Name of Provider: Bishop Grosseteste University
UKPRN: 10007811

Provider Context

1. Bishop Grosseteste University (the University, BGU) is a small Higher Education Institution (HEI) based in Lincoln, Lincolnshire. Founded in 1862 as a teacher training college, full university status was conferred in 2012. The last ten years have been a period of transformation driven most recently by the ambition and priorities of the current *BGU Strategy (2019-25)*[1].

2. This transformation has been facilitated through the introduction of a single Faculty in 2020 to ensure the consistent delivery of excellence across students' experiences and outcomes, as the University has realised significant portfolio diversification, successful transition to Apprenticeships delivery, a rising trajectory of international student recruitment, and a shared approach to strategic priorities and quality enhancement.

3. Building on BGU's traditional strengths in Initial Teacher Education (ITE), the current portfolio of programmes continues to equip graduates for the workplace through additional provision in Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, and in Education, Health and Lifelong Learning. New undergraduate (UG) single honours subject areas have been introduced and continue to develop (e.g., Business and Management, Health and Social Care, Counselling, Sport, Sociology). As a result, the proportion of students enrolled on programmes other than Education and Teaching has increased from 30.1% in 2017/18 to 44.1% in 2020/21[2].

4. The TEF indicators[3] recognise 14 subject areas but several of these have 'low data' because of small initial cohort recruitment and/or not yet having a degree completion cohort.

5. In 2020/21 BGU recruited its first cohorts of Higher and Degree Apprentices. These programmes are not represented in the TEF indicators[3] and are not discussed further except to note that in October 2022 BGU received its Ofsted FE Early Monitoring Inspection and was judged to be making 'reasonable progress'[4].

6. Consistent with the priorities of the *BGU Strategy (2019-25)*[1], the University has continued its explicit commitment to widening participation[5] and students are able to access excellent learning, teaching, research and knowledge exchange enabling them to maximise their potential in their chosen field.

7. The University makes an important contribution to the socio-economic prosperity of the region by engaging with the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP) to address the education, training and skills needs identified in the Strategic Economic Plan[6], as well as directly with employers (e.g., schools, NHS). The county has districts that are among the most socio-economically deprived in the country[6]. Only 29% of the working age population in Greater Lincolnshire are qualified at NVQ Level 4+ (11% below national average) and the gap is even wider for those aged 25-29 (13% below national average)[7]: '*Just under half of local graduates stay in the East Midlands after graduation ... Lower overall levels of degree-educated residents reflect some parts of Greater Lincolnshire being particular graduate cold spots.*'

8. The 2021 Census[8] shows that compared to England (19%) and the East Midlands (14.3%), a smaller proportion (4%) of Lincolnshire's residents identify as a member of a minority ethnic group (1.6% as 'Asian' or 'Asian British', 0.6% as 'Black', 1.3% 'mixed ethnic' and 0.6% 'other').

9. Within an overall context of high levels of multiple deprivation, poor social mobility prospects, and low-skilled employment across the county, BGU plays an important role in raising aspirations and supporting students to achieve and to secure employment and further study. The University has been at the forefront of widening participation and outreach activity across Greater Lincolnshire by leading the county's Uni Connect consortium of higher education providers (LiNCHigher).

10. Over each of the last five years BGU has enrolled[2] approximately 2,500 students: 70% UG – 7% Foundation Degrees (FdA, other UG) and 63% Honours Degrees (First Degree); 30% postgraduates (PG) – 14% PGCE, 14% postgraduate taught (PGT), 2% postgraduate research (PGR). To date, BGU offers entry only to full-time UG programmes and students studying part-time are doing so to retrieve failed modules within a level. A small proportion of BGU's students (1.5%) are taught through two partnership franchise arrangements.

11. The University's UG student population[9] (2019/20), drawn primarily from Lincolnshire (62%) and surrounding counties (a further 18%), reflects the socio-economic characteristics of the county. The Office for Students (OfS) TEF dashboard[2] shows that in 2019/20, 47% of the students are from TUNDRA Quintiles 1 and 2 (19.1% above sector), 37.2% from IMD Quintile 1 and 2 (2.1% below sector), and 97% of the student population identify as 'White'. Enrolment of mature students is 34.6%[2] (12.7% above sector) with opportunities for mature students returning to education provided by Foundation Degrees (75%)[9] and Integrated Foundation Year programmes (52%)[9]. The University's subject mix attracts a large majority of female students (80.1%)[2], though new programme areas (e.g., Business, Sport) recruit more male students. In 2019/20[2] twice as many BGU students (33.6%) declared a disability as the sector average (16.1%). Typically, about two-thirds of the UG students (2019/20, 65.3%)[9] identify with one or more 'widening participation' characteristics (i.e., Mature, Minority Ethnic POLARQ1, IMD Quintile 1, Known Disability).

12. For this TEF submission the University established a working group including the Students' Union (BGSU) President and Vice-President (Education) as well as representatives from academic and professional services staff. The group met frequently to review the TEF guidance, to explore the data sets, to identify and compile evidence, and to consider submission drafts. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) briefed the BGSU Student Council and Student Engagement Forum to provide the context for BGSU officers to capture student opinions for their submission. Student Engagement staff within the University's Centre for Enhancement in Learning and Teaching (CELT) have specifically supported BGSU officers to gather, review and present information and views for its student submission.

Student Experience

13. The vast majority of programmes at BGU are delivered by in-person class activity, augmented by Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) directed supplementary learning. The University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment (LTA) Strategy[10] outlines the academic student experience as one of collaborative student-centred teaching and learning, delivered by appropriately qualified tutors, through a curriculum that is informed by research and/or sector practice. Assessment is used to test and drive learning, and assessment feedback allows students to gauge and enhance their progress supported by active tutoring. On-going enhancement of curricula and delivery is informed by and responds to external subject/sector

development, the feedback from students and the reflective practices and scholarship of staff.

Teaching, feedback and assessment for learning, progression, and attainment (SE1)

14. The effectiveness and impact of performance across a range of measures of teaching quality, assessment and feedback demonstrate that BGU consistently provides a very high-quality academic experience for its UG students. The overall institutional TEF indicator[3] for National Student Satisfaction (NSS) '*Teaching on my course*' is 82.9% which is 'broadly in line with benchmark'. For '*Assessment and Feedback*' the institutional indicator is 78.3% (2.3% above benchmark, with a positive at/above benchmark confidence skew).

15. The four-year time series (2018/19 to 2021/22)[3] for the '*Teaching on my course'* indicator has improved from 3.5% below benchmark in 2018/19 to 1% above benchmark in 2021/22.

16. The '*Assessment and Feedback*' indicator[3] has been above benchmark for three of the four years, only in 2018/19 was the indicator below benchmark. During 2020/21, the indicator dipped to 74.9% (still 1.5% above benchmark) when COVID-19 forced blended delivery and fully remote learning (in semesters 1 and 2 respectively), and students did not experience the usual in-person assessment support that they had come to expect. The post-COVID 2021/22 score of 81.3% was the highest of the four years and 'materially (7.2%) above the benchmark'.

17. Through a robust process of programme proposal, validation monitoring and review, the University ensures that programme design, development, academic standards and assessment are effective in challenging students to develop independence, knowledge, understanding and skills that reflect their full potential. Subject teams use both internal and external reference points to inform the curriculum design, development and revision of all programmes (e.g., alignment with current subject benchmark statements, employers, professional bodies and subject associations, student cohorts).

18. The curricula are designed to build progressively challenging learning, knowledge and skill acquisition from Level 4 to Level 6. Clear and appropriate module learning outcomes are linked to criterion referenced assessments. External Examiners' reports[11] confirm the general quality of BGU students' work, the suitability of programme design and content, and the comparability of standards and student outcomes across the portfolio of programmes.

19. The 2021/22 (NSS) data[12] show that 87.0% of students felt that '*staff are good at explaining things*', 82.9% felt '*staff made the subject interesting*', 84.3% felt '*the course is intellectually stimulating*', and 81.5% of students recognised that their programme *'challenged me to achieve my best work'*. All are above benchmark. The 2021/22 NSS data[12] also indicate that 84.7% of students were satisfied with the '*learning opportunities*' (1.6% better than BGU's benchmark).

