

Draft evidence to support the student submission for TEF 2023

1 Approach to evidence gathering

To gather evidence for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) of current student opinion, an anonymous student survey was conducted December 2022 - January 2023 across all university partnership and professional courses at level 4 and above. The questions were the same as those from the National Student Survey (NSS) that are included within the TEF. They covered the teaching on my course, academic support, assessment and feedback, learning resources and student voice.

The survey resulted in a response rate of 35% from the partnership courses and 29% from the professional courses.

Partnership courses are Foundation Degrees, 3-year Honours Degrees and level 6 Honours Degree Top Ups which are university validated by the University of Plymouth, Oxford Brookes University, University of West of England, Bristol and The Open University. Partnership courses also include students on HNC/D courses validated by Pearson. Responses were received from students across all types and levels of partnership programmes.

Responses were received from 17 out of the 26 professional courses. The professional courses are those at level 4 or higher that are validated by Awarding Organisations other than a university or Pearson and tend to be much shorter courses linked to specific career paths such as CIPD certificate for HR professionals, diploma in counselling, certificate in sports massage, diploma in leadership etc.

The feedback is representative of full and part time courses and includes UK and international students, male, female, young and mature, those with disabilities and learning difficulties and those without, those who receive additional support and those who do not. The survey feedback is therefore representative of the student body.

The survey results showed that of those completing the survey:

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

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

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

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

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

2 Student experience

Academic experience and assessment

SE1- How well teaching, feedback and assessment practices support students' learning, progression, and attainment

The survey showed that 78% of partnership students and 90% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that the criteria used in marking has been made clear in advance - a revised HE Assessment Policy is being introduced this year with much greater detail clarifying the grading criteria to assist students to understand how to gain higher marks and to add to the feedback/feedforward that is provided to students on the completion of each assessment.

80% of partnership students and 94% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that marking and assessment has been fair.

74% of partnership students and 87% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree feedback on work has been timely – University Centre Somerset (UCS) has an assessment feedback policy stating that feedback should be given within 20 working days. However, some students would like results sooner, so tutors need to manage expectations.

76% of partnership students and 91% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree they have received helpful comments on their work.

SE2 - How well course content and delivery engages students in their learning, and stretches to develop their knowledge and skills

The survey showed that 87% of partnership students and 98% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agreed Staff are good at explaining things.

89% of partnership students and 96% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agreed staff have made the subject interesting.

90% of partnership students and 97% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agreed the course is intellectually stimulating.

90% of partnership students and 97% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree their course has challenged them to achieve their best work.

SE3 - How far research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and /or employer engagement contribute to the student academic experience

- Importance of staff engagement in research and scholarship activities
- Annual bidding round funds research and scholarship
- Annual research and scholarship publication showcases activities
- Student involvement with staff research is encouraged
- Employer Engagement vital to ensure skills developed that are fit for the workplace
- Staff have industrial experience and not just academic experience so they are able to bring up to date knowledge into the classroom
- Placements are built into Foundation Degrees and Honours Degrees

- 3-year Honours Degrees developed with embedded Foundation Degrees so that work-related elements are built into the design of both. Students from underrepresented groups who may not achieve sufficient UCAS points to enrol directly onto an Honours degree programme can instead enrol onto the foundation degree and can progress on successful completion of their foundation degree to the level 6 Top Up
- Student and employer involvement in the co-creation and development of programmes and in validations/revalidations
- Development of Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) in the first and current round of applications with more planned
- UCS engagement as a partner within South West Institute of Technologies
- Working directly with employers to create courses and provide sector standard facilities so that students gain all the experience and develop the skills they need, eg
 - Gaining approval from the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) to support the local NHS by delivering direct entry and Nursing degree apprenticeships, Trainee Nurse Associate foundation degrees and apprenticeships with a full suite of appropriate facilities including a simulation suite
 - National College for Nuclear at the Cannington Campus with a flow rig delivering BEng Nuclear Engineering Degrees to support Hinkley Point C development
 - Engagement with the South West Institute of Technologies which provided funding for the flow rig and a centre of excellence in welding
 - Advanced Engineering Centre supported by EDF
 - Fully working farm that sells milk to national supermarket
 - Animal management centre
 - Arts House
 - Digital Hub to support progression from T Levels into Higher Technical Qualification in digital

SE4 - How well the university or college supports staff professional development and academic practice

- Delivers teacher training/PGCE courses and expects staff to be qualified to teach
- Research Scholarship & Ethics Committee (RSE) promote annual bidding round which funds research and scholarship
- RSE committee funds application for Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy and supports staff in their applications. In the last two years 3 members of staff gained Senior Fellowship of the HEA and others became Fellows
- Annual Research and Scholarship conference at the start of the academic year
- Annual research and scholarship publication showcases activities
- Annual HE Conference every February to update staff and share good practice
- Scholarly activity days built into contracts
- Teach Meets to discuss and share good practice each term
- TLA Insights emails provide links and share good practice in teaching learning and assessment
- Staff development days
- Training and support provided for those developing new courses or revalidating existing ones

SE5 - How supportive the learning environment is, and how far students can access the academic support they need

The survey showed that 90% of partnership students Definitely/Mostly Agree that they have been able to contact staff when they needed to.

