

Bloomsbury Institute: Submission TEF 2023

**BLOOMSBURY
INSTITUTE**
LONDON

Name of Provider: Bloomsbury Institute
UKPRN: 10004061

Introduction: Student President, Bloomsbury Institute Student Guild

Over the last number of months the student body has been working on creating our own submission for TEF. This has been a very positive experience for the students involved and we have been reminded of the vibrancy and strength of the partnership that exists between the student body and the staff of Bloomsbury Institute. For this reason, it is my honour to introduce this report knowing that I do so on behalf of the entire study population.

When the Student Guild was founded in 2017, the decision was made not to have sabbatical officers. This was based on the demographic make-up of the student body. For most students here, our studies are undertaken while we maintain employment commitments outside. Too many of us would simply never be in a position to take up a sabbatical post. Nevertheless, structures are in place to ensure we have a strong voice and we feel included and supported in contributing to the strategic and operational management of the Institute.

Our Guild is supported by an annual grant from the Institute and the full-time staff at the Guild work with student leaders to ensure student representatives are trained for the commitments they take on. Student representatives are briefed on committee agenda items; time is set aside at meetings for the student voice to be heard; the Student Staff Consultative Forums allow students and staff to focus on strategic matters

as well as reviewing how key activities have gone, such as enrolment, assessments and feedback. Focus groups allow us to sit down together with a pizza and think creatively about how we might do things better. I believe these structures demonstrate a strong and robust system of student representation.

Over the course of this academic year, we have seen a new development of the Institute's brand, one that is focused on removing barriers together. This perfectly aligns with our aims as a Student Guild. In introducing this report, I want to commend all the staff who work so hard to achieve this. Often, we see in them people who share our experience of facing challenges as we work towards success in higher education. This submission is the story of how we, together, as an academic community work to remove barriers so that opportunities can open up for as many of us as possible.

, Student President



1. Provider context

Bloomsbury Institute is a vibrant and contemporary learning community that was set up in August 2002 as the London School of Business and Management to deliver Accounting, Business and Law courses. Following a partnership with the University of Northampton, we are now partnered with Glyndŵr University who validate all of our degrees and we began delivery of courses in June 2022.

We deliver degrees in Accounting, Business, and Law. Our undergraduate degrees comprise 4-year (and 3-year accelerated) degrees with an integrated foundation year, 3-year (and 2-year accelerated) degrees, and 1-year top-up degrees. We also deliver an MBA and MSc Management.

As well as working with Glyndŵr University, we also have agreements with Birkbeck College, University of London for the provision of teaching space, and a progression agreement to some of Birkbeck's Masters' programmes. Our students have access to International Students House¹ too ensuring they can enjoy the benefits of belonging to the wider Bloomsbury student population.

These relationships enable us to provide our students with a high-quality 'university experience' with significant, individual support in the heart of London.

We have a strong reputation as a values-driven institution. We invest heavily in developing our purpose and values² to enhance the cohesiveness of our staff and student body. Our last employee engagement survey shows outstanding levels of belongingness and a sense of fairness and respect³. Job applicants regularly remark on the distinctiveness and appeal of our values and our purpose has inspired debate and discussion in the sector.⁴

Our purpose is:

- Breaking down barriers together

Our values are:

- Dare to be different
- Make it happen
- Don't be mean

Too many people face barriers to higher education. Many of these barriers relate to who we are and where we're from: gender, ethnicity, where we live or how much money we or our family have. But we believe that the things that hold people back are also rooted in their experience and how they see themselves – and they are unique to every individual – whether it's

1 <https://www.ish.org.uk/>

2 <https://www.bil.ac.uk/about/vision-values/>

3 95% of respondents to our Employee Engagement Survey (representing a response rate of 30%) say they 'feel a strong sense of belonging to Bloomsbury Institute'. The same number report they are treated with respect at Bloomsbury Institute. 100% 'feel confident they'd be able to report bullying/harrassment without worrying that it would have a negative impact on me'.

4 We invited CEO of London Higher and DVC Glyndwr University to discuss Breaking down barriers with our Director of Academic Development at our Annual Teaching and Learning Conference. was inspired to turn her remarks into a HEPI news blog during the parliamentary resit

self-limiting beliefs, personal circumstances, or previous educational experience. At Bloomsbury Institute we're committed to understanding and working **together** to take down any barriers that stop students from reaching their full potential, during their studies and beyond.

Breaking down barriers **together** is especially relevant to us because of our diverse student body which is reflected in the diversity of our staff. Our emphasis on working together reflects our belief that success, in education and beyond, is never achieved alone. 'Together' means that while we do everything we can to create the conditions for our students to thrive, we are not [solely] responsible for their success. It acknowledges the fact that every student has valuable experience to bring to their learning. And that every member of staff should enrich and feel supported by our community. 'Together' demonstrates our commitment to working with employers to make sure talented people are given the opportunities they deserve, no matter where they're from. And it recognises our collective responsibility for breaking down barriers that hold people back. 'Together' means we see ourselves as active members of the communities we operate in, locally, nationally and internationally. And it signals our openness to partnering with organisations who share our values.

Our Student Guild (grant-maintained by Bloomsbury Institute, but completely independent) was established in 2017. It is supported by a team of trained Peer Advisors who are employed by the Student Guild to provide a signposting service to their fellow students, in addition to providing all the opportunities associated with a traditional Student Union.

Information about the size and shape of our submission

We are proud to be a higher education provider that opens its doors to students who may not otherwise have the opportunity to study and be supported on each and every step of their journey. The TEF data for the four-year period shows our student body (97.5% UK) as significantly diverse compared to national figures, for example:

	Bloomsbury Institute	National
Mature (Over 21)	80%	21%
Black students	20%	8%
Lowest Quintile 1&2	62%	31%
FSM eligibility	46%	18%
No A Level entry qualifications	95%	48%

Many from our diverse student cohort hold an 'intersection' of the above characteristics which makes the depth and complexity of 'disadvantage' difficult to measure. During the TEF years 2018-2020 the vast majority of our students (in excess of 90% according to SLC data) were from low-income households (£25,000 or less per year) and unconfirmed