20. The University recognises the importance of assessment and feedback to evaluate learning and to support and improve students' learning development, progression, and attainment. In 2015 the University reviewed its assessment and feedback processes in consultation with students and staff. Revised guidance[13] and staff training[14] were provided, the long-term effect of which can be seen in the TEF indicators[3].

21. Assessment tasks are outlined in standardised template assignment briefs, linked to validated module outcomes and translated into clear assessment-specific grading criteria within the submission area of the VLE.

22. Students receive regular written feedback from both formative and summative assessment that contains feedforward advice and guidance through the identification of clear targets for future development. The Personal Development Portfolio (PDP) that students maintain during their studies requires reflection on feedback across all assessments and is explored in personal tutorial sessions to set goals for learning gain. This reflective use of feedback is designed to meet the needs of assessment *for* learning as well as assessment *of* learning[15].

23. Evidence of the ongoing and sustained impact of BGU's approach to improving the effectiveness of assessment and feedback is apparent in the 2021/22 NSS[12] '*Assessment and Feedback*' results. The 2021/22 NSS[12] responses reveal levels of satisfaction higher than benchmark and sector: 79.7% for '*criteria used in marking have been clear in advance*' (6.5%, above benchmark), 77.7% for '*marking and assessment has been fair*' (6.2% above benchmark), 87.3% for '*feedback on my work has been timely*' (significantly better than benchmark by 15.3%), and 80.6% for '*I have received helpful comments on my work*' (significantly better than benchmark by 8.9%).

24. Reports from External Examiners in 2021/22[11] commend assessment and feedback practices. The External Examiner for UG Psychology noted: '*I am particularly struck by the variety of assessments offered to students on this programme. We all know that students learn differently and reflect this learning in different ways ... the assessments are innovative and continue to become even more so*', and the External Examiner for UG History commented '*Feedback across the programme is uniformly excellent. Students are given a clear explanation for the grades awarded, copious on text commentary, and clear guidance on how to improve their work. Feedback is in line with the best practice and exceeds the quality of guidance on offer at most institutions in my experience.*'

25. Effective teaching, learning, assessment and academic support practices are key to providing students with the opportunity to achieve their attainment potential. The OfS 2022 analysis of degree classification data[16] shows that prior to the COVID-19 affected years (2019/20 and 2020/21) the proportion of upper-degrees (2.1 and first class) awarded by BGU increased from 69.2% in 2015/16 (the first year after BGU reviewed its assessment processes) to 70.6% in 2018/19 (sector 78.9%). This 1.4% increase was lower than the sector average rise of 2.5%. Over the same period the proportion of first-class awards conferred by BGU increased from 4.7% in 2015/16 to 12.9% in 2018/19, whilst over the same period the proportion of first-class awards made by the sector was 29.5% in 2018/19, up by 4.7%.

26. For BGU, the OfS[16] has indicated that the proportion of awards in 2018/19 that were 'unexplained' after considering 'structural factors' (e.g., subject mix, entry qualifications, age, disability, ethnicity, TUNDRA groups) was only 12.9% for first class and only 6.2% for upper-degrees – both lower than the majority of the sector.

27. The rigour of programmes and assessment standards is assured through clear criterion referencing, alignment with subject benchmarks, internal verification[13], external examining procedures, and (where applicable) Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation. When BGU gained full university status it researched, adopted and applied a

degree classification algorithm (50:50 weighting of Levels 5 and 6 without any discounting of low scoring modules) in line with the sector[17]. The algorithm has been used consistently across all undergraduate programmes and External Examiners have consistently confirmed assessment grading[11].

28.   The University continues to invest heavily in implementing, resourcing and delivering its LTA Strategy[10] to enhance positive outcomes for all students. The dedicated tutoring by subject academics and CELT's learner development team, combined with engaged and responsive students, result in learning gain beyond that which is 'explained by structural factors'.

29.   For the COVID-19 affected years (2019/20 and 2020/21), BGU has seen large variations in attainment reflecting the comparatively small first-degree population and the differential effect of blended learning, remote learning, changing assessment methods, no detriment regulations (in 2019/20 only) and students' personal socio-economic circumstances as they and their families coped with isolation, furlough, loss of work, caring for dependants and digital poverty. Compared to previous years, the impact of COVID-19 has varied across the performance profile. The proportion of upper-degrees rose from 70.6% in 2019/20 to 73.5% in 2019/20 and then fell back to 69.5% in 2020/21 (just 0.2% higher than in 2015/16)[16]. For first-class awards the proportion decreased marginally from 22.0% in 2018/19 to 21.9% in 2019/20, but then rose to 27.3% in 2020/21[16]. For 2021/22 awards, graduates whose Level 5 year was impacted by lockdown show classifications still readjusting with first-class awards at 18.9%[9].

Students engage in and are stretched in their learning of knowledge and skills (SE2)

30.   Students at BGU are effectively stimulated and challenged by appropriate learning and teaching activities, supported by easily accessible academic and learning support services, to ensure that they engage actively with their studies. Jointly developed by the BGSU and the University, the BGU Student Charter[18] sets out the University's and students' expectations and responsibilities for providing, and engaging with, teaching and learning opportunities.

31.   Subject teams determine and apply the most appropriate learning and teaching strategies for effective delivery. A rich variety of learning activities (e.g., lectures, seminars, workshops, tutorials, placements, field-classes) are deployed to engage students in their development of subject knowledge, subject-specific skills, and transferable skills. Whole group 'lecture' sessions include a mix of staff-led delivery and student interaction to explore themes and topics. Problem-based learning and authentic workplace or community-oriented challenges engage students to develop deeper skills and understanding. The VLE provides materials, resources and flipped classroom approaches, post-session discussion boards, quizzes and group project collaboration to reinforce and extend classroom learning.

32.   The Early Childhood Studies External Examiner 2021/22[11] remarked: '*The course is effective in stretching students and developing independence. This can be seen in the progression students make between levels. The course is designed to allow students to link theory to what they have learnt in practice and to develop critical reflection of both.*'

33.   The 2021/22 NSS[12] results show that 84.4% of BGU students (1.5% above benchmark) felt their course provided '*opportunities to explore ideas or concepts in depth*', 88.1% (3.0% above benchmark) for '*opportunities to bring information and ideas together from different*

topics', and 81.7% (0.3% above benchmark) for '*opportunities to apply what I have learnt*'. In addition, 83.1% of BGU students were satisfied with the *'opportunities to work with other students as part of my course'* (3.9% above benchmark).

34. The University has embraced the ethos of students co-creating enhanced learning with academic staff through the development of the 'Students Creating Change' (SCC) Framework[19], providing student-led opportunities to undertake research and develop innovative projects to enhance student learning opportunities, develop teaching and learning practices, and further enhance student employability. In 2016/17 the themed focus of the SCC Framework was to embed Graduate Attributes, and in 2017/18 to embed wellbeing within the curricula. For the last three years SCC projects have been developed to support the University's Access and Participation Plan[5] (APP) targets. In addition, some students also work collaboratively with CELT as Digital Change Agents (DCAs) to develop and deliver technology-enhanced learning and teaching projects.

35. Examples of this collaborative approach include BGSU's development and implementation of a Peer-Assisted Learning Scheme for 2022/23 in which students at Levels 5 and 6 hold seminars with students at earlier stages of their studies to share perspectives and tips on learning and to reflect on the skills, knowledge and activities that lie ahead. This is run in collaboration with Programme Leaders and augments tutor-led learning support.

36. Overall, the University's deliberate, strategic and embedded approach to programme design and assessment practices provides scope for excellent levels of stretch and is designed to ensure all students are challenged significantly to achieve their full potential. The benefits of these integrated strategies and interventions have been judged independently by External Examiners, external validation panellists and accrediting bodies to be both consistent and sustained in comparison to HE sector norms and relevant benchmarks. For example, the External Examiner for UG Special Educational Needs, Disability and Inclusion (SENDI)[11] noted in 2021/22: '*The programme design is effective, and it provides students with a wide and progressive pathway from level 4 through to level 6 and the opportunity to engage with and explore the full range of issues, concepts, and ideas within the subject area of special educational needs.*'

Research, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and employer engagement (SE3)

37. There is a current imperative at BGU to appoint new academic staff who have completed or are close to completing a doctoral qualification, and colleagues appointed previously without a doctorate are encouraged to register for one. In July 2022[20], 54% of all staff were independent researchers and a further 18% were becoming independent researchers. These research active staff create personal research plans, work with mentors and align to multi- or inter-disciplinary research units as part of the strategic growth and development of research and knowledge exchange at BGU.

