Provider name: University of Suffolk
UKPRN: 10014001

Optional provider submission template for TEF 2023

<table>
<tr><td>**1. Provider context statement: Transforming Lives and Our Region**</td></tr>
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Our submission to TEF

Our submission to TEF has been drafted collaboratively with representation from across our community, including our Students' Union (SU).

while the SU has contributed to the drafting of this document, they find themselves unable to make an independent separate submission. To make explicit the independent voice and experience of our students, we have drawn heavily on NSS commentary reflecting the excellent academic experience and enhancements we have achieved. We have also been careful to select examples of high quality across the mix of our students and courses to highlight the consistent impact of the interventions undertaken, regardless of cohort size.

At the University of Suffolk (UOS) we believe in the transformative power of higher education (HE), that it should be accessible, drive social equality and mobility, and be a catalyst for change. We are located in a large rural county with substantial areas of low participation in HE, and lower than average employment in SOC Major Groups 1-3 (41.9% Suffolk compared to 51.4% Great Britain) (Office for National Statistics, 2022). Our commitment to equity of opportunity remains unwavering, with 82% of our population being Access and Participation (APP) countable in 2019/20. We consistently perform above APP benchmark attracting young full-time students from low participation neighbourhoods (UOS: 23.0%, benchmark: 12.5%) and from the most deprived areas in the country (UOS: 38.6%, benchmark: 21.9%). Our student population is largely mature (87%), and full time (over 90%). 11.1% of our population has a known disability, and 6.1% a known learning difficulty (HESA 2020/21). Since our foundation as University Campus Suffolk in 2007, we have extended our reach through strategic partnership nationally and internationally, including FE colleges, private providers, and employer providers.

Our Strategy and Vision 2020-2030 (University of Suffolk, 2020) states we will be an empowering force for individual and community growth and development, *"providing high quality education and research"* which gives our students the skills and opportunities to *"transform their lives in order to transform the lives of others and to benefit the society in which they find themselves."* To achieve this, in our location, we must use **research**, **innovation, professional practice** and **employer engagement,** to deliver a student experience and student outcomes which are **typically very high quality** with **some outstanding features**. We believe we deliver an **outstanding academic experience**, at minimum **silver**. This submission outlines our current position (as of November 2022) set against the historic data of TEF, and our ongoing trajectory; meeting and exceeding high quality standards.

As a new University, established in 2016, we are proud of recent external accolades which exemplify our success:

- Climbing 30 places in the Guardian University Guide 2022 to 67th out of 121 institutions.
- Climbing 26 places in the Complete University Guide 2022; the 3rd highest leap by any UK university.

Provider name: University of Suffolk
UKPRN: 10014001

- 92% of our students are in employment or further higher study according to Graduate Outcomes 2019/20.
- WhatUni Student Choice Awards 2022, top 10 in the Lectures and Teaching Quality category and Facilities category.
- OFSTED rating of "Good" for apprenticeship provision.
- Our first REF submission received an outcome of 3* overall, with 70% of outputs at 3 and 4*.

In rating our apprenticeship provision as "Good" in 2022, OFSTED inspectors recognised the "*transformational journey that the university is on*" and that "*leaders work closely and purposefully with employers to design an apprenticeship offer that meets local and regional skills needs very well*" (OFSTED, 2022). This is true of all our provision; we are on a journey of fast-paced transformation. We have excellent relationships with regional organisations and smaller employers which not only ensures that our graduates meet their future workforce needs but have also resulted in the development of a range of **outstanding** state-of-the-art **physical and virtual learning resources** tailored to effectively support outstanding teaching. Our investment in the last 4 years is considerable, including a £13 million Health and Wellbeing Building[1] in partnership with the NHS, £9.6 million Digitech Campus with BT[2] and £20 million flagship heritage centre[3] with Suffolk County Council.

Contextualising the metrics: an overview
The aggregated metrics used in this TEF present the work of the University and its partnerships at a point of transition and evolution; and include data from years in which we were actively identifying areas in need of enhancement. The impact of the work we have completed, including through the period of the COVID pandemic, results in a data-led realisation of immense success. While our full-time progression (76.6%), part-time continuation (82.5%) and student voice (66.8%) and apprenticeship progression (94.3%) were already above benchmark, we can illustrate considerable improvement beyond the aggregated data in the TEF snapshot. This is particularly true in relation to full-time continuation (increasing from 79.6% to 82.5%) and in line with the TEF benchmark (83.9%).

During the COVID pandemic the University reimagined its understanding of blended delivery, implementing technologies to increase access for all students (e.g., the implementation of lecture capture). We are proud of the fact that not only did we rapidly move all teaching and assessment online, but we sustained synchronous teaching delivery throughout the pandemic from the initiation of lockdown. At the same time, we recognised the opportunity to develop a more compassionate pedagogy; one which was more supportive of the complexities many of our students' experience. This manifested in the piloting of a *Block and Blend* pedagogy (McKie, 2021) establishing the University as a national leader in this innovative approach. Ongoing data analysis and comparison of block and traditional, semesterised delivery indicates that students learning on block programmes have a continuation rate of 99% compared to 84.5%. Understanding continuation as an antecedent of completion indicates that our completion rates will also be positively and significantly impacted. This is particularly evident in relation to our majority APP countable student population; realising a reduction in the percentage gap for degree outcomes, defined as targets in our Access and Participation Plan (APP) between:

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[1] Virtual tour: https://youtu.be/3N51SqeK8e0
[2] Virtual tour: https://youtu.be/94ROmMT23gQ
[3] https://www.uos.ac.uk/content/thehold

- full time BAME and white students, seeing a decrease from 18% in 2020/21 to 2% in 2021/22,
- full time young POLAR 4 Quintile 5 and 1 students, seeing a decrease from 15% in 2020/21 to 1% in 2021/22,
- full time IMD Quintile 5 and 1 students, seeing a decrease from 19% in 2020/21 to 2% in 2021/22.

The impact of our enhancement activity is also evident in relation to TEF measures of **student experience**. Indicators have increased consistently from an already in-line-with-benchmark position across all modes of study. For example, in 2022, NSS results for full-time students, who made up 91% of the student population, were well above the benchmark and align with TEF benchmark **outstanding quality** in four of the five indicators: teaching on my course, assessment and feedback, academic support, and student voice. Our progress and achievement of "Good" for our apprenticeship provision supports that our data for apprenticeships is on a significantly upward trajectory from its current position in the TEF tables.

We can evidence success and impact when analysing our completion data against B3 outcome thresholds. In B3 we have exceeded thresholds for every mode of attendance and level of study. As an example, while TEF indicates full time undergraduate completion to be at 76.7%, B3 positions us at +13.7 for "other UG" and +3.2 for first degree UG.

Our approach of continuous improvement and our ability to analyse, respond and positively impact data demonstrates both our commitment to delivery of a typically high quality academic experience, *and* that we have achieved and provide an academic experience for our students which is **typically very high quality** with **some outstanding features.**

2. Delivering an Outstanding Student Experience (SE1-SE7)

The University is proud of the **outstanding academic experience** we deliver in partnership with our students and Students' Union (SU). While some of our TEF aggregated data reflects sector challenges in terms of student experience directly impacted by the COVID pandemic, our most recent 2022 NSS data demonstrates we have exceeded the sector average for England in all aspects of teaching. Notably we were 4% above the average for teaching on my course,

National Student Survey Results (% Agreed)

NSS Themes	England	UOS	Difference	
The teaching on my course				
1. Staff are good at explaining things.	84	88	3	⬆
2. Staff have made the subject interesting.	78	84	6	⬆
3. The course is intellectually stimulating.	81	83	2	➡
4. My course has challenged me to achieve my best work.	76	83	7	⬆
Assessment and feedback				
08. The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance.	70	81	11	⬆
09. Marking and assessment has been fair.	69	77	8	⬆
10. Feedback on my work has been timely.	67	78	12	⬆
11. I have received helpful comments on my work.	69	80	10	⬆

Table: NSS Data 2022

and 10% above sector average for assessment and feedback. This is reflected at individual course level in a number of areas, e.g., business management (14% above for teaching, and 18% for assessment and feedback,) law (5% and 14% above respectively) and psychology (5% and 7% above respectively).

Our biggest 'gains' in student experience have been in our full-time population (which accounts for 91% of our student population), and we continue to work with our part time population and apprenticeship provision, with additional governance in place and commended by OFSTED. We were also in the Top 10 WhatUni Awards for lectures and teaching quality in 2022.

