

## Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023 Student Submission

### 1. Introduction

Ravensbourne Students' Union is passionate about the student experience and student outcomes. We work hard to promote the interests and welfare of every Ravensbourne University student during their time with us and beyond.

As a small Students' Union with only 4 members of staff including full-time sabbatical officers, completing a lengthy student submission is not feasible given the many hundreds of hours it would take to do justice in explaining the unique benefits of the Ravensbourne experience.

We value the Office for Students Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) process and are grateful for the opportunity to endorse Ravensbourne University. We know that the Office for Students TEF Panel may not know a lot about Ravensbourne University nor Ravensbourne Students' Union other than perhaps some uncontextualized data on an NSS spreadsheet which doesn't give the full picture of who we are, and so we welcome the opportunity to give some much-needed context about the experience here at Rave.

This submission is based on the experiences of students, specific TEF focus group feedback, 18 student voice meetings, over 600 responses to our pre-Christmas 2022 survey with extensive feedback and meetings with course reps and students from a wide range of programmes. However, we have kept this a brief document as we want to provide an over-arching triangulated message, and instead focus the rest of our time and resources on improving the student experience rather than writing a lengthy student submission which would run into scores of pages if we even tried to summarise each student voice meeting. We ask that the TEF Panel do not mistake our brevity for disengagement with the TEF process, but instead appreciate that we are instead focusing our efforts on our students with the resources that we have and continuing the great work that we are doing that Students' Unions of much larger sizes are unable to do.



The Ravensbourne University building next to the O2 which won the RIBA award for best Higher Education building

## 2. Approach to evidence-gathering

This TEF Student Submission is authored by Ravensbourne Students' Union and signed off by the Office for Students TEF Student Contact, \_\_\_\_\_, elected President of the Students' Union and lead student representative. \_\_\_\_\_ graduated \_\_\_\_\_ at Ravensbourne and during her time at the University worked as a student ambassador and a Kit Store student helper (more on the Kit Store below). Within her course, \_\_\_\_\_ specialised in directing and on her most recent project she worked with Amazon and Barnardo's to create a short film highlighting the negative effects of \_\_\_\_\_ individuals living at home when their parents don't accept them. She also took part in freelance work as a makeup artist for film and television, working on a range of music videos and short film sets in and around London.

The importance of mentioning this is that \_\_\_\_\_ has been elected by the student body and is also someone who has spent a total of \_\_\_\_\_ years at Rave including time as a student and as President – and so acts as a powerful representative student voice who is passionate about the student experience and student outcomes.

Although signed off by lead student representative, invaluable support was provided by the whole Students' Union team and the student body, especially those who completed survey feedback and those who attended student voice meetings and TEF focus groups. A huge special thanks also to \_\_\_\_\_, Vice-President of Activities, Campaigns and Welfare, \_\_\_\_\_, Students' Union Manager and \_\_\_\_\_, Student Engagement Coordinator.

Due to restrictions on time, this student submission has not been shared with the university prior to submission, however we will share this document with them alongside all student focus group feedback to continue to help improve the student experience.

The feedback in this document incorporates feedback from a range of sources including the specific TEF focus group feedback, survey feedback and meetings with course reps and students from a wide range of programmes. The Student President held and documented feedback from 18 student voice meetings in November and December 2022 including with students and student representatives across a variety of year groups on the following courses:

- |                                     |                              |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Fashion Buying & Brand Management | • Animation                  |
| • Fashion Promotion                 | • Product Design             |
| • Fashion                           | • Advertising & Brand Design |
| • Architecture                      | • Digital Film Production    |
| • Business & Computing Courses      | • Digital Photography        |
| • Editing & Post Production         | • Digital Content Creation   |
| • Music & Sound Design              | • Foundation Year            |
|                                     | • Digital Content Creation   |
|                                     | • Graphic Design             |

Feedback and key actions from these student voice meetings will be raised through the regular student feedback mechanisms at Ravensbourne, with some of the salient points from these meetings being used in this submission as powerful, representative, triangulated and above all recent feedback on the student experience and on student outcomes.

Therefore, when a statement is made below, it is not an unsubstantiated personal comment, but is a statement that has been triangulated and mentioned by groups of students or more-so groups of student representatives numerous times across each of these feedback mechanisms. We have not repeated this information and started each paragraph with “In a student voice meeting, students and student representatives have said xyz”, however this can be taken as read that each statement is from these meetings and is triangulated from these aforementioned sources.