- Small friendly groups with accessible and supportive staff
- Module Tutors and Course Leaders get to know all students well
- Student feedback confirms it is a supportive environment
- HEADStart (Higher Education Academic Development) sessions are run by the LRC.
- Research project results with student feedback on HEADStart sessions - evaluation with student feedback shows it is very effective

92% of partnership students and 95% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that they have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to their course.

90% of partnership students and 95% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that good advice was available when they needed to make study choices on their course.

SE6 - How well physical and virtual learning resources support teaching and learning

The survey showed that 77% of partnership students and 91% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that the IT resources and facilities provided have supported their learning well.

UCS has refurbished and created a UCS Common Room for HE students in 2023 that significantly enhances the facilities previously available. It includes a very popular kitchen area as well as a room with both computers and points to connect your own laptop. There is also a practice presentation room with a smart board and conference style table and chairs for students to practice giving presentations or holding board-room style meetings. There are three other areas with different styles of seating and flooring so that students can find an area to work, relax, think or talk that suits their requirements at different times.

83% of partnership students and 90% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that the library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well.

- Industry standard physical resources as described above (Nursing suites, NCfN, Digital suite, farm, animal management centre, smart boards in classrooms, LRC)
- HEADStart (Higher Education Academic Development) sessions are run by the LRC – in person in groups, individually and with online resources
- Research project results with student feedback on HEADStart sessions
- Self-Evaluation by LRC with student feedback
- Virtual Learning Environment, Blackboard and MS Teams used effectively to support learning

88% of partnership students and 93% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree that they have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g., equipment, facilities, software, collections) when they needed to.

SE7 - How well the university or college engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students

The survey showed that 92% of partnership students and 94% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree they have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on their course.

- Autumn and Spring Programme Committee Meetings (PCMs)
- Student rep for each course and year group attend PCMs having collated student opinions using a prompt sheet that covers the different headings including: the teaching on my course, academic support, assessment and feedback, learning resources. The programme teaching team is therefore able to discuss this with the rep, identify any actions needed and agree when they will respond to the student group with feedback on the points raised by the rep in the meeting. In this way students are able to influence the development and improvement of their course.
- Development of UCS Common Room is an example
- Student engagement in course developments – both alumni and current students to ensure that courses start out and remain fit for purpose for students and employment sector to which they relate
- Students attending validation and revalidation events
- SU President is also the HE Student Governor and therefore has a voice directly into the strategic intent of the College and UCS
- SU President is a member of the Senate that oversees HE at UCS. Their opinion is asked for at every meeting and they represent all HE students at this high level

87% of partnership students and 95% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree staff value students' views and opinions about the course.

71% of partnership students and 90% of professional students Definitely/Mostly Agree it is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on.

- Student Union representing students and working with UCS to co-create and develop the SU constitution, facilities, courses and to review and inform the Access & Participation Plan in relation to underrepresented students
- Dedicated HE Student Engagement Officer and HE Learning Support Advisor to work with the SU post holders and the HE student body
- Annual Student Surveys: NSS, Student Perception Questionnaire (SPQ) for those not eligible to undertake the NSS
- Student focus groups – eg on what UCS is and should be going forwards and on providing input into and reviewing the Access & Participation Plan in relation to underrepresented students
- You Said ... We did
- UCS Elevate – further development of the BTC/UCS Advantage programme being discussed with Governors, including student Governors, to then have wider student feedback in order to co-create an updated version that is responsive and relevant to students and continues to meet student and employer needs

3. Student Outcomes

- Good degree results
- In-year retention

SO4 – What educational gains the college intends its students to achieve and how relevant these are to its students

- Further development of BTC/UCS Advantage with Governor and student input to co-create UCS Elevate to ensure it is relevant to students and will continue to support them to develop the skills necessary to enter employment and succeed in their careers
 - Employability skills
 - Transferable skills
 - Digital skills
 - Presentation skills
 - Confidence and being work ready
 - Use of a variety of assessment methods to build and assess a variety of skills, knowledge and understanding
 - Through HEADStart: Critical thinking skills, academic writing, research skills, referencing

SO5 – How well the college supports its students to achieve these gains

- BTC/UCS Strategy focus on skills agenda and supporting employment skills
- Personal Development Planning within Foundation Degrees and 3-year Honours Degrees
- BTC/UCS Advantage being further developed into UCS Elevate
- HEADStart programme through LRC
- Use of a variety of assessment methods to build and assess these skills and gains

SO6 – How far the college evaluates and demonstrates the gains made by its students

- Use of BTC/UCS Advantage and the Personal Development Planning element of courses
- Focus on students critically evaluating their skills and developing plans for their further development
- Evaluation of HEADStart and sessions run by the LRC with feedback from students

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

- UCS problem-solving approach during pandemic with spreadsheet of difficulties experienced by students through Extenuating Circumstances process so that solutions could be found and the lived experience of students understood and proactively responded to, rather than simply giving extensions
- Cyber incident
- Arson attack which burnt down the Motorsport workshop
- Student supported to successfully complete their studies

- No complaints received, students appreciative of the support and bursaries provided
- All lectures went online over the weekend of the first lockdown.
- Staff and students were supported for the fortnight before lockdown to learn how to use MS Office 365 and Teams. This enabled lectures to continue after lockdown with synchronous and asynchronous delivery
- Each course was reviewed to see if the learning outcomes could be met without access to physical resources. Adaptations were made where necessary with the approval of the validating university and External Examiner.