

## Norwich University of the Arts provider submission - TEF 2023

### 1. Provider context

**1.1.** Norwich University of the Arts is a successful specialist university with an impressive track record of delivering high-quality courses in practice-based disciplines. We have a strong and inter-related portfolio of courses, a remarkable city campus at the heart of the creative quarter of Norwich, and an authentic and caring creative community of staff and students. We are ambitious and committed to the creativity of our staff and students, and to engaging our whole community in the debate about the future of creativity and creative arts education. We view this debate as vital because the world is changing fast and facing many challenges, and creative practitioners will play an essential role in understanding and interpreting our world and imagining and producing better ways of living in the future.

**1.2.** This submission is in respect of Norwich University of the Arts TEF 2023 assessment. The University was rated Gold in the 2017 Teaching Excellence Framework in recognition that students from all backgrounds achieved consistently outstanding student outcomes [see SO2 (3.19-3.22); SO3 (3.23-3.30)]. At the time the University was commended for its course design, assessment practices, a comprehensive and embedded approach to student engagement, exemplary employability initiatives, investment in industry-standard physical and digital resources, a learning environment enriched by collaborative working and an embedded institutional culture that rewarded excellent teaching.<sup>1</sup>

**1.3.** Since the last TEF we have continued to develop these areas of strength and build our student experience through data-led and evidence-based enhancement work. We have expanded our portfolio of courses to encompass Performance and Creative Science. We have continued to evolve our creative pedagogy; developing hybrid approaches to facilitate inclusive learning, working with staff and students to enhance our approach to assessment for learning, engaging staff in a programme of good practice workshops to enhance our employability interventions, and developing student resilience and confidence through enhancement of the range of integrated measures available to support students and their learning [see SE5 (2.36-2.52)]. This will be expanded in the remainder of the document.

**1.4.** Graduate employability remains a key focus. Since 2017 we have built on the success of our gamified employability programme, *Profile*, winner of a Guardian Education Prize in 2019<sup>2</sup>. We have integrated employability within the curriculum, embedded learner-driven self-assessment through *Profile Digital* and built engagement with the employability resources from 30% of students each year to more than 90% in 2021<sup>3</sup>. Now, in 2023 - when all but six (3%) of our 219 split indicators are at or materially above benchmark, with four of those six being historical markers for progression - we have significantly improved progression from 62.2% to 69.4% over three years, bringing our current metric for progression to 1.8% above benchmark [TEF\_workbook\_10004775].

**1.5.** The success of our work during this TEF period is clearly evidenced by our being rated in the top 10 of all universities for Teaching Quality and 7<sup>th</sup> of all Modern Universities in the Times and Sunday Times for 2022, as well as top 2 UK Creative Arts University by The Complete University Guide for 2023 (rising 30 places – the most of any institution in the table).<sup>2</sup>

**1.6.** We were the 2020 Sunday Times University of the Year for retention. In making the award, the editor wrote *"Norwich University of the Arts does a better job than any other university in the UK at getting its students from enrolment to graduation. In a sector where so much money and time is wasted by students dropping out of their courses, NUA is a beacon of excellence with a dropout rate running at around half the expected level for an institution with its student and subject mix."*<sup>4</sup>

**1.7.** During this period the creative industries have acknowledged our teaching and learning successes. We have been shortlisted for and won the TIGA Games Industry Awards in the categories of Best Education Institution and in Innovative Teaching multiple times. In 2021 and 2022, we were ranked in the top 50 Creative Media and Entertainment schools and colleges in the World and top 20 for Concept Art and Illustration by the Rookies Global School Rankings, and we have repeatedly been ranked as 2<sup>nd</sup> for Design Education Institution of the Year by the World Brand Design Agency.<sup>2</sup>

**1.8.** The most significant ratings come from our students. In 2022 Norwich was shortlisted for Small or Specialist University of the Year by the WhatUni Awards, a higher education award based *solely* on student choice (35,000 verified university reviews gathered from on-campus visits); and awarded Best University for Teaching Quality 2022 by Student Crowd - the only UK league table based on authentic student reviews:<sup>2</sup> *“Norwich University of the Arts’ continued focus on in-person workshops and assessments has seen them soar to our number one spot. Students at the university are taught by practitioners using the same widespread techniques seen across creative industries, giving them a unique level of preparation and insight to prepare for their careers.”*

