Teaching Excellence Framework Provider Submission University of East Anglia 10007789

PROVIDER CONTEXT

UEA educational mission and values

The University of East Anglia (UEA) is a dual-mission university focused on both education and research excellence. We are committed to social inclusion and equity, and recognise the importance of our civic role in the wider community, and the value that we can bring to our region: culturally, socially, and economically through having a strong regional, national, and global reputation. The UEA values of *Collaboration, Empowerment, Respect,* and *Ambition* are at the heart of how we behave as a community, drive excellence in teaching, learning and research, and collaborate as an anchor institution in our local community.

Our educational mission builds on and advances UEA's long-standing reputation as a higher education institution that widens access serving the local communities within the Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex regions, and welcoming students from further afield. We are proud of our established reputation for outstanding student support and inclusivity, and we are committed to continuous development of our practice to enable all students to achieve their academic, professional, and personal potential.

Strategic aims

Our Vision 2030: Student Success strategy reflects our institutional values of *Collaboration*, *Empowerment*, *Respect* and *Ambition* which are embedded in the strategic education aims: *We'll ensure the success of our undergraduate and postgraduate students today and tomorrow by*:

1) Working in partnership to understand and meet changing expectations,
2) Providing innovative high-quality inclusive education,
3) Keeping pace with technological change and
4) Inspiring and enabling our students to achieve brilliant things within and beyond graduation

Our strategy identifies four priority project themes: Quality Curriculum; Graduate Opportunities and Success; Inclusive Education and Experience; and Innovation in Teaching and Learning and is designed to inspire and enable our students to achieve brilliant things before and beyond graduation. Our holistic approach to curriculum development recognises the important role of higher education in supporting students of all backgrounds to establish friendships, exchange experiences, master new knowledge and skills, and benefit from access to and engagement with our expert, research-led teaching. Explicit examples of interventions delivered to provide an outstanding student experience and the exceptional outcomes of our diverse student community are presented.

Characteristics of our undergraduate students

UEA has just over 13,000 full time undergraduate (UG) students at the beginning of spring semester 2023, who make up the majority of our student population of 16,500 students in all. TEF data shows that we have very small numbers in undergraduate part time provision (230) and apprenticeships (190) and for this reason, this submission focused on full time students on traditional undergraduate degree programmes. UEA prides itself on being an inclusive place to learn and recruits a diverse student body whilst retaining a top 30 position in the main league tables. Key characteristics of our full-time undergraduate group include:

- More than one in five UEA full time undergraduate students is disabled, substantially more than the sector average (20.2% compared to 16.8% sector figure) with the most cited disabilities as cognitive and learning disabilities and mental health conditions

- 20.1% of UEA full time undergraduate students have an ethnicity of Black, Asian, Mixed, or other compared to 9.1% of the overall population in our region in same ethnic groups in our region (UK Government 2023)
- More than one in five UEA full time undergraduate students comes from IMD quintiles 1 and 2 (22.8%)
- More than one in ten UEA full time undergraduate students starts their studies after the age of 21
- UEA full time undergraduate students come with a range of previous qualifications, nearly three in ten (29.5% of students) have qualifications other than A-levels on entry.

The diversity of our cohort means we must deliver an inclusive and holistic student experience to ensure that students from non-traditional backgrounds, underrepresented groups, and with additional needs succeed. In this submission, we explain the impact of our whole institution approach which means we deliver outstanding student experience and outcomes for all.

Types of undergraduate courses

UEA has expansive educational provision aimed at meeting the diverse needs of our students and our region, whilst recruiting strongly both nationally and internationally. We are very well known for our innovative courses in the environmental sciences and creative writing, but equally important to us are the number of health and social care, teaching, media, law, and business professionals we educate for our region. Accordingly, we work with a wide range of accreditors and professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies including the Health and Care Professions Council; Nursing and Midwifery Council; Social Work England; General Pharmaceutical Council; General Medical Council; Institute of Chartered Accountants and Ofsted. In this section we outline the range of provision, but for clarity we emphasise that by far the dominant mode is our full-time three-year and four-year undergraduate courses. For this reason, in our TEF submission, we focus on these courses.

Full time undergraduate courses
UEA has four faculties, totalling c. 13,000 undergraduate students. Most are on standard three-year courses, with some students on four-year variants involving study abroad, a year in industry or leading to an integrated master's qualification. Courses with placements are also important to our portfolio, and available across all faculties. This increased focus on students acquiring work-based skills is embedded within our strategic aims and contributes to achievement of excellent graduate outcomes. We also have students in all faculties undertaking integrated foundation year study, which is a key aspect of our inclusive approach to our course portfolio. Details of student numbers and types of provision are summarised in table PC1.

Faculty	2022 total UG students (rounded)	Students on foundation year	Students on integrated master's	Students on year abroad	Students on placement year
Medicine and Health Sciences	2700	43 (School of Medicine)			All
Arts and Humanities	2400	85		50	2 (pilot year, recruited 20+ next year)
Science	3400	294	591 (78% in Pharmacy)	44	398
Social Science	4500	18 (International Development)		114	565

Table PC1 – undergraduate course types at UEA with 2022/23 academic year numbers

The role of our foundation year provision
Integrated foundation year provision in all faculties reflects our commitment to supporting students who may have had disrupted academic journeys or who might benefit from a managed transition into UG level study. Each faculty approaches the provision in a bespoke way, to ensure that students are well prepared to be successful when they join the level four course and progress through higher

levels and beyond, as evidenced by TEF data indicating outstanding outcomes for this cohort, with progression 11.2 percentage points above benchmark. One illustration can be seen in the *Gateway Year to Medicine*. This course is for school leavers whose circumstances or educational opportunities have prevented them from realising their academic potential. Applicants who meet the contextual criteria for the course are made a lower entry offer than for the five-year MBBS course. The additional year develops the students as independent learners through an innovative curriculum mapped to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. A problem-based learning (PBL) approach and the teaching of effective, inclusive, group work skills develop strong support networks within the cohort. The use of PBL facilitators as advisors provides students with support to develop strategies to successfully navigate the pressured and competitive environment of medical school. Assessments provide early experience of methods used in the MBBS course and year on year more than 95% of gateway students progress. Feedback is excellent with students noting the confidence and preparation it provides for successful completion of the MBBS course.

Undergraduate courses with integrated master's level qualifications

Integrated master's degrees are offered in our Faculty of Science. These developed in response to employers' requirements for graduates to be qualified beyond first degree level. They offer an effective route to a qualification that provides advanced training, for example through research projects and greater experiential opportunities. In some professional fields, such as Pharmacy, the MPharm, is the only route to qualifying as a pharmacist. Our responsive course design ensures students have optimal professional outcomes from their degrees. These courses are in scope as data is available on student experience and outcomes.

'Other' undergraduate courses

In our TEF data dashboard, there is some data relating to 'other undergraduate' courses. These are made up of specific NHS-commissioned courses which are designed as 'top up' professional development for existing NHS employees such a paramedics. While these courses are important to our civic role and impact in the region, they are not representative of our student experience and outcomes measures and are therefore out of scope for discussion due to the space constraints of this submission.

Part time provision

Part time provision at UEA serves very small numbers of students with specific requirements. There is no student experience data and limited student outcomes data for this cohort. Students in this group comprise qualified nurses undertaking post registration HEE-commissioned provision and do not follow traditional routes. Other part time provision in engineering that appears once in the dataset is provision from a now closed partner college. While these courses are important to our impact in the region, they are also ruled out of scope for discussion.

Apprenticeships and partnerships

UEA further supports widening access to HE via our own apprenticeship provision and a number of validation partnerships with regional and national colleges and HE providers. We worked in close partnership with regional employers to develop higher and degree apprenticeships since 2018 meaning that in the timeframe covered by TEF dashboard data our provision was small and represents less than 1% of our learner population. As such it is not representative of the student experience at UEA nor of the apprenticeship provision which has grown substantially to nearly 700 apprenticeships. Similarly, partnership data in the current dashboard highlight a small number of students who were part of a now ceased partnership, delivered via a different model. Data are therefore not representative of our partnership practice. For these reasons we are ruling both partnership and apprenticeship data out of scope for discussion on this occasion.

A whole institution commitment to student experience and outcomes

Education is led at UEA by the Pro Vice Chancellor (PVC) for Student Education and Experience, with a portfolio established in 2020 designed to focus on both teaching and learning, and student welfare and wellbeing. The PVC is supported by five Associate PVCs (APVC) with delegated authority for Education and Curriculum, Learning and Teaching Enhancement, Partnerships and Apprentices, Employability and Opportunities, and Student Inclusion. An advisory executive board with the APVCs and Directors of Academic Services (Student Services, Governance and Assurance, and Graduate and Student Success), and Director of our newly-formed Centre for Higher Education Research Practice, Policy, and Scholarship (CHERPPS) supports the work of the PVC. The board has institutional and strategic oversight of our Student Success strategy and has been responsible for supporting UEA's resilience through and out of the pandemic adopting an integrated and interdisciplinary approach and represents a significant investment of both resources and expertise in our educational vision.

We have centralised professional services to ensure fairness of treatment for students, assuring the quality of standards of our degrees, and ability to effectively review, update or amend policy as needed. This is supported by a number of faculty-based structures and roles including faculty Associate Deans and School Director academic positions. Embedded teams also provide accessible localised support for staff and students outlined later within our holistic approach.