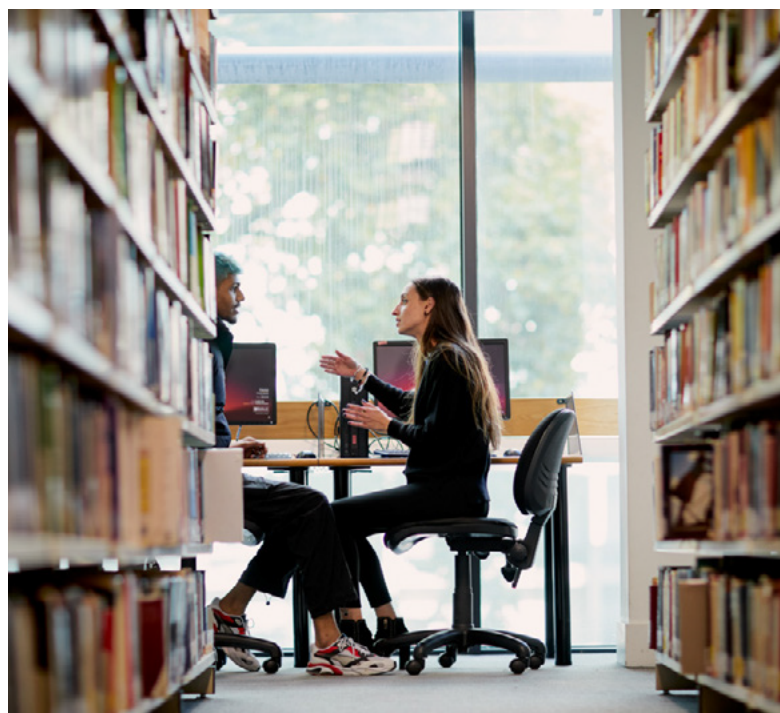
data indicates the same for the year after with high rates of disadvantage continuing to be the norm. All our students commute to their lessons. To address the established risks⁵ to engagement and success that such 'commuter students' face, we have introduced (from 2021) a bursary scheme for all our students to cover the exorbitant cost of travelling within London⁶. From October 2022, we give all our students a free laptop as part of our commitment to making education accessible to everyone.⁷

The diverse nature of our academic community is valued as an important asset to the educational experience we provide. The insights and learning of our graduates, educated in the midst of this diversity, is, we believe, one of the important contributions we can make to the wider society in which we live.

Information about the context of the submission

Our students are represented on our Governing Body (the Board of Directors) and in Academic Committee, Course Committees, and in the Student-Staff Consultative Committee. They receive all the same papers and data that ordinary committee members see. This means they are equipped to engage in informed and meaningful discussions. We collaborated on our separate submissions in the following ways. As nearly all our student representatives combine study with working, we checked to make sure they were happy to make a submission and we encouraged them to think about a submission format that would work for

them and their circumstances. The TEF main contact and alternative contact attended the student representatives meeting in November 2022 to ensure all representatives were aware of the provider's submission. The TEF main contact also attended the Staff-Student Liaison Committee in December 2022.



2. Student experience

We believe we offer an outstanding student experience at Bloomsbury Institute. Our aggregate TEF data for the four-year period puts us above our benchmark on every TEF measure, with the exception of Learning Resources where we are at benchmark. Our external reports and internal data that we discuss in the following sections are further evidence of our very high-quality provision. Our most recent NSS results (OfS:2022) show that we are maintaining our performance.

⁵ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/effective-practice/local-and-commuter-students/>

⁶ <https://www.bil.ac.uk/travel-bursary/>

⁷ <https://www.bil.ac.uk/laptop-offer/>

For 2022 we had an overall response rate of 77% compared to the sector's 69%. Overall satisfaction rating for Bloomsbury is 8.58% higher than the sector average for that year. For the last 4 years, we have been above the

sector average in terms of the overall satisfaction rating, and we have seen a consistent upward trend in the satisfaction rating. The Table below shows us scoring higher than the sector average on all themes.

Theme	Bloomsbury Institute	Difference between us and Sector	Sector
The teaching on my course	85.66	+ 05.61	80.05
Learning opportunities	84.92	+ 05.55	70.37
Assessment and Feedback	77.87	+ 09.34	68.53
Academic Support	84.43	+ 10.55	73.88
Organisation and Management	80.77	+ 10.89	69.88
Learning Resources	83.72	+ 02.82	80.90
Learning Community	83.44	+ 15.22	68.22
Student Voice	83.06	+ 16.52	66.54
The Students Union/Guild	76.43	+ 23.88	52.55
Overall satisfaction	84.87	+ 08.58	76.29

We are especially proud that when we exclude Specialists and FE Colleges, we are ranked in London:

- 2nd for Overall Satisfaction
- 1st for Law Degree (7th in UK)
- 3rd for Business (14th in UK)
- 3rd for Student Voice
- 3rd for 'Feeling part of a community'
- 3rd for 'Course is challenging'
- 3rd for Guild/Student Union

Our already strong performance and our upward trends are as a result of deliberate efforts through detailed action planning and execution, especially in the last academic year.

Academic experience and assessment

SE1. We have embedded outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting our students' learning, progression, and attainment.

We have consistently attracted positive feedback from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA: 2017, 2016, 2015). In October 2015 we received a commendation for the enhancement of student learning opportunities following our Higher Education Review (HER). At the last scheduled monitoring visit in September 2017, the QAA monitoring team concluded that we had made commendable progress with continuing to monitor, evaluate and enhance our HE provision. The report stated that:

The team found that the School has continued to make commendable progress

building on the features of good practice identified in the HER(AP) October 2015 review visit, and that all recommendations had been met with further improvements implemented since the 2016 visit. The review team considered the School had systematically evaluated its response to the recommendations and had successfully implemented enhancements and exceeded these in some aspects.

We had been expecting a QAA Monitoring Visit in September 2018; however, on the strength of our commendable outcome in 2017, we were informed that a visit would not be required. In addition, the QAA expressed its satisfaction that our 2018 QAA Annual Return demonstrated that we were continuing to maintain academic standards and enhance the quality of student learning opportunities and information about learning opportunities. Since then we have worked to maintain and improve our high standards. Our internal data and feedback shows that our teaching provides effective stimulation, challenge and contact time that encourages students to engage and actively commit to their studies.

Our TEF metric for the 'Teaching on my course' is 86.4% which is 4.0% above our benchmark. Our local evaluations evidence that satisfaction rates of existing students are even higher. Our anonymous Student Module Evaluation Questionnaire returned the following satisfaction percentages⁸:

- 92% – of students strongly agreed or agreed that 'The aims and objectives of the module were clear'.
- 90% – of students strongly agreed or agreed that 'Tutors were good at explaining things'.