Provider name: University of Suffolk
UKPRN: 10014001

Valuing student voice and investing in student experience

Student voice is embedded into our governance, curriculum development and teaching enhancement processes. This is articulated in our Student Charter[4] developed in partnership with our students and reviewed annually. We **embed engagement with our students** through student representation at institutional committees, Student Voice Forums (course committees), and the Student Experience Task Force (SETF). Over the last three years SETF has sponsored projects to the value of £113,974, including funding for internships, research projects, micro-placements, and micro-grants, course-related field trips, extended library opening, mental health and wellbeing support (SilverCloud platform[5]) and the Suffolk Online Feedback in Action (SOFiA platform).

As part of our approach to **continuous improvement** we have also established a dedicated Student Experience and Engagement Team within our Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) which works directly with students, the SU, Schools, and Professional Services team to receive and respond to feedback through events, campaigns, SOFiA and signpost to additional support through events such as *One Wish, One Worry*.

SE1: Very high quality teaching, feedback, and assessment practices

"Various support available for assignments and academic skills has been very helpful and useful. All staff on the course are approachable, supportive, and compassionate. Clinical skills sessions are well organised, concise, and well taught. Feedback on assignments is useful and the support I received for a resubmission was amazing and the staff member helped me a lot!"

Adult Nursing, Level 6 (NSS)

"The teaching is impeccable, the material in class is stimulating, encourages debate, and is professionally delivered. Help and support is always available from teaching staff and feedback is always constructive and insightful. The teaching has been inspiring and helped me effectively re-enter education and advance both my learning and academic knowledge well beyond the level I was at."

Humanities and Health, Level 6 (NSS)

"The feedback to students by the teaching team is professional and utterly exemplary. It is always detailed, constructive and supportive. A positive and enabling developmental learning dialogue is clearly evident between the student body and the teaching team. The teaching does display a genuine and enthusiastic pastoral duty of care to the students. The teaching team go the extra mile and this feedback and support is very well received and appreciated by the student body as witnessed when I had a meeting with them before the assessment board in July."

External Examiner, Social Sciences, East Coast College

Teaching Excellence

Excellence in learning and teaching at UOS is defined and delivered through a strategy which positions us as a national leader in innovative and transformative education. In 2020, we implemented a bold new *Block and Blend* pedagogy at Undergraduate Level 4, which has generated an unprecedented change in our approach to the enhancement of learning and teaching. This is evident in our increased success in areas such as continuation and achievement and is on track to deliver increased completion for the first full cohort to experience the pedagogy. This approach

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[4] Published at: https://www.uos.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Student-Charter.pdf
[5] https://www.silvercloudhealth.com/uk

complements existing approaches which are based on a progressive model of increased independent learning through the academic lifecycle. The University has received considerable external interest, providing advice and guidance to other universities, presenting at conference nationally and internationally, and publishing our findings (Buck and Tyrrell, 2022, Buck, 2022) .

A move to *Block and Blend* has created an opportunity to redesign curricula and ensure that design and delivery is fully aligned to four key themes; inclusive and collaborative, personalised active and independent, digitally enabled and employer engaged and enterprising. These are enabled through approaches which are transforming and empowering, research informed, creative and innovative and deliver an excellent academic and social experience.
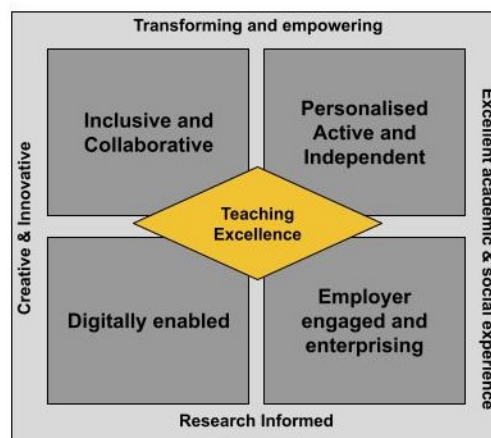
UOS Learning and Teaching model

In *Block and Blend,* students typically study one module at a time, e.g., 20 credits over four weeks, with the same number of hours of tutor structured learning, and with assessment delivered in a fifth week. Learning Hubs (across several modules or a whole academic year) are used to support skills development critical to student success, e.g., academic, wellbeing, employability or subject specific in labs or studios. Blended content, delivered through our Online Learning Environment (OLE), Brightspace, augments and adds value to the learning, through a mix of synchronous face-to-face activities with asynchronous digital learning that students can undertake independently. This flexibility supports all students and is especially welcomed by those who have commitments in addition to their studies, as highlighted by one of our students.

"Sole focus on one module, it's easier to learn and give your all to that topic… assessment week with no lectures, allowing for time to complete assignments. There is a sense of being organised I feel going through a module one by one makes me feel more on top of things and accomplished."

Social Sciences and Humanities, Level 4 (Block and Blend pilot feedback)

Our students are further supported and empowered through a *Personal Academic Coaching*[6] (PAC) approach to tutoring. This approach promotes a culture of self-reflection and awareness, with students taking greater responsibility, developing communication, and increasing levels of satisfaction. This approach is fully aligned to our progressive philosophy, in which our students develop their knowledge, skills and behaviours as effective, independent learners, through a *guided* model of learning at Level 4, transitioning through a *negotiated* model at Level 5, achieving more independence at Level 6.

Ensuring high quality of blended learning

Mandatory staff training has been designed in-house (Digipaths[7]). These support staff to make full use of Brightspace, which 89% of our current teaching population have completed. In addition, the Learning Design team conducts module health checks against the published Brightspace Baseline Standard[8] to ensure a consistency of academic experience in active blended learning[9], providing

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[6] https://libguides.uos.ac.uk/celt/pac
[7] https://libguides.uos.ac.uk/celt/cpd/digipath
[8] https://libguides.uos.ac.uk/celt/brightspace/baseline-standard
[9] Guidance published at: https://libguides.uos.ac.uk/celt/cdb/delivery/abl

reports, recommendations and bespoke support. These are at the heart of our revised course design and validation processes[10].

Examples of our teaching excellence include:

- At our partner GBS, who work primarily with mature students: a key focus is securing engagement through a student-led approach that draws upon their lived experiences. Consultant lecturers, who are advanced practitioners, draw out relevant students' experiences and empower them to contribute to class, making sessions interactive and engaging. They play an important role in mobilising students by making themselves approachable and celebrating every milestone of their students' academic journey, engendering a sense of belonging and commitment to studies. The impact is evident in the University's 2022 partner student survey
with 88% agreeing that their course had enabled them to link learning to professional contexts and experiences, and 92% satisfied that their course provided challenging and stimulating learning.
- Explicit links are made between theory and practice in our professional health courses. These comprise practice preparation, reflection or consolidation activities and include teambuilding, confidence, and resilience sessions. These are commended by External Examiners, e.g., Adult Nursing 2022 *"The modules across the programme enable the students to demonstrate their learning and provide opportunities to link theory to practice".*

Assessment

Assessments are designed to be robust, challenge students and be fit for purpose. Many of the assessments are geared towards the types of tasks that graduates would use in industry, hence supporting graduate employability, and receive commendation from External Examiners:

"I would once again commend the team on successfully linking assessment to the employability agenda. As previously identified, there are some excellent examples of work-based simulation used for assessment...Since many of the questions raised in the viva's replicate the types of questions a client could ask in a clinical setting, it is clear that the students are being well equipped for the word of work."

External Examiner, Sport and Exercise Science

Examples of these type of assessments include practical laboratory examinations, assessing students' competence using specialist equipment. Mock job interviews are part of the assessment for professional development and "graduate readiness" modules, and design briefs are provided by industry such as those provided by the BBC in our BA (Hons) Graphic Design course and practical field skills assessment used by our BSc (Hons) Wildlife, Ecology and Conservation programme. Students from all disciplines are supported to undertake practice-based experience.