UEA is committed to social diversity as a means of enriching learning for all through a dedicated student inclusion and widening access and participation management team, including our Associate Pro Vice Chancellor of Student inclusion, Head of Widening Access and Participation, and our Widening Access and Participation Evidence and Evaluation Team, ensuring an evidence based evaluated approach. We also have ten Widening Participation Academic Officers embedded in our faculties to develop subject-specific measures to address inclusive practice as priority across the student lifecycle.

Our commitment to closing access and outcome gaps for students from underrepresented and/or disadvantaged groups is exemplified by our Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2020/21 to 2024/25. This received five year rolling approval without any specific monitoring conditions, an extremely rare occurrence across the sector. The recent reapproval following the OfS variation exercise continues our strong record. Our plan sets out a strategy built on a foundation of inclusive practice, ensuring our systemic and structural approach to excellent teaching and student support is inclusive by design. This is enhanced by targeted and tailored approaches to address barriers to successful outcomes for students facing specific disadvantage or additional pressures. UEA's commitment to inclusion is evident in our Inclusive Education Policy (IEP), first approved in 2018. The policy, along with its implementation and monitoring, was devised in full partnership with the Students' Union (SU). Since approval, the policy has been implemented by a cross university working group, which includes academic leadership, professional services and student representatives who continue to develop policy and practice in response to the latest developments in the sector. Training for academics in developing inclusive teaching is provided by our inclusivity network and our dedicated Inclusive Education Tutor and Project Officer.

The IEP is underpinned by key performance indicators which consider gaps in student experience and outcomes for students with different characteristics. For the first three years of implementation, these were considered separately, but in a drive to fully embed inclusive practice, we have now moved the scrutiny of gaps into mainstream reporting. This has had two impacts. Firstly, it means that university performance is always considered in terms of closing gaps in students' experience and outcomes. Secondly, it means inclusive practice is a shared responsibility. The data are also considered by schools of study in their submitted Teaching Excellence, and Employability Plans. The impact of this is that schools know and can act on gaps that apply to their own school of study. For all these reasons, UEA's systemic and structured approach to inclusive practice is sector leading.

The newly-formed CHERPPS is a clear example of UEA's commitment to exploring new ways to enhance and improve our teaching provision and strengthen our reputation. Building on previous exploratory research (Coxon *et al.*, 2022), CHERPPS has recently produced research based on a project investigating the impact of Technology Enhanced Learning on students affected by specific learning difficulties: a pioneering study tackling a previously neglected area. The project is now being extended to partner institutions to share and compare experiences in the sector.

UEA was a proud participant in the HEFCE *Piloting and Evaluating Measures of Learning Gain* project, delivering strong contributions in the definition of learning gain through grade point average dynamics, student confidence, and concept inventories. We are excited to resume this research to contribute to the OfS agenda aimed at defining educational gain, via the award of a QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project grant, in partnership with a consortium of other institutions, to engage in research on *Accounting for Student Success: Measuring Educational Gain*.

Collaboration with students in producing our TEF submission

Collaboration and partnership with students are integral to our inclusive practice at UEA and is underpinned by our Student Partnership Agreement, co-created in 2021. In this we set out how we will maintain a 'transparent and trusted' working relationship in several priority areas, each of which are reflected in our holistic approach to the student experience and map effectively with Student Success strategic goals and priority themes (Quality Curriculum; Graduate Opportunities and Success; Inclusive Education and Experience; and Innovation in Teaching and Learning).In developing our TEF submission, SU sabbatical officers and staff were key members of our working group. Once the data dashboard was published, the provider submission lead summarised the data to be used and this was shared openly with the student submission writing team. Later in the process, we shared and discussed our respective drafts in the working group. A shared aim was to produce well-informed institutional and student submissions in line with our commitment to a 'transparent and trusted' relationship, whilst being respectful of others' perspectives and priorities within each.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

An embedded, outstanding and inclusive student academic experience

For UEA, TEF dashboard student experience data are within the benchmark at an 'overall indicator' level. Some subjects show outstanding student experience, including the large cohorts in Economics and Medicine. In line with our commitment to an outstanding experience for all students we note strong positive experiences for many student characteristics groups on learning resources but some lower student satisfaction with assessment and feedback in keeping with the sector. The analysis of student experience data by demographic characteristic is long established, and we routinely monitor student experience by student characteristic groups via the Inclusive Education Policy (IEP) key performance indicators, through our Student Experience Committee, and Learning and Teaching Committee with annual review by Senate and Council. We continue to dedicate resources to improving the student experience for all, and the impact is shown in the table SE1.

Data included are based on National Student Survey data and illustrate how students from different student characteristic groups are compared to students not in that group. The figure shown compares the groups and shows whether students in each group are more or less satisfied than the comparator group, by percentage point difference. This subset of NSS questions was selected in response to key concerns raised by students in the narrative comments of the NSS in academic year 2018/19 and is under review. Our regular scrutiny of this data shows our commitment to an outstanding student experience at UEA, and we can see that for many of the questions, student experience is improving across all areas and in some cases across multiple demographic groups. This data shows the impact of our IEP on the student experience. The defined groups are:

- **POLAR4** geographical measure (participation in higher education Q1 and 2 compared with POLAR4 Q3-5)
- **Disabled** (compared with non-disabled)

- **Age** (mature students starting UG studies at age 21 or over, compared with younger students)
- **Ethnicity** (students from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds compared to white students)
- **Gender** (males compared to females (non-binary and other data not available))

The cells are colour coded: white indicates no significant changes or volatile over three years, orange for narrowing satisfaction gaps, blue for widening satisfaction gaps.

1 Staff are good at explaining things.			
	2019	**2020**	**2021**
Polar4	-−3		
Disability	−5	−4	−3
Age	−3	−4	−2
Ethnicity	−3	−4	0
Gender	1	−1	−2
9. Marking and assessment has been fair			
Polar4	−5	0	−7
Disability	−8	−5	−1
Age	−8	−4	−2
Ethnicity	−4	−5	−8
Gender	+9	+2	+4
11. I have received helpful comments on my work			
Polar4	−4	−1	−2
Disability	−7	−5	−3
Age	−1	−3	+5
Ethnicity	−1	+4	+1
Gender	+1	0	+2
15. The course is well organised and is running smoothly			
Polar4	10	9	8
Disability	11	8	5
Age	−10	−11	−5
Ethnicity	0	+7	+4
Gender	+6	+6	1
16. The timetable works efficiently for me			
Polar4	0	-3	-2
Disability	-6	-8	-5
Age	-9	-13	-3
Ethnicity	-2	-1	0
Gender	+3	−1	0
17. Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively			
Polar4	−4	−5	−6
Disability	−12	-12	−6
Age	−3	−8	−2
Ethnicity	+2	+3	+3
Gender	+8	+6	+2
18. The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well			
Polar4	−2	+1	+1
Disability	−9	−2	−5
Age	+2	+1	+7
Ethnicity	+4	−2	0
Gender	0	−1	+2

19. The library resources (e.g., books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well			
Polar4	−1	0	+1
Disability	−4	−3	−1
Age	+3	−1	+5
Ethnicity	+1	−3	0
Gender	−4	−3	−1
20. I have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g., equipment, facilities, software, collections) when I needed to			
Polar4	−1	+2	0
Disability	−5	−4	−2
Age	+3	0	+2
Ethnicity	0	−3	+7
Gender	+2	−1	+4

Table SE1 – student satisfaction data by demographic categories on UEA Inclusive Education policy KPIs.

It is evident that there are improvements in these experience measures in a number of groups and questions. This is notable particularly for disabled students, where we see the gap in satisfaction closing in seven of the nine questions. Given that this is a large demographic group at UEA (2,730 students) this change is particularly significant and is further evidence of UEA's commitment to an outstanding student experience for all students. We have invested significant resources in improving disabled student experience, including better access to inclusive materials, and improvements in diagnosis and support. In addition, we actively apply reasonable adjustments in the process of full review, as we acknowledge that while inclusive practice should aim to meet most needs, some students will still require additional adjustments.

Student experience of assessment and feedback

UEA is consistent with the sector in showing variable performance at subject level, with some areas showing below benchmark performance in assessment and feedback. It is noted that in common with the score for academic support, student satisfaction with assessment and feedback has fallen over the last three years, with the most recent cohort below benchmark. These students were the most impacted by pandemic restrictions which is recognised as a contextual factor sector-wide. We have taken steps to better understand UEA student sentiment about assessment through our snapshot student polling student pulse survey. This survey is sent to students on a weekly basis with a standing question about student wellbeing alongside a specific theme each week. When we surveyed students about their experience of assessment and feedback this year, we saw that student confidence was building in all three of the key areas which we surveyed, showing that the specific additional interventions that we have applied more recently have begun to turn around the student experience in this area. This is shown in the table below. The response rate for this survey varies week to week, with between 500 and 600 students participating in each survey with a total of 17% of our students having participated this academic year (2390 individual participants).