38. The University's Reader and Professor Appointment Policy rewards and recognises learning and teaching as one of four pathways for promotion with illustrative criteria that include curriculum innovation, pedagogic transformation, and transnational development.

39. The University's successful submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021[21] represented an expansion and strengthening of institutional research to include more Units of

Assessment (from 3 to 5) and staff (from 11 to 45.2 FTE), with 'research environment' templates recording and celebrating areas of student engagement with research projects.

40. Teaching on all programmes is research informed, incorporating problem-based learning and the practice of research-engaged learning within the curriculum. Students are routinely exposed to, involved with, and co-create learning opportunities which draw on scholarship, research and/or professional practice that are at the forefront of subject knowledge. For example, all UG Primary Education students undertake practitioner action research with school partners, creating their own research outcomes that are showcased at a student research conference.

41. The English tutors engage students in their research activities through professionalisation opportunities. The student and staff collaborative outputs from the Being Human, British Association for Victorian Studies and BGU Vote 100 Suffrage projects, were cited in an impact case study as part of the English Language and Literature submission to REF 2021[21].

42. Referenced in BGU's Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) 2021 submission[22], SCC projects demonstrate student engagement and theses have been funded utilising BGU's annual institutional block allocations of UKRI KE funding since 2021/22. The SCC Framework enables students to be funded as research assistants through the BGU Learning, Teaching and Innovation Fund. This important synergy of collaborative teaching and scholarship is being recognised and showcased through BGU's own student (UG and PG) peer-reviewed journal, *Solertia*. As part of their placement with GCHQ, a History student produced a report on a RAF Signals Station near Lincoln and has had their research published on the GCHQ website[23].

43. Several of the University's programmes are accredited by PSRBs (e.g., British Psychology Society, Joint Negotiating Committee for Community and Youth Education, Ofsted). As a result, many students exit BGU with an academic award that is informed by and meets the relevant requirements of professional practice. The most recent (2022) Chartered Management Institute (CMI) Centre Quality Report[24] for the business subject area concluded: '*The university has robust teaching and learning processes in place which ensures that the learning journey from start to finish is of an excellent standard. The university should be commended on having robust processes coupled with engaging staff and learning resource.*'

44. The use of placement practice learning and invited expert practitioners is embedded in all programmes. For example, whilst fully committed to programme delivery, most of the Business delivery team are working in the professional world providing authentic practitioner informed learning. Industry/business experts are invited to deliver guest lectures facilitated and moderated by tutors. Business tutors have also participated in Erasmus+ exchange with other European universities to share research and pedagogic practice.

45. Sport tutors have developed and maintained partnerships with many local organisations (e.g., Active Lincolnshire, Goalball UK, Lincoln City FC, Lincolnshire Cricket, Lincolnshire FA, Lincolnshire RFU, Youth Sports Trust, YMCA, sports clubs and local schools) to enhance the delivery of the programmes via guest lectures, practical sessions, placement opportunities, volunteering and project work. The Sport External Examiner commented: '*The programme benefits from an applied focus and engagement with external partners. This provides a clear real-world focus for the students that will benefit them when they enter the employment market*'.

46. The 2021/22 review and reapproval of the ITE BA (Hons) Primary Education programme has embedded the forthcoming Core Content Framework with enhanced Research, Inclusion and Wellbeing themes. Feedback from students, school partners and External Examiners suggests these changes have been welcomed.

47. The report of the most recent Ofsted ITE inspection[25] in 2016 confirms that professional practice is embedded into the preparation of graduates: *"Leaders and managers have skilfully harnessed the expertise of the university, local authorities and a wide range of colleagues from diverse early years settings and schools, to design, deliver and evaluate the training provided"* and *"Students are able to contribute to their independent learning processes through the negotiation of activities, including research topics and placement opportunities."*

Staff professional development and promotion of excellent academic practice (SE4)

48. The University supports teaching most visibly through CELT which brings together, in a physical and virtual space, learning development, student engagement facilitators and technology-enhanced learning developers to work directly with academic staff and students.

49. University staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to support the delivery of programmes and to respond to students' academic, personal, and professional learning needs. Annual performance review and peer observations enable evaluation of teaching by peers and line managers[26]. Tutors are encouraged to gain membership of subject associations and professional bodies. For example, all Business tutors are registered as professional members with the CMI. Many Primary Education tutors are key members / leaders of associations such as National Primary Teacher Education Council and share their research work internally and externally at UK and international conferences and through peer-reviewed publications. The University's Lecturer to Senior Lecturer promotion policy recognises teaching and learning as one of four pathways.

50. The HESA data[27] for 2021/22 showed that 90.5% of BGU academic staff held a teaching qualification (sector average of 59.3%). The AdvanceHE Annual Review 2022[28] indicated that 85.8% of BGU staff have some level of Fellowship (39.7% above sector average). This significantly higher proportion has been facilitated through the AdvanceHE Accredited Fellowship Scheme delivered by CELT since 2018/19, which has awarded 57 endorsed fellowships. Engagement with the scheme is a condition of probation for all new academic staff who do not have a formal teaching qualification. New academic staff must also engage with an extensive induction programme introducing them to Turnitin, VLE, Continuing Professional Development, LTA Strategy[10], Graduate Attributes (GAs), University Policies, Codes of Practice and Regulations[29].

51. All staff are encouraged to be reflective practitioners, which enables them to engage better with a diverse range of student needs, facilitating the development of students' academic, personal and professional potential. The extensive academic Staff Development Series of pedagogic CPD activities and events (typically 50 per year), coordinated by CELT, is delivered by internal staff sharing their own practice or cascading learning from external events. Topics for sessions are informed by NSS, BGU Student Satisfaction Surveys (BGUSSS – the annual internal satisfaction survey for all students gathering views on academic, professional service and campus experiences), Annual Monitoring Reports (AMRs), External Examiners' Reports, external surveys (e.g., HEPI, JISC Digital Insight

Tracker), requests from staff, staff performance reviews, peer observation, key topical themes (e.g., mental health and wellbeing), and APP interventions. The sessions are mapped to BGU's LTA Strategy[10] and UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) to inform BGU's annual Academic Health of the Institution Report (AHIR). This is designed to provide a coherent approach to the identification, development, reward, and recognition of excellence in learning and teaching.

52. The University's annual Learning and Teaching Conference is a themed one-and-a-half-day event bringing together external keynote speakers and internal colleagues showcasing and sharing their pedagogic best-practice and action research. Previous conference themes have included diversity and equality, employability and entrepreneurship, data and management information, wellbeing, digital capabilities, online delivery for blended and remote learning and the inclusive curriculum. The 2022 Conference was attended by 110 (70%) of the academic and student-facing professional services staff, including academic colleagues from college partners. The impact of the conference is illustrated by an example from tutors on the Integrated Foundation Year scheme who, after hearing an external speaker's use of OneNote at the 2022 conference, adopted its use as an effective and already well-received tool for interclass 'homework' and formative assessment.

53. The BGSU supports the recognition of excellence in learning and teaching by coordinating the annual 'Student Teaching Academic Representation' Awards. Students are invited to nominate academic and learning support service staff for an award in one of eight categories - 'Inspiring teaching', 'Innovative teaching', 'Outstanding support staff', 'Outstanding supervisor', 'Most informative module', 'Most engaging module', 'Outstanding tutor', 'Personal Tutor of the Year' and 'Outstanding feedback'.

Supportive learning environment and academic support (SE5)

54. The TEF indicators[3] show that student satisfaction with '*Academic Support*' at 79.4% is marginally (0.2%) above but 'broadly in line with benchmark'. Over the last four years this NSS score has varied. In 2018/19 it was 3.0% below benchmark, peaked in 2019/20 at 85.7% (3.6% above benchmark), fell to 3.6% below benchmark when COVID-19 impacted student and staff accessibility, and has partially recovered to 81.3% (5.0% above benchmark) in 2021/22 with the return of campus access.