All courses contain a capstone project in the final year, usually as a dissertation or specific project. The purpose of these capstones is for the student to utilise the majority of the skills and knowledge that they have developed during the programme of study in a unified and applied way. Frequently, these outputs have a wider impact than simply fulfilling the requirements of the degree. For example, within the School of Engineering, Arts, Science and Technology (EAST) an annual "End of Year" show exhibiting the work of final year students from all our arts-based courses takes place. This

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[10] Our course design process: https://libguides.uos.ac.uk/celt/cdb/begin_design

exhibition is open to the public and will often attract visitors from industry. This provides a useful springboard for graduating students to continue their networking with employers during the period they are applying for postgraduate jobs. Within the life science programmes of EAST, success is further celebrated by numerous joint publications and conference attendance by academic staff and undergraduate students. This often sees completing students go into further academic study; typically, master's degrees and PhDs.

Feedback

Our *Block and Blend* model ensures that our students have continuous feedback from the first week of delivery, supporting our progressive learning philosophy. This deliberate step responds to challenges in academic confidence expressed by many of our students who are largely recruited from low participation neighbourhoods (23%) or are mature learners (87%). We use a variety of mechanisms and work with students to understand their feedback preferences and the value and purpose of it. For example, work with Adult Nursing students, triggered by lower than national average NSS in 2018/19 for assessment and feedback, resulted in exploration of video feedback through Brightspace. As a result of this work, understanding of feedback, and recognising feedback improved, and NSS results in this area increased from 63% in 2019 to 76% in 2021, 8% above benchmark.

SE2: Very high quality course content to inspire and stretch

"A majority of the module tasks have been really engaging and offer a challenge which have been really interesting to work through, with some stand-out examples being modules where game development is at the focus of the module."　　　　　　　　**Computer Games, Level 6 (NSS)**

We develop and deliver our courses with the aim to inspire our students and stretch them to develop skills and knowledge to the best of their abilities. Our overall impact here is reflected in our NSS results. In 2022, 84.18% of our students felt staff made their subject interesting, 83.46% felt their course was intellectually stimulating and 82.96% felt their course had challenged them to achieve their best work. These results are in line with sector benchmarks against a demographic of widening participation, and clearly demonstrate a steep, upwards trajectory which exceeds those in England as a whole.

Our ability to inspire our students is achieved through a number of course level innovations. Many of our courses regularly make use of practitioners and industry professionals to show students how learning on campus can be applied in the real world. Most degree programmes across the University, and our partners develop graduate employability through the content of the course. This is achieved by including at least one module in the first year that is a subject specific "Skills" module, and in final year, honours level students are required to take modules which prepare them to obtain their first graduate posts and receive industry-recognition and awards. The impact of these types of development has led to our high skilled progression to rise from 73.8% in 2017/18 to 82% in 2019/20.

Examples of our course content that stretches and inspires include:

- Our safeguarding module, available to our childhood and education students, which draws heavily on external practitioners to discuss the real-world implications of safeguarding.
- Our Social Work course has established a 'Social Work Voices' network of those with lived experience and knowledge of Social Work and Social Care services. This network is actively involved in the design and delivery of learning and teaching giving students unique real-word

everyday insight into Social Work practice. Similarly, in health programmes qualified staff guest lecture and service users are integral to the students' learning experience.

- In our BSc (Hons) Wildlife, Ecology and Conservation Science course, we use industry to deliver part of our programme. Colchester Zoo is engaged to deliver our "Zoological Management" module. This takes place at the zoo over several months and is delivered by various zoo staff. Similarly, our Practical Conservation and Field Research Skills Module is delivered offsite, engaging experts employed by organisations such as the Field Skills Council, Environment Agency, and Suffolk Wildlife Trust. The focus on taking students out of the campus to learn in a work-based setting has helped students to become inspired to learn, to understand the professional and employment context, and to develop several graduate key skills around professional behaviour and values.

- In our Life Sciences provision, part of a Level 6 module, involves a session exploring the industrial application of the topic with sessions facilitated by Labcorp[11] (one of the world's largest contract research organisations) toxicologists and study directors. This is followed by a full day, hands on visit to one of the company's facilities with department specialists helping students to understand what, why and how things are done in such organisations. This has led several students to gain employment working for Labcorp and development of a work placement scheme for our BSc (Hons) Biological Sciences students.

- At East Coast College, a BA (Hons) Visual Effects and Post-Production student won the Super Short Award at the Cotswold International Film Festival in May 2022; a FdA Professional Photographic Practice student was chosen to exhibit in Glasgow Gallery of Photography's International Landscape Exhibition in June 2022; and a FdA Fashion and Textiles student produced St George outfits for the Tyson Fury ring walk at Wembley in April 2022.

SE3: Very high quality research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and / or employer engagement enhances academic experience

"The course has made me understand concepts and ideas in-depth with thorough research. I've applied knowledge and critical skills in all modules. I've developed my interpersonal skills and confidence in all aspects of the course and in class discussions."

Early Childhood Studies, Level 6 (NSS)

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement drive our curriculum. As a civic university we "recognise our responsibility to support and meet the needs of the regional economy" (University of Suffolk, 2020, p. 1). As an institution we have developed our Graduate Attributes which every UOS student will develop during their programme of study and through participation in co- and extra-curricular activity. These attributes have been tested with our local and regional employers through a series of Employer Forums (2021) to test understanding, suitability and any expectations for subject or mode of study. Course teams map learning

UOS Graduate Attributes

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[11] https://www.labcorp.com

outcomes to these at level-of-study, while our Careers, Employability and Enterprise Team provide additional support through focussed Employability, Enterprise, and Entrepreneurship (EEE) weeks, micro-placement, and micro-grant opportunities. Our overarching goals are to increase the recognition of these attributes in curricular, ensure our students increase their self-awareness in relation to their own ability and have tangible experience to be able to share with prospective employers.

Use of research

Our curricula make use of pedagogical and subject based research which was rated as 3* overall, with 70% of outputs at 3* and 4* in REF 2022. Our Schools have direct links to Research Institutes and Centres[12], for example, the School of EAST works closely with the Digital Futures Institute based at BT's Adastral Park. This institute undertakes extensive research and business collaborations in Artificial Intelligence, automation, cybersecurity, Internet of Things, networks, serious games, robotics, and software, with PhD student and postdoctoral projects already being based at the centre. Our undergraduate provision shares this space and exposes students not only to the equipment and expertise, but also the culture of innovation, research, and enterprise. In other areas, for example, in Nursing and Midwifery, research knowledge, developed in our Health and Wellbeing Institute and Integrated Care Academy[13] is threaded through modules, especially in PSRB accredited courses where the requirement is explicit, see for instance the Standards Framework for Nursing and Midwifery Education paragraph 1.14 "*support opportunities for research collaboration and evidence-based improvement in education and service provision"* (Nursing and Midwifery Council, 2018). Our External Examiners have commended our approach.

"*The content of the assessments show that the quality of learning and teaching is consistent with the requirements from the NMC to educate students on the 7 platforms of nursing care consistent with the Standards Framework for nursing education'*

External Examiner, Children's Nursing

Innovation, Professional practice and / or employer engagement

Many courses work collaboratively with employers, community organisations, professional and accrediting bodies, and practitioners to significantly enhance the student's academic experience. This approach ensures curriculum and delivery meet the needs of employers and professional standards and encourages direct participation in the design of the curriculum. Examples of this include BSc (Hons) Biological Sciences programme and BSc (Hons) Biomedical Science course accredited by the Royal Society of Biology (RSB) and the Institute of Biomedical Scientists (IBMS) respectively. Our BSc (Hons) Nutrition and Human Health is accredited by the Association for Nutrition (AfN), and our Social Work programme was developed with regional County Councils. This also enables our students to access resources, conferences, and membership upon completion of their programme. Engagement for all our health programmes continues through Education Partnership Forums and liaison groups bringing academic leaders, NHS Trusts, and employers together (e.g., in our BSc Biomedical Science). Our approach is commended by External Examiners and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

Within the arts subjects, many of our academic staff are professional practitioners, splitting their time between being industry practitioners and lecturers at the University. Similarly, several health

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[12] https://www.uos.ac.uk/content/research-institutes
[13] First of its kind in the country: https://www.uos.ac.uk/ica

lecturers continue to work in clinical practice to maintain subject- specific knowledge and skills. This ensures both currency of the curriculum, and opportunity for continuous development of the programme and its delivery. Several staff are also actively engaged in external academic and professional networks, such as NICE clinical guideline development activities, enriching the student learning experience by ensuring ongoing currency and relevance.