Question asked in student voice survey	% Agree mid October 2022	% Agree end of November 2022	Student satisfaction change
Feedback on my work is timely	45	57	Up 12pp
Feedback on my work supports my academic development	57	65	Up 8pp
My assessments are suitable for me	64	68	Up 4pp

Table SE2 – student satisfaction data using student pulse survey on assessment and feedback

Insight from the student pulse survey also indicates student confidence and self-efficacy is rebuilding after the pandemic. This is a vital measure of the holistic approach to student experience outlined

above. Comparing data from September 2021 with September 2022, we see a significant increase in student positive sentiment regarding their academic preparedness (Table SE3)

Question asked in student voice survey	% Agree September 2021	% Agree September 2022	Student satisfaction change
Question about feeling academically prepared	43	64	Up 21pp

Table SE3 – student satisfaction data using student pulse survey on academic preparedness

Our holistic approach

UEA is committed to providing a high-quality holistic student experience in and beyond the classroom and to supporting the journey from admissions to graduate success for all students This has informed a series of strategic projects with illustrations provided.

- **Holistic support in the design of the curriculum**: Our principles of teaching and learning are expressly designed to have regard for the mental health and wellbeing of students. As a founding participant in Advance HE's *Embedding Mental Health in the Curriculum* (Advance HE 2020) project, a series of measures were developed to facilitate positive experience and outcomes. An example includes the design of the curriculum to reflect a standard working week (37.5 hours) with modular academic learning hours arranged to allow for accessible co-curricular experiential, support, and developmental activities. A review of our Exceptional Circumstances policy was also undertaken and led to self-report and retrospective consideration of mental ill health in recognition of the nature of such difficulties.

- **Holistic support within schools of study**: Within their own school of study, students can access holistic support from their academic advice team, who can support with academic matters such as employability support, and signpost students to support services elsewhere in the university. This is overseen by senior advisors in every school and supported by bespoke training including Mental Health First Aid. This is in addition to academic support provided by the course team directly related to their learning. Study abroad, placement support and embedded wellbeing teams are also provided in every faculty.

- **Holistic support through the dedicated Student Services Division**: Mindful of individual needs, students can request academic assistance at any time in person or online via our Learning Enhancement Team, in addition to school-based roles already noted. Based within our Student Services Division, this team provides help in several critical areas including academic writing and studying; mathematics and statistics; learning support for students with specific learning difficulties; peer assisted learning programmes; and in-sessional English language support. Data scrutinised by the University's Learning and Teaching committee in June 2021 showed a steady rise in the number of individual students using the service and the number of attendances at Learning Enhancement Team events. The data recorded 12,712 attendances by 4,540 students (79% of whom were undergraduates). This represented a near doubling of student use of these services when compared to the same data five years earlier. This is an example of how outstanding student support leads to high levels of student help-seeking behaviour and engagement in their learning.

- **Holistic support for students with additional needs**: For students with disabilities who need additional support, Student Services ensure that reasonable adjustments are put in place for their learning. These adjustments are aligned with the IEP and have recently been revised to reflect UEA's commitment to inclusive practice which embeds accessibility in student learning. For example, a recent investment saw the cross-campus application of the Blackboard Ally tool, allowing students to create multiple formats of learning resources at the touch of a button, as well as enabling staff to improve the accessibility of materials. Data presented to the University Learning and Teaching Committee in June 2021 showed that in academic year 2020/21, more than 53,000 alternative formats of learning resources were downloaded from the Blackboard VLE This was up 82% on the previous year and showed the impact of an inclusive approach to learning resources. In addition, substantial use is also made of the tool's ability to give automated guidance to staff seeking to ensure that their materials are as inclusive as possible.

Effective and tailored support for learning, progression and attainment

Throughout the pandemic, we kept our approaches to student assessment under regular review to preserve the integrity and standards of student outcomes. We have retained impactful aspects of that practice, which informed assessment guidance published in March 2022 setting out how we expect to continue to innovate in assessment practices, reduce the assessment burden on students and to utilise inclusive design to remove barriers to achievement. The principles include:

- Assessment methods and criteria should be aligned to learning outcomes and teaching activities
- Assessment practices need to be reliable, consistent, fair, and valid
- Assessment expectations should be explicit and supported by an accessible assessment brief
- Assessment design and delivery should reflect student and staff effort proportionate to the amount of credit, the subject and be in line with professional body requirements where appropriate
- Where possible, opportunities should be provided for students to choose topics and approaches that are meaningful and of interest to them
- Opportunities for students to actively develop their assessment literacy, including their understanding of assessment criteria, standards and processes, and skills of self and peer assessment should be provided
- An approach to feedback practices that promotes the regular use of formative assessments and dialogue between staff and students, and among students should be adopted
- Marking practice should be shaped by explicit marking criteria, with the secretarial aspects of writing appropriately weighted in terms of marks awarded.

These principles, as applied over the pandemic and post pandemic period have protected student academic performance and enabled strong student continuation in most subject areas and for all student characteristic data splits, especially students doing foundation years (close to being above benchmark at 90.1%) and international students (above benchmark at 95%), both of these groups having benefitted from the embedding of inclusive assessment practice.

Effective and tailored blended learning

Blended learning was an established pedagogy at UEA pre-pandemic and continues to develop. Our approach combines a selection of pedagogical activities to maximise students' engagement and understanding, as well as their agency, mastery, and ultimately ownership of a subject. Our blended learning environments blur the boundaries between physical and virtual spaces and exploit the unique potential of each these spaces. Our blended learning practice also combines the timing of pedagogical design, reflecting on what students do on their own, what they do with their peers, and what they do during in-person delivery of teaching and learning activity on campus or in placement.

Inclusive education is at the core of our use of technology to enhance the learning experience. Prior to the pandemic we invested in Blackboard Ally, which allows download of alternative formats and we had just started to implement lecture capture with the ability to add both live transcriptions and closed captions to content. We had also progressed significantly with online submission and marking of both formative and summative coursework. As with many other HEIs, the pandemic surfaced both our strengths and weaknesses with regards to the use of technology to enhance the learning experience. It was clear we needed to scale knowledge of and training for both staff and students. We instigated a network of digital champions in academic schools and professional service divisions, this was managed through our Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL). We built a range of self-access training courses, as well as instigating communities of practice around specific technologies. We conducted a gap analysis on our technologies with stakeholders from across the institution, including our students. This highlighted a need for investment in several key areas: assessment, portfolio, content creation, and engagement. We made an investment of £400k under a digital change programme at UEA to bring in the required technology, which included expanding the CTEL team's capacity as well as technologies relating to digital exams, portfolio, and engagement. Prior to the start of the 2021-22 academic year, we mapped our blended learning against the recommendations in the *Gravity Assist* report (OfS 2021) and developed a framework

for blended learning across the institution. This is now being developed into a Blended Learning Policy with further reference to the recently published review undertaken by OfS in 2022.

Student support is available online throughout the academic year and is focused on activity relating to where a student is in their academic year cycle, for example: 'handing in my first assignment' or 'preparing for exams'. We recorded 15,887 clicks in the academic year 2021-22 to these services and resources giving us a very solid baseline from which to develop in future years. In every Blackboard site we embedded a tab called *Successful Learning* which took students to resources in the Library and the Learning Enhancement Team. This was accessed by 2,032 unique student users over the course of the 2021-22 academic year. We consider this work has had a positive impact on our benchmark score on the three questions under *Learning Resources*.

Inspirational course content and active engagement from students

High quality engagement from students on all courses is vital to student success. At UEA the Student Academic Engagement Process (SAEP) is a holistic and supportive digital process that monitors student engagement with taught sessions via QR codes. This is part of our sector-leading learner analytics, for which we won an award from The Higher Education Strategic Planners Association (HESPA 2021). SAEP enables us to ensure that students who are struggling to attend get help as soon as possible via a student support-focused, non-disciplinary process. The dashboard that we use to identify those requiring support also uses information about student engagement in their studies, for example card swipes into the Library, use of VLE materials, and assessment submissions. As part of this process, our embedded wellbeing teams reach out to students which results in many students coming forward and seeking help. This approach was recognised as one of three UEA best practice examples within a QAA collaborative project *Embedding mental health in the curriculum* (QAA 2022).

Inspirational course content

Courses at UEA are designed to maximise active participation and inspire students to achieve outstanding outcomes through deliberate use of assessment design, relationship building and creation of an environment in which students wish to engage. One excellent example can be seen in the School of Education, whose portfolio of courses relating to Physical Education and Sport is designed for students who come from non-traditional backgrounds. Over the last four years, the proportion of students on these courses coming from low participation areas (using POLAR4 index) has been as high as one in four, with BTEC entrants significantly outnumbering students with A-levels. Many also come to the courses after breaks in study. To attract, support and retain students, transitional activity is built into the curriculum. For example, one module is timetabled as small group workshops rather than traditional large groups, to enable close tutor contact and support relationship-building, and this module is year-long to create a pastoral thread through the first year of study. A credit-bearing personal portfolio that facilitates engagement with university support services is part of assessment design. This includes a reflective piece which provides insight into student stories, barriers, and motivations, and ensures support needs are identified in the early weeks of the course. The learning environment is communicated as one where 'colleagues' (staff and students) reside, in pursuit of a common end goal. This co-relationship is built on mutual trust and respect, creating an open environment (albeit one that may not be traditionally seen in higher education), where students feel they can be themselves. There is a bespoke physical study space: a 'home zone' in the truest sense of the phrase, of which students feel a sense of ownership and move towards when they are in a time of need.