**1.9.** We have a strong ethos of collaboration with students and have worked with them on the completion of our TEF return. As the nominated student contact, the Students’ Union (SU) President is a member of the university TEF Working Group, whose members have all contributed material to the submission. We have shared all data and document drafts for contributions and comments. We have also supported the SU President through a joint meeting of the Student Representatives Group (SRG) at which the TEF was introduced and the SU President received feedback from all student representatives through a survey they had designed to inform the student submission. We have also provided the SU with administrative support for copyediting and proofreading.

**1.10.** Since the last TEF in 2017, undergraduate student numbers have increased from 2,000 to 2,700 (up 35%). In addition, we have just under 100 students enrolled on taught postgraduate awards.<sup>3</sup> The University continues to perform strongly in recruiting widening participation students, as evidenced in our provider profile, with 43.8% of our students coming from low participation neighbourhoods (TUNDRA MSOA quintiles 1 and 2) and an average of 28.7% of our students declaring at least one disability [see *Size\_of\_provision\_workbook\_10004775*]. We are one of ten universities in the UK with the highest proportion of students with a declared disability.<sup>5</sup> As a result, in the period since the last TEF we have further strengthened our student support services, the success of which is borne out in our current data [see SE5 (2.49-2.52)].

**1.11.** In support of our students’ learning we currently have 97 substantive academics (83.4 FTE), 89 hourly-paid lecturers (38.5 FTE) and 49 technicians (35.1 FTE), who are experts and practitioners in their disciplines<sup>3</sup>. This gives a highly diverse diet to our teaching and learning environment from research intensive teaching to practice informed pedagogy led by professionals still working in industry. This is a critical part of our research informed curriculum and professional practice environment in the studios and workshops.

**1.12.** From 2017 the University strategy provided a strong foundation for the learning and teaching attributes that underpinned our TEF Gold award. Its values centred around excellence in learning, teaching and the wider student experience; the continuous development of our curriculum and portfolio; excellence in research, consultancy and professional engagement; the ongoing development of our staff, buildings, and physical resources to support the academic community; and building the long-term sustainability of the University.

**1.13.** In 2021, under the guidance of a new Vice-Chancellor, a new University Strategy (2022-2027)<sup>6</sup> was developed which built upon these key commitments. The new strategy was forged through consultation with students and staff and provides a focus to accelerate our development.

Key to this is an acknowledgement of the success of the University's achievements to date in providing the foundations from which to move forward.

**1.14.** In support of the Strategy, the University has reorganised its academic management structure into six programme areas: Communication Design; Fine Art and Photography; Architecture and Interior Design; Film and Performing Arts; Fashion and Textiles; and Computer Arts and Technology. Each programme area is led by a new role of Programme Director who is responsible for the academic strategy of their discipline. The Programme Directors report to the Dean of Creative Education who is responsible for strategic delivery, learning and teaching, pedagogy and quality enhancement across the programmes and courses.

**1.15.** Our Vision is: 'Ambitious and committed to the extraordinary creativity of our staff and students, over the next five years Norwich University of the Arts will become the place where the debate about the future of creativity and creative arts education is most passionately engaged.' The new strategy retains the primacy of the student at the centre of our academic community, and clearly articulates our ambition to stimulate creativity, developing graduates with resilience and confidence who will become the agents of change in tackling future global challenges and social inequalities.