## 2. Student experience

Reading the guidance, we can see that the TEF “*aims to encourage universities and colleges to improve and deliver excellence in the areas that students care about the most: teaching, learning and student outcomes (whether students go on to managerial or professional employment, or further study).*”

Therefore, this document will focus on these main areas of teaching, learning and student outcomes.


- i. To provide context to the TEF panel, students in focus groups gave the following responses as to why they chose Rave: practicality of the subject; being able to interact; promote the industry and getting you the job; having your own community and being in a specialist environment; head of 6th form recommended; new and up-to date technology; easier transition from college because it's a small university and feels welcoming and the Interior architecture course is accredited, which is good.
- ii. The top things at Rave include the technology with the University priding themselves in using up to date technology, being industry based, not too many people and tutors get to know you as an individual, availability of Plugs and ethernet cords all over the building, on Aula, jobs are shared to students by lecturers, which helps them feel supported, Rave feels like a hub for practicality, facilities, everything seems to have been put in place purposefully and a great mix of student population from different backgrounds, industry standard equipment at the Kit Store, the studying experience feels enjoyable rather than forced, the location being great for filming and tutors making students feel equal and a part of the industry. Areas that need more improvement are that teachers don't always engage on Aula, the need for more opportunities to collaborate, increased social opportunities, communication, printing costs, library access at other universities and SLAs for responses to students. Both these positives and negatives will be discussed below where relevant.
- iii. Ravensbourne Students' Union has a direct line to the Senior Leadership Team at the university. This is not something that many universities have – and this underpins a genuine attempt at building a strong working relationship with the Students' Union and the student body. This is not shown in NSS statistics or league tables, but it is something that happens every day on the ground at Ravensbourne.

- iv. Furthermore, in addition to all the student voice mechanisms and students on panels, the new Dean has taken an approach for regular feedback where groups of students (3-4 from every class) provide direct feedback to the Dean regularly – and students feel that this is working. This innovative approach is not reflected in the most recent NSS scores but is recent positive feedback that supersedes the NSS. This is supplemented by a suite of Student Voice meetings as mentioned above, which are well received by students and help improve the student experience. Students have comments on how lecturers and Senior Leadership are very open to receiving constructive criticism including on feedback and making improvements.
- v. Some of the key areas the Students' Union will work with the University on include the recent change where the library is being split into two buildings. This change needs to be constantly reviewed carefully as students want to make sure that they can visit other university libraries as part of this agreement – and so noise pollution and space planning in the library and the second building will be an area of focus for the Students' Union to discuss constructively with the University in 2023.
- vi. Room bookings, printing costs or printing credits (as students are on a fixed budget), timetables and risk assessments can all cause delays and worries for students and can impact on the student experience at Ravensbourne – and so these are key areas of focus for the Students' Union as they have been mentioned by students in focus groups.
- vii. To leave Ravensbourne industry-ready, Ravensbourne's Kit Store allows ALL students from their first day at Ravensbourne to access to a broad range of equipment. The Kit Store loans gold-standard equipment from industry-standard manufacturers, including cameras, audio, lighting and more.
- viii. The Kit Store directly contributes to excellence over and above in SE5, SE6, SE7, SO1, SO2, SO3, SO4 and SO5 of the Student Experience Features and Student Outcomes Features listed in the TEF guidance. Because the use of the Kit Store covers a range of areas – student experience, learning experience, teaching, academic support, assessment, learning resources, student outcomes and student employability, this submission goes into detail on some of the resources on offer and how this helps students.
- ix. For example, the Kit Store offers a wide range of digital stills and video cameras to students, including the Arri Alexa which has been used to capture numerous Oscar-winning films, as well as the Sony FS7, Red, and Phase One cameras and a wide range of lenses, including prime, zoom and macro lenses. The same goes for top-of-the-range equipment to be borrowed by students for projects off campus including lighting audio, sound, and musical assets to assist students with their projects and work on their courses.
- x. Not all universities can offer a fraction of this range (if at all), for example the Arri Alexa costs multiple tens of thousands of pounds alone! Therefore, if the TEF Panel are looking for features of excellence and outstanding or gold features in each of the criteria mentioned above, this is one of many examples. Yes, technology can get out-dated quickly and so there is always the demand for newer models, more of each item (especially if something gets broken by accident) and more staff in the Kit Store (e.g. where hours may have been reduced post-pandemic due to staff shortages) – and so the Students' Union will voice these requests on



behalf of the student body to the university – but it doesn't detract from the state-of-the-art equipment on offer and the student experience and student outcomes benefits that these bring.