In 2021, we introduced Marketing Labs as a way to bring real industry experience into the classroom. In the labs, students work for a local business with a marketing problem. Students work to deadlines to understand issues and customer base, and develop a results driven marketing solution for them, e.g., a new TikTok campaign, an influencer & PR campaign or a multi-channel digital approach. The students learn how to interact with clients, use client data to inform decision making and see their ideas get put into practice.

Scholarship

Our bi-annual Learning and Teaching conference provides opportunities for our academic and professional services staff to share experiences in their approaches to delivery. CELT sponsors projects each year which are focussed on pedagogic enhancement, and most recently, have included work in relation to the design and inclusion of learning hubs to complement block and blend, the liberation of our curriculum from barriers to inclusion and success for our students, and the embedding of EEE.

Examples of scholarship in our work include:

- BSc (Hons) Therapeutic Radiography collaborative research projects at Level 6. Students complete research with academic and clinical supervisors in groups. A range of national and local surveys have been completed, clinical audits and SLR's to support business cases for radiotherapy department managers. Several students have submitted their individual work to journals for publication.
- Sports Science students are supported to publish their dissertations as peer-reviewed articles. Staff in Sport Sciences have researched the positive experiences and impact of this activity for our students
- All programmes embed an extensive guest speaker programme which continued virtually throughout the pandemic. Representatives from a wide range of backgrounds and industries are invited to share their experiences, providing students with invaluable practical knowledge of how to transition taught theories into pressured business scenarios. Recent speakers at our partner, LD Training, have included the Head of Higher Education at UNESCO and the Head of Supply Chain at Amazon.
- Nursing students are encouraged to attend local Trust and national study days. These include Royal College of Nursing Congress, and local multi professional obstetric training days (PROMPT[14]) to develop specific knowledge. These explicitly link with professional bodies or the mandate to work in interprofessional teams to improve care and outcomes in maternity service. By encouraging students to attend these events the importance of research informing clinical practice is reinforced.
- Radiography students have had study abroad placements in Norway, Portugal, and Sweden. Nursing students can attend an international exchange programme in Japan, for which they submit a statement of interest and attend an individual interview.

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[14] https://www.promptmaternity.org/prompt-uk-1

SE4: Outstanding support for staff and embedding academic practice

CELT, established in 2019, provides leadership over the enhancement of learning and teaching across the University and acts as a hub for supporting staff professional development. Our outstanding staff support is accredited by AdvanceHE and underpinned by the UKPSF. This includes our Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP), Academic Professional Degree Apprenticeship and portfolio-based route to Fellowship. Both pathways were fully redesigned and revalidated following our move to *Block and Blend,* with commendation from AdvanceHE.

"The University further demonstrates a strong commitment to learning and teaching through significant investment in the establishment of the Directorate of Learning and Teaching. The Directorate houses the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning that delivers University wide professional development activities such as teaching enhancement, curriculum and learning design, academic skills development and learning data analysis…sponsored projects, the Digipaths series, task and finish groups and an annual calendar of events such as conference and forums."

AdvanceHE Validation Report, 2021

To promote engagement with delivery, the PgCAP or APA is now a mandatory element of probation for academics who do not hold an equivalent qualification on joining the University. The structure of the programme includes a requirement to engage with other activities, including Personal Academic Coaching, Digipaths (see p. 5), as well as projects sponsored by CELT. The impact of our commitment to supporting staff to embed excellent academic practice is reflected in our student experience measures, particularly under "the teaching on my course" where we are in line with the benchmark. Furthermore, our NSS data over the last four years shows that we have continued to make progress in this area and have now exceeded pre-pandemic levels of satisfaction (2018/19 – 84%, 2019/20 – 82%, 2020/21 – 80% and 2021/22 – 85%).

CELT also has oversight of all policies and procedures relating to learning, teaching, and assessment as well as the University's Learning and Teaching Strategic Plan. The Centre has strategic links with all our Schools through Associate Deans for Learning, Teaching and Student Experience; roles which were established in 2019. CELT also delivers its work through an institutional committee with representation from across our Schools and partners. This ensures that decisions are both informed, communicated and measured against "best practice" in the sector.

We have also established *The Suffolk Academic Framework* creating career progression pathways which define expectations for AdvanceHE Fellowship and academic citizenship. As a consequence of these changes, we have realised a 33% increase in teaching staff achieving AdvanceHE fellowship.

SE5: Very high quality supportive learning environment and academic support

"The availability of tutors to support and prepare us for assignments is incredibly fantastic. The way the 'module guide' is presented for each module is equally very well done. All the services made available by the library such as sessions to learn how to write an essay and how to use 'RefWorks' among many others, has been extremely helpful."

Business Management, Level 6, (NSS)

Provider name: University of Suffolk
UKPRN: 10014001

Our aggregated data shows that we are in line with TEF benchmarks, and looking to our 2022 data, we see that in two of the three *academic support* questions the University is substantially ahead of sector.

National Student Survey Results (% Agreed)

Year		2022	
NSS Themes	England	UOS	Difference
Academic support			
12. I have been able to contact staff when I needed to.	80	79	-1 →
13. I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course.	72	79	7 ↑
14. Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course.	69	78	9 ↑

NSS data 2022 questions 12-14

We are proud of the considerable progress made in providing academic support to our students. We have implemented several enhancements to our practice to realise these, building on our already high quality learning support and environments. Crucially, engagement with the plethora of learning support resources is effortless and tailored to meet study level and subject specific needs.

When designing enhancement and interventions to promote effective engagement with high quality support we build in evaluation activity, learning from the good practice of our APP work, and OFSTED requirements to demonstrate impact. This approach has been especially beneficial when evaluating our move from a more directive tutoring approach to an empowering personal academic coaching model (PAC) in 2021. In PAC, each student is assigned a coach at enrolment with one-to-one and group meetings through the academic year from induction. During coaching the student explores their own study and career journey, producing a bespoke action plan. The coaches are academic staff; all of whom have undergone specific training both in the process and coaching specific skills. Students have reported that these sessions have helped with placement, academic assessment, feedback and development, mental health, job opportunities and time management. The levels of satisfaction with NSS Question 13 (79%) and 14 (78%) are both above TEF benchmarks, suggesting that this enhancement is effective and well received.

Examples of our outstanding work in this area include:

- To create a seamless placement learning environment we have established excellent relationships with Practice Development and Education staff across health programmes. Key NHS education staff are engaged at the beginning of the student journey through course design and student recruitment, and participate in tripartite meetings between Nursing Apprenticeship students, academic and practice staff. This ensures practice staff are familiar with, and engaged in the academic requirements of health programmes so that student learning is consistently supported in all areas across all learning environments. Our hard work is reflected in the University's outcomes from the most recent National Education and Training Survey (NETS) 2021 from Health Education England where over 63% of respondents rated the overall supervision quality of placements as 'good' or 'outstanding' and 73% of respondents indicated that clinical placement staff were welcoming, supportive and friendly throughout practice placements. 82% of learners indicated they were likely to recommend their placements because colleagues were supportive. Link lecturers act as intermediaries between students, practice areas and the University whilst students are in placement.
- The University and its partners provide academic skills development support to students, through tailored one-to-one support as well as small group sessions and workshops. In 2021/22, at Ipswich, we delivered **2,036 one-to-one sessions to students, and 462 workshops** covering general academic and soft skills, such as, academic writing, referencing, time-management. Overall, **more than 8,000 student hours were delivered** through this provision. The provision that our partner Global Banking School provides has been commended by External Examiners

stating, *"students' skills development was "very well-supported, and there is evidence of improvement during the student lifecycle".*

SE6: Outstanding physical and virtual learning resources

"Students have evidently had access to numerous resources over the course of the year and this is particularly notable on modules such as Writing for Television, where practical industry samples have clearly provided guidelines and inspiration that has led to some very impressive submissions."