55. A wide range of learning support opportunities and activities is available to BGU students including Personal Tutors, Learning Development Tutors, Study Skills Tutors, Subject Librarians, transferable and subject-specific skills development workshops, development of Graduate Attributes, placements, and co-curricular and extra-curricular awards.

56. The University's strategic decision to maintain cohorts with learning and teaching groups of smaller size[30] has allowed for a personalised pedagogic approach with intensive academic and professional services support. In addition to whole group, smaller seminar and tutorial groups, there are regular individual meetings with personal and academic tutors. Students completing the 2022 NSS[12] reported 83.7% satisfaction with *'contacting staff"* (4.4% above benchmark), 80.6% of students (6.0% above benchmark) were satisfied that they had '*received sufficient advice and guidance'*, and 80.0% (significantly above benchmark by 8.5%) were satisfied that '*good advice was available when I needed to make study choices*'.

57. The University has a well-developed student PDP framework[15] operating across all programmes, supported by Personal Tutors (who meet students formally at least twice per year), mentors and career advisers. As a member of UK Advising and Tutoring, BGU was able to utilise sector best practice to revise and relaunch the Personal Tutoring process at the 2022 Learning and Teaching Conference for 2022/23 delivery.

58. The personalised learning support at BGU provides a 'net' of interventions. Subject teams deliver the PDP and Personal Tutoring strategies as well as offering informal one-to-one 'drop-in' tutoring sessions as and when required by students. They also work with, and are supported by, professional service teams – CELT, the Library, Student Advice, BG Futures (BGU's Careers, Enterprise and Employability service), Chaplaincy and the BGSU.

59. For example, academic support sessions are often targeted at specific subjects and Learning Development tutors in CELT provide an extensive array of one-to-one tutorials, a daily drop-in, and a regular series of workshops (often co-delivered with academic colleagues – 114 in-module-sessions during 2021/22) such as for dissertation guidance. Over 1,060 one-to-one learning development appointments were delivered by CELT during 2021/22 which was reflected in the 2021/22 BGUSSS[30] with 83.4% of UG respondents indicating that they were satisfied that CELT's '*Learning Development supports your learning*'.

60. Positive qualitative comments from the 2021/22 BGUSSS included: '*CELT provide excellent workshops highlighting subjects such as analytical writing/thinking, APA7 referencing, writing academically*' and '*CELT is a very valuable resource and has supported my learning very well over the past two years. I would recommend CELT to anyone studying at BGU.*'

Physical and virtual learning resources (SE6)

61. Physical, human, digital and technological resources are considered in validation, monitoring and review processes, and in business planning. A 'Learning and Teaching Spaces' sub-group of the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) monitors the University's approach to securing appropriate learning environments. This group ensures that interventions and developments are appropriate to meet students' various learning needs.

62. Diverse learning opportunities are provided through physical resources such as the 248-seater theatre and cinema, the BGU Archive, and campus archaeology (the University is adjacent to a Roman road), as well as digital toolkits on the VLE, work-based learning and placements, and educational visits and exchanges ranging from the local to the international.

63. The TEF indicators[3] show that student satisfaction with '*Learning Resources*' at 80.8% is 'broadly in-line with benchmark'. In the four-year time series this NSS score peaked in 2019/20 at 88.1%, then fell to 69.0% in 2020/21 when COVID-19 reduced access to campus learning resources but has recovered to 86.1% in 2021/22 ('materially above benchmark') with the return to on-campus learning.

64. The enhancement of learning resources is a consequence of BGU's ambition to improve its general and course specific resources on campus and to support students at collaborative partners in accessing BGU's online learning resources. As well as the creation of CELT in its dedicated central space, since 2017/18 new and refurbished classrooms have provided excellent audio-visual facilities and flexible, configurable learning and teaching environments.

65. The University's Library is modern and spacious, with quiet, group and social study areas and access to relevant, high-quality physical and online resources (including 24/7 access to

an IT suite). Students report consistently high satisfaction with the Library; the 2021/22 NSS score[12] for '*library resources…have supported your learning well*' was 88.6% (4% above benchmark). The Library team provides tailored support through in-curriculum sessions and one-to-one appointments.

66. The Library team also oversees the University's online reading list system – which is integrated into the VLE and linked to the Library catalogue – ensuring that module reading lists are consistently presented and regularly reviewed. In the 2021/22 BGUSSS[30], 86.6% of UG students who responded were satisfied with the reading list system.

67. Library learning resources are augmented by subject specific learning materials, for example, Business students are registered with the CMI which allows them to access its Management Direct platform for physical and online resources and career planning tools. The NSS results for 2021/22[12] show that 86.4% of students were satisfied with '*being able to access course-specific resources*' (5.0% above benchmark).

68. Substantial investment in information technology (IT) for students and staff has included upgrading the VLE and a pan-university initiative for CELT to work with, and train, academic tutors to use the VLE's enhanced capability. In the 2021/22 BGUSSS[30], 86.4% of UG students were satisfied with '*the organisation and layout of the virtual learning environment to support their learning*' and 88.4% with '*the materials and activities in the VLE supporting learning*'. The NSS 2021/22[12] results show that 83.2% of students were satisfied with '*IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well*' (6.4% above benchmark).

69. Digital support is provided to students by CELT's Digital Learning team through in-person and online one-to-ones, drop-ins, workshops, in-module delivery, a range of online resources, self-assessment activities including the development of badged online courses. During 2021/22, 83 in-module sessions (across all subject areas) and 240 student one-to-one support appointments were delivered for students identified by subject tutors as needing extra-support in developing their digital capability.

70. Student DCAs working with CELT have developed the effective use of accessibility features to enhance the inclusivity of learning and teaching. In 2019 BGU was the winner of Blackboard's 'Catalyst Award for Inclusive Education' for incorporating inclusivity tools into the VLE. The University engages with JISC's sector-benchmarked Digital Insights Tracker[31] and results for 2021/22 show widespread engagement with key accessibility tools by BGU students – 20.3% use screen readers (6.8% above sector) and 27.2% use spelling or writing support tools (6.5% above sector).

Student engagement to improve experiences and outcomes (SE7)

71. The University is proactive in engaging students in the enhancement of learning and teaching, and in quality assurance processes. Overseen by the LTC and led by CELT working with the BGSU, student engagement activities include Forums each semester for students to share views about new initiatives to enhance the student experience, as well as regular consultative meetings with target student groups (e.g., mature / parent students, students from a minority ethnic background and students with declared autism).

72. Students are encouraged and supported to provide feedback throughout the academic year on their modules, programmes and the broader university experience through module evaluation forms, the annual BGUSSS and the NSS, and through participation in a range of

quality assurance, enhancement, and teaching and learning developmental activities, committees, conferences and working groups.

73. Since 2015/16 the BGSU has managed the University's portfolio-wide, collaboratively designed student Representative Feedback System (RFS) providing constructive, real-time feedback on teaching quality. The BGSU's Vice President (Education) oversees the RFS including election of student subject/level representatives, training, and collation of issues and agreed actions before and after subject meetings (each semester) with Programme Leaders and subject tutors. Subject/Programme Leaders complete the feedback loop by reporting actions through class announcements and the VLE subject discussion boards.

74. Student subject representatives are also members of the BGSU Student Council which considers student concerns and raises motions for the BGSU Officers to work with BGU to address. University staff, such as the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students) or the Head of CELT, are invited to update Student Council on University policies, practices, and topical issues (e.g., OfS' Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Commitment, APP, Graduate Attributes Excellence Award, TEF).

75. As a result, the student voice is heard by subject teams using these feedback and evaluation mechanisms to inform current and future learning opportunities and teaching practices. Subject teams respond and outline actions to student issues through subject specific community forum on the VLE and through a summary '*You said, we did*' campaign in the autumn. From 2021/22 some of the responses included: '*Business assignment hand-in dates spread so no more than 2 per week*'; '*more subject specific liaison activity for foundation year students*'; and '*a first aid accredited session for Primary Education trainee teachers.*'

76. The NSS and BGUSSS are important elements of this student voice process and are promoted through Student Survey Week to the whole student body to ensure a robust representative sample. As a result, BGU's NSS response rates are some of the highest across the sector – in 2021/22[12] it was 79% (10% above sector average). The BGUSSS[30] had an UG response rate of 35.9% in 2021/22, recovering towards the pre-pandemic rate of 51.3% in 2018/19.