**1.16.** The following sections will expand on the key strengths we have developed since the last TEF that continue to underpin our excellent student experience and outcomes:

- Excellence and innovation in our teaching and learning, and provision of first-class teaching quality. [see SE1 (2.1–2.15); SE2 (2.16–2.22); SE3 (2.23–2.27); SE4 (2.28–2.35); SE5 (2.36–2.44); SE6 (2.53–2.68); SE7 (2.69, 2.73); SO1 (3.1–3.10); SO3 (3.24–3.31); SO4 (3.32–3.38); SO5 (3.39–3.44)]
- Working with students as partners, co-creating their education, University environment and student experience to ensure that we provide opportunities that will stretch and develop them as creative practitioners. [see SE1 (2.6–2.8); SE2 (2.17); SE3 (2.24); SE5 (2.40–2.43); SE7 (2.69–2.75)]
- Cross- and inter-disciplinary working and collaboration [see SE1 (2.2–2.5); SE2 (2.18–2.20); SE3 (2.23–2.25); SE5 (2.39–2.40); SO1 (3.15)]
- Data capability, our systems for the dissemination of data throughout our teams, and the continued and structured use of research and data as a springboard for our improvement and innovation [see SE1 (2.6–2.10); SE7 (2.73); SO1 (3.1–3.14); SO2 (3.20–3.23); SO3 (3.24–3.31); SO6 (3.45–3.50)]
- Development of a needs-based and student-centred approach to student support from first point of contact to beyond graduation [see SE5 (2.36–2.52); SO1 (3.1–3.14)]
- Research and knowledge exchange activity and how this informs and becomes embedded in our core activities [see SE3 (2.23–2.27); SO1 (3.15); SO6 (3.45–3.50)]
- Graduate employability and the growth of high-quality jobs in the regional creative economy [see SO1 3.1–3.19); SO3 (3.24–3.31)]
- Our strong sense of place and our role in our locality, celebrating Norwich, and our civic university commitment, and the importance we place on regional engagement to solve local/regional problems that have a global application [see SO1 (3.16–3.18)]

## **2. Student experience**

***SE1. The provider has embedded outstanding teaching, feedback and assessment practices that are highly effective and tailored to supporting its students' learning, progression, and attainment.***

**2.1** The statement of findings from the last TEF commended the University for course design and assessment practices that provided outstanding levels of stretch for students by encouraging experimentation, creative risk-taking and team-working skills. We have continued to develop our creative pedagogy and assessment practices through ongoing scholarship, staff CPD, co-development with students, and quality processes that engage the wider team in the review of data and development of enhancement plans [ see also SE4 (2.28-2.33 and SE7 (2.73)].

**2.2** Teaching and learning at Norwich University of the Arts is structured to allow students to engage with creative experimentation and cross-disciplinary collaboration. A distinctive feature of our model is that all students follow a shared unit framework with the same generic Learning Outcomes and Assessment Requirements across three or four years of undergraduate study through our Award and Credit Scheme (ACS).

**2.3** Three-year undergraduate courses are based on six discrete units of study, with six summative assessment points across three academic years. Four-year courses include an additional foundation year (Year 0), is based on three units that start with basic art and design skills, progressing through to more specialised subject focus. Each course scheme features the same generic units, interpreted in a discipline-specific manner through course documentation. As the units include generic Learning Outcomes, collaboration across disciplines is readily facilitated, encouraging team working and sharing best practice. BA (Hons) Architecture takes a similar approach which provides opportunities for cross-course collaboration but has additional elements to meet the Architect Registration Board (ARB) PSRB requirements.

**2.4** Collaboration is a key theme of our creative pedagogy which is highly relevant to working in the creative industries. Our curriculum is designed to support students to better understand the purpose and benefits of collaboration, together with the ability to successfully collaborate with a range of internal and external partners. A dedicated unit in Year 2 requires collaboration across disciplines and between courses.

**2.5** Courses follow the same academic calendar, allowing institutional cross-course and cross year group activities to be facilitated. The first of these activities is *Make it Manifest(o)* in which all undergraduate students, upon their arrival on campus, create work expressing hopes and expectations for their creative futures.<sup>6</sup> In addition, there are two *Interchange* weeks each year at which point regular teaching stops and students across the University engage in co-curricular creative challenge projects, learn complementary skills, go on educational visits and have the opportunity to engage in a range of wellbeing activities.