Research, innovation, and employer engagement for an outstanding student experience

Our institutional values, dual-intensive status, and 2030 Strategy for Student Success provide a framework for the creation of a dynamic and effective educational environment, centred on the needs of our students and supportive of all members of staff. Our recent excellent Research Excellence Framework (REF) performance placed us in the UK top 20 for research quality, with five subject areas in the top five (Times Higher education REF2021 Analysis). This provides evidence of the quality of our academic dual-intensity enabling research-led education of outstanding quality, that provides students with opportunities to learn from international experts. Schools of study engage with a wide range of employers to inform design and review of courses. This is achieved through our use of employer advisory boards, and membership of learned societies and accrediting bodies. In addition to active engagement with PSRBs, our non-regulated courses involve alumni and professional contacts in the delivery of teaching and assessment, through guest lectures, panel events, and project based authentic assessment opportunities.

Our position within the Norwich Research Park also affords our students exceptional opportunities. A significant proportion of our courses include final year projects, which vary by credit weighting depending on subject. In Science, the majority of students undertake a project placement, typically worth 40 credits in undergraduate programmes. These projects provide direct experiential learning, always linked to the research of academics and the wider Norwich Research Park but with increasing diversity around the type of research, such as lab-based, field-based, or computer-based. An increasing number of these focus on science communication, commercialisation, or education-based research, extending the skills and knowledge base of our students. UEA also received funding for Wellcome Trust Biomedical Vacation Research Studentships, which offer a valuable route for final year students from disadvantaged groups to gain research experience and have had a significant impact on their progression to PhD research or employment.

Communities of practice to support student success
The UEA approach to teaching excellence builds on an agile and thriving network of communities of practice. A commitment to collaboration, passion, enthusiasm, and spontaneous organisation enables these communities to tackle everyday challenges and promote significant innovations in a pragmatic way. Communities of practice are the means through which sector regulations and university policies translate into effective pedagogies, and successful innovations transform into established practice. Some examples of the impact of this approach are provided.

Academic transitions and inclusivity
The Supporting Academic Transitions Groups work has fed into a successful transformation of UEA's induction events and the creation of our Welcome Week programme for incoming students. We have a dynamic Inclusivity Network community, which builds on dozens of daily exchanges on its virtual platform accessible by every member of staff: swapping tips, offering mutual support, and disseminating information and guidance on the design of inclusive practices in learning, teaching and assessment.

TeachMeets
Our institutional *TeachMeet* events allow educators to meet informally to discuss topical issues in learning and teaching, and exchange experiences of innovative pedagogies. Two more outstanding examples are communities where scholarship, research and professional practice combine to produce and outstanding student experience at UEA: the Digital Champions Network and the University Teaching Fellows Network.

Digital Champions Network
The creation of a network of Digital Champions in 2020 has enabled our institution to bridge the gap between the expertise and training imparted by the learning technologists housed in CTEL and the need for relatable demonstrations of what TEL can deliver within an applied context. To date, the

Digital Champions Network has more than 100 members, comprising academics and educational development staff, who identify as technology-savvy early innovators. Digital Champions pioneer the implementation of new software and technologies to enhance the student experience. They are embedded as members of individual schools and units within UEA, and they facilitate the process of digital transformation in our institution, leading by example, offering informal advice and support to all teaching staff, and providing a stream of case studies and practical applications that make TEL accessible and relevant to all. The Digital Champions Network delivered a pivotal contribution in upskilling our teaching community through the Covid-19 pandemic, demonstrating that the resilience of our institution is built on staff commitment and on the pragmatism and agility of its close-knit academic community.

University Teaching Fellows and National Awards for Teaching

The UEA University Teaching Fellows (UTF) Network was established in 2015 to nurture the talent of teaching innovators and support them in developing pedagogical experimentation, evaluation, and dissemination activities and, eventually, to apply for a National Teaching Fellowship (NTF) or a Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE). We have seen significant growth in the number of colleagues achieving success with many projects closely aligned with our strategic commitments which further strengthen our sector-leading inclusive practice. Some of our most recent examples include:

Pedagogy of Compassion was awarded recognition for addressing systemic racism and promoting decolonisation of language teaching

Peer Enhanced E-placement (PEEP) digital tool pioneered an online platform in support of students on placement, now widely adopted across the UK

led a team promoting digital innovation, entrepreneurship, and enterprise among students through the *Sync the City* event

left an outstanding legacy in the sector specialising in student transitions. Her UEA-based online course *'Preparing for University'* has supported thousands of students and is recommended by other institutions

Made significant contribution to piloting measures of learning gain and confidence gain, of particular benefit to students who struggle at the beginning of their academic journey.

Other awards have been given relating to areas of authentic assessment, peer-learning and inclusive practice in an internationalised education environment; the development of science communication as a discipline; and world-leading innovative approaches to enhancing student engagement. UEA currently has four Principal Fellows of the HEA, the highest level of professional accreditation in the UK Professional Standards Framework. In addition, more than 1,000 UEA academic staff have their educational skills accredited through the UK Professional Standards Framework.

Each member of staff involved in designing and delivering learning and teaching has access to our master's in Higher Education Practice which has been recently redesigned to deliver the skills needed to operate in a post-pandemic environment. The Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education exit route has been re-accredited by Advance HE to award Fellowship of HEA status, and our bespoke training programme for Graduate Teaching Assistants is accredited to award Associate Fellowship to postgraduate Associate Tutors upon successful completion. Support from our Academic Practice Team is also available to develop direct applications for accreditation and alignment to the UKPSF. In preparing teaching skills amongst our students who are likely to supervise and teach students as part of their future careers, many MBBS students in year 4 (71 students in 21-22) now complete a course that has enabled them to seek accreditation at AFHEA level. From 22-23, all students completing this course will automatically gain AFHEA accreditation.

Outstanding support for staff professional development and academic excellence

Continuous Professional Development (CPD) is delivered through CHERPPS. Acknowledging the time constraints faced by academics, as well as the complexity and diversity of the challenges faced by individual schools and units, CHERPPS has reorganised the provision of training and support - migrating from a traditional delivery approach (i.e., a catalogue of training events) to a holistic model of on-demand bespoke support. The new model is tailored to the specific needs of individuals and schools, eliminating the need for second-guessing what is needed, and addressing problems in a timely and efficient manner. From a wider perspective, the creation of CHERPPS in 2022 is a tangible sign that the University is committed to the enhancement of teaching excellence at UEA. A pedagogical innovation scheme is being launched to support the introduction and evaluation of development projects, with the aim of scaling up successful outcomes across the institution and beyond. A further support scheme is being set up to provide the means for colleagues to attend pedagogy-focused events and disseminate their own good practice. Building on the capacity already established within the institution, CHERPPS has set itself the ambitious objective to produce high-profile pedagogical and education policy research, and to submit to future Research Excellence Framework exercises. CHERPPS has also implemented a system to recognise staff contributions to innovation and evaluation of practice, as well as to pedagogical and education policy research. The Centre is devising scholarship pathways to reward contributions to teaching excellence, which can be used to support academic progression and promotion. In this way, the spontaneous activities promoted within communities of practice are valued and align with a system of incentives that empower all UEA staff to proactively contribute to our ambitious learning and teaching enhancement agenda.

How we create an accessible and supportive learning environment, tailored to student need

Sector and internal UEA research shows that a strong sense of belonging for all students is at the heart of retention and success. As part of our pulse survey, we ask students if they feel part of our learning community.. Although levels of sense of belonging remain below where we want them to be, we can see an improvement comparing academic year 2021/22 and academic year 2022/23:

Overall student reporting positive sense of belonging as part of a community	Beginning of academic year	End of year	Student positive sense of belonging to baseline at start of AY2021
Academic Year 21/22	54%	49%	
Academic Year 22/23	63%	62% (Dec 2022)	+8pp

Table SE4 – student sense of belonging data using student pulse

UEA takes an evidence-led approach to creating and maintaining student sense of belonging; in 2018/19, UEA engaged specialist agency, The Campaign Company, to conduct research into students' experiences of UEA and why some students feel a stronger sense of belonging than others. The research took a mixed methodology approach to exploring how students relate to the university, campus, and the broader areas. It assessed what contributes to their sense of belonging, explored how integrated and cohesive the university is perceived to be, and considered current communications. This has been the basis for the development of a set of sense of belonging principles embedded into student support and broader structural, systemic, cultural and communication approaches. The principles established to underpin our work are:
- Safety — so that all students feel safe and secure in their surroundings
- Shared identity — collective identity or sense of pride that makes students feel part of something shared
- Diversity valued — students from all backgrounds feel welcomed, valued, and respected

- Integration — high levels of interaction between students from different backgrounds, including weak and strong ties
- Equality of opportunity — equal access to services, support, and campus activities
- Agency — all students feel they have a voice and a role in influencing the campus.