- 93% – of students strongly agreed or agreed that 'The module materials were well organised on Canvas' [for VLE].
- 96% – of students strongly agreed or agreed that 'I feel I was treated with respect within the learning environment by my tutors and staff'.

– Student Module Evaluation Questionnaires, 2021–2022

The open-ended responses from our SMEQs provide further illustration of student satisfaction.

The lessons were very well planned and to the point.

– Foundation Year Student

Everything was well organised, easy to understand and overall there was great support. My seminar tutor helped me with my topic, giving me suggestions and feedback and also some useful materials for my final project.

– Business and Management Student

⁸ The level of satisfaction is consistent over the years we have been running SMEQs. The overall response rate across for 2021-2022 Programmes is 23% and 29% for Foundation Year, slightly lower than other years. Many individual modules have high response rates. As almost all students now bring a laptop to class, we will be encouraging completion of SMEQs in class time.

Great course. Learned some things that I didn't have knowledge of. Thank you.

– **Foundation Year Student**

has been an amazing lecturer and tutor throughout all the lessons, caring, very clear and making sure there was still a bit of enjoyment and fun in the lessons to keep our interest up. Overall anything delivered by stuck in my mind.

– **Business and Management Student**

Assessment and Feedback

Rigorous assessment practice has been maintained and the School uses its online system for students to submit assignments and receive feedback. The students the team met reported very positively about the quality and timeliness of assessment feedback ...The School actively engaged and consulted with the student body on the review and changes to assessment practice.

– **QAA Annual Monitoring Report, September 2017**

Our TEF metric for 'assessment and feedback' is 78.5%, 4.4% above our benchmark. Our local assessment processes provide further evidence of our very high-quality assessment practices and how we use feedback effectively in supporting students' development, progression and attainment.

The provision of effective and timely feed-forward (i.e. formative feedback) and summative feedback is a key component of our assessment approach. Several types of feed-forward and feedback are provided at various times during the assessment cycle. Prior to completing an assessment, feed-forward is provided on a sample of written work. Once an assessment is completed, summative feedback is provided.

If a student fails to pass the assessment, this feedback will additionally act as feed-forward for the resubmission or resit. The timeliness and quality of feed-forward and feedback is monitored through our Student Module Evaluation Questionnaires and our Course Committee meetings, at which feedback is a standing agenda item.

Our most recent Student Module Evaluations returned the following satisfaction percentages, and are further evidence of our good practice.

- 88% – of students strongly agreed or agreed that 'The Assignment Brief was clear'.
- 89% – of students strongly agreed or agreed that 'The assessment criteria were clearly communicated by the tutor'.
- 88% – of students strongly agreed or agreed that 'The feedback provide was clear and helpful'.

– **Student Module Evaluation Questionnaires, 2021–2022**

Our external examiners look carefully at our assessments and feedback. We have received comprehensive qualitative feedback from them on all our assessments, feedback and related procedures. Examples of these comments from External Examiner Reports⁹ include:

The assessment tasks given are very appropriate, address topical issues, and offers students the opportunity to be critical about contemporary issues vis-à-vis the wider business environment.

– **Business Management External Examiner**

There are some excellent applied assessments at Level 6. These require the students to really think and use their knowledge and learning. I think too that there is a constant refresh of what is delivered so that it remains current.

– **Business Management External Examiner**

Feedback to students is generally of a very high standard with a detailed comments linked to the assessment task and learning outcome and specific developmental comments which give students substantial guidance.

– **Accounting and Financial Management External Examiner**

One of the highlights of the year was meeting the students – many thanks to BIL for arranging this – and I can happily say that, from this event, there seems to be good practice aplenty at BIL. A few examples would be: Students very positive; viewed the staff as ‘like a family’ and ‘amazing’; fantastic support system and concern for well-being.

– **LLB Law External Examiner**

We work constantly to maintain and improve the high-quality of our teaching, feedback and assessment. Our regular Teaching and Learning Forum is compulsory for staff; this allows us to discuss effective methods of teaching and learning and to reflect on the challenges faced by teachers and students. Recent sessions have covered ‘Effective Teaching in a Multi-Cultural Environment’, an ‘Assessment Design Bootcamp’, and ‘Enhancing Digital Pedagogy’. Our Research Forum is another venue where we reflect on how we can support students further. For example a recent session explored how students can be supported to improve their comprehension of Assessment Briefs.¹⁰

Outstanding teaching and feedback practices are also secured through a high-quality Managed Observation of Teaching Scheme which sits alongside a Peer Observation of Teaching Scheme¹¹. This provides our academic staff with a confidential development activity which has a clear link to the improvement and enhancement of the student experience.

9 Our external examiner reports over the years consistently point to high-quality practice. <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/external-expertise/external-examining/>

10

11 <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/policies/>

SE2. Course content and delivery inspire our students to actively engage in and commit to their learning, and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential.

With the change from franchise to validated awards at undergraduate level, the School was able to have a lead involvement in the design and development of the awards, including the structure of assessment. In developing these programmes, the School makes explicit reference to the FHEQ, the applicable Subject Benchmark Statements, the Quality Code, and relevant professional body requirements including accounting professional organisations, the Solicitors Regulation Authority, the Bar Standards Board, and the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives.

— QAA Annual Monitoring Report, September 2017

Since our last QAA Monitoring Report we have worked hard to ensure our course content, design and delivery remain rigorous and effective in inspiring learning and in stretching students to develop the independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential.

Our validated degrees, including the Foundation Year, comprise four 30-credit modules at each Level, with two assessments per module. We deliver the modules through lecture (active listening), seminar (discuss and develop), and workshop (apply and practise) teaching sessions.

Feedback from students on this delivery method has been resoundingly positive:

- 91% – of students strongly agreed or agreed that ‘The module was intellectually stimulating’.
- 88% – of students strongly agreed or agreed that ‘The seminars helped me discuss and develop an understanding of the lecture content’.
- 86% – of students strongly agreed or agreed that ‘The workshops helped me apply/practice the lecture content’.

— Student Module Evaluation Questionnaire, 2021–2022

Open-ended responses provide further illustration:

Everything in the module is so practical the module leader makes everything so interesting. I have really enjoyed this.

— Business and Management Student

My tutor is always competent and confident in the delivery of module. It was clear took her time in ensuring we all understand what is being taught and also what is required to be successful within the module. I am very happy with the style of teaching. My tutor shows that is passionate about what does and also cares about students. Well done

— Law Student

Embedded throughout the curriculum is Personal Development Planning (PDP). PDP assists students to develop skills that make them competitive for better jobs; improve their key transferable skills competence, which will enable them to reach their full academic potential, and develop them into a reflective and strategic learner and practitioner, a skill which will assist them throughout their personal life and career.