**2.6** In June 2017 the ACS was amended to include the BSc curriculum structure and generic unit outlines, which was first delivered in 2017-18. The creative science portfolio launched in 2017 with BSc UX Design and BSc Games Development, was expanded in 2021-22 with the addition of BSc Creative Computing and BSc Creative Technology. The opportunity for all undergraduate students to develop higher level technical skills has been introduced through a Level 5 Diploma in Creative Computing. An additional year of study between years 2 and 3, this can be added to any award. 18 students from a broad range of courses chose to undertake this in its first year.

**2.7** In 2019-20 we approved Year 0 courses for all awards, apart from BA Acting, for delivery in 2020-21. We had previously approved Year 0 for six courses; BA (Hons) Fine Art, BA (Hons) Film & Moving Image Production, BA (Hons) Games Art and Design, BA (Hons) Graphic Design, BA (Hons) Illustration and BA (Hons) Photography. The extension of this provision built on our experience of delivering Year 0 provision and was developed to meet demand from prospective students. Year 0 offers students with less developed entry-level skills, or who have had fewer opportunities to study creative subjects, to benefit from a foundation year to explore basic creative and study skills, and so develop their confidence to study at degree level. This was identified as a particular aspect of our provision that led to our Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide



Award for Retention in 2020; The Editor wrote, “*Adding a foundation year to courses - a process that will be complete across its full range of degrees by 2020 - ensures that students who might otherwise be at greatest risk of dropping out acquire the skills necessary to succeed in their studies by the end of the first year - the year during which students are most at risk of dropping out*”.<sup>4</sup>

**2.8** In June 2019, the structure of Year 3 was changed from two 60 credit units to one 40 credit and one 80 credit unit. This was in response to student feedback through NSS and student forums on workload and clarity of Learning Outcomes. The rationale was to allow focus on the Research Report during the first 40 credit unit and a longer period to develop final year practice in the 80 credit unit. The changes were debated with Student Reps throughout 2018-19 and students contributed directly to the re-presentation of the Learning Outcomes with key words set out in capital letters to enable students to clearly see the skills and attributes on which each learning outcomes are focused. The principles applied to Year 3 Learning Outcomes and Unit Outlines were extended to Years 1 and 2 in 2020, again in consultation with students. Between 2018 and 2021 we consulted approximately 40% of students and all learning and teaching staff on the structure, length, and content of the units. [Also demonstrates SE7]

**2.9** The impact of these changes was evidenced in an improvement in satisfaction with NSS question 8 (*The criteria used in marking have been made clear in advance*) from 66.95 to 72.41 in NSS2020<sup>7</sup>, which was reflected through the split metrics. While results for students with Specific Learning Disabilities dipped slightly, students with other disabilities increased from 52.24 to 72.84 and for underrepresented ethnic groups of students the increase was from 50.00 to 75.00.<sup>7</sup>

**2.10** The success of the shared unit framework is further illustrated through our exemplary league table ratings for learning and teaching as well as the materially above benchmark ratings for teaching, assessment and feedback for diverse groups of students (including Mature, Black and Asian students) as evidenced in the TEF dashboard. We have also consistently received above sector benchmark satisfaction scores in the NSS for questions relating to learning opportunities, particularly question 5, (*My course has provided me with opportunities to explore ideas and concepts in-depth*) and question 7 (*My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt*).

Table 1- National Student Survey Learning Opportunities (5 years)<sup>7</sup>

	Norwich University of the Arts					Sector					Difference from sector				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
5	89.3	85.47	85.87	83.76	80.08	83.9	83.98	83.52	79.53	79.65	5.4	1.49	2.35	4.23	0.43
7	83.99	83.93	81.86	83.06	79.83	81.1	80.95	80.77	76.3	77.07	2.89	2.98	1.09	6.76	2.76

**2.11** Assessment is delivered through our own holistic approach. We have developed, implemented, and enhanced our approach over the last 12 years. Units of study integrate all elements of the curriculum, including written, technical, and creative practice components. Holistic assessment recognises the interdependence of all the components listed in the assessment requirements and looks for evidence the Learning Outcomes have been met across the full submission. For example, in assessing a Learning Outcome related to research, we look for evidence of research within all the unit submission elements, which may be a body of creative practice, supporting documentation and a written report. This gives students the broadest opportunity to demonstrate they have met the Learning Outcomes. This methodology has ensured the strength of our continuation and completion data and avoided the overall grade inflation seen nationwide at other institutions.