External Examiner, Screenwriting

The University has made a significant investment in its physical and virtual learning resources over the last four years, and in 2020/21 spent in excess of £15million on estate and £780,000 on student digital. This was recognised by our students with the University being shortlisted in the final Top 10 for the WhatUni Student Choice Awards 2022 for Facilities. Significant enhancements have been created for all Schools, and include:

- **Health and Wellbeing Building[15],** (£13 million, home of the Integrated Care Academy and Health and Wellbeing Research Institute.) Provides state-of-the-art integrated care facilities for our students, partners, and wider community and houses clinical simulation hospital wards, birthing unit, sports science equipment, radiography imaging equipment and counselling and physiotherapy rooms, immersive technologies.
- **Digitech Campus[16]** (£9.6 million, in partnership with BT, home of the Digital Futures Research Institute.) Provides state-of-the-art facilities at Adastral Technology Park (shared with over 150 high tech ICT businesses). Includes secure Cyber Range, an enterprise-grade Juniper networking sandpit, and an AI Computer Server delivering 9.7 64-bit double precision teraflops of computational resources, among many other facilities.
- **Law Court and Legal Advice Centre[17],** (£60,000.) Installed by professional law courtroom fitters, this provides our law students, and those who may need training in advocacy (e.g., social working, nursing, and paramedic science students) with real world environment for court proceedings and training in public speaking and Law Moot exercises. The Court was opened by Suffolk Judge Levett, who commented *"The recently installed and now opened new mock courtroom in the Waterfront Building gives a realistic setting for court proceedings and it is a great training venue for public speaking which is not easily found in everyday lectures, so it provides the essential training tool in every law student's curriculum in legal training".*
- **Refitting of Arts Building** (£1.5 million) to provide state of the art architecture and film studios.
- **Innovation Labs (ILABS, launched 2021) have been established as a focal point for** developing entrepreneurs, start-ups and promoting innovation, offering a coworking community networking and collaborative opportunities. Students benefit from wraparound support to help them with their entrepreneurial ideas to help them develop, launch, and grow their business ideas to the market.

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[15] Virtual tour and further information: https://youtu.be/3N51SqeK8e0
[16] Virtual tour and further information: https://youtu.be/94ROmMT23gQ
[17] Information on launch: https://www.uos.ac.uk/news/leading-suffolk-judge-opens-universitys-mock-courtroom

Provider name: University of Suffolk
UKPRN: 10014001

Physical resources

"Having the opportunity to access the Digitech Centre in my last year was great as we have access to the newest facilities."

Computing, Level 6 (NSS)

"Access to subject specific facilities is incredible and really valued."

Bioscience, Level 6 (NSS)

Many of our courses require specialist facilities, including life sciences, health, the arts, architecture and computing. Significant investment is made to ensure facilities are maintained and use industry-standard equipment and techniques. For example, our science undergraduates use fully equipped tissue culture rooms, Cryostat histological preparation equipment, Zeiss high power fluorescence inverted microscopes with cell chamber and time lapse imaging, high quality gene analysis and cell biology equipment including PCR, qPCR, nanodrop, FACS, Bio analyser and gel dock imaging system. Analytical chemistry resources include Gas Chromatography (GC), High Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) and Mass Spectrometry (MS). Our art students have access to purpose-built film studios which have a range of excellent cameras, lighting, audio and industry standard editing and mixing equipment. We have many high-end Mac suites complete with full Adobe software, graphic design studios and architecture suites including 3D printing and modelling.

Virtual resources

"Blended learning is great, especially with my disability, I do not need to travel into uni every day I have really enjoyed the mix of at home and on campus lessons."

Social Sciences, Level 4 (Block and Blend pilot feedback).

We have also invested significantly in virtual learning resources, including subject specific (e.g., 3D simulation Labster, STEM research and education resources through Jove and SimVenture business start-up simulation) and more generally in Library resources where investment has increased from £556,543 in 2018/19 to £623,000 in 2022. The University has also invested in a new OLE during this period, supporting our innovative pedagogical work. Brightspace and embedded tools enables delivery of excellent learning experiences and is particularly beneficial to our students and those with disability. Our digital learning environment continues to be further enhanced through strategic investment in our new learning spaces, and embedded technologies, such as Panopto lecture capture software. The impact is visible in student feedback.

"I just... wow. Honestly, I was blown away. It was so overwhelming I cried. Just to see it all there and press play and understand it all right away was just amazing. It's in time, it's correct, it's static, its customisable, you can see everything you need to in once place – incredible. It's going to make a huge difference to me and to other students that need captions as well. The additional features are beyond my wildest dreams; I just wanted captions, but this has so many excellent features that I'm sure will be utilised by many others, disabled or not."

History, Level 6

SE7: Outstanding engagement with students to improve experience and outcomes

"The lecturers always want the best for the students and are constantly seeking opinions on the content of the course and how the modules are being run."

Wildlife, Ecology and Conservation Science, Level 6, (NSS)

The university prides itself on its **outstanding** engagement with students to improve their experience and outcomes. Indeed, our overall measures for student voice for full-time students are broadly in line with the sector benchmark, and above benchmark for part-time students. Our 2022 NSS data shows that we are substantially ahead

National Student Survey Results (% Agreed)			
Year		2022	
NSS Themes	England	UOS	Difference
Student Voice			
23. I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course.	79	81	2 →
24. Staff value students' views and opinions about the course.	69	76	7 ↑
25. It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on.	52	62	10 ↑

NSS data 2022, questions 23-25

of sector averages for the *student voice* question set. However, we also recognise that we can further improve our engagement with students and draw on their feedback to further enhance our provision. To this end, the University has sought to emphasise embedding the student voice over the last three years.

As well as having student representation at institutional committees (including University Board, Senate, Quality Committee and CELT), members of the University Senior Leadership team (e.g., Deputy Vice Chancellor and Director of Learning and Teaching), are invited to Student Union Council for question and answers and to update on University strategy and enhancements. This is replicated at School level with Deans meetings with Course Representatives. Through the Student Engagement Taskforce we have also achieved the following:

- Development of SOFiA (Suffolk Feedback Online in Action): a collaborative project between CELT and our Students' Union, in 2019, to develop an online feedback platform to enable student feedback to be passed to course teams and professional services teams. Crucially the system introduced a way for course teams to respond to feedback received, closing the feedback loop. As well as serving as a tool to capture feedback and provide updates to students, SOFiA also enabled the University to gather centralised student feedback data. Initially the platform was available to course representatives to complete on behalf of their cohorts but has been available to all students to use from the 2022/23 academic year. This year we have received over 180 submissions relating to *what is working well* and *what is working less well* in relation to teaching, timetables, academic support, assessment, feedback and placement.
- Creation of a team of Student Experience Ambassadors (SEAs) to support student engagement and to improve experience and outcomes.

  The role is designed to bring the students' lived experience into the delivery, design, and maintenance of our programmes through directly linking the student body at course level to the wider remit of the University. The SEAs work with students and SU to collate feedback and identify acute areas for development. This has led to some notable changes to the benefit of the student experience and outcomes including the creation of a "Recharge Week" to encourage engagement with learning and signposting to support services and included a "One Wish, One Worry" campaign. These activities resulted in enhancements in our communication with students, including earlier release of timetables, PAC sessions, and the creation of a one-stop support and information module for students in our OLE.
- Reimagining of course committee meetings into Student Voice Forums which all courses have at least twice per year to bring together feedback collated by the SEAs, student representatives and academic staff at a course team level. The forums provide an opportunity to consider the

collected feedback and for students and academic staff to work together to ensure good practice is maintained and to find solutions for any issues. An action plan is then produced, and progress against the action plan is published to all students within the course specific area of the OLE.

3. Delivering Outstanding Student Outcomes (SO1-SO6)

UOS was established to raise levels of education and is committed to positively impacting the economy of our county and region. Suffolk is a county of lower educational qualification (36.5% at NVQ Level 4 and above as compared to 43.6% Great Britain) and lower levels of employment in SOC Major Groups 1-3 (41.9% Suffolk compared to 51.4% Great Britain) (Office for National Statistics, 2022). Within this context we have established an exceptional record for progression. Much of this document sets out the work we have done to move our institution beyond the high quality thresholds; and whilst we are confident that the actions we have taken are having an impact on our students' experience and outcomes some of the more longitudinal data is yet to make this explicit.

In the most recent TEF year, our data, shows that **progression rates are six percentage points above the TEF benchmark at 81%** for full time undergraduates. Additionally, we are in line with TEF benchmark for apprenticeship and part time students. Looking to B3 thresholds, we are 21 points above threshold for full time undergraduates, 19.3 above for apprenticeships, 18 above for part time undergraduate and 15.9 above for part time first degree students.