Support as students enter university

A key example of UEA turning this into impactful action is our welcome approach for undergraduate students which is designed to reflect the sense of belonging principles, facilitate the forming of student communities and friendships, and create conditions for ongoing student success. We integrate activities from international student welcome into our main programme following a tailored arrivals process. Our integrated, partnership approach with SU, school, and course-level activities, aims to set the tone for the student experience. This is alongside a range of centrally organised events. By setting out expectations of the learning environment and actively facilitating community-forming and building of peer support networks. This approach helps students gain confidence in themselves as they transition into, and through HE, a new way of learning, and the opportunities and support they have access to. Our evaluation of *Welcome 2021* used a range of sources of insight, including analysis of student attendance, qualitative focus groups, survey research with students, and feedback from staff. Overall, the outcomes of the *Welcome 2021* evaluation were very positive showing that the delivery of a predominantly face to face and active set of events by friendly and welcoming staff and students was most effective. Students who attended welcome activities in September 2021 were significantly more likely to agree with almost all sense of belonging statements, confidence statements and several statements on UEA Values, including feeling that 'they can be themselves'*,* and feeling that 'UEA cares about each other'. This benefit was seen to last throughout the academic year and remained until the end of the summer term, and was felt to be particularly important as part of recovery from the impact of the pandemic and achieving better academic outcomes.

Support for placement learning

Since the pandemic, which severely restricted opportunities for placements and work experience, we have committed to the embedding of high impact experiential opportunities. This refers to the application of theory and academic content to real-world experiences; within the classroom, the community, or the workplace, as an inclusive way of encouraging reflection and application of skills and knowledge in contexts that prepare students for the workplace and civil society. Through embedding and inclusive design, these activities can be of most benefit to those from disadvantaged groups through opportunities to develop graduate capital. Information on embedded experiential learning is collected as part of the module update task and is linked to student records and graduate outcomes to assess our progress. Participation of students from disadvantaged groups has increased in line with, or greater than, our student profile mix, demonstrating positive impact of our approach. Students with frequent or significant experiential learning activities are shown to have positive Graduate Outcomes of three percentage points higher than those with minimal experiential learning. We now have 'year in industry' pathways in all our faculties, in addition to cross-disciplinary work placement modules, and are committed to expanding our experiential learning offer and to further disseminate best practice across the institution.

Support to maintain good mental health

In 2019, a multi-disciplinary Taskforce on Mental Health and Wellbeing was established by our Vice-Chancellor which was identified by QAA (2022) as a best practice example of institutional approaches to embedding mental wellbeing. This group, which convened over a period of more than two years, worked to successfully drive forward whole institution change through a series of project workstreams. Success is evidenced by successful implementation of a wide range of approaches including early adoption (2019) of an opt-in scheme for third party contacts in student crises, the creation of embedded wellbeing teams in our faculties, and management information monitoring to ensure service responsiveness to trends in reported student wellbeing.

Alongside the work of the taskforce, an initiative called 'Take Five' was launched in the Faculty of Humanities, aimed at creating spaces where students could build relationships with other students

on their course. Activities were not focused on learning outcomes but on promoting interaction and fostering a strong learning community. In 2020, this initiative moved online and in 2021 there were more than 1,000 student logins to Take Five activities, with respondents to a post-activity survey saying that Take Five had increased their sense of community, helped to lessen their feelings of isolation, and helped to lessen their feelings of loneliness. This model has developed across the institution and once groups established, has been led by paid student facilitators.

UEA is recognised as sector-leading in supporting good mental health for students, in terms of its strategic leadership, level of investment and positive impact on student experience. We have made a consistent and continued commitment to address the challenges to student success posed by student mental health and wellbeing. We are part of the first cohort to sign up to the Mental Health Charter; the Vice-Chancellor continues to work closely with UUK to develop a *Mental Health Senior Leadership Tool*, and the PVC SEE has been an active participant in projects with Advance HE, the QAA and most recently was selected to join an OfS/ Nous action learning project.

Our financial investment in direct student support in this area has been significant; increasing threefold from 2017/18 to 2019/20 and maintained annually since at approximately £1.5m per annum. This investment ensures that wellbeing support is comprehensive, combining one-to-one expert support with 24/7 self-service online support through the Health Assured and Togetherall digital support platforms. The strength of our approach is exemplified by our wait times of less than five days for talk therapy appointments (in comparison to either unmonitored or significantly longer wait times at the majority of HEIs), and UEA being one of only a small number of institutions to offer out of hours support to students in campus residences from experienced student services staff. This approach has been recognised as outstanding as evidenced by regular requests to share best practice at sector events such as AMOSSHE, and The Student Services Organisation, and roles on cross agency bodies held by our Director of Student Services including the Regional Suicide Prevention Leadership Group and Norfolk Safeguarding Adults Board.

How our campus, learning spaces and virtual learning environment are tailored and used effectively

We recognise that our campus experience is a distinctive asset for UEA and have embarked on an ambitious campus development programme to modernise our teaching, learning, social, and recreational spaces, exploiting the efficiencies generated by the new ways of working that emerged post-pandemic. Most facilities available in the central campus are student-facing spaces for teaching and learning, independent study and student support enabling students to access resources seamlessly and enjoy a thriving campus experience. Our Digital Transformation Programme is aimed at empowering staff and students to benefit from a modern and state-of-the-art study and work environment. We have invested in a comprehensive review of our information systems and learning technologies. This has enabled the introduction of rich and engaging blended learning environments, the use of which is supported by guidance on the use of blended learning to ensure a high-quality experience. We launched a Curriculum Review Project in 2022.This review will enable students to explore a breadth of options and allow for even more interdisciplinarity. This project addresses more than the structure of our degrees, encompassing the implementation of blended learning pedagogies and the adoption of innovative assessment methods, and widening our experiential activity opportunities.

The library and virtual learning resources
In response to user feedback and in line with the Inclusive Education Policy, UEA Library has developed its services to meet the needs of our diversifying cohort of students. In June 2022 our library student survey data showed 88% of respondents felt comfortable when entering the Library, indicating that this is a welcoming space for students. TEF data shows that the learning resources theme of the NSS for UEA is above benchmark in several subjects and crucially for several student characteristic groups. Over the last few years, developments in library practice have included:

- having been closed due to the pandemic in March 2020, UEA Library operated a 'click and collect' service from June 2020

- introducing postal loans and scanning services
- reopening the 24/7 Library building in August 2022, one of the first HEIs to do so
- refreshing ergonomic furniture provision to meet disabled students' needs
- adding 70 PCs since 2018, spread throughout silent study areas
- addition of wellbeing spaces

Pre-pandemic, face to face teaching of Digital Information Skills was the core element of librarians' offer, from first year orientation to final year long-form assessments. Covid-19 accelerated the need for additional blended delivery and support. There has been a significant increase in student use of online support for learning, demonstrating the positive impact this is having, this set out in table SE5.

Library course student views (not unique user)	Academic Year 2020/21	Academic Year 2020/21	Change in student engagement
Online Induction student views	2,965	5,334	79% increase
First Assignment online course	3,631	4,075	12% increase
Subject guides and curated content for student lead research	79,358	95,157	20% increase
Library YouTube	12,713	16,159	27% increase

Table SE5 – increases in student use of online library resources

To directly support blended learning initiatives, the use of online reading lists accelerated over the period of the pandemic. As of 2021, Online Reading Lists are embedded in the virtual learning environment for 90% of relevant taught courses, increasing from 70% in 2018. In accordance with this improvement in teaching practice, reading list use has risen dramatically, with 71,111 unique student visits to online lists in 2018, rising to 420,605 in 2021, an increase of 590% over the reporting period. Wider reading is also supported by significant continued investment in digital library resources. In 2018 it provided access to 552,837 eBooks and 97,247 electronic journal titles. As of 2021, this provision has risen to 712,997 and 129,529 respectively.

Blackboard is UEA's virtual learning environment (VLE). Students use this VLE to engage with their course materials, such as pre-prepared content, lecture recordings, quizzes, polls, and discussion boards. It is also where they submit the majority of their formative and summative coursework as well as the majority of their online examinations. Table SE6 shows student access data for Blackboard sites.

Faculty	Total Bb Sites	1-4 visits	5-9 visits	10-19 visits	20-29 visits	30-49 visits	50-99 visits	100-149 visits	150+ visits
Arts and Humanities	288	20	15	41	66	121	24	1	0
Science	267	23	17	39	47	89	49	1	2
Social Sciences	289	33	24	23	40	122	46	1	0
Medicine and Health	124	44	21	12	11	11	16	9	0
All UEA	**968**	**120**	**77**	**115**	**164**	**343**	**135**	**12**	**2**

Table SE6 – The total number of Blackboard sites where the median student has visited at least once on number of days between 1 August 2021 and 31 January 2022

For most schools the standard practice is to have one Blackboard site per module, however within the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, standard practice is for a small number of 'umbrella' sites to be used for teaching, where all students from a particular cohort are enrolled (for example all Year 1 Nursing students), and Blackboard sites with a 1:1 relationship with a module are used for assessment. For this reason, it is expected most Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences Blackboard sites have low student usage, and a few have very high usage. The total number of Blackboard sites where the median student has visited on x number of days between 1 August 2021 and 31 January 2022 is shown in table SE6 Thus, in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities there were 121 sites where the median student visited between 30 and 49 times. We monitor this data to ensure that students have access to effective blended learning resources. From the data, it is clear that a high proportion of sites are visited regularly by students in an academic year.