**2.12** The quality of our assessment and feedback is consistently commended by external examiners across all subjects, some examples provided below:

*“The feedback was extensive and referenced with clarity and rigour both learning outcomes and the grading matrix [marking criteria]. This unified team voice for moderation and feedback in*

*turn allows for a coherent style of course feedback across all modules/ tutors that is to be commended” (EE Report 2017-18)*

*“The ongoing rigour and reflective feedback utilized through projects and assessment ensures learning and developmental progress is effectively mapped and understood” (EE Report (EE Report 2018-19)*

*“The precise feedback mechanisms used by the course team should be commended. Students appear to understand the language of learning outcomes and are adept at responding to them in their practical and written coursework.” (EE Report 2019-20)*

*“The Assessment Feedback Forms are well designed and enable lecturers to provide valuable and specific feedback to assist students in improving their skills. The quality of advice given to students is of the highest standard and will assist them in developing industry relevant skills” (EE Report 2020-21)*

*“There was consensus that assessment feedback provided to students was thorough, caring, meaningful and consistently of an exceptionally high standard. One External Examiner observed that feedback was the best they had seen throughout their years as an academic”. (Minutes of Joint EE Meeting 2021-22)*

**2.13** A distinctive feature of learning and teaching at Norwich is the involvement of skilled technicians in the delivery of technical teaching and support. Our technical teams develop learning materials and deliver interactive demonstrations and technical teaching to enable students to develop their skills and resolve creative outcomes to a high standard. This is a key aspect of our Creative Pedagogy where learning, experimentation and critical thinking are combined with highly skilled technical expertise and universal access to industry standard resources [see SE6]. This creates an environment that supports creative endeavour no matter how ambitious [see SE2], with technicians providing a unique additional voice and perspective on the development of students’ work. Our technicians are committed to delivery of excellence with 15% of our technicians having completed our Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education: Art, Design, Architecture and Media (PGCHE) and 50% having fellowship with Advance HE.<sup>3</sup> This is evidence of our drive for professional standards across an integrated teaching and learning team.

**2.14** Our hybrid learning model has developed significantly since it was designed in response to the Covid19 lockdowns. At the start of the lockdown in March 2020, the Senior Management Team nominated a Dean of Faculty to lead a cross-institutional group to develop an appropriate rapid response to the switch to online teaching while taking a considered view of the long-term implications of digital learning. The Norwich Expanded Arts Learning Environment (NEALE) project managed these changes with a pedagogy-first approach based in the scholarship of teaching and learning. The result has been the development of an integrated curriculum approach utilising digital teaching and learning as a complement to practical process and materials-based learning on-campus. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic students’ access to the campus was limited to different degrees, making it crucial that the available studio and workshop experiences were as rich and valuable as possible. Staff were rapidly trained and supported in using MS365 and lecture-capture software, and a range of new technology was acquired to facilitate hybrid teaching. This was all supported with a rolling programme of training and roundtables where best practice was shared between staff across all courses.

**2.15** This focused approach was one of the factors that led to the University maintaining its levels of continuation, completion and attainment during the challenging period of Covid-19 pandemic restrictions [see also SE6 (2.66) and SO2 (3.23)]. During this time, we also closed undergraduate attainment gaps in relation to disability (7% in 19-20 down to 3% in 20-21) and POLAR4 (22% in 19-20 down to 0% in 20-21)<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, in 2021 we had the highest score in the NSS for overall student satisfaction of all UK specialist art and design providers.<sup>7</sup> We

presented our approach and outcomes to adopting hybrid delivery at the *AMPS Virtual: Online Education* conference in April 2021.