While the OFS provider data for continuation indicates that the University is below benchmark (4.4% for full time students), more recent data, clearly demonstrates the considerable improvements made in this area with
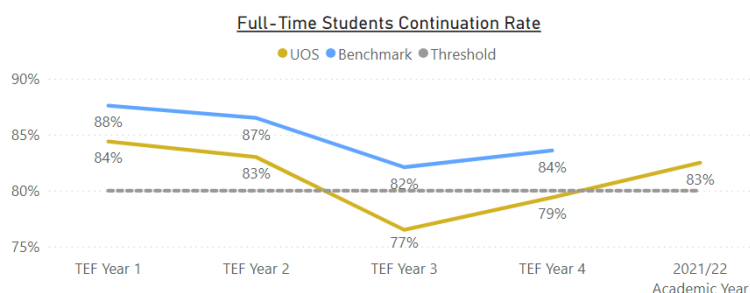
Continuation full time undergraduate

current continuation levels for the same population just 1% below benchmark as of November 2022, following an increase of 4% on previous academic year. When considered in the context of the student population[18], particularly that 87% is mature and 39% are in the most deprived areas, it is clear to see that the approaches we have taken to ensure students continue, succeed and progress are typically **outstanding**.

SO1: Highly effective support for Success and Progression

"You don't feel like just another number or another random face in the crowd, but you actually feel like you are someone, you have a voice, and the lecturer is there for you and your education."

Psychology and Early Childhood Studies Level 6, (NSS)

UOS learning and teaching has a progressive approach, of increased independent learning through the academic lifecycle. Our partners have also established delivery models which support their learner demographic, including evening and weekend learning and day-release. In the NSS, 88% of

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[18] The four-year aggregate data shows that 48.2% of our full-time undergraduate population are from IMD Quintile 1 and 2 (and 68% from quintiles 1-3), who are much more likely to withdraw from their course, and in 20/21 87% of the UOS student population was mature.

students at London School of Commerce state that evening and weekend learning enables them to fit their studies around existing personal and work commitments when asked about timetabling, compared to a sector average satisfaction level of 74%.

Our outstanding provision is reflected in above threshold (B3) completion (success) rates and our outstanding progression metrics. Continuation is increasing and in line with TEF benchmarks. At the heart of our approach is ensuring that our students can recognise and develop their resilience, shape their learning, feel valued and achieve their potential. Examples of the support we provide includes:

- Our partner Global Banking School (GBS) has successfully piloted a Peer Assisted Study Skills (PASS) programme which enables Level 4 students to support Level 3 foundation year students on the same course, promoting continuation and success. PASS Leaders are trained to facilitate activities that enhance Foundation year students' learning, understanding and experiences with course content, academic writing, study, and IT skills. This also serves to support PASS Leaders' personal development and work readiness, for example in terms of confidence, resilience, and soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership.

- In 2021/22, the University reviewed its approach to Personal Tutoring, and moved to a model of academic coaching, based on empowerment, ownership, developing problem solving and resilience. As part of our ongoing evaluation of impact, a survey was sent to all students at Ipswich and respondents included representation from students at all levels. The survey results showed that 68% of responding students (192) either agreed or strongly agreed that the meetings were useful. Staff were also surveyed about the impact of the model for them. One respondent stated a key benefit being the ability to "*Get to know the student and their goals and perspectives on the world. In conversations coachees often talked about motivation and wider interests which was really helpful in knowing a more rounded picture of the student experience.*" From September 2022 enhancements are planned with regards to data collection, giving greater insight into attendance and student engagement with the University-advocated **GROW model**[19].
- In 2021/22, **Learning Hubs**[20], which sit alongside subject teaching, were piloted in course design on Childhood programmes. These Learning Hubs were designed to provide interactive online activities to develop academic, transferrable and employability skills as well as highlight University life and wellbeing support. This pilot was evaluated through interviews, focus groups and questionnaires, and found that the Learning Hubs were broadly welcomed by students. The success of this pilot was disseminated at the University's annual Learning and Teaching Day. Interest in this approach from other course teams will see this use of Learning Hubs rolled out further across the University and is being further enhanced in year through a QR (Quality related research) funded research project.

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[19] https://libguides.uos.ac.uk/celt/pac/GROW
[20] https://libguides.uos.ac.uk/celt/cdb/delivery/block#s-lib-ctab-15603826-6

SO2: Very high rates for continuation and completion

UOS aggregated data for continuation rates range from 2.9% above benchmark for part time undergraduates to -4.3 below benchmark for full time students. Continuation data early in the TEF cycle

Most recent: Full-time students			
KPI	UOS	Benchmark	Difference (ppt)
SO: Continuation	82.5%	83.6%	-1.1% ⚠

2022 Contnuation data full time

was substantially impacted by rates at one of our new partners, London School of Commerce (LSC). This was identified early in the partnership through the Partnership Management Group, and robust measures put in place to remedy perfomance have been very successful with continuation rates and level 3 module pass rates at first attempt increasing from 70% in 2018/19 to 85% in 2021/22. This is also evident in recent positive NSS results for this partner. The impact on our full time continuation data overall is that in 2021/22 our rates were at 83%, just 1% below benchmark. We continue to monitor continuation for all our partners.

While the overall continuation indicator for apprenticeship programmes shows the University is 2.1% below threshold, we have made great improvements, realising a 6% gain, through a variety of initiatives. This is evidenced and highlighted by our 2022 OFSTED full inspection report, which recognised the *"transformational journey that the university is on" (OFSTED, 2022)* and a "Good" overall rating.
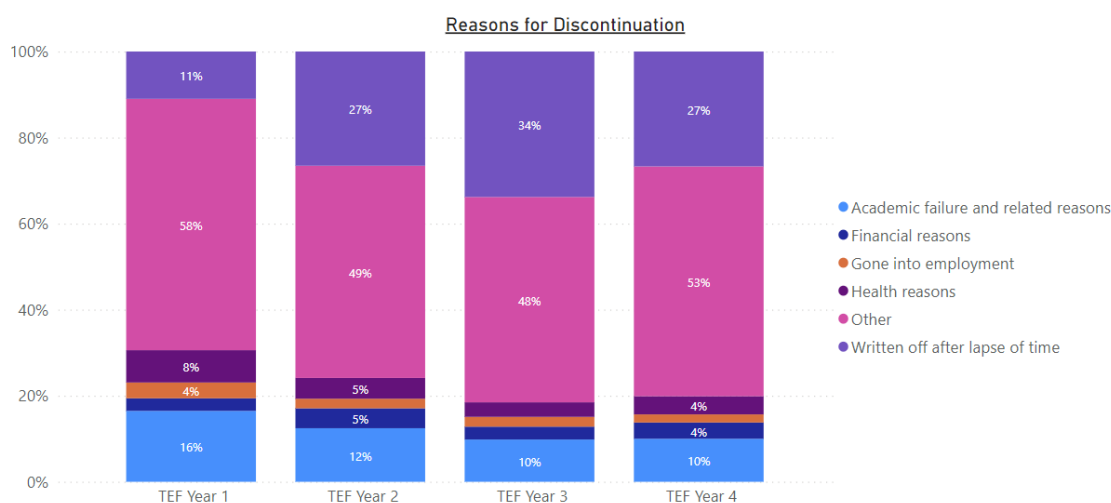
The University acknowledges that the four-year aggregated data for full time completion is 6.2% below TEF benchmark. Looking to the B3 thresholds (see table) it is clear, however, that we have consistently remained above threshold with data in TEF year 4 at 78.3% or +3.3%. This is an outstanding achievement, particularly as this time period includes the COVID pandemic.

Full-time Students Completion Rates

Year	UOS	Threshold	Difference (ppt)
TEF Year 1	79.3%	75.0%	4.3% ⬆
TEF Year 2	78.1%	75.0%	3.1% ⬆
TEF Year 3	77.9%	75.0%	2.9% ⬆
TEF Year 4	78.3%	75.0%	3.3% ⬆

Full time B3 completion rates

To understand the challenges our students face in continuation and completion, we have analysed our withdrawal data.

Reasons for Discontinuation

Legend:
- Academic failure and related reasons
- Financial reasons
- Gone into employment
- Health reasons
- Other
- Written off after lapse of time

	TEF Year 1	TEF Year 2	TEF Year 3	TEF Year 4
Written off after lapse of time	11%	27%	34%	27%
Other	58%	49%	48%	53%
Health reasons	8%	5%		4%
Gone into employment	4%			4%
Financial reasons		5%		
Academic failure and related reasons	16%	12%	10%	10%

Provider name: University of Suffolk
UKPRN: 10014001

Analysis of our data clearly demonstrates that the **primary reasons for withdrawal** from study are due to **financial reasons or "other"**. 48.2% of the University population are from IMD Quintiles 1 and 2, with 68% from quintiles 1-3. Students from these quintiles are far more likely to withdraw from their programmes of study. Our data shows that for our students, academic failure and related reasons accounts for just 10% of those withdrawing from study, reduced from 16% in TEF year 1 data.