An embedded approach to engagement with students

In October 2020, Learning and Teaching Committee approved a new Student Partnership Agreement cocreated with the UEA Students' Union (uea(su)). It states: 'The University of East Anglia's commitment to providing an exceptional student experience depends upon a dynamic and effective partnership between its staff and students. Our Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) outlines this relationship by setting out priority areas that UEA and uea(su) will jointly address to ensure a quality student experience. These cover: Inclusion, Learning and Teaching, Research, Authentic Extra-curricular Experience, Support for Students, and Sustainability. Our vision is that this agreement will establish an outstanding and vibrant community where all student needs are considered.' It goes on to highlight shared responsibility within our partnership and notes the commitment made by both parties to 'a collective spirit to benefit the university community, and beyond our institution…UEA and uea(su) commit to providing clear, respectful, and open communications with students; offering opportunities for meaningful consultation; and the provision and explanation of actions taken further to this to ensure the best outcomes for the overall student experience. Our agreement also commits to providing accessible and open lines of communication to enable us to listen, help keep track of student voices and act or close the feedback loop appropriately.'

The relationships we have, to which transparency and trust are central, are maintained through regular informal open discussions between the PVC SEE, senior colleagues and our sabbatical officers which are held on a fortnightly basis. Students are also included in all formalised quality assurance and decision-making bodies including, but not limited to, the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Student Experience Committee, and school and faculty teaching committees, and, in professional schools, Interprofessional Learning Committee. The numbers of students actively involved in student representation activity is high, with more than 100 students attending a beginning of year training event for reps focused on equality, diversity, and inclusion. Students have worked in close partnership in developing our inclusive practice, including the co-development of the IEP, and there is extensive student involvement in working groups across all aspects of provision including current development of a new approach to reasonable adjustments.

Pulse - UEA's student voice survey
Throughout the pandemic period and since, UEA has valued the voices of students as partners and collaborators in education. One important illustration of this is the development of our highly responsive student voice survey. Through weekly polling, students are asked to reflect on their levels of wellbeing, confidence as well as other aspects of their lived experience, including the effectiveness of our teaching and assessment approaches. The survey is disseminated via email and students respond online. Response rates vary, but each week we capture the student voice of between 500 and 700 students. The data covers all schools and levels of taught provision, but the data used in this submission is for undergraduate students only. We also collect student verbatim comments to enhance our understanding of the issues that students face but, for reasons of confidentiality, we cannot share these in the submission. A weekly briefing note on the outcomes of the survey, tracking change over time and responses by different student characteristics, is provided to senior management to ensure responsiveness. One important measure is the confidence and resilience of students. Throughout the pandemic, students faced many challenges, for example social isolation,

the need to adapt to online or more blended learning, new assessment approaches, and social upheaval. We monitor student confidence and resilience and have seen steady and maintained improvement since September 2021 as seen in table SE7.

Overall student reporting positive confidence and resilience	Beginning of academic year	End of year	Student confidence and resilience change compared to baseline at start of AY2021
Academic Year 21/22	61%	63% (May 2022)	+2pp
Academic Year 22/23	69%	70% (November 22)	+9pp

Table SE7 – student voice data on confidence and resilience

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Outstanding continuation and completion rates for all student groups

For UEA, the student outcomes data is within the benchmark at an 'overall indicator' level. Over recent years, steady progress has been made despite the substantial challenges of the pandemic; for example, completion shows steady improvement and is nearing the top of the benchmark. It is also noticeable that for international students, both continuation and completion are outstanding and materially above benchmark for non-UK domiciled students for both continuation (by 2.9pp) and completion (by 3.7pp). This demonstrates that supporting outcomes of non-UK domiciled students is a strength for UEA.

UEA takes a lifecycle approach to student and graduate success where continuation, completion and progression are stages within a wider holistic transition from student to successful graduate. Recognising that our students join the university with differing levels of capitals (Tomlinson, 2017) and with diverse backgrounds, prior educational achievements, experiences including study beyond the UK, ambitions, and varied definitions of what 'success' looks like, our approach is to be inclusive by design but offer individualised support and guidance to students.

Continuation and completion is outstanding in a variety of subject areas, notably in Business and Management, where the development of student skills and holistic support contributes to these outstanding outcomes. Norwich Business School supports its students to set stretching targets for themselves and their development through a co-curricular e-learning course. There is a strong culture of working in partnership with businesses that supports students' ambitions and makes links to the world of work. For example, our Employability Week is a timetabled programme of talks and workshops delivered by employers. This initiative won an Advance HE Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence in 2020 (Advance HE, 2020) Students can also compete for employability prizes, and prizes sponsored by employers that are related to students' course assessments.

Outstanding progression rates for all student groups

Progression at 'overall indicator level' is within benchmark for UEA. However, Progression for mature students, black students and students declaring their ethnicity as 'other' is also outstanding and this is despite differential experiences prior to university, particularly during Covid-19 when educational journeys were significantly disrupted. Furthermore, our educational gain measure demonstrates that, over the course of the degree, gaps in attainment that are common elsewhere in education are closed for many student characteristic groups at UEA. The positive trajectory they gain from their academic outcomes culminates in progression significantly above benchmark for students from a range of disadvantaged groups as evidenced in sections below on educational gain.

UEA's CareerCentral has annually run the *WeCan* programme of events, which aims to address potential employment barriers for all students and graduates, but with specific emphasis on enabling those with disabilities and mental health conditions, from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and

with Black heritage. This series of events involves alumni speakers from underrepresented groups working closely with uea(su) to ensure reach through its Peer Support Networks. This activity is supported by the ongoing Development and Opportunities Fund designed to improve employability outcomes by providing financial support for home-fee undergraduate students from underrepresented groups. *WeCan* is primarily promoted through an intensive social media campaign achieving an impressive average reach of 7,500 students and impressions of approx. 50,000 across the programme. Events have been evaluated positively, showing an overall increase in knowledge and career confidence to overcome an identified employment barrier. Evaluation results from an event for disabled students showed a substantial increase in understanding of recruitment and workplace adjustments; before the event 55% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: 'I understand what is meant by a recruitment or workplace adjustment', compared to 100% of respondents after the event.

UEA's award winning strategy for inclusive student employability

Outstanding student outcomes at UEA stem from the development of our inclusive institutional strategy for student employability. This was nominated for Best University Employability Strategy at the *TargetJobs* Awards in 2020. The strategy has three main objectives:

- embedding employability within the curriculum to ensure that all students understand the links between their course and the world of work
- promoting student agency, so that all students develop high-level skills, confidence, and resilience through curricular and co-curricular activity, and can articulate their experiences to prospective employers, for example through our own careers award
- supporting students throughout the student life cycle and beyond to prepare them for the changing nature of the labour market

Our UEA Student Success strategy cites Employability and Opportunities as one of four priority themes underpinning institution-wide projects designed to support students' academic achievement, professional development and social agency, and personal growth and wellbeing. This ensures all courses deliver inclusive, authentic, and diverse assessment; identified experiential learning activity and space for self-reflection. Module outlines and assessment briefs are explicit in articulating to students the wide application of learning outcomes, skills, and knowledge to inform a range of career paths, with oversight provided by faculty Associate Deans for Employability. UEA's strategic investment in employability is having an impact on our Graduate Outcomes performance, which is on a positive trajectory. Table SO1 demonstrates how this has improved concurrently with closing of gaps in outcomes by student characteristics.
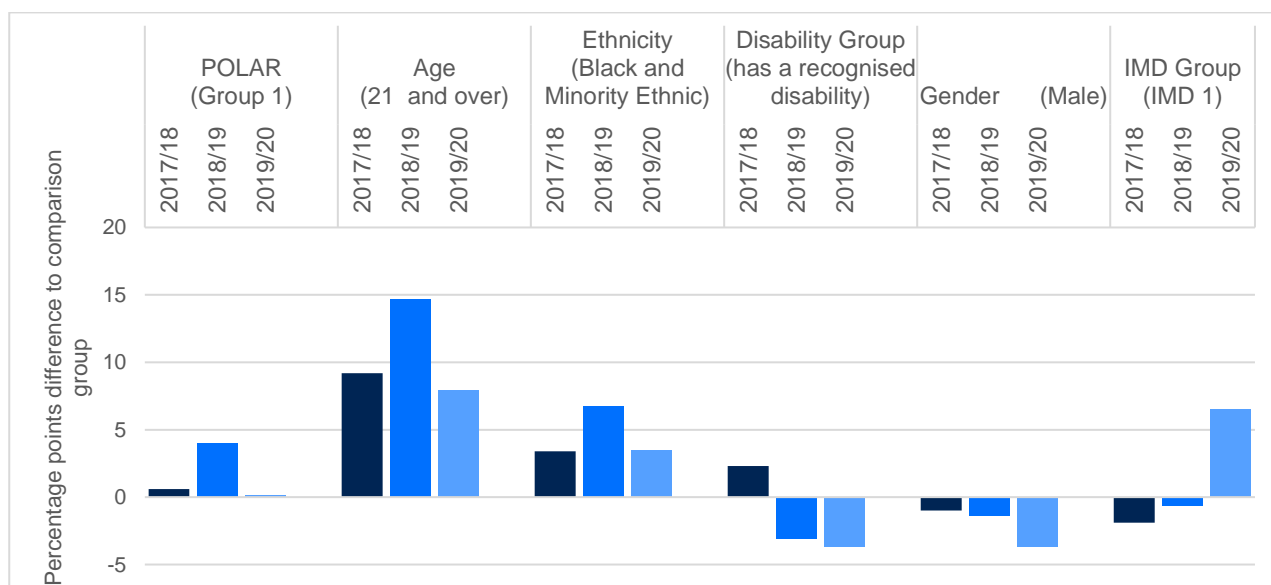

Table SO1 – Gaps in Graduate Outcomes for disadvantaged students

Using internal data based on the Graduate Outcomes Times League Table algorithm for positive destinations (UG Home students only) the table displays the gap in outcomes by student characteristics, with a positive gap demonstrating higher positive destinations. Gaps in outcomes have closed for POLAR Q1 students, are positive for mature, Black and minority ethnic students and those in IMD Q1 but increasing slightly for male students and those with a disability. Our detailed analysis of disability shows that the gap in outcomes for students with a recognised mental health condition has closed from 15.7pp in 2018/19 graduating cohort to 6.7pp for 2019/20.

