine by CoLRIC.

SE6: Learning Resources: The metrics state that the UCS satisfaction rate is 72.5%, which is lower than the benchmark of 76.6%. However, the SPQ rates for 2022 were higher and the Autumn TEF survey showed that 77% of partnership students and 91% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that the IT resources and facilities provided have supported their learning well. 83% of partnership students and 90% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that the library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well. 88% of partnership students and 93% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that they have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g., equipment, facilities, software, collections) when they needed to.

The context section gave examples of the type of outstanding, state of the art resources available to students on courses at UCS. In financial terms recent investment for buildings and refurbishments are enormous:

Building	Date	£
CSIC Extension	Mar-17	259,207.93
Advanced Engineering Centre	Oct-17	6,278,588.00
Milking Parlour Extension	Oct-17	42,005.88
Quantock Restaurant Taunton	Dec-17	1,149,541.55
University Centre Taunton	Dec-17	43,842.61
ACE LEP Buildings, Taunton	Jan-18	160,097.28
Arts House Taunton	Jan-18	375,423.31
R Block Taunton	Jan-18	174,787.82
National College for Nuclear (NCfN)	Mar-18	9,651,146.58
NCfN Burrow Hall	Oct-19	4,558,699.23
Bridgwater T Levels Construction (HE students also use these facilities)	Mar-21	999,088.75
Conference Centre Taunton	Jul-21	9,982.80
Cathedral Barn, Rodway	Aug-21	43,615.62
Energy Skills Centre	Oct-21	371,865.10
New UCS Residential accommodation in Wellington Road, Taunton	Jan-22	1,323,548.75
Bridgwater Costa	Mar-22	290,130.45
Taunton Costa	Mar-22	143,980.95
MCofE	Oct-22	1,698,039.79
B Block Taunton, Taunton	Nov-22	1,228,470.10
Grand Total		28,802,062.50

In addition, there was investment in the animal collection housing in 2021-22 of £16,500.

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Health Education England provided £150,000 for Nursing resources and the Office for Students capital fund provided £2million which was spent on IT equipment, the refurbishment and establishment of the nursing simulation suite and further associated resources and equipment. This extremely high level of investment over time into the buildings and facilities support the strategic aims of providing high level industry standard facilities for students to use. The examples of outstanding resources already mentioned in the context section, are replicated across the provision as can be seen from the investment figures above. For example, HNC/D Engineering students work in the Advanced Engineering Centre and also have access to the Centre of Excellence in Welding. Arts students work in the completely refurbished Arts House. Unusually for a college, UCS also has Halls of Residence to accommodate students who are not local. This has been extended by the purchase in Jan 2022 of new student accommodation in Wellington Road, 5 minutes walk from the Taunton UCS campus. This is in response to students considering that the Halls of residence in Trull are too far away (2 miles) from campus. The new accommodation is an easy walk into the centre of town as well as the campus.

Students receive outstanding support in class and outside of it through the use of resources on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The pandemic significantly accelerated the use of the VLE and interactive teaching and learning. For a fortnight before the first lockdown, online training packages were made available to staff. The fact that they could access this training at a time to suit themselves meant a much larger take-up in training than before. Staff taught their students to use MS Teams as a means of communicating and delivering both synchronous and asynchronous delivery. Teaching continued without a break and sessions moved immediately online with the focus being on live taught sessions that were recorded. Students have been extremely positive about having sessions recorded and how it helped them during the lockdown. Blackboard and MS Teams are the systems used to support learning. The Digital Skills Manager supports staff in their effective use. Fortnightly TLA Insights emails prompt further good practice and ideas and the Teach Meets provide an opportunity for staff to share and discuss good practice. Some staff have carried out research projects on effective teaching and learning, including a focus on the use of digital platforms. Examples can be seen in the UCS Research and Scholarship Showcase publications previously mentioned. Together, these physical and virtual resources are tailored to support outstanding teaching and learning in line with the strategic plan.

SE7: Student Voice: The metrics show UCS satisfaction is 70%, which is below the benchmark of 74.5%. However the SPQ results are higher than this and the Autumn TEF survey were considerably higher than the benchmark. They showed that 92% of partnership students and 94% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree they have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on their course. 87% of partnership students and 95% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree staff value students' views and opinions about the course. 71% of partnership students and 90% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree it is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on.

Mention has already been made of the Programme Committee Meetings (PCMs) that are embedded as a fundamental part of the HE Quality Cycle at UCS. Key to the PCMs is the collection of the student voice. Students are provided with a prompt sheet, based on the NSS questions and are supported to discuss this with their cohort. They are asked to reflect on the NSS and SPQ scores from the previous cohort of students and to comment on their experience and the extent to which they agree or not with the survey outcomes. They are also asked a Safeguarding question about whether they feel safe on campus and have the opportunity to raise any other

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questions or queries or to make suggestions for improvements. The student voice is captured in the meeting²³. The Course Leader agrees how and when they will feedback to students on the points they have raised. Some actions are resolved immediately, others are added to the programme level action plan.