I really likes this model as it is relatable to what I would like to do in the future

– Business and Management Student

SE3. We use research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to an outstanding academic experience for our students.

Our learning environment is enriched by student exposure to and involvement in provision at the forefront of scholarship, research and/or professional practice. Invited speakers, lunchtime dialogues, research projects, and embedded employability (all of which are discussed in the following sections) contribute to an outstanding learning and teaching experience for our students¹².

One area of innovation we have focused recent efforts on is digital pedagogy so that we further strengthen our curriculum and approaches to teaching and learning methods. In September 2021 we appointed a new Learning Technologist to work alongside a new Academic Lead for Learning Technology. A Digi-Flow Community was established for staff to support each other to become more flexible and innovative and to empower our students in the same way. Ideas, initiatives and resources are shared on the DigiFlow Teams site. We renewed and purchased

licences for a range of learning technology applications which enhance synchronous and asynchronous learning. Padlet, Articulate, Mentimeter, Adobe Suite and Canva are applications that are now actively used by our academics. We sought out opportunities to forge connections and to build expertise in this area.

We launched a new series on our Bloomsbury Institute Radio Station in which the Learning Technologist interviews our ‘DigiFlow-Pioneers’ (volunteer staff across the Disciplines) about their views on the importance of digital innovation in education. After broadcast, the episodes are available for students and staff to return to and listen again at their own pace¹³.

Evidence to date suggests this investment is of benefit to our students. Our Student Module Evaluation results for 2021–2022 show that 91% of students agreed or strongly agreed that ‘The use of additional learning applications (Mentimeter, OneNote, YouTube) enhances my learning’.

External examiners comments are positive and demonstrate the value of our investment in this area.

The programme team at Bloomsbury Institute has employed a wide variety of learning, teaching and assessment methods within the BABM programme. They have included contemporary delivery models and assessments methods such as Padlet, quizzes on Canvas, case studies, podcasts, real-life simulations and so on, emphasising on the development of theoretical or academic aspects students’ learning. Assessments are generally practically focused and are clearly explained to students. The majority of student feedback is of a very high standard.

– External Examiner, Accounting and Finance,

¹² <https://www.bil.ac.uk/lets-grow/external-lectures-and-speaker-events/>

¹³ <https://soundcloud.com/bloomsburyradio/sets/growing-with-the-digi-flow>



Resources, support, and student engagement

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

Our commitment to staff CPD is at the heart of who we are, reflected in our purpose of breaking down barriers to realise the potential in all of us to develop and grow. It is a key goal in our strategic framework where we commit to building a culture that celebrates success and enables all of us to flourish together. To read the words of praise for staff from their peers and by students at our Annual Staff Awards is to see the evidence of our approach and of the values of mutual support and leadership that are lived across all Divisions at Bloomsbury Institute¹⁴.

We are a Teaching-only provider but this doesn't mean we don't do research or invest in research-informed teaching. We are immensely proud of our Research Strategy¹⁵ and of the research opportunities we create that apply to all staff (not just academic staff). But we don't expect staff

to just get on with it. Staff complete a Research Development Plan, and once that's approved they are offered a mentor, receive their own Research Allowance to support their research, and attend our thriving Research Forum and Seminar Series. We are delighted that our approach was recognised by the QAA as good practice in 2017¹⁶ and we have enhanced our practice since then.

Our annual appraisal system supports staff to reflect on and plan their personal and professional development goals. Staff use a template that asks questions such as "What do I want or need to learn, or to get better at? What will I do to achieve this? What resources or support will I need? Staff receive time off to pursue training, and all staff have their own annual personal CPD allowance of £500 which engenders an even greater sense of autonomy and direction over their self-development. Managers support staff through the year to achieve their goals.

The Institute's Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) supports teaching staff in their development in a number of ways including through the Teaching and Learning Forum (mentioned above) and also an Annual Teaching and Learning Conference which all staff at the Institute attend and participate in. This annual event is designed to tease out ways in which we push the boundaries of our achievement. For example, our 2021 conference was entitled 'Taking Shape' and it explored the form and style of teaching and challenged our staff to a greater awareness of "teaching as an act of communication that is consciously crafted, designed, performed and exhibited"¹⁷. We were supported in this by our keynote on the day, , from the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

¹⁴ <https://www.bil.ac.uk/2022/09/05/bloomsbury-institute-awards/>

¹⁵ <https://www.bil.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Research-Strategy-2021-24.pdf>

¹⁶ The School has a detailed Research Strategy which is informed by the REF Assessment Framework and Guidance, and supported by the Academic Committee. The information provided clearly shows that this area of good practice has been maintained and enhanced through staff being supported to engage in research activity, observations, support materials for staff, seminars and conferences, and through student engagement to share practice. – QAA Annual Monitoring Report, September 2017

¹⁷ <https://www.bil.ac.uk/2022/07/21/teaching-and-learning-conference-2022-taking-shape/>

Our Institute targets include having all members of teaching staff as members of the Higher Education Academy to the minimum level of Fellow. Over 85% of our permanent academic staff have achieved Fellowship or Senior Fellowship of the HEA. We provide comprehensive support to staff with their HEA Fellowship applications through our In-Bloom Programme (that is accredited by the HEA/Advance HE). The support is personalised (i.e. group and one-to-one sessions), unlimited, and covers all aspects of the Fellowships (i.e. materials provided, and all related costs of Fellowship).

The QAA in its HER accurately described our still thriving teaching observation scheme:

Peer and managed observation processes for observing teaching are comprehensive.

*Records of teaching observations are detailed and supportive. The annual evaluation of peer observations provides examples for sharing good practice, and enhancing collegiate support and professional engagement. The managed observation scheme is clear, and the revised process shows that all observers undertake training in order to standardise observations.*¹⁸

We believe our support for staff professional development is outstanding. We are delighted that in 2022 we were the recipients of Independent Higher Education's (IHE) Transformative Staff Development Award¹⁹.

SE5. We ensure a supportive learning environment, and our students have access to a wide and readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs.

Our TEF metric for academic support indicates an 83.5% satisfaction rating, which is 6.2% above our benchmark. Our internal data and external reports, as set out below, provide further evidence of the outstanding quality of academic support that is accessed by our students.