The sector leading nature of our strategic approach is further evidenced by the fact that, in summer 2022, the University was awarded The Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) Strategic Innovation Award for Excellence and was also shortlisted in the Supporting Student/Graduate Employability and Sustainability Impact categories. In addition, reviews from our students awarded UEA the *StudentCrowd* Best University for Job Prospects 2022 Award.

Gateway to Growth, UEA's three-year flagship employability innovation project, concluded in summer 2022. Responding to evidenced challenges, namely a need to match UEA graduates with local SME businesses, and to provide ongoing support, we worked collaboratively with some of the most entrepreneurial people based in Norfolk to deliver an SME Dedicated Recruitment Service, a pilot Innovation Hub Scheme and Enhanced Professional Support for Norfolk based graduates. Our Theory of Change based, multi methodology evaluation showed strong immediate and long-lasting impact: strong levels of engagement and positive outcomes for participating graduates (growth in experience, confidence, and skills) and organisations (30+ projects completed alongside significant rate of graduate placements) and a strong set of learnings to inform UEA's continued commitment to employability.

Monitoring student progress to outstanding outcomes

Using data-informed approaches to understand student engagement and track progress, we offer individualised support and guidance to help students to explore their ambitions and motivations and work towards their goals. Our careers *readiness* questions, part of our compulsory registration task, ask students about their career planning. Results presented below by inclusivity splits demonstrate how this delivers the positive outcomes demonstrated above. If a student selects 'Decide' it indicates that they are not yet ready to start thinking about their career. If they select 'Plan', they have an area in mind, but they are not sure what to do next. If 'Compete' is selected, they are ready to apply for graduate jobs or further study. Finally if a student indicates they are 'Sorted', they have a job, or have been accepted further study or have set up their own business.

	Decide (%)	Plan (%)	Compete (%)	Sorted (%)
Disability	27.5	61.3	9.0	2.6
No disability	27.8	61.2	8.5	2.7
White	28.6	60.6	8.4	2.5
Racialised background	25.3	62.9	9.4	3.3
POLAR Q2-5	28.0	61.2	8.3	2.5
POLAR Q1	25.7	61.6	10.1	3.9
Under 21	27.2	62.1	8.3	2.0
21 and over	28.0	55.3	11.3	7.4

Table SO2 – Careers readiness - student characteristic split data

A further example of excellence can be seen in our approach to student progression, where our TEF metrics show above benchmark performance for students of black and other ethnicity and mature students. Impact can also be seen in the way in which inclusive practice is fully embedded in our annual school and faculty employability planning process, ensuring that all approaches are inclusive by design. Practice champion roles are also embedded in CareerCentral, including our progression coordinator with an explicit remit to develop tailored approaches and guidance for students from

underrepresented groups including disabled students and those with specific declared mental health conditions.

CareerCentral engages with all students across the student community. The team offer a range of tailored hybrid services that all students are able to use, for example, the UEA Award (2022), to help develop their understanding, build their self-awareness, support them to make and take careers decisions and action, and understand their own career wellbeing in the context of individual barriers and challenges. The team also works closely with academics, schools, and faculties to create and deliver in-curriculum, co-curricular and extra-curricular interventions. Engagement levels with the service are closely monitored to ensure reach and impact for different student groups. As an example of evidence of impact we can see that students declaring a disability have engaged with the service at a higher rate than non-disabled counterparts each year since academic year 2017/8. Between 2019/0 and 2021/2 more than 2,700 disabled students engaged with the CareerCentral, 66% of the known cohort disclosing a disability. Disabled students' engagement has had a positive gap over non-disabled students since 2020/1, most notably disabled students have engaged more with individual one to one careers appointments as well as in their use of *MyCareerCentral* (our online careers portal with vacancies, events, resources, and programmes).

The evidence presented and the trajectory of our progress demonstrates that the investment in Graduate Success and the strategic approach taken is now having a significant impact on Progression and we believe that we offer outstanding opportunities and support to all students through embedded, inclusive, and innovative approaches to our taught and co-curricular activities. From our assessment of the data, we are confident that this trajectory will continue, and Graduate Outcomes will improve further over the coming years.

Tailored approaches that ensure our students' succeed and progress

Graduate attributes are clearly presented to students in all modules, which together create a UEA graduate 'identity'. We work closely with employers to inform students about opportunities. We also promote innovative approaches to learning, such as the Peer Enhanced e-Placement (PEEP). This is an award-winning approach that provides structured employability development within an innovative peer learning virtual placement experience, a model that has been implemented by many institutions in the UK and internationally. The PEEP offers a quality and sustainable evidence-based, practice-based learning model, and was cited by the Council of the Deans of Health (2022) as best practice in innovative healthcare education placements. Strategic investment has been made in this area through the appointment of an Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Employability and Opportunities, and a Director of Student and Graduate Success. CareerCentral is now based in the Library in a prominent location — affirming its position at the centre of the student experience. This strategic approach is having an impact on graduate outcomes, as proven by the time series Progression data: 1.2pp below benchmark in Year 1, 0.2pp below in Year 2 and most recently 0.9pp above benchmark in Year 3. Our improved performance in this area is concurrent with closing or narrowing of gaps in outcomes for disadvantaged students, demonstrated in table SO3, using internal analysis of the most recent Graduate Outcomes survey. The TEF data dashboard also demonstrates that Progression for students on our Foundation Year programmes is 11.2 percentage points above benchmark, and 3.9 percentage points above benchmark for Continuation. Our foundation year programmes are integrated with our degrees and demonstrate further evidence of the trajectory that students with non-traditional routes have through the support provided. As members of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS), we were assessed in 2021 by the professional body with the reviewer concluding; 'UEA's CareerCentral service should be incredibly proud of their outstanding employability and career development provision, and fully deserve receipt of the AGCAS Membership Quality Standard.'

Educational gains, our current and future measures

Educational gain is a term used to define the progress a learner makes during their educational journey. In our planning principles for academic year 2022/23, we set out a vision for a holistic student experience which enables students to:

- Succeed in their academic studies through gaining knowledge and skills related to their discipline
- Gain skills for a wide range of potential careers outcomes
- Develop and maintain good mental wellbeing
- Have time and opportunities to engage in a wide range of learning inside and outside classrooms

A measure to capture the outcomes of this vision is under development and we are part of an international project examining the application of student competence frameworks that have a holistic focus. We expect that this work will mature in the next four years. In the meantime, we have taken a pragmatic approach to educational gain measurement for TEF2023. The measure we have chosen to use in this TEF exercise is based on an approach developed as part of our work with HEFCE's Learning Gain Project. In this project we worked closely with other institutions to develop the 'dimensions of learning gain' outlined in the final published report (Kandiko Howson, 2019). Considering the dimensions of learning gain outlined in the report (cognitive gain, career readiness and soft skills), the measure we have chosen is an approach aligned with cognitive gain and based on student marks. Although our project also investigated student confidence, self-efficacy, and concept inventories, we have, on this occasion, selected the most scalable approach. We outlined our sector leading work in this area at conferences and in publications (Ylonen and Gillespie, 2018) UEA's measure of educational gain.

Table SO3 shows a comparison between the end of year one percentage mark and the final percentage mark and compares student characteristic groups. These groups align with our inclusive mission and APP targets to close gaps in attainment between students from historically underrepresented or disadvantaged groups and their peers. These gaps are part of a national picture in Higher Education which underpins regulatory condition A1, APP, and a comparison to that data is offered by way of triangulating the outstandingly inclusive outcomes that put our performance in this area amongst the very best in the sector.

To summarise student outcomes according to our measure of educational gain, our data shows that:

- Differences in educational gain between Black and Minority Ethnic and White Students are present but small. Given the sector level importance of this attainment gap, this data and the evaluative comparison with APP data below show very strong performance at UEA.

- The gap in attainment by this measure is also small between students who have reported a disability and non-disabled students. The continued strong performance here for UEA shows the impact of our inclusive approach, even during the enforced period of online study during the pandemic.

- There is a large gap between mature and young students, although given that data were collected between 2017 and 2021, we might see here the impact of the pandemic on mature students who are more likely to have struggled to balance family commitments and study. This will be closely monitored, and mature student attainment remains a focus.