77. The outcome of this comprehensive integration of the student voice in teaching and learning development is captured in the AMR for each subject area and the AMRs for professional services (i.e., BG Futures, CELT, International Office, Library and Student Advice). The subject AMRs are formally reviewed by Faculty Executive and professional service AMRs by the LTC. All AMRs are considered by a panel of student representatives organised by CELT and BGSU before being submitted to the University's Academic Enhancement Committee (AEC). This formal annual review process then informs the University's AHIR which is considered by a joint meeting of Senate and University Council.

78. In the 2021/22 NSS[12], 57.9% of BGU students were satisfied that '*the students' union (association or guild) effectively represents students*' academic interests' (3.8% above benchmark).

79. The TEF indicators[3] show that student satisfaction with the '*Student Voice*' at 74.2% is 'broadly in line with the benchmark'. In the four-year time series this NSS score peaked in 2019/20 at 80.0%, fell to 66.8% in 2020/21 with COVID-19 campus lockdown when the University was not always able to respond as directly to issues as students expected, and

has recovered in 2021/22 to 73.5% (2.8% better than benchmark) with the return to normal on-campus activity.

80.   From the specific questions on the NSS, the 2021/22 results[12] show that our students '*have the right opportunities to provide feedback*' (82.8% satisfied, 1.2% above benchmark), '*feel their views and opinions are valued*' (74.3% satisfied, 2.7% above benchmark), but are less clear '*with how students' feedback has been acted upon*' (63.1%, though still 9.4% above benchmark). Closing the feedback loop is a key institutional action for 2022/23 across all subjects with tutors and student representatives, after RFS meetings reporting back to cohorts in classes and via the VLE.

Student Experience Subject Variation

81.   The TEF Indicators[3] show variation across the five student experience scores and the nine subject areas with reportable data. Seven subject areas have indicators 'broadly in line with benchmark', above benchmark and/or 'materially above benchmark':

- '*Teaching on my course',* two subjects are 'materially above benchmark' (Performing Arts, History and Archaeology), two have indicators positively skewed above benchmark (English Studies, Sport and Exercise Sciences) and one (Education and Teaching) 'broadly in line with benchmark'. These reflect the collaborative, student-engaged teaching approaches and the application of research specialisms and teaching qualifications, including AdvanceHE fellowships of staff.

- '*Assessment and feedback*', none of the nine subjects are 'materially below benchmark', two subjects (Philosophy and Religious Studies, Education and Teaching) are above benchmark, and three subjects (English Studies, History and Archaeology, Sport and Exercise Sciences) are 'materially above benchmark'. This reflects how tutors explain assessment briefs and criteria in module sessions and provide clear verbal and written assessment feedforward. For example, for the first assessment encountered by the Sport Level 4 cohort, feedback is given verbally within a week of submission to allow the incorporation of advice into subsequent module assessments. The Sport External Examiner in 2020/21 noted '*the programme team had provided high quality feedback for students relating to both areas of strength and for development. The programme team should be congratulated on the level of feedback.*'

- '*Academic Support*', Philosophy and Religious Studies and Education and Teaching have indicators above benchmark and English Studies, History and Archaeology, and Sport and Exercise Sciences are showing as 'materially above benchmark'. These subjects illustrate effective support by Level / Module Tutors and Personal Tutors, coupled with strong signposting and collaboration with the University's professional services when needed and proactive and individualised dialogue with students.

- '*Learning Resources',* eight subjects, Education and Teaching, History and Archaeology, English Studies, Philosophy and Religious Studies, Sport and Exercise Sciences, and Allied Health all have indicators above benchmark with confidence positively skewed.

- '*Student voice*', two subjects (English Studies, History and Archaeology) are 'materially above benchmark' and a further two subjects (Education and Teaching, Sport and Exercise Sciences) have indicators above benchmark. For the most recent revalidation of the FdA Professional Practice in Education, student focus groups informed the design of

the new modules and assessments. Collaboration between students and tutors in Sport through an SCC project developed new subject content around adapted physical activity (Goalball) and how to embed academic skills within modules, enhancing the curriculum and the student experience.

82. The TEF student experience indicators[3] show that satisfaction was 'materially below benchmark' in only three subject areas. Examination of the data alongside staff and student feedback indicates specific cohort issues. In addition to the AMR process, since 2020 there have been annual 'challenge' meetings for all programmes with the Academic Executive and chaired by the Vice-Chancellor. Dashboard data (NSS / BGUSSS, continuation, retention, attainment and progression) are interrogated, and individual action plans prepared and monitored throughout the year by the Faculty Executive. The impact of these interventions on under-performing programmes has become evident in improved performance.

- Health and Social Care: the TEF indicators[3] show '*teaching on my course*' and '*student voice*' are 'materially below benchmark'. The BSc (Hons) Health and Social Care was introduced as a new programme in 2015/16 and two of the first five completing cohorts had their studies impacted by COVID-19. Following initial low NSS scores, the teaching delivery was reviewed and made more engaging, including the introduction of a student subject conference with external presenters. As a result, the teaching score in the NSS[9] rose from 40.9% in 2020/21 to 87.5% in 2021/22. With students back on campus from 2021/22, the delivery team have also revised how they listen and respond to the student voice sooner and more directly, resulting in an increase in NSS[9] satisfaction from 22.7% in 2020/21 to 80.0% in post-lockdown 2021/22.

- Psychology: the only subject area that had '*learning resources'* four-year average[3] 'materially below benchmark'. However, since 2018/19 there has been an upward trajectory in the annual NSS scores[9] rising from 65.3% to 83.8% in 2021/22 after dipping to 59.2% in 2020/21. This reflects improved Psychology resources including a refurbished Psychology laboratory in 2020 and the creation of new interview rooms. The fall in satisfaction in 2020/21 resulted from final year students not having access to those new resources for their dissertation research due to COVID-19 lockdown.

- Allied Health and Psychology: the student experience indicators[3] for these two subject areas are linked as they share the common joint honours programme of BA (Hons) Psychology and Counselling. Allied Health is only comprised of this programme, whereas for Psychology the joint programme contributes a significant proportion of student FTEs. First recruiting in 2015/16, BA (Hons) Psychology and Counselling is also a relatively new programme. The indicators[3] show '*teaching on my course*', '*academic support'* and '*student voice*' are 'materially below benchmark' for both subject areas. NSS[9] annual scores and free text comments reveal a drop in satisfaction for the 2021/22 final year joint honours programme cohort reflecting lower satisfaction linked to COVID-19 lockdown (remote learning not satisfactorily delivering the interpersonal counselling practice skills) during 2020/21, and staff turnover within the small delivery team during 2021/22 which caused a sense of disruption to the strong student-staff rapport that existed. The *teaching* score[9] fell from 86.5% in 2020/21 to 55.9% in 2021/22, and *academic support* and *student voice* scores[9] in 2021/22 were 40.2% and 35.3% respectively. The Psychology NSS scores[9] showed moderated lower satisfaction as the Counselling related issues did not affect other Psychology programme students.

The University addressed the staffing of Counselling in year, recruiting new staff and, for 2022/23, the ownership and management of the joint BA (Hons) Psychology and Counselling programme has moved into Psychology. Action plans have been implemented in 2022/23 to ensure an improved student experience and satisfaction scores, including clear mechanisms of listening and responding to students both individually and collectively in liaison meetings and closing the feedback loop via the VLE

83. The subject indicators demonstrate consistency in student experience 'broadly in line with benchmark' with a balance of subjects 'materially above benchmark' and 'materially below benchmark'. The indicators 'materially below benchmark' are concentrated in three subject areas, which are the result of specific recent events and are being addressed through intervention at Executive level and the implementation and close monitoring of action plans (Health and Social Care is already demonstrating the positive impact of those actions plans).

Positive experiences for all students

84. The TEF indicators[3] show that the student experience metrics for the whole student body are generally consistent across the various student characteristic groups and 'broadly in line with benchmark'. The only groups that show greater variance are:

- Age: 21–30-year-old students for all five indicators show a below benchmark value with a negative skew. Only '*teaching on my course'* is 'materially below benchmark'. Analysis shows that this response is co-correlated with mature UG students on Counselling, Psychology and Health and Social Care who have already been identified as having lower satisfaction on these programmes during 2020/21 and 2021/22.