The student voice is also heard at the Senate via the Student Union President who is also the HE Student Governor and represents the HE students at full meetings of the Board of Governors.

The appointment in Sept 2022 of an HE Student Engagement Officer, based amongst the students in the newly refurbished UCS HE Student Common Room has enabled an even greater focus on supporting HE students and the Student Union.

Students are also a very important voice in relation to course developments. Both alumni and current students are asked their opinions to ensure that courses start out and remain fit for purpose for students and employment sector to which they relate. Students attend the validation and revalidation events for their programmes so that the validation panel can hear their views directly in addition to what has been recorded in the Background document about what has informed the development of the programme²⁴.

3. Student Outcomes

SO1: The programme level reviews carried out at the Autumn and Spring PCMs together with the annual UCS Self-Evaluation Document²⁵ enables both programme teams and Senate members to analyse, evaluate and act on the data provided relating to student outcomes. Tutorials support students on an individual basis, the LRC support both groups and individuals through the HEADStart programme and the Embedded Librarian project and the Additional Learning Support Team also provide individualised sessions. The Wellbeing Team support students where necessary and when students apply for Extenuating Circumstances, if appropriate they are signposted to the Wellbeing Team for support or referral to counselling.

Embedding employability skills within the curriculum through the use of foundation degrees and supporting those employed students who attend professional courses to further their skills in the workplace is highly effective in ensuring students succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

SO2:

Continuation Rates

The overall full time continuation data in the TEF metrics is above the benchmark (84.7% in comparison to the benchmark of 84%). The metrics show a significant rise in year 3 to materially above the benchmark (89.9% in comparison to benchmark of 84.8%), but reduces uncharacteristically in year 4, particularly in relation to engineering continuation.

Since the merger in 2016 and the creation of UCS thereafter, all HE provision has been reviewed and decisions taken to close some courses and develop others. The full time TEF continuation data starts in year 1 with 2016-17 entrants and ends with 2019-20 entrants in year 4, whilst the part time metrics date back to 2015-16 entrants. The HE offer at UCS has changed substantially over this period of time. There are some old engineering courses that are no longer running contained within the dataset that have since been replaced and some from old franchised provision that was in the final stages of being closed down with some university partnerships that stopped prior to merger.

However, the data does confirm known issues with certain engineering programmes that were running during the last four years. The key issue has been the level of maths required to succeed on engineering programmes. Some students who have completed a level 3 BTEC have not always had the option, or where available, did not always opt to take the more advanced maths unit at level 3. These students in particular have found the maths components of their HE programme difficult, despite additional maths sessions being provided to assist them once on-programme. The main reasons for withdrawal from engineering programmes over the last 4 years have been due to the maths being too difficult or finding employment, although health and family reasons have also featured.

Widening participation, equality diversity and inclusion are all key elements of the UCS strategy and therefore opportunities have been given to students on level 3 BTEC courses to continue onto HE engineering and motorsport courses. Where it is feasible, students have been advised by lecturers that if they are intending progressing to HE that they should complete the more advanced maths unit at level 3. However not all students had this option and have still been given the opportunity to enrol at HE level. Some of these students continue successfully, but not all, and these statistics clearly show where the widening participation opportunity offered has not worked successfully for some students, despite the extra support provided.

The engineering continuation has had the effect of reducing the overall full time continuation rate for UCS. However, the indicator is still above the benchmark (84.7% in comparison to the benchmark of 84%).

The overall indicator for part time continuation rates is also above benchmark (82.9% in comparison to the benchmark of 80.8%), with the most recent year (year 4, 2018-19 entrants) being further above the benchmark (84.1% in comparison to the benchmark of 81.1%). It is very positive to see that the UCS continuation rate is getting significantly better, whilst the continuation rate for the sector as a whole is reducing. The curriculum reviews and re-alignment of provision to be fit for purpose for the sector and students is having a positive effect.

The apprenticeship continuation rates contrast as they are below benchmark (79.5% in comparison to the benchmark of 84.8%). Although Allied Health is materially above benchmark, and Agriculture is above benchmark, Engineering and Business and Management are not.

Business and Management apprenticeship continuation rates were affected by the fact that a new requirement was brought in for managers in health care settings to have a management qualification. A number of employers required staff to enrol on the apprenticeship Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children's and Young People's Services (England). However, although students continued, did not as they did not wish to have the responsibility for the pay that was being offered. They therefore withdrew. This was monitored and the programme reviewed. It was closed and an alternative, more suitable route for supporting the sector was found. However, the impact can still be seen in these statistics. This was the greatest number of withdrawals from the Business apprenticeships offered. Withdrawals from other Business and Management apprenticeships were less significant. The combined effect though is that they bring down the overall continuation rate.