In our last Higher Education Review by the QAA, the team considered our “wide range of effective support mechanisms that enable students to develop their academic and personal potential” and judged this to be “good practice” and commended us for the enhancement of student learning opportunities. This judgement was reinforced by the QAA's follow up visits in 2016 and in 2017.

Since our positive QAA reviews and visits, we have continued to enhance the support we offer students through a strong partnership between our Academic Division and our Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success (SEWS). Together we work to ensure that support is mainstreamed and embedded within the curriculum, through course design and in

¹⁸ QAA Higher Education Review Report, October 2015

¹⁹ <http://independenthe.com/ihe-awards-2022-ihe-annual-conference-2022>

everyday classroom interaction, with additional support provided through co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, targeted where necessary.

We were particularly concerned to understand the needs of our students during Covid-19. Therefore, we designed our Welcome Back Survey, new for 2020, to canvas the opinions of our continuing students. This was seen as important both in the context of the pandemic and the move to online delivery. We received 247 responses across all disciplines, which equates to a 26% response rate. Over half of respondents said that they found the past year “quite challenging” and “very challenging” (50.6% and 12.6%, respectively). However, we were pleased to note that 93.1% answered ‘yes’ to the question ‘Do you feel that Bloomsbury Institute took reasonable measures to support you during the coronavirus lockdown in relation to learning and teaching?’ And almost two-thirds of students said that online classes were as good or equally as good as face-to-face classes.

When we repeated the survey in 2021, we asked students whether they made use of SEWS. The survey showed that 35% make use of our Peer Assisted Learning Scheme, and a large proportion of our students accessed the Disability and Wellbeing advice and support (26.3%); pastoral advice and guidance from SEWS advisors (35%); wellbeing activities including Managing Stress, Managing Budget, and Developing Resilience (33.8%). Those who attended any wellbeing sessions found the topics interesting and agreed they learned something new as a result.

“[During Covid-19] I have support from the University all the time I needed [it]. Thank you”.

— Welcome Back Survey respondent

In 2019, we invested further in our Learning Enhancement team including the appointment of a dedicated Academic Lead who works with teaching staff to design additional support and to target students where necessary. Bloom Bites provide short videos and advice on a changing basis in response to student requests²⁰. Students can also attend workshops and take mini online courses in specific areas; work 1:1 with the Academic Lead to build confidence in delivery presentations; and receive additional (to their lecturer) feedback on written assignments and advice and support to improve and, in cases, to resubmit work²¹.

Almost 70% of respondents to the 2021 Welcome Back Survey said they made use of support from Learning Enhancement with 96.4% of these saying they found the support services useful.

You get all support you need, just have to ask for. Professionalism, very responsive and helpful.

I’ve received the advice needed and my tutor’s attitude was excellent.

Developing a students’ IT skills to meet the requirements of their course is essential and there is a great deal of support available for students. The Learning Enhancement team and IT Services offer students training sessions, called Digi Skills, throughout the academic year on a variety of digital and online tools.²²

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

We are in a long-standing relationship with Birkbeck College (University of London). Our agreement with them continues to provide us with a unique position in the alternative HE

20 <https://www.bil.ac.uk/learning-enhancement/bloom-bites/>

21 <https://www.bil.ac.uk/?s=learning+enhancement>

22 <https://www.bil.ac.uk/hello/digital-toolkit/>

provider sector with all of our teaching taking place within Birkbeck College which also assures access to Birkbeck College's library (including borrowing rights for all our students) and for our students to be fully immersed in a central London university environment.

We have an excellent collection of online resources (general and subject-specific), and a full-time Librarian to support students to make best use of these.²³

In 2021, we invested further in our physical space through exclusive day-time access to the Birkbeck Estate at 373–375 Euston Road. Euston Road provides new, state-of-the-art teaching facilities with dedicated informal co-learning spaces.²⁴ All our lectures, tutorials and seminars are now held here and our students can learn in these exciting and excellent facilities.

We constantly strive to develop our offer and we are always thinking how physical and virtual resources can be tailored and used effectively to support outstanding teaching and learning. The student laptop scheme has had an immediate impact on our capacity for teaching and learning, with the syllabus becoming increasingly digitalised on all our programmes. On the Foundation Year, for example, students complete digital workbooks which accompany the core modules. The laptops have also made it possible to diversify our assessments and learning design, including an increase in the use of Padlet, interactive practice-based lectures, web design, and live data capture and analysis sessions.

We are delighted that the potential in our thinking has been recognised in the recent OFS competition for funding.²⁵ The award of over a £0.25m for our Digital Employability Hub will enhance learning and the graduate employability skills of our students. The Digital Hub will be equipped with technology capable of supporting

the digital skills we have plans to enhance in our students over the coming years: data analytics, artificial intelligence, cloud technology, video production, and virtual reality being at the forefront of these.

SE7. We embed engagement with our students leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of our students.

Our TEF data shows that we have exceeded our benchmark by 8% for the Student Voice. We support our students to engage with the design and delivery of the curriculum and with the leadership and governance of the Institute to allow a range of perspectives to have influence in the continuous improvement of their educational experiences and outcomes.

We have embedded student representation in all of our academic decision-making meetings²⁶ and of course on our Board of Directors. The Institute also initiates a number of informal focus groups throughout the year to support enhancement across all our divisions. Focus groups allow students and staff to discuss possible initiatives and enhancements before they enter committee agendas. Focus groups seek to generate as

23 <https://www.bil.ac.uk/student-portal/online-library-and-databases/>

24 These can be viewed in 3D here <https://www.bil.ac.uk/student-life/our-campus/>

25 <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/capital-funding-for-2022-23-to-2024-25-formula-allocations-and-invitation-to-bid/>

26 <https://www.bil.ac.uk/qem/section-1/>

much creativity as possible as well as providing an outline of the boundaries within which everyone feels comfortable to progress.

We have a Relationship Agreement with our Student Guild that formally sets out how both we and our Student Guild work together. Our Student Staff Liaison Manager (SSLM) acts as the key line of communication between us and the student body (represented by the Student Guild). The SSLM plays an important role in enabling real-time and open dialogue with Student Representatives through daily 'drop-in' sessions which are designed to promote a culture of student engagement.

Through our Student-Staff Consultative Forum (SSCF), we provide a platform where all Student Representatives and key Institute staff meet. The SSCF enables us to share and consult the student body on new or developmental strategies, policies, ideas or initiatives. The SSCF also allows Student Representatives to all meet together and bring a collective voice to the Institute.