We have instigated a number of measures which enable us to better understand and mitigate for non-continuation. Some of these were in train pre-pandemic and others developed in direct response to the impact of the pandemic on our students ability to continue with and complete their studies. We have invested in digital platforms which provide a rich source of real-time information regarding student engagement, continuation, and completion.

Examples of our work to continue the impressive upward trajectory of continuation and completion, exceeding B3 threshold and in line with TEF benchmarks include:

- Review of recruitment and admissions processes to ensure provision of high quality academic guidance and support.
- Introduction of a study skills preparatory course which applicants to LSC must successfully complete post-interview and prior to admission; investment in learning support available to students; and more robust attendance monitoring to enable interventions for 'at risk' students.
- UOS became the first university in the UK to adopt a block and blend pedagogy at undergraduate level. Implemented as a pilot at Level 4 in 2020/21, it has since been rolled out across at all levels at the University in Ipswich, and by one of our partners, Global Banking School (GBS). This approach to learning and teaching is recognised in literature as being more compassionate in its delivery, enabling better time management, better engagement, increased retention and achievement. While evaluation is ongoing (Buck and Tyrrell, 2022) initial indicators have shown improved retention of students from POLAR Quintile 1 (with a 98% continuation rate compared to 82% on semesterised programmes), and for students with a declared mental heallth condition (100% continuation compared to 77%).
- As over half of our student population is recruited from IMD quintiles 1-3, we have made considerable investment in financial support and the development of financial literacy (via Blackbullion online platform[21], tailored one-to-one support and workshops). In 2021/22 there was a 3% increase in engagement resulting in 3% increase in retention between 2020/21 and 2021/22.
- We have continued the Digital Technology Support Fund (DTSF), implemented through OFS COVID funding to help undergraduate students across the University and its partners who experience digital poverty with a £300 payment to help purchase IT equipment. Feedback from one student: *"It is most appreciated and extremely helpful at this time when everything is online. "Thank you for you[r] email and confirming the support. This is a massive help."* We also have loan laptops available for students in need.
- For students disclosing disabilities and / or learning disabilities, a bespoke induction was launched in 2018/19. This includes an enrolment support session, introduction to support available from University's Disability & Wellbeing team, the wider Student Life team, Library and Learning Services and Careers, Employability and Enterprise, and dedicated campus tours.

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[21] https://www.blackbullion.com

- In 2020/21, we reshaped and strengthened our apprenticeship governance structure, to include an Apprenticeship Board and School Panels, and revised the terms of reference for the existing Apprenticeship Management Group. This allowed greater oversight to ensure 'at risk' students were identified, and tailored support put in place to help with their continuation. The University was subject to a full Ofsted inspection in May 2022 and received '**good**' in all judgement areas along with an overall '**good**' rating.

- We have invested in Practice Educators for each School to complete tripartite reviews with apprentices and employers, as well as significantly enhancing our relationship with apprenticeship employers through employer voice forums and employers being more involved in the onboarding process. Employers are therefore more aware of what is required of apprentices and can provide support, as necessary. This is also confirmed by the Head of Academic and Research Partnerships at BT: *"We've worked very closely with the University of Suffolk over a number of years on apprenticeships. We value the academic training that the University provides to our learners and the fact that we've been able to work with the University to tailor the courses to our requirements."*

- A new system has been implemented (that uses a non-discriminatory machine learning model) to identify new students at risk of withdrawal who will then be supported by our Student Experience and Engagement team to access support and guidance and re-engage. The system is based on the number of modules enrolled, visits to the online learning environment, grades, and module quiz scores. The impact of the process will be monitored through a data dashboard with monthly and yearly KPIs. Following the pilot in 2022/23, the retention programme will be rolled-out to include all study levels and all intake periods.

### SO3: Outstanding rates for successful progression (SO3)

"One thing I did not expect to gain from this [University] experience was self-awareness, and the FutureMe resource has really encouraged self-development. From the useful quizzes and information, I now can say that I have a true understanding of what motivates me, my personal strengths, and opportunities for my future. As well, it has helped me to develop my resilience and self-confidence, which I can say will genuinely help me moving forward in my career."

Health and Wellbeing Nursing Associate Higher Apprenticeship, feedback to Careers, Employability and Enterprise

We have outstanding rates of progression, which given our location socio-economic context is exceptional. It is also testament to both our commitment to equip our students, which come from a diverse background, with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to transform their lives, ready for the world of work and relationships with employers. Full time progression is 3.1% above benchmark,

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[22]https://www.slido.com/

apprenticeships at 2.5% and part time students at 2.2% above benchmark. Our most recent data indicates that our progression rate for full time students is now 5% above TEF benchmark. Our approach of

Full-Time Students Progression Rate
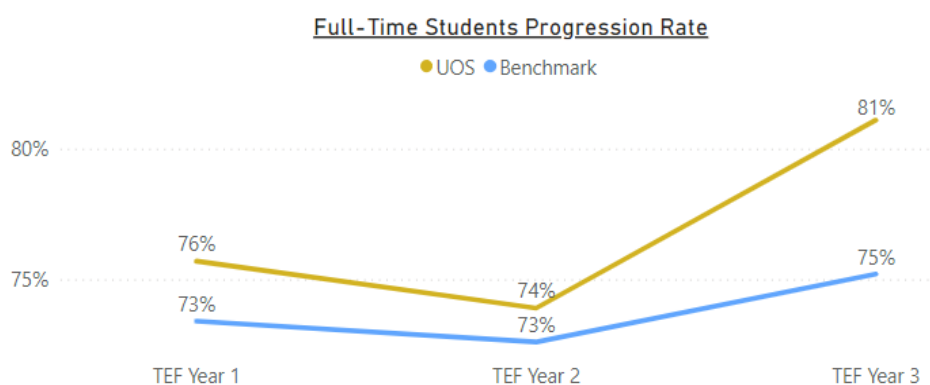
Full time students progression

embedding Employability, Enterprise, and Entrepreneurship (EEE) has been established and commended in courses through sandwich years, placement modules or Professional Practice modules. We have also established an Innovation and Engagement Board, which includes a range of employers in membership to support and advise the University. Our curriculum and programme portfolio are driven, in part, by the needs of local, and regional employers.

"Leaders work closely and purposefully with employers to design an apprenticeship offer that meets local and regional skills needs very well. Nursing and social work apprenticeships support NHS trusts and local authorities to meet critical skills gaps in the workforce"

OFSTED Full Inspection Report, 2022

The ways in which we have embedded, extra and co-curricular activities include:

- The University's Course Design Blueprint[23], provides course teams with guidance and support materials for embedding EEE. In 2021/22, (re)approval processes were modified to include course design and development events including internal and external stakeholders, e.g., students and local industry, to (re)design course provision. This is exemplified in the recent BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy course approval, with the design event including representatives from a range of employers (Colchester Hospital, AHP Suffolk, Health Alliance Suffolk, West Suffolk Hospital) as well as service users and internal stakeholders, including the Head of Careers, Employability and Enterprise and a Student Experience Ambassador. This approach was highlighted by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists at the validation who commended the *"coproduction of the programme with all your key stakeholders [and] in particular the input of the service user group and the investment in them as a group by the University."* The impact of this approach to course design and development ensures that courses are up-to-date and coherent with students developing relevant skills. This is demonstrated in the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey with 78% of our graduates in 2019/20, above sector average, reflecting that they are using what they learnt during their studies within their current activity.
- BA (Hons) Games Design students are required to complete a Professional Practice module, which provides them with a professional brief from an outside organisation or competition.

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[23] https://libguides.uos.ac.uk/celt/cdb/home

- BSc (Hons) Computing brought together students and staff with Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Highways and BT as part of the Smarter Suffolk Hackathon. This challenged students to work on some of the key challenges faced by Suffolk County Council and Suffolk Highways through using real-life data, to generate tangible outputs and practical solutions and contribute to Suffolk County Council's innovation strategy.