Engineering apprentices embarking on 4 or 5-year higher level apprenticeship qualifications, (including the move to standards) demonstrated some initial challenges in terms of retention. This

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was in part due to the high level of skills and knowledge acquired, equipping apprentices with highly sought-after skills. The level and nature of the employment also resulted in some apprentices being removed from their employment. In response to the data a number of actions have been taken including: the further development of employer partnerships, modelling of HE qualification modules and the development of a bespoke BEng in Engineering with Nuclear, with UWE and EDF which commenced in 2017-18 with the National College for Nuclear (Southern Hub) opening in 2018 and the first-degree apprentices starting in autumn 2018. The range of developments have combined to provide high quality apprenticeships with improving retention rates now close to the 92% benchmark. Engineering staff work to engage with employers in the interview process and establish a tripartite approach to the apprenticeships. The investment in en-suite accommodation in a newly built accommodation block which further enhances the student experience has also supported apprenticeship satisfaction. UCS/BTC's strategic ambition for HE and apprenticeships, the investment in engineering and nuclear engineering, combined with the development of staff, support the current very high-quality provision. Data for the apprenticeship continuation rates for year 4 (2019-20 entrants) show a significant improvement (82.8%) demonstrating a positive impact of the changes and investment made, which has continued since 2019-20.

Completion Rates:

Overall full time and part time completion rates are both materially above benchmark. Full time is 83.4% in comparison to the benchmark of 79.4%, whilst part time is 88% in comparison to the benchmark of 84.6%. Apprenticeship completion is also materially above benchmark with a rate of 75.9% in comparison to the benchmark of 71.1%.

Allied Health is particularly strong with the highest rate materially above benchmark as the completion rate on these apprenticeships is 79.3% in comparison to the benchmark of 69.4%.

SO3: Overall full time progression is below benchmark (a rate of 53.8% in comparison to the benchmark of 59.8%). The subject area that is bringing this rate down is Performing Arts as well as, to a lesser extent, Engineering. The Performing Arts subject having the greatest effect on the progression rate is the Foundation Degree in Media Make-up. These students frequently go on to study a level 6 Honours Top Up and therefore complete the Graduate Outcomes survey only 3 months after graduating from their Degree. The survey falls very early in their career when compared to traditional Honours Degree students. It is also the nature of this sector to undertake fixed term contracts. Three months (and even 15 months for BA (Hons) students) after graduating it is therefore possible that they do not have a specific contract at the moment of the survey. Nevertheless, key figures in the sector have expressed considerable support for this programme and the level of expertise with which students graduate. It is one of the longest running such courses in the country and the quality is recognised in the sector, with discussions currently underway in relation to a possible sector endorsement of the qualification when it is revalidated next year.

The full time Engineering progression relates to 30 students. This data is affected by old franchised partnerships that are no longer in place with courses that have been seen out. The only data available to analyse is for 16 students who have a progression rate of 81.3%, well above the benchmark of 68.1%.

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The full time progression for computing students is 63%, slightly below but broadly in-line with the benchmark of 64%. A survey of LinkedIn profiles of former computing students from the last 3 years' cohorts carried out in January 2023 demonstrates in graduate jobs related to their BSc (Hons) degree²⁶

The fully revised approach to digital innovation (outlined earlier in the document), investment in a digital hub, extensive access to software and Apple accreditation, have provided an environment in which digital students are able to thrive. The inbuilt HTQ, skills and knowledge transfer is now producing graduates with skills aligned to the current and future employment landscape. The roles and nature of careers being secured by recent graduates reflect the positive impact of engagement with the sector enhancing the student experience and career prospects across the digital sector.

Overall part time progression is materially above the benchmark (78.8% in comparison to the benchmark of 75.5%). The most recent data contained within the metrics is for year 3 (2018-19 qualifiers). In this year UCS part time progression rate jumped to being even higher above the benchmark (87% in comparison to the benchmark of 75.9%).

SO4: UCS' intention for its students over the last four years has been that they develop the skills and knowledge to enter or progress in their chosen career path. This includes a wide range of personal, professional, transferable and academic skills. These are captured in the 'BTC Advantage'.²⁷ For students on foundation degrees and Honours Degrees they are also embedded within the Personal Development Planning (PDP) learning outcomes of their course and are therefore already measured.