The Institute provides the SSCF with secretariat support. Minutes of all meetings are taken and actions agreed throughout the meeting with a two-week turnaround allowed for follow-up. This is to ensure that the impact of the student voice is felt as soon as possible and changes can be made as efficiently as possible.

3. Student Outcomes

Positive outcomes

SO1. We deploy and tailor approaches that are highly effective in ensuring our students succeed in and progress beyond their studies.

The high-quality teaching, curriculum, and student experience we provide has been effective in ensuring that many of our students succeed in and progress beyond their studies. This includes our disadvantaged students for whom we have none or very small gaps compared to their advantaged counterparts.

However, across all student groups a significant number of our students fail to continue and complete their higher education with us. In light of this, we have agreed targets with the OfS to improve our continuation rates over the next four years. We have worked hard to introduce, deploy and tailor further approaches to support our students. The evidence to date shows these are, and will be, effective in ensuring more of our students succeed.

Approaches that are already in place include high quality teaching and assessment as discussed in preceding sections, and outstanding approaches to ensuring we listen and respond to the students' voice. The additional initiatives we introduced have been approved by the OfS and are those for which substantial evidence already exists in the sector as to their efficacy. We have monitored their impact to date in our own institution and we work with external consultants to provide objective assurance and independent advice so that we can strengthen our approach and evaluation further.

Enhanced admissions screening

We committed to enhancing our admissions testing in 2021 and to further explore the motivations and commitment to HE studies of

applicants to our degrees with an integrated foundation year. We appointed external reviewers (with extensive experience in writing and reviewing English Language tests) to review our internal English Language assessment. This led to the launch of new admissions assessments with a new marking scheme/ points system and different types of tasks to test the applicant's reading and writing skills. We complemented changes to our interviews, reviewing the approach, and rolling out enhanced training for our interviewers with the help of an HR consultant. An Admissions Assessments and Interview Guide has been prepared to guide applicants through this process²⁷. Members of the Admissions team report an increase in confidence in the process and a better exchange of information between the applicant and the Institute.

Transition to HE Course

We delivered a starter course for our FY starters in 2021/22 on transitioning to HE to support their understanding of, and readiness to undertake, third-level study. We rolled out the course at induction to ensure sufficient reach. This consisted of a 1-week blended course, including an Articulate course covering all the basics of HE, and drop-in sessions with our academic team. We evaluated this through our Initial Course Evaluation Survey.²⁸ 73% of students (representing a response rate of 67%) found the transition course extremely useful.

English for Academic Purposes Module

We introduced an additional Foundation Year module focused on developing students' academic English and study skills. These were designed to run alongside the core modules and equip students with a grasp of the technical vernaculars required to study in their chosen

disciplines. The end-of-course feedback was very positive with 100% of respondents saying they would recommend the course to new Foundation Year students²⁹. Students appreciated learning new vocabulary, and this was something needed even by those with English as a first language. The students also enjoyed the subject knowledge that they gained, and all survey respondents agreed that their confidence had improved as a result of the course and that they felt better prepared to study the 'Introduction to Business/Law/Accounting' module in the following semester:

Having embarked on a Law degree, it was good start learning, in small steps, the fundamental language in regard to the law. It was a great course and was great to discuss points that were of particular interest with someone who comes from a Law background.

– Respondent to English for Academic Purposes Survey Result

Mentoring Scheme for Foundation Year Students

Following success in this area previously, we committed to further promotion of peer-learning in and outside of the classroom. Our Foundation Year teaching and learning resources now contain a number of activities promoting peer-learning. For example, the Contemporary Worlds module has lots of activities designed to encourage interaction and peer learning opportunities. Alongside the 'Grow Your Reading' groups (which are social learning environments) we will also be encouraging students to discuss podcasts/videos in the new Foundation Year Learning Community. This is a MS Teams area with Peer Mentors

27 Like many HEIs, we invested in proctoring software and used lockdown browsers during Covid-19 to safeguard standards while applicants sat our admissions assessments online.

28 The Initial Course Evaluation (ICE) is conducted at a course level. The ICE is intended to be an 'early warning' survey to ensure that all new students have settled into their studies and are not facing any difficulties. The ICE is conducted around four weeks into the students' course.

29 A sixth of FY students participated. The response rate to the survey was 50%.

and Lecturers on hand to facilitate student discussions outside of classes and create a peer-to-peer help forum. Our Peer Learning Evaluation Surveys and Annual Reports show very positive feedback from all student participants in relation to their experiences of peer support.

Personal Academic Tutoring

We committed to introducing a 'proactive' Personal Academic Tutoring pilot tailored for Foundation Year students to reduce risk of disengaging. This was introduced for the Sept 2021 intake. Each Tutor was allotted between 12–15 students, and they and tutees have been meeting one-to-one since then. The Academic Lead for Personal Tutoring has created a range of resources for the programme and a dedicated Teams site enables tutors and tutees to communicate easily. The one-to-one meetings have all resulted in actions or services being recommended to each student.

The meetings have been really good – there were a of students I spoke to who were sitting on very big issues. There's who hasn't had a 121 but has got in touch with important issues since they know I'm their PT.

– [Personal Tutor]

Widening Participation Forum

We launched our Widening Participation Forum aimed at supporting teaching staff to engage with and to undertake research in areas related to improving student success. We invite external experts to share proven methods with us, for example nationally celebrated work improving achievement and closing gaps through embedding 'micro-skills of compassion'

in the curriculum³⁰ and author of the Advance HE sector-wide UKES survey³¹ which examines how students engage with their learning and develop their skills. We have used anonymous surveys to rate the usefulness of the discussions and to establish if and how staff would adjust or change their practice as a result of what they had learned. To date, all bar one respondent has found Forum discussions 'useful' with most rating it 'extremely useful'. Respondents described the ways in which they intended improving their current practice as a result of participation in the event'. These discussions then continued in our Teaching and Learning Forum and in our Research Forum.

We established a Widening Participation Grant in 2021–22 to provide a boost to staff whose research focused on inclusion and student success. We made four awards. Evaluation for the initial phase considered reach and recognition over a short time scale. All grantees completed their work or they published early reflections or findings to a national audience³². We also trebled the number of staff researching Widening Participation themes. 'Researching' is measured by staff who are successful in having a Research Development Plan (including intended outputs and outcomes approved) and completion of those Plans within a specified annual timetable.