- There is a small gap between students from IMD Q1 and 2 students and students in Q3 to 5. This shows that students from the areas least likely to participate in higher education (a commonly used proxy for socio-economic disadvantage) do less well than students from other areas, however, the gap at UEA is small and the evaluative comparison below with APP data suggests outstanding performance against the sector in this area.
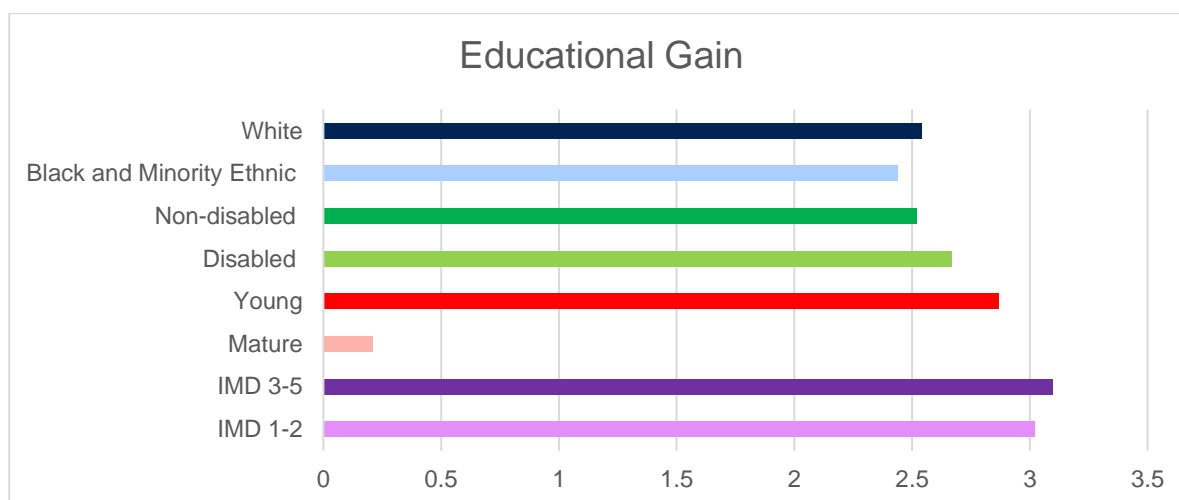
Table SO3 - Aggregated difference between final award mark and stage 1 confirmed mark - comparing by Widening Access and Participation demographic groups

Table SO3 shows that educational gain differences between students from historically underrepresented or disadvantaged groups and their peers are small at UEA, with the exception of the gap between young and mature students. To evaluate our approach to educational gain, a comparison was made to the student attainment data used in APPs. Table SO4 shows a comparison of gaps in student attainment data, using the rate of award of a good honours degree, between students from different demographic groups. Although this is a different measure of student attainment, it allows a comparison between the educational gain data and another sector attainment measure. UEA's outstanding performance in reducing attainment gaps is shown in table SO4, with six out of seven groups showing a smaller gap at UEA than for the sector. For this reason, student outcomes at UEA measured by educational gain are considered to be sector leading.

Comparison group	Sector gap in percentage points	UEA gap in percentage points	Difference
IMD quintile 5 to 1	14.8	11.0	UEA gap smaller
Ethnicity White to Black	17.4	14.0	UEA gap smaller
Ethnicity White to Asian	5.8	4.0	UEA gap smaller
Ethnicity White to Mixed	2.5	5.0	Sector gap smaller
Ethnicity White to other	8.2	5.0	UEA gap smaller
Young to Mature	9.5	3.0	UEA gap smaller
No disability declared to disabled	1.1	-2.0	UEA gap smaller

Table SO4 shows the gap in good honours degreed between demographic groups. Data from Office for Students Access and Participation Plan dashboard comparing UEA student outcomes to sector averages on the same measure. Data is for the most recent year available, 2020/21 Note – all UEA gaps are not considered statistically significant in the APP data dashboard

Methodology and limitations

End of year 1 and final stage marks as a score out of 100 are compared and the gap shown as a measure of inclusive practice in attaining good outcomes. The marks are for all full-time students and relate to students who graduated between 2017 and 2021, a four-year period in line with other methodology for the TEF. The data does not control for differences between subjects, either in terms of different marks profiles for different subjects or different demographic profiles in different subjects, an issue which was a key finding of the HEFCE funded learning gain project. We found that this measure is the most scalable in the short to medium term, given that the data that underpins this measure is routinely collected. However, there are some limitations and drawbacks of the measure related to assessment and marking processes. We wrote about why this was a problem (Ylonen *et al.*, 2018) and since this article we have addressed assessment and marking inconsistencies to make this measure of educational gain more robust. The actions taken are set out above in the section on effective and tailored inclusive assessment.

The future of educational gain monitoring at UEA

We developed this measure as one of the three approaches we trialled, and we have opted for this approach as it is useful to illustrate the impact of inclusive excellence. We will continue to develop this measure as well as include it in our ongoing internal reporting. For TEF 2027 we are engaged in two further explorations of educational gain, firstly working with other international universities on developing a competence framework which measures student skills. Secondly we are involved in the QAA funded educational gain collaborative project. These two measures will be developed alongside the inclusive approach to measuring educational gain using student marks used above.

Support for students to achieve educational gains

Support for all students to make excellent educational gains is part of our educational approach exemplified throughout this submission. To summarise:

Area of educational gain	Support for students to achieve in these areas
Succeed in their academic studies through gaining knowledge and skills related to their academic disciple	- A high-quality curriculum taught and assessed by well supported and well qualified staff - Comprehensive and integrated foundation year provision - Strong support for transitions into and through the stages of university - A strong record of widening participation and inclusive practice
Gain skills for a wide range of potential careers outcomes	- General and targeted careers support - A focus on employability embedded in learning - Data driven monitoring of student progress towards graduate outcomes
Develop and maintain good mental wellbeing	- A longstanding investment in inclusive practice that enables good outcomes for all - Holistic support for student wellbeing, both through schools of study and specialist services
Have time and opportunities to engage in a wide range of learning inside and outside classrooms	- A range of opportunities to engage in learning outside the classroom including through sport, cultural activities, work, and volunteering - A well embedded way of collating and celebrating student gains in this area though the UEA Award

Table SO5 shows areas of expected educational gain mapped against support for students to achieve in each area

Our approach to evaluating student outcomes

In response to the new regulatory framework for higher education in England, our integrated approach to quality assurance and regulatory data is under review. This review will impact our approach enables evidence-based quality assurance:

- **School of study-based Teaching Excellence Plans (TEPs) and Employability Plans.** As a result of our last TEF submission and participation in the pilot for both subject-based TEF exercises, we developed school of study level annual plans for employability and teaching excellence that act as the capstone of our internal quality assurance monitoring process.
- **The quality assurance and regulatory data** that is used by our committees will also be aligned with the TEF, B3 and APP data from academic year 2023/24 to ensure that there is consistent year-on-year evaluation of student outcomes data by both student characteristics and by subjects
- This approach aims to **build consistency in evaluation, and capacity across the institution** in data literacy and data informed strategic approaches to improving student experiences and outcomes.

References

Advance HE (2020) Sync the City, University of East Anglia https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/cate-team/sync-city-university-east-anglia

Council of the Deans of Health (2022) CoDHCast: Pandemic Powered Improvements Best practice in innovative healthcare education placements created during the pandemic https://www.councilofdeans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2_CoDH.PPI_FULL_WEB.pdf

Coxon, A., Achtypi, A., Aricò, F., and Schildt, J. 2022. The impact of technology enhanced learning on students with specific learning difficulties. Qualitative Methods in Psychology, 33.

Coxon, A., Aricò, F., and Schildt, J. 2020. Accessibility and inclusivity in online teaching. McKenzie, S., Garivaldis, F., Dyer, K.R. (ed.) Tertiary Online Teaching and Learning. Springer. 169-175.

HESPA (2021) HESPA AWARD WINNERS 2021 https://www.hespa.ac.uk/Resources/News/View?g=7636c99d-f5aa-4d3b-8458-00f3caf4f9c0&m=6&y=2021&t=HESPA%20Award%20Results%202021

Kandiko Howson, C.,B. (2019) Final Evaluation of the Office for Students Learning Gain Pilot Projects https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/20ffe802-9482-4f55-b5a0-6c18ee4e01b1/learning-gain-project-final-evaluation.pdf

Tomlinson, M.B. (2017) 'Forms of graduate capital and their relationship to graduate employability', *Education + Training*, 59:4, pp338-352

UK Government (2023) https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/regional-ethnic-diversity/latest#areas-of-england-and-wales-by-ethnicity

QAA (2022) Embedding Mental Wellbeing https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/blog/embedding-mental-wellbeing#

Tomlinson, M.B. (2017) 'Forms of graduate capital and their relationship to graduate employability', Education + Training, 59:4, pp338-352

UEA Access and Participation Plan (2022) https://www.uea.ac.uk/about/university-information/widening-participation

UEA (2022) UEA Award https://www.uea.ac.uk/web/about/alumni-and-supporters/careers/about-our-services/join-the-uea-award

UEA (2022) Gateway to Growth https://www.uea.ac.uk/about/gateway-to-growth

UEA Inclusive Education Policy (2022) https://www.uea.ac.uk/about/university-information/governance/policies-and-regulations/general-regulations/inclusive-education-policy

UEA (2022) UEA 2030 Vision https://www.uea.ac.uk/about/university-information/uea-2030-vision

UEA (2023) Student Partnership Agreement https://www.uea.ac.uk/en/web/about/university-information/governance/policies-and-regulations/general-regulations/uea-student-partnership-agreement

Ylonen, A., Gillespie, H., and Green, A. (2018) Disciplinary differences and other variations in assessment cultures in higher education. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 43:6, 1009-1017, DOI: 10.1080/02602938.2018.1425369