- Minority Ethnic groups: Given that BGU currently recruits only about 4% of students from minority ethnic groups, for most categories the numbers are too low to be reportable. However, for mixed ethnicity students four of the five indicators (not '*learning resources*') show a below benchmark value. Both '*academic support'* and '*student voice'* are 'materially below benchmark'. The University is implementing greater liaison and inclusive interventions as part of its APP[5], and started a '*tell-it-like-it-is*' group for students from minority ethnic groups instigated through a SCC project co-developed by the BGSU, CELT and an academic tutor. The project has continued to run as an enhanced student voice conduit and has resulted in the establishment of a dedicated Racial Diversity Officer in the BGSU, the embedding and promotion of Black History Month events since October 2020, and the establishment of a learning community consisting of academic and Library staff in decolonising the curriculum through reviewing learning resources and promoting alternative voices.

- Free school meals eligible students: all five indicators are above benchmark. Both '*assessment and feedback'* and 'academic support' are 'materially above benchmark'.

Partnership student experience

85. The TEF indicators[3] demonstrate that BGU's relatively small franchise provision, delivered predominantly at Grantham College, is 'broadly in line with benchmark'. The very high-quality student experience indicators reflect the small cohort teaching delivery and intensive academic support provided by the College's Foundation Degree delivery teams. The partnership '*learning resource'* indicator[3] is 'materially above benchmark' reflecting the

students' ability to access learning resources both locally at their College as well as through BGU's online resource library.

86. The long-established franchise provision benefits from the collaborative partnership with BGU with close guidance and support from BGU subject Link Tutors and a dedicated Academic Lead for Flexible and Distributed Learning who provides training. The College-based delivery team have access to BGU learning materials, quality assurance guidance and professional development opportunities including attendance at BGU's new staff induction sessions and the Learning and Teaching Conference.

87. In the reapproval event of Grantham College's delivery of the FdA Professional Practice programmes in November 2022, the strong collaborative partnership and students' recognition that they were part of the BGU learning community were both commended.

Student Outcomes

Students continue, complete and progress beyond their studies (SO1-SO3)

88. The University's approach to widening participation, learning gain and developing GAs (particularly employability skills) is designed to achieve positive outcomes – continuation, completion and progression into graduate employment / further study, for its students from all backgrounds.

89. The Access and Participation Subcommittee of Senate, ensures that BGU has embedded responses by subject areas and professional services to widening participation. The University's 2020/21-2024/25 APP[5] outlines targets to increase recruitment of students from minority ethnic groups and students from IMD Quintiles 1 and 2 backgrounds, to reduce the attainment gaps for students from minority ethnic groups, mature students and students with a known disability, and to reduce the progression gaps for students with a known disability, from an IMD Quintile 1 background and mature students. Due to previously high continuation rates, no specific differential performance gap targets were set. To date, the OfS has been content with BGU's ambitions and progress demonstrated through the 2019/20 Impact Report, the APP 2020/21-2024/25 Approval Letter and the APP 2023/24 variance.

90. In addition to the high-quality academic support outlined in SE5, all of BGU's other services – Accommodation Service, BG Futures, Chaplaincy, Governance team, International Office, Placements Service, Registry, Sport and Fitness Centre, Student Advice, and BGSU – work collaboratively with the Faculty to provide an 'ecosystem' of student support.

91. An example of this inter-connectivity is demonstrated when a student misses a class. In such circumstances the Module Tutor contacts the student directly, then after a repeated missed session, the Personal Tutor and the Student Engagement Officer would contact the student. If an underlying issue is identified, a formal 'support for study' meeting is arranged with the student involving the Personal Tutor and/or Programme Leader, and a representative from the Student Advice team or other relevant service colleagues. An agreed action plan is devised including steps for support (e.g., from Learning Development Tutors, the Mental Health Advisor, finance guidance through Student Advice) and clear milestones identified with revised assessment submission dates, if necessary. Through this process early intervention is identified and implemented to re-engage the student with their studies.

92. Students may wish to identify support needs directly with their Personal Tutor or other staff member; if so, the student would be encouraged to disclose their situation to others so that comprehensive support could be provided.

93. The University has a comprehensive set of policies and protocols for providing student support including Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct, Prevent, and Safeguarding, as well as Report and Support mechanisms (including anonymous reporting) and Attendance and Engagement protocols.

94. Through a dedicated Student Advice team, BGU delivers a multidisciplinary service approach which includes engagement with students who declare an access need prior to enrolment or during their studies to ensure appropriate support is provided from the point of that declaration. The Student Advice team works closely with subject teams, CELT, Faculty Administration and the BGSU to provide appropriate support for students, including learning, teaching and assessment support and adjustments if required.

95. Advice and counselling support is accessed through the Student Advice team for a range of issues including mental health and wellbeing. In 2020/21 the University recruited to the new role of Mental Health Advisor in response to the increasing number of students declaring mental health needs, to work directly with students and, if required, refer onto BGU's external counselling services provider. The University's counselling service provides an initial seven free sessions to students, and appointments are usually arranged to be within 48 hrs of contact. All students have online access to the 24/7 'Togetherall' external support service.

96. For 2022/23 the University is working collaboratively with the local NHS trust which is funding two twilight hours mental health support staff posts for students on campus, and mental health training to key staff and student officers. These posts are one legacy of BGU's participation in the University of Lincoln's OfS Mental Health Challenge Competition Project[32], a result of inter-agency working on the project. Also, the support materials and resources developed by the project, (some of which were produced by BGU's students as SCC projects) are being accessed by BGU's students as part of the BGU Wellbeing Toolkit available on the Student Portal.

97. BGU has worked collaboratively with students to prepare a submission for the University's Mental Health Charter in December 2023. In line with the Student Minds guidance, students have co-produced a whole institution approach to mental health and wellbeing provision.

98. Student Advice provides finance advice and manages BGU's bursary package and Learning (support) Fund informed by national discretionary fund guidance provided by the National Association of Student Money Advisers, and BGU's APP investment plan commitments[5].

99. In the 2019/20 BGUSSS[30], UG students' satisfaction with the support provided by Student Advice was 95.5% for the '*counselling service*,' 96.7% for *'information and guidance'* and 96.4% for *'accessibility support'*. For those students who had specifically declared and accessed disability support and responded in 2019/20 (n=128), 96.4% were satisfied with the '*overall accessibility of campus and services'*. In 2021/22 the Student Advice service was nominated by students for the national 'WhatUni Awards for Student Support' and awarded second place (after third place in 2018/19), reflecting the value that the students place on the service.

100. The TEF indicators[3] show that the overall four-year (2016/17 to 2019/20) institutional level continuation rate was 92.9%, which exceeds BGU's benchmark by 2.8% resulting in a positive skew of confidence at/above benchmark. This high-quality performance is consistent for both the provision taught by BGU and for registered students taught at collaborative partner institutions. The overall continuation rate for partners is 94.4% and 92.9% for students taught at BGU, both are above benchmark by 6.8% and 2.7% respectively. This results in continuation rates 'materially above benchmark' for partner students and a positive skew of confidence at/above benchmark for BGU taught students. For partners this reflects:

- Students who are work-based learners on Foundation Degree programmes who have made a positive commitment to their vocational degree programme.

- Shared support provided by Student Advice and CELT teams available to partner students and the support provided by BGU subject Link Tutors to partner Programme Leaders.

- Localised partner support of Progress Coaches, Student Mentors, Diversity and Inclusion Champion, Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer, counselling services and intense tutor support offered to small cohort groups.

101. The University started to deliver its four-year honours degrees with an Integrated Foundation Year in 2019/20, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020. Students on the Foundation Year programmes are typically returning to education and/or are mature students who require greater support to be confident learners. The impact of COVID-19 lockdown meant that these students did not have access to in-person tutor support and had to cope with online remote learning whilst facing personal family life challenges. Consequently, despite the online support of tutors, a large proportion of those students withdrew from their studies, resulting in the 61.2% continuation rate[3] 'materially below benchmark' (79.1%).