32 For example in higher education,

(Jan 2023) Slavery, Indenture and the Law, Routledge

(2022), Music's potential to overcome barriers

Timetables

We committed to looking into more flexible timetabling solutions for our students. For academic year 2021–22, our new applicants were able to stipulate their preferred days of study during the admissions stages; students can also request a change of timetable via their SSP. From September 2023 we are looking into implementing a timetable self-selection system (that is possible through our current software) to enable all students to build their own timetables.

Further Review of Teaching and Learning Resources

We committed to continue reviewing and updating our module specifications and teaching and learning resources to employ the most effective and engaging teaching approaches and learning technology solutions and to further enhance employability skills development. For example, we introduced further support for students needing additional help. We did this through asynchronous video content in the form of bite-size videos to accompany our core modules and which focus on key concepts, assessment and digital literacy. We wanted to ensure these were flexible and inclusive and therefore accessible to our students who are often short of time and money³³. They have been accessed hundreds of times and can be paused and re-watched allowing students to control the pace and place of learning.

Employability

We have further embedded employability into our courses. For example, we have created the Start Your Organisation assessment element of our Foundation Year. This project-based learning initiative constructively aligns three Foundation Year core modules to enable students to create, market research, and then launch (via

a website), a real-life organisation. Students have created businesses, charities, community organisations and law firms. Through this there has been a greater emphasis on developing creativity, digital literacy and storytelling skills (as these were recently highlighted as being graduate skill gaps identified by the DCMS (UK Government:2022).



In 2022 we appointed full-time Employability Leads who oversee our existing work with Personal Development Planning, internships, employer engagement and alumni. Personal Development Planning (PDP) is a core component of our approach to student success. We recently reviewed (in consultation with students) our current PDP provision.³⁴ Staff in our Centre for Student Engagement, Wellbeing and Success worked with the University of the Western Cape in developing a student version of their pioneering business performance programme, Five Lens Assessment, as an enhancement to our PDP. At its core, the programme measures and reports on 23 behavioural dimensions and offers developmental pathways across a range of behaviours. Previously, the programme has only been delivered on a one-to-one basis for senior executives in companies around the world. Our employability support and impact is discussed in greater depth under Educational Gain.

³³ <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/events/gravity-assist-a-new-era-for-higher-education/>

³⁴ PDP workshops are delivered during timetabled sessions with each cohort throughout the year. All materials, links and related documents to the PDP programme are posted on students' VLE course sites, where additional PDP related workshops and events are also promoted.

Research and Development

We review and develop initiatives if and where the evidence shows they can be effective. For example, we mentioned our travel bursary in the first section of this submission. External consultants SEER³⁵ found that 94% of respondents to their evaluation survey thought financial support from the Institute had been important or very important in their ability to financially continue with their studies. However, as the result was not statistically significant and because there a range of additional enhancements that SEER proposed we will be taking steps to improve this intervention.

SO2. There are very high rates of continuation and completion for the provider's students and courses.

As discussed in S01 above we have agreed targets and initiatives with the OfS to improve our continuation rates.

It should be noted that our continuation rates for both Degrees with an integrated Foundation year and without a Foundation year has improved over the years and our internal data indicates that the measures we have implemented are meeting with success.

Improving both continuation and completion rates is one of the purposes of our annual monitoring and evaluation processes, through which quality enhancement measures are identified and implemented through measurable actions that are monitored through our Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, and Academic Committee.

SO3. There are very high rates of successful progression for our students and courses.

Our rates of progression for our students are just slightly below benchmark: 58.4% against a benchmark of 58.7%. However, it should be noted that for our Degree Students with an integrated Foundation Year we are above benchmark by 4.8%.

We are pleased that the aggregate data for the four TEF years show Law students doing particularly well in comparison to other students. Earlier this year we visited University College Galway to discuss the opportunities that their Taxation Clinic offers students, to build upon the success of our Law Clinic. Plans are in place for us to create a similar opportunity for our students especially those studying Accounting and Business.

In the aggregate years covered by the TEF data, most of our students came through our doors with little or no qualifications. We are immensely proud of what so many of those individuals achieved.

35 SEER (2022) Evaluation of the Impact of Financial Support at Bloomsbury: 2021/22. PP;1–32.



Educational gains

SO4. We clearly articulate the range of educational gains we intend our students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to our students and their future ambitions.

Developing the independence, autonomy, and creativity of our students is at the core of who we are. Therefore ‘Gain’ or what a student achieves is not simply about what we as educators “intend our students to achieve” but is also about what our students themselves define as gain and how this is relevant to them and their ambitions.

Let’s Grow is the Institute’s strategic programme through which we articulate to students how we will support them to understand and pursue their goals³⁶. It was first launched in 2018 and adopts a similar outlook to ‘Gain’ as described in (2022)³⁷.

The Programme’s approach to personal and professional development is to ensure students and graduates are “work-ready” in the context of graduate employment, self-employment and new venture creation; “study-ready” in the context of postgraduate study, and “life-ready” too –

capable of understanding themselves and others and appreciative of the values which underpin living life well.

The ‘Gain’ is that our students will have realised their capabilities to access the world of learning and education, built the relevant skills to do so including the resources they need to sustain themselves along the way and for these to further their future ambitions whatever these may be.

SO5. Our approach to supporting our students to achieve these gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to our students and their different starting points.

We draw on evidence and best-practice to design interventions and opportunities that will support our students in: 1) Developing a clear understanding of how their personal constitution feeds into how they think, behave and perform. 2) Using this insight to map clear pathways linked to personal and professional goals. 3) Building up self-belief and wellbeing through positive affirmations of individual worth through individual and group support. 4) Empowering our students and graduates to achieve their potential and make valuable contributions to all the communities to which they belong through this development.

We adopt a person-centred approach so that students can develop or ‘grow’ at their own pace. By providing strong interventions at year level and an “à la carte” suite of activities and support alongside the curriculum, the Let’s Grow Programme has the flexibility to respond to individual needs and be accessible and attractive to a highly diverse student body.