## STUDENT VOICE



### StAARs

StAAR stands for Student Academic & Activities Representative and it is the new face of representation at Ravensbourne. If you're a rep on your course, or the President/Vice President of a sports club or society, then you are a StAAR and have a place on the StAAR academy. You're a pioneer for – the first ever StAAR academy and we're proud of you for putting yourself forward.

StAARs are an essential link between the student body, Students' Union and the University. The community you create and the feedback you collect through clubs and societies helps to make positive changes for students at the university.

Being a StAAR is an exciting opportunity that enables you to not only make a positive change, but to develop your leadership and other skills.

[DOWNLOAD STAAR HANDBOOK](#)

Some of the initiatives listed on our website <https://www.ravesu.co.uk/welcome/get-involved/>

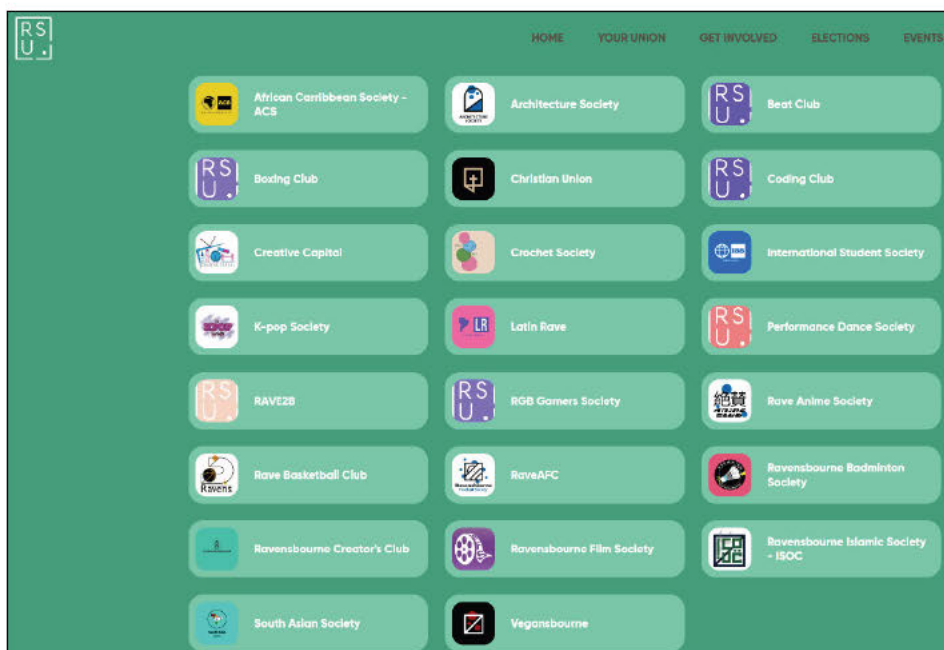
- xi. A key theme mentioned by students and student representatives across the various student voice meetings is that Ravensbourne offers a small close-knit community and classes, that provide students the opportunity to have dedicated support from tutors and create close connections with students from a range of creative courses to support their future careers.
- xii. As a result of student feedback, students are of the view that there have been positive changes to course content, the development of subject knowledge, academic skills such as critical thinking, critical skills, and problem-solving and this is especially demonstrated but not limited to essays and dissertation which provides the necessary rigour and stretch including increasing practical work skills, leadership skills, technology skills and confidence skills. Additionally, being given the freedom to explore one's own interests within the design projects reinforces the necessary learning gain, and provides the necessary rigour and stretch.
- xiii. Students on a number of courses and especially those on Animation and Architecture commented on how they feel listened to, understood and supported. The mention of one course, doesn't preclude others nor to bring an adverse inference to others, but these need to be mentioned in particular because of the particular feedback received.
- xiv. We feel that the information listed here gives more context than just NSS scores which can be skewed by the triple prongs of being a London based provider (not taken into account when benchmarking for the NSS), focusing on creative and arts subjects that traditionally score lower in the NSS and the post-covid world where students went back into the classroom earlier at Ravensbourne than many universities with covid restrictions still in place that can hamper the student experience. Therefore, the TEF indicators which are based on retrospective data isn't as powerful as independent student insight that is more direct and more current than retrospective data.