102. The second Foundation Year cohort for 2020/21 also had low continuation[9] at 55%. This was despite BGU prioritising in-person delivery during social-distancing and providing intense online learning during the pandemic lockdowns. In contrast, during 2021/22 with the return to uninterrupted in-person on-campus delivery in small workshops with intense tutor support, the continuation rate for the third cohort improved to 78%[9]. Foundation Year tutors continue to enhance their support for the fourth cohort during 2022/23.

103. Across BGU's subject portfolio only Business and Management shows a TEF indicator[3] continuation rate (80.9%) 'materially below benchmark'. The period from 2016/17 to 2019/20 saw the replacement of the existing Business programme with a refreshed curriculum and a new programme leadership team which has overseen an improvement in continuation rates in 2020/21[9]. In contrast, three subject areas (Performing Arts, Education and Teaching, Health and Social Care) recorded continuation rates[3] 'materially above benchmark'.

104. All the student under-represented split group continuation indicators[3] are either at least above benchmark and/or 'broadly in-line' with benchmark. Notably, mature students and students from IMD Quintiles 1 and 2 backgrounds have continuation rates 'materially above benchmark'.

105. As well as a high continuation rate, the TEF data[3] for 2013/14 to 2016/17 starting cohorts show that on average 91.2% completed their degree programmes, 1.1% above, but 'broadly in-line with benchmark'.

106. These high completion rate indicators[3] are consistent for under-represented groups in HE and all are either above benchmark or broadly in-line with benchmark, with ABCS Quintile 1 'materially above benchmark'.

107. Seven of the eight subject areas that have reportable completion rate indicators[3] are better than respective benchmarks. Six (i.e., Performing Arts, English Studies, History and Archaeology, Philosophy and Religious Studies, Health and Social Care, and Sport and Exercise) are above benchmark. Education and Teaching was 'broadly in line with benchmark'; and Psychology's indicator is 2.8% below, but not 'materially below benchmark'.

108. The high levels of continuation and completion in the indicators (above) demonstrate the benefit BGU students derive from easily accessible, regular and frequent contact with academic and professional service staff providing a holistic, supportive, academic and pastoral experience.

109. Employability and enterprise were both explicit key standalone themes in the University's current *Strategy 2019-25*[1] and the previous *Five-Year Strategy (2014-19)*[33], and feature as components of the LTA Strategy[10]. Both themes have been embedded throughout the student experience, from registration to post graduation and have continued to be developed in response to local and national economic and employment priorities.

110. Over the last five years BGU has faced the challenge of sustaining its successful track record in preparing students for employment and further study across the diversified portfolio of programmes. The majority of programmes in the now broader UG portfolio, including Primary Education with QTS, Psychology and Counselling, Early Childhood Studies, SENDI, and Business, develop students as 'professional practitioners'. Throughout these programmes an understanding of the related sector and employment context is implicit and aligned to PSRBs and/or sector requirements. Other subject areas, such as History, English, Theology, Music, Performing Arts, deliver curricula which explicitly develop employability skills, Graduate Attributes and explore the application of knowledge and skills in society.

111. The strategic embedding of a placement experience alongside employability and enterprise learning in UG programmes, as well as the integrated support provided by BG Futures and a dedicated Placements Service Team, enable students to achieve positive progression outcomes. In the 2019/20 BGUSSS[30], UG students rated their satisfaction with the '*careers service*' provided by BG Futures at 91.3% and their '*placement experience*' at 89.4%.

112. With 'partnership agreements' for all academic subject teams, BG Futures has collaborative integration of tailored careers development activity within each programme area. For example, pre- and post-placement sessions are conducted with Psychology and Counselling programmes, where students are invited to reflect in advance on their aspirations for their placement activities and then align these to the reality of that experience afterwards. Bespoke interactive sessions are delivered by BG Futures to Level 4 Business students on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals which are aligned to GAs.

113. A range of generic sessions for students is delivered by BG Futures, including 'Routes into Teaching', LinkedIn social media, CV Creation, Personal Statement Writing and 'What can I do with a degree in…?' These provide students with online recorded resources on the BG Futures 'Planet E-Stream' platform which they can access during and after the sessions. As host for the Greater Lincolnshire Social Economy Academy, BG Futures also provides a series of opportunities for students to gain knowledge of the social economy and develop

their networking skills. The Social Economy Hub tenants in the BG Futures building all offer to BGU students, as part of their tenancy agreement, bespoke mentoring support and networking opportunities. Physical office 'incubator space' within the Hub is offered to BGU graduates to support entrepreneurial business start-up; for example, in November 2022 a recent UG Archaeology graduate launched a space recovery systems enterprise.

114. The BG Futures staff are members of the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) and the Career Development Institute (CDI), maintaining their expertise and skills by attending events where sector leading practice is shared. In March 2022, BG Futures was awarded the AGCAS Quality Standard Award (Green category)[34] with the report recognising that: '*BG Futures is a wide-reaching service in spite of its relatively small student population, with responsibilities significantly beyond that of a 'traditional' HE careers service including enterprise education, apprenticeship oversight, volunteering, work within the local community and more recently overseeing the university's Kickstart bid and implementation.*'

115. Together, BG Futures and Student Advice have held the 'matrix Standard' accreditation since 2009 recognising the quality of their support and guidance practices. The University's professional services working with the academic subject teams together provide effective, comprehensive, integrated and embedded services that support the development of employability skills among BGU students. This is particularly relevant in the context of the socio-economic and demographic profile of Lincolnshire and BGU students.

116. Between 2017 and 2019, BG Futures ran the ESFA funded 'Skills training needs project'[35], liaising with 607 local employers to understand their skills needs which has provided a valuable knowledge pool of the skills local employers are seeking from graduates.

117. The TEF indicators[3] show at institutional level that the overall progression rate over the three years from 2017/18 to 2019/20 was 69.0%, marginally below (0.5%) benchmark but still 'broadly in-line with benchmark'.

118. The progression rates for Foundation Degrees and First-degrees are comparable at 69.4% and 69.0% respectively, with Foundation Degrees above (1.9%) but First Degrees slightly below (0.7%) benchmark. This results in Foundation Degrees having a positive skew of confidence at/above benchmark and First Degrees being 'broadly in-line with benchmark'. The higher Foundation Degree progression reflects the nature of the subject and work-based learners who are typically working as professional practitioners in education settings.

119. Across BGU's subject portfolio, six subject areas have reportable progression rate indicators[3]. It should be noted that four of the six areas each had 50 or fewer total qualifiers over the three-year period, with only Education and Training having a substantial sample (n=750). English Studies at 69.9% is 'materially above benchmark'. Education and Teaching at 73.7% is 'broadly in-line with benchmark' and reflects that this subject area includes ITE Primary Education and other education related subjects (e.g., Education Studies, Early Childhood Studies, SENDI) which typically go into teaching either directly or via a further year of PGCE study. Performing Arts (40.1%) and Health and Social Care (62.2%) are both 'materially below benchmark' and BG Futures staff are working with these subject areas to understand their graduate employment sector, the challenges BGU students face, and to implement tailored enhanced employability planning.

120. The University supports its students from all backgrounds to secure positive progression outcomes, particularly those from disadvantaged and under-represented groups. Examining the split group, TEF indicators[3] show the following for under-represented groups in HE:

- Mature students (21-30 years old and 31+ years old), Males, IMD Quintiles 1 and 2 and students eligible for free school meals are 'broadly in line with benchmark'.

- Students with a reported disability have a progression indicator of 59.2% which is 'materially below benchmark'. This is one of the University's APP[5] target groups to reduce differential performance gap.

- ABCS Quintiles 2 and 3 indicators are 'materially below benchmark'.

BGU's refreshed personal tutoring scheme, which identifies career ambition on entry and sets employability milestones, was introduced for 2022/23 along with targeted proactive guidance and advice interventions by BG Futures for students with a known disability and those at risk of not achieving good progression outcomes.

121. Collaborating with the University of Lincoln's OfS Graduate Skills Builder Project[36], BGU students were placed in local business and organisations to showcase the skills of graduates from local HEIs and to encourage greater graduate employment. One legacy of this project was the creation of the '*Living and Working in Lincolnshire*' website to highlight graduate opportunities in the region and, at BGU specifically, using the UG final year capstone project as an opportunity for applied collaborative research with organisations.