"This project will not only have huge benefits for our residents, but it also gives the county something to be really proud of, as successes from the trial will have the potential to be rolled out across the country. It has been fantastic to see the project continue its successes with this Hackathon event, with students working together to bring this newly gathered data to life." **Suffolk County Council's**

Cabinet Member responsible for Ipswich, Highways and Flooding

- Establishment of EEE academic leads alongside two designated Employability and Placement Consultants for each School. Together, they map our Graduate Attributes[24] to module and year-level learning outcomes, developing dedicated, timetabled EEE Weeks, and the use, in course, of a range of tools including the FutureMe platform.
- Micro-placements, established in 2017, have seen year-on-year growth in engagement now at 74. One participating student commented: *"micro placement was an amazing experience where I developed not only skills which will help me in the future, but I also had the chance to feel what a professional environment feels like".* In addition, early findings from a TASO funded project suggest that the project has had a positive impact on every student interviewed.
- *FutureMe*, a platform which enables students to understand their own strengths, skills and work preferences has been implemented and embedded into programmes of study and furthers impactful learning through careers workshops, fairs, and one-to-one support (with surveyed students articulating an increase in confidence from 3.5 to 4.5 out of 5.) A FutureMe Award has been established, including a range of tasks and activities which can be included in the students Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR). More widely, the impact of this tool is evident in results from the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey, with 80% of our 2019/20 graduates reporting that their 'current activity fits with their future plans'. This is above sector average.
- In 2021/22, following receipt of funding from the Suffolk Inclusive Growth Investment Fund, the University was able to launch the Entrepreneurs Forge, which allowed four students to receive micro-grants to launch or develop their business. The impact of this initiative can already be demonstrated with one graduate recipient, who launched their retail shop, and has now moved to established premises next to the University's Waterfront Building.

SO4: Articulation of educational gains and their relevance to students and future ambitions

The University of Suffolk welcomes the inclusion of educational gain within the framework. As a community impact university with a commitment to transformation - individually, within the community, our region and beyond – we are focused on providing experiences for our students which prepare them academically, personally, and professionally beyond the subject-specific expertise of their chosen subject. As found in the OfS' final evaluation report on learning gains (Kandiko Howson, 2019) we recognise that there is no one-size fits all approach when it comes to educational gains, and universities need to consider their contextual position when determining the gains a university intends its students to achieve. UOS uses the recommendations outlined in the OfS' report, while

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[24] https://libguides.uos.ac.uk/celt/cdb/content/employability

considering the context within which it operates, to measure educational gain in three areas: cognitive gain, soft skills development, and work readiness and employability.

Our definition of educational gains

Cognitive gain relates to students' course related academic achievements and their experiences of learning, which is relevant to students as UOS aims to equip students with the necessary skills to thrive academically and in their careers by providing an excellent student experience.

Soft skills development refers to skills such as critical thinking, time-management, problem solving, etc. which are relevant to students and their future ambitions as their transferrable nature supports students succeeding academically and in their careers.

Work readiness and employability is associated with students' preparedness for the workplace. This is achieved through the development of skills and attitudes that encourage success and offers opportunities to engage with employers and professionals. Furthermore, this enables students to confidently transition into the workplace and realise their future ambitions.

By combining these areas, UOS aims for its students to succeed academically, grow personally, and prosper professionally, embedding our commitment to transformation in all stages of our students' journey.

SO5: Outstanding, evidence-based approaches to supporting students achieve these gains which are highly effective and tailored

"I am confident that the degree they have taken has provided a firm foundation for graduate employment and to be active citizens and leaders."

External Examiner, Politics

UOS measures cognitive gain, soft skills development, and work readiness and employability through existing data collection processes with plans to improve the approach through evaluation, research, and action. Our current and planned measures for each area include:

- **Cognitive gain**: measured through academic achievement by assessing module assessment grades and the type of degree class a student attains. These measures can be analysed at student, module, study and institutional level, providing key insights to support decisions throughout our students' journey. In terms of student experience, NSS questions in the *teaching on my course* theme are used to ensure that students are being intellectually stimulated and challenged. Acknowledging that the NSS relates to graduates' perceptions and our aim for cognitive gain to be measured at all levels of study, we implemented a new feedback process in 2022/23 to measure the *teaching on my course* theme at a module level, enabling the evaluation of the student experience at each level of study.
- **Soft skills development**: we have implemented a compulsory personal academic coaching (PAC) programme for all students. PAC is student-centred and tailored to their individual needs. With three compulsory sessions in an academic year – more sessions optional – students can set their goals for the year and ways to achieve them. These sessions often include deliberations on soft skills, such as time-management, where academics offer strategies and signpost students to university resources that can help them achieve their goals. Additionally, a team of academic skills advisors (ASAs) offer one-to-one sessions and workshops, which include topics such as, critical thinking, problem solving, etc. The evaluation of these two areas encompasses

our current measures of soft skills development with plans to include students' sense of belonging at the university as a measure. As the evaluation of soft skills development is inherently complex by nature, we continue to investigate new approaches and improvements that enhance the measuring of this educational gain area.

- **Work readiness and employability** is currently measured through the graduate outcomes survey and NSS questions in the theme *learning opportunities.* Through the newly implemented module feedback process, we collect data relating to *learning opportunities* at a module level, enabling evaluation of gains in this area for students starting at any point. In addition, the school-based Employability and Placement Consultants are working with Level 4 students to self-test their skills at the beginning of academic year, with later re-evaluations which will indicate perceived readiness, level of skills demonstrated and a quantifiable measure for educational gain. There are also many University organised employer-led events where students have opportunities to discuss their future career plans with employers.

SO6: Outstanding evaluation of gains and demonstration of success (SO6)

"At my very end of the course, I can definitely say that I improved many of my skills with the help of the Academics. I changed my job recently and I am applying what I learned in some of the modules. Library resources (multiple choices) helped me a lot during my academic years."

Business Studies, Level 6, (NSS)

Cognitive gain:

Our students have made significant cognitive gains over the period of TEF.

Cognitive gain measures	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Trend
% of students achieved a 2:1 and above (attainment)	69.7%	67.6%	70.4%	
NSS Q3: the course is intellectually stimulating	82.0%	82.0%	83.5%	
NSS Q4: My course has challenged me to achieve my best work	79.5%	74.6%	83.0%	

Data : measures of cognitive gain

Recovering from the pandemic, the 2021/22 academic year realised the highest values in all measures over the three years. In the same period, the average module grade for level 4 students was 58% and 61% for level 6 students, indicating our progressive model supports students' academic skills to improve through the academic lifecycle. This is achieved by making their course intellectually stimulating, stretching, and challenging. Additionally, these gains are further evidenced through the attainment rate, 70.4% in 2021/22, the highest in the period, another illustration of our commitment to students' experiences and their outcomes by continuously improving and striving for excellence.

Soft skills: In 2021/22, a survey about PAC was conducted, which had 192 student responses. In this survey, when asked about which areas they thought they needed to improve on, 28 students had time-management related comments and 22 students had academic writing related comments. This information informs the ASA's work. In the 2021/22 academic year, ASAs delivered over **2,000 one-to-one sessions** with students and more than **450 workshops**, which included those student-identified areas from the PAC survey. This feedback loop between PAC and ASAs is pivotal to providing tailored support for each individual student

Work readiness and employability: this overlaps with developing soft skills and cognitive gain as both play a critical role in a successful transition into the workplace. Engaging with employers, giving students the opportunity to engage with professionals during their course, offering students career advice and workshops, and ensuring students can apply what they learn, all play an important role in ensuring students' progress into high-skill employment or a higher level of study. Our progression rates are outstanding and have increased over the last three years, with a high point of 81% in the most recent year, 6% above the benchmark. Furthermore, 86% of graduates

in 2021/22 feel their course has provided them with the opportunity to apply what they've learnt, which was the highest point in the last three years, and 9% above the England average.

Work readiness and employability measures	2019/20 or TEF Year 1	2020/21 or TEF Year 2	2021/22 or most recent year	Trend
% of graduates in high skill employment or higher level of study (progression)	75.7%	73.9%	81.1%	
NSS Q7: My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt	83.2%	77.6%	86.1%	

Data: measures of work readiness

Our performance in relation to the provision and enhancement of an outstanding student experience, together with outstanding student outcomes over the last three years provide clear evidence of why we believe we are, at minimum, delivering a very high quality, silver-rated academic experience for our students.

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