36 <https://www.bil.ac.uk/lets-grow/> and <https://www.bil.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/4198-BLOOM-Lets-Grow-Strategic-Measures-document-web-sp.pdf>

37 “The change in knowledge, skills, work-readiness and personal development, as well as enhancement of specific practices and outcomes in defined disciplinary and institutional contexts.” (2022)

1. We promote **Growth-Mind-Set**: Last year's Annual all-Staff Induction provided a key session on 'Growth-Mind-Set'. This year's special session was devoted to 'Coaching'. We focus on these areas because we want our staff to talk to students in ways that build their confidence in their abilities to direct their own futures including a future of life-long learning. The Institute is proud and incredibly fortunate that the Director of our Student Engagement and Wellbeing Service, who champions these approaches, is also the Director of Professional Development at the European Mentoring and Coaching Council.³⁸
2. We have **Embedded Employability** in the curriculum so that students are supported to regularly identify the skills they are acquiring, discuss these within the classroom community, and be able to articulate these in a work-based context. The Design of our Foundation Year as outlined in SE1 is an example of how we do this and Personal Development Planning is built into all our degrees. We have taken PDP further through the delivery of an online enneagram-based questionnaire to our students. This offers students insights into how they tend to behave in the world, what their strengths are and where areas of improvement are likely to be located.
3. We create **Links with Graduate Recruiters**: We ensure our degrees and employability provision reflect changes in the labour market and remain current. We have provided students with a cost-effective pathway to achieve CMI Chartered Manager Status³⁹. At an institutional level we are now developing 'internship partner organisations'. We sought through our partnership with the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) opportunities for some of our students to undertake a paid

placement with the NHS in London. Since the beginning of this partnership,

of our students, each year, have been successful in securing a placement, which is a far higher ratio of success compared to many of the bigger institutions in London. We have an established relationship with Support Through Court a charity supporting people who face court alone so that they can represent themselves to the best of their abilities. As volunteers, students provide both reassurance and guidance to clients of the charity. This relationship provides students with the opportunity to gain valuable practical experience in a supported environment. Currently, in 2022/23, 14 students have signed volunteer agreements and the

, within eight weeks of starting the degree.

4. We provide **Social Capital**. We address the social capital deficit experienced by many of our students by forging relationships with individuals and bodies from outside the Institute. Separate to our peer-mentoring discussed under SE5, we have a scheme which matches KPMG Executive Mentors to Level 5 and Level 6 student mentees. The purpose of the scheme is to support students to develop strategies for reaching their goals, gain valuable insight into their chosen professional area and build their network, whilst gaining transferrable skills such as communication skills, and greatly building confidence. This scheme is very popular with our later year students, and mentees have provided very positive feedback, including that they have gained great insight into what it would be like to work in a corporate environment and have found the guidance given to them by their mentors as very helpful.
5. **Bloomsbury Law Clinic**: Our students do not have the access to work experience

38

39 <https://www.bil.ac.uk/2022/06/13/bloomsbury-institute-has-been-accredited-as-a-chartered-management-institute-cmi-partner-centre/>

that their counterparts in many other universities have. We seek to create such opportunities for our students and in doing so we give back to the wider community we live and work in. In January 2022,

, Former President of the Supreme Court, opened our new Law Clinic⁴⁰. The mission and purpose of the Clinic is two-fold:

- Social justice: to provide free legal advice to people who are not eligible for legal aid and cannot afford to pay
- Student learning: to provide law students with clinical experience, and non-law students with the opportunity to develop their transferrable skills.

6. Bloomsbury Radio: Bloomsbury Radio is the only radio station run by a higher education provider⁴¹. It was set up in 2020 to promote engagement and learning with our local and virtual communities, and to offer students work-related experience. In 2021, it launched a comprehensive and certified 5-week training programme to coach students to become broadcasters and production staff. Students apply outlining what they hope to achieve from the training. Currently on a daily basis 11 hours of programming is produced and presented by our students, staff and the wider community. Programming content is driven by the students' passions and programmes range from politics to poetry, from music shows to student life here at Bloomsbury Institute.

SO6. We evaluate the gains made by our students, and demonstrate that our students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains.

We deploy a mixed method evaluation to the gains made by our students. We were delighted that the Northampton University Validation Panel that approved our validated LLB (Hons) Law and BA (Hons) Accounting and Financial Management programmes, particularly commended our approach to PDP: "Bloomsbury Institute was commended for the use of Personal Development Planning that uses student voice in the design". Internal surveys show that students regard the recent further development of PDP with enneagram as useful with 40% of respondents to our Welcome Back Survey in 2021–22 accessing the test.

To date over a hundred students have trained with Bloomsbury Radio in presenting, producing, and editing, including students outside of the Institute. An early (focus group) evaluation with students suggest they are seeing the gains they hoped for.

I've learned new software skills and organisational skills. My communication and confidence have really grown.

— , Foundation Year

[It's] helped me to be more structured. It's opened up a different side to me. I'm not afraid anymore to push myself and try new things.

— , Law Student

The biggest lesson I've learned from the Radio training is the importance of patience.

40

41 There are some student radio stations across the country but Bloomsbury Radio is the only one run by a provider.

To stop rushing. To be more in the moment and enjoy life.

— **, Local**
London student

Equally, students are highly positive about the work experience opportunities that they have been afforded through their studies at Bloomsbury Institute:

My experience with the Bloomsbury Law Clinic has been great. I have found it helps my understanding and with my Clinical Legal practice module and things have started to fall into place. It's an additional way to learn and compliments my first module on my degree course. I am ready to practice my advisory skills in the clinic and that support given by Ian and the current advisors will ensure my experience and knowledge is superb!

— **Law and Legal**
Practice student volunteering with the Bloomsbury Law Clinic

Working with Support Through Court has been such an amazing experience for me. The Support Through Court team were very welcoming and I already I feel like I am a part of the family. I have learned how to communicate with clients and how to register clients into their system which was a new experience and skill for me.

— **Law and Legal**
Practice student volunteering with Support Through Court.

Our 2021–2022 Let's Grow Survey shows that students have engaged in a range of various opportunities: 25% listen to the Lunchtime Dialogues on Bloomsbury Radio; 36% get involved in CMI/CIMA/HMRC events; 32%

engage in co or extra-curricular employability workshops.

Most students agree that Let's Grow has either "increased my confidence"; "I understand myself better"; "My skills have improved" or "I can write about my skills more confidently". 90.5% of students would recommend Let's Grow to other students.

Our internal evidence suggests that our approach is having success in supporting students to achieve the gains we have articulated together with them. However, we are committed to further developing our understanding of Educational Gain, and improving our evaluation. We worked with external consultants SEER to embed Theory of Change in all our divisions and they will continue to work with us to provide an external view and analysis.

'I am the only one in my family who came to London for my higher education studies. I have no words to explain my happiness. This is a historical thing for me.

— **Student Graduate** 42

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