- xv. Communication is another area that the Students' Union will work with Ravensbourne on to ensure that all departments communicate effectively – and so students receive information about changes happening at the university quickly and efficiently – and timetables. If a student has an enquiry, it should be answered quickly and accurately and so communication improvements can always be made with clear SLA's for responses to queries being published will be an area of work for the Students' Association and the University – with a potential for increased staff in departments e.g. the kit store mentioned above and potentially the library and other professional departments – all of which can be discussed with the university when looking at SLA's. Ravensbourne has many physical resources, and it would be beneficial if these were promoted more.
- xvi. Whilst social interaction may not be in the scope of the TEF, the Students' Union will work on improving social interaction between students within each course and between courses. Having more extra-curricular activities, sports, social life and events – and a bigger Students' Union and Student Services department will assist the student experience. We feel that this will create a better student community, especially if there are trips around the UK and abroad, sports pitches, more social events and an increased student community.

### 3. Student Outcomes

- xvii. Continuation, progression and completion data speaks for itself. Looking at the TEF data dashboard, we can see statistically significant scores that are significantly above benchmark in these areas – and students are supported by staff to achieve learning gain and to continue, progress and complete with excellent educational outcomes. The new common academic model is welcome and will assist the student feedback and student outcomes.
- xviii. Experienced lecturers who are work in industry and are great at what they do is a key feature of Ravensbourne and is often mentioned positively by students – and this impacts super-positively on the student experience, the learning experience, the academic experience and on student outcomes. Having 1-2-1 time with lecturers and being able to ask questions and receive feedback is appreciated and feature of best practice. The wealth of knowledge is incredibly helpful given that lecturers work in industry alongside teaching.
- xix. This is supplemented by an excellent careers service that is praised in feedback from students and student representatives that helps enhance employability and get good well-respected professional jobs in the sectors of students' choices. Work experience places love Rave, and a lot of people are working in the industry are Rave alumni so there are alumni wherever students go. People from industry also come in and look at student work. The careers team assist with employment opportunities - Ravensbourne has a great reputation in local creative and digital industries as many of our alumni are now working in those sectors – and there is a real prestige of having studied at Ravensbourne. Additionally, the careers team work hard to prepare students for work in the outside world, but especially within their chosen fields, ranging from starting off CVs, tailored advice and also help with applying for jobs and interviews. Students also commented on how the fashion course for example helps learn about the fashion

industry and how to survive in the industry – and so it prepares you for the world of work in a way over and above anywhere else.



Clubs and societies help enhance the student experience, further the sense of student community, help with learning gain, student outcomes and a fantastic learning environment

Image from our site <https://rave.native.fm/?groupsDirectory=1>

- xx. With Alumni ranging from David Bowie to Stella McCartney, student outcomes are clear to see and employers in the sectors and on the courses which Ravensbourne teach are of the strength of the Ravensbourne teaching and learning that enhances the employability of Ravensbourne graduates.



The December 2022 Ravensbourne graduation, with Idris Elba




#### 4. Conclusion

Ultimately, we appreciate that the TEF student submission is optional, however we strongly believe this brief independent student submission will be a powerful tool in helping the TEF Panel understand the experience at Rave.

We have read the guidance about how the TEF informs student choice and encourages universities and colleges to deliver excellence in teaching, learning and student outcomes and we feel that this process will enable Ravensbourne University to continuously improve and to go from strength to strength to deliver a world class student experience to all Ravensbourne students.

Penultimately, in looking holistically at Aspect 1 for the extent to which teaching, learning, assessment and the educational environment delivers an excellent educational experience for Ravensbourne students and Aspect 2 Student outcomes rating for the extent to which students studying at Ravensbourne succeed in and beyond their studies, and the educational gains delivered for students, we believe that on reflection the University provides typically outstanding deliverables in these areas.

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Gold</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">The student experience and outcomes are typically outstanding.</p>
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Finally, We have further read that TEF rating will be published in September 2023 which is 8+ months away, and so we will use this time to keep working with the university on providing student feedback directly to the Senior Leadership Team and to continue to enact and implement improvements – especially around the aims of the Students' Union of building student communities, empowering the Student Voice, officer training and development and equipping the Students' Union for a sustainable future. If the University supports the Students' Union with extra resource, we can accelerate our efforts in each of these four key areas.