122. The OfS Geography of Employment interactive map[37] and TEF indicators[3] show that a higher proportion of employed BGU graduates are working within the three lowest quantile areas (Quintiles 1-3) for graduate employment. These include Lincoln and Boston (Quintile 2) and nearby Skegness and Louth, Grimsby, Scunthorpe, Grantham, Worksop and Retford, and Mansfield (Quintile 1). The split indicators for students in Quintile 1 areas, at 69.5% show a positive skew of confidence at /above benchmark and for Quintiles 2 and 3 students are 'broadly in-line with benchmark'. This suggests that students who stay local after graduation have progression that is at least broadly in-line with benchmark.

Educational gains achieved by students (SO4-SO6)

123. The University continues to evolve how it can holistically support its students to achieve success during their time at BGU and afterwards. Educational gain is not just about academic development and attainment but also providing BGU students with the ability to develop, practise and apply subject and transferable graduate skills effectively with confidence beyond their programme and after graduation.

124. As one of the ten UK universities that participated in the National Mixed Methodology Learning Gain Project[38], BGU used that experience to determine how it would define and effectively develop learning / educational gain through the integrated and embedded use of its VLE, GAs and the PDP frameworks.

125. Educational gain is a cornerstone of the LTA Strategy[10], and it is articulated through the research informed development of the University's GA Framework. The key goal is the 'holistic BGU Graduate' – visualised as a flower of six GA themed 'petals' which surround, support and are embedded and contextualised through the central attribute of Subject Expertise for each programme. Of the six attributes, 'employability' and 'being enterprising' were developed by BG Futures working with local employers.

The alignment of GAs to employer needs and students' personal development and/or further study aspirations was endorsed in the QAA (2016) HER report[39]: *"The attributes address the needs of the labour market, local communities, personal development and broader social development. They provide a framework for students to measure their development."*

126. The GA Framework was launched for 2015/16 and the GA Steering Group, reporting to the University's LTC, was established to promote and oversee the continuing development of the framework. Embedded in all UG programmes, GAs were mapped and reported by each programme subject area for the 2015/16 Institutional Enhancement Theme. In subsequent programme approval and reapproval events GAs are explicitly articulated, mapped and recorded.

127. During 2018/19 the GA Steering Group, in consultation with students, staff and employers, reviewed, revised and enhanced elements of the framework, including:

- The GA theme 'petal' content and expectations.

- Subject mapping with programme teams identifying in which modules the development of each specific attribute occurred.

- An integrated PDP e-portfolio, which all students complete as part of their personal tutorial support with the GA Framework.

- The definition of a GA Standard Award guaranteed for all those who complete their BGU degree programme and the extension GA Excellence Award for students who want to take the opportunity to further enhance their GA profile.

- A marketing and promotion plan to students about the enhanced GA Framework.

128. With the GA Standard Award all students completing their programmes have, since 2019/20, received a GA Certificate of Achievement in recognition of the attributes they have developed embedded within their programme. The careful design and mapping of the curriculum ensures that the expected GA characteristics are achieved within the programme's core modules.

129. Students are introduced to the GA Framework at the start of their BGU programmes during induction sessions and the University's formal Matriculation ceremony. Presented as part of VLE modules, students understand where and how these GAs are being initiated, developed and practised through their programmes. The VLE and BG Futures webpages host mini-videos and promotional materials, produced by DCA and Student Engagement Champions (SEC) to introduce and explain each GA theme.

130. Oversight of the students' GA development is an integral part of PDP and the associated e-portfolio. Students reflect on their confidence with each attribute and identify areas for development as part of their personal tutorials. Support for the development of GA skills is provided by the full range of professional service teams through in-module sessions and signposted extra-curricular sessions. For instance, on the Education Studies UG programme, each module is introduced by mapping outcomes to the relevant GA theme petal. Each student's e-portfolio allows them to understand and be able to articulate to prospective employers how they have developed GAs.

131. The GA Excellence Award is an extension opportunity for students to enhance their GA profile. Launched in 2019/20, through the GA Excellence Award students complete several extra-curricular activities including a minimum number of either paid work and/or volunteering hours (additional to programme placements) and participate in internal and external GA events. For instance, some students volunteer to staff a local community library (through which BGU enhances local community access to education), others work collaboratively with CELT as a DCAs or SECs to provide enhanced resources or activities for other students, act as Student Reps or Ambassadors, or run a Student Society/Club with the BGSU, and others take paid work with the University's Catering team. Students who embark on the extension award are supported by a BG Futures advisor and their experience is demonstrated through one of three assessment formats (a reflective written piece, vlog or interview discussion). On successful completion, a student's extra-curricular educational gain is recognised by the award of a GA Excellence Award Certificate of Assessment.

132. The University continues to develop its GA Framework and from 2023/24, with the implementation of a new UG curriculum framework, will introduce the opportunity for students to take GA Enhancement (GAE) modules. At Level 5 there will be a small suite of modules to allow students to tailor their programme for their own specific educational gain needs, with credit-rated modules planned to include environmental sustainability practice, leadership in the workplace, business enterprise, and introduction to teaching. Programmes will still deliver their core GAs but these GAE modules will allow students to enhance theme 'petals'.

133. The GA Standard Award began for all students starting their first-degree programmes in 2019/20 and the 2021/22 graduating cohort is the first opportunity to evaluate the impact of the initiative on progression in the Graduate Outcomes survey of 2024. However, the BGUSSS 2021/22[30], provided an opportunity for UG students *at all levels* of their study to indicate how their educational gain is developing. In response to the question '*How satisfied were you with the opportunities for personal growth and development at BGU?*', 83.1% of all UG students who completed the survey responded positively. A similar proportion, 80.6%, responded positively to '*How satisfied are you that your BGU experience is preparing you for either further study or employment after you leave BGU?*' For the question '*How satisfied are you with the embedding of Graduate Attributes within your programme?*', 69.7% responded positively.

134. In the Graduate Outcomes Survey 2022[9], when 2019/20 BGU graduates (n=197) responded to the item to '*consider that their current work / studies utilise the skills they learnt during their studies?*', 76.7% agreed compared to only 15.2% who disagreed.

135. During 2021/22, BGU introduced new online software (Target Connect) to record and monitor the 'pathway' of GA Excellence Award students as they developed their portfolio of activities. As a result, BGU has adopted this software as its main PDP e-portfolio tool for all

student personal tutoring. From 2022/23 the software has been used to capture a baseline survey of employability skills and career readiness from the new UG cohorts. The cohorts will be re-surveyed at the start of each subsequent level of study to evaluate on-going impact on career readiness. The University's Student Exit Survey is used to identify which students have, and have not, already secured post-graduation employment, allowing BG Futures to target proactively those alumni who need further support.

136. The 2022 'matrix Standard' reaccreditation report[40] highlighted: '*Leadership of each team [Student Advice and BG Futures] continues to ensure that the delivery of IAG is in line with the aims and objectives of the service linked with the ambitions of BGU; very much an integrated approach across the institution that has seen greater alignment with the Access and Participation Plan, the successful embedding of the Graduate Attributes and Excellence Awards, the drive to develop Mental Health service capability and the repurposing of the facilities in BG Futures to develop the wider Social Economy Hub and Academy.*'

Conclusions

137. Working through its single Faculty, BGU provides the strategic landscape and context for the development of its portfolio and programme curricula, the approaches deployed for learning, teaching and assessment, and the academic and broader support of its students. The subject teams, working holistically with professional service departments, translate those strategies within the context of their subject to ensure the most effective delivery of the academic experience, outcomes and educational gain for students.

138. The scale of the University enables excellent practices to be shared across the institution to inform reflective practice and strategy development. These ensure that academic programme and professional service teams facilitate and deliver consistent excellence in student experience and outcomes across the University's portfolio of UG programmes.

139. Students who join the BGU learning community can be confident that they will experience very high-quality teaching, learning and assessment experience, receive excellent academic and pastoral support, have access to excellent physical and online learning resources, and be collaborators in their own education where their voice is valued for enhancing the provision.

140. The University works with, and supports, its students to be successful with excellent continuation and completion rates and to use their educational gain in their graduate employment and life-long learning.

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