Initial consultations are underway to extend the BTC Advantage to create UCS Elevate, a more bespoke set of expectations related to educational gain, building on the educational gains mentioned above and linked to graduate attributes with built-in reflection by students on skills development and planning to further develop the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in their careers. Governors have been consulted and asked for feedback on the initial proposals (including the HE Student Governor). The intention is for the UCS community of staff and students to co-create UCS Elevate to ensure it is relevant to students and will continue to support them to develop the skills necessary to enter employment and succeed in their careers. It will include aspects of educational gain that are already working well such as the development of digital skills and academic skills gained through the HEADStart programme run by the LRC. Student feedback after these sessions already demonstrates their effectiveness and impact. There will continue to be a variety of assessment methods used to build and assess a variety of skills, knowledge and understanding.

SO5: UCS support students from a broad range of starting points, as demonstrated by the metrics from the Access and Participation Plan to achieve their educational goals. The BTC/UCS Strategy focus on the skills agenda and supporting employment skills from the outset of course design, provides students with opportunities to develop beyond the academic attainment through work experience, placements and live briefs, evidenced through Personal Development Planning (PDPs) within Foundation Degrees and 3-year Honours Degrees. The fundamental basis of the BTC/UCS Advantage being further developed into UCS Elevate, embodies a holistic approach to the individual student's development of what it takes to be an active, engaged learner and member of the wider community, able to engage with and contribute effectively through employment and wider contributions. All courses design and use of a variety of assessment methods to build and

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assess these skills and gains. Students reflect on the development of the range of skills required at each level of their programme. Constructive feedback innovations such as the digital team's oral feedback tagged to students work, is highly effective in engaging students to use feedback and feedforward effectively to improve their outcomes.

The HEADStart programme delivered through the LRC at each campus provides support and engagement in academic writing and research. General course delivery is supported by the team who provide individualised support where needed, this is frequently cited in the NSS/SPQs questionnaires as a highly positive influence on the support and additional progress students make whilst at UCS.

SO6: The use of BTC/UCS Advantage and the Personal Development Planning element of courses assessed through module learning outcomes, provide students with the opportunity to reflect and measure their progress against their starting point. Teaching staff are able to use this information to evaluate the gains made by their students. The approach will be further developed as part of the introduction of UCS Elevate. The annual evaluation of the HEADStart sessions run by the LRC provides feedback from students on the impact of this programme on students' personal development.

4. References

¹ Strategic Planning Framework 2022-27 in TEF folder in central electronic HE Library in Sharepoint

² Page 15 of Strategic Planning Framework -see 1 above

³ Access & Participation Plan, url: [BridgwaterAndTauntonCollege APP 2020-21 V1 10000878.pdf](https://bridgwaterandtauntoncollege.ac.uk/app/2020-21/V1/10000878.pdf) (officeforstudents.org.uk)

⁴ **Education for Sustainable Development in Further Education**, Chapter 2 Becoming Sustainability Champions: page v

⁵ Research and Scholarship Showcase publication <https://www.somerset.ac.uk/about/research-and-scholarly-activity/>

⁶ Minutes of University of Plymouth Partner Forum, held in central HE Library in Sharepoint

⁷ UCS policies are available on the UCS website: [UCS \(somerset.ac.uk\)](https://www.somerset.ac.uk)

⁸ UCS Senate minutes are available in the HE library in Sharepoint

⁹ HE Enhancement and Action Plan in the HE Library in Sharepoint

¹⁰ Programme Committee Meeting notes are in the HE Community of Practice in Sharepoint

¹¹ UCS HE Self-Evaluation Document is in the HE Library in Sharepoint

¹² 7 Ways-Evaluation of Teaching Learning and Assessment Policy stored in TEF folder in HE Library

¹³ UCS HE Assessment Policy: [UCS \(somerset.ac.uk\)](https://www.somerset.ac.uk)

¹⁴ TLA Insights briefings – recent emails stored in TEF folder in HE Library

¹⁵ HE Common Inspection Review summary in UCS HE SED stored in TEF folder in HE Library

¹⁶ External Examiner Reports Stored in HE library in Sharepoint

¹⁷ SED data on achievement, in-year retention and good degrees stored in the HE Library in Sharepoint

¹⁸ Module Leader comments and programme action plans stored in HE Community of Practice PCM folder

¹⁹ Major change paperwork in HE library in Sharepoint

²⁰ Research and Scholarship Showcase publication <https://www.somerset.ac.uk/about/research-and-scholarly-activity/>

²¹ Staff feedback summary of feedback forms in minutes of RSE committee in HE Community of Practice

²² UCS Scholarship and Research Policy: [UCS \(somerset.ac.uk\)](https://www.somerset.ac.uk)

²³ Student voice in PCM documentation stored in the HE Community of Practice in the PCM folder

²⁴ Background documents for (re)validations stored in HE Team Library

²⁵ UCS SED in HE Library in Sharepoint

²⁶ Computing students' destinations results as at January 2023. Stored in TEF folder in HE Library

²⁷ BTC Advantage posters across the College