***SE2.Course content and delivery inspire the provider's students to actively engage in and commit to their learning and stretch students to develop knowledge and skills to their fullest potential.***

**2.16** Our creative pedagogy is centred around enquiry-based learning delivered through projects undertaken either individually or collaboratively. Projects are designed to advance learning through experimentation and practice, leading to iterative development of skills and knowledge over time [see SO5 (3.39-3.44)]. We provide the support and strategies to enable students to gain the confidence and resilience to engage in creative risk-taking and understand the value of failure in the creative process. This is evidenced in our above-benchmark success in the NSS in relation to key questions around learning opportunities (NSS questions 5 (*I have had the opportunity to explore ideas or concepts in depth*), 6 (*I have had opportunities to bring information and ideas together*) and 7 (*I have had opportunities to apply what I have learnt*)) for NSS2018 to NSS2022.<sup>7</sup>

**2.17** We use a Project-Centred Learning (PCL) approach which builds on the key features of Problem-Based Learning (PBL): group-based, self-directed and concerned with real-life scenarios, but emphasises the project as '*an imperative that propels learning*'<sup>8</sup>, rather than focusing on the resolution of a problem, as with PBL. PCL has developed from traditional art-school pedagogy and forms a highly effective and innovative way of learning - an alternative to the traditional didactic/instruction-based approach. At Norwich we have developed and applied PCL to a broader range of technology, performance and media disciplines, allowing students to experience more immersive and effective teaching methods than allowed for in traditional classroom methods.

**2.18** Using projects as the primary vehicle for delivery provides a further means of facilitating cross-course collaboration in which students of different disciplines apply their complementary skills and differing perspectives to relevant global or industry challenges [see SE1 (2.4)].

**2.19** A core principle of our approach to PCL at Norwich is that all undergraduate courses offer opportunities for students to work on live industry briefs. Taught by academics with industry experience and facilitated by technicians, often joined by external industry experts, these project briefs contextualise learning in real creative industry scenarios and offer experience and opportunities for reflective learning that supports an integrated employability curriculum.

**2.20** Courses work with a wide range of commercial, not-for-profit, and charitable organisations at differing scales to expose students to the broad range of working environments they may encounter in their future careers. Organisations we have most recently worked with include: Aviva, Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Firstsite Gallery, The Broads Authority, Next, Matches Fashion, Hobbs, AllSaints, Norwich Historic Churches Trust, MyDNAHealth, Conran Design, Flexifoil Kites, Ubisoft, and Dovetail Games. Feedback from partner organisations informs curriculum enhancement. Two recent quotes from industry partners illustrate the impact of PCL:

*"The balance of allowing students to be expressive and exploratory but through a practical lens, stressing the real-world application and considerations of their branding, makes students at NUA very attractive to brand and communication agencies like ourselves"* –

Design Director, Conran Design

*"We are so impressed with the level of detail, creativity and professionalism applied by the students on the diet assessment prototype project. It's amazing what they produced in such a short time frame"*

Co-founder & CEO, myDNAhealth

**2.21** Live briefs are often supported by technical instruction supporting students to develop industry skills. This approach ensures that students keep pace with traditional, digital, and emerging technologies as appropriate for their discipline. In addition to live briefs, all courses

engage with industry through rich and varied visiting lecturer programmes. In total the University hosts between 180 and 220 Visiting Lecturers and Professors each year across all courses.<sup>3</sup>

**2.22** The success of our PCL approach is evidenced not only through our results on NSS Question 7 which have been consistently above sector average for the last five years: *'My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learnt.'* (Table 1), but the success of these projects themselves. External Examiners have repeatedly emphasised the high quality of student work; exhibiting strong practice and creative responses as evidenced through the quality of the degree show and success in competitions. Between 2017 and 2022, we were shortlisted or awarded multiple top industry prizes for students' projects including: 21 D&AD New Blood Awards, 14 Creative Conscious Awards, five RIBA East Student Awards for Outstanding Design, 8 Royal Television Society East Student Awards, two Penguin Book Jacket Awards, five Association of Photographer Awards, 7 Society of Publication Designers Awards, 8 students chosen for the GUCCI Global Design Graduate Show and 24 Graduate Fashion Week Awards.<sup>2</sup>

**SE3. The provider uses research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement to contribute to an outstanding academic experience for its students.**

**2.23** The University employs a practice-led approach to teaching and learning, and over the past five years the student experience has been further informed and enhanced by research and knowledge exchange. The University performed strongly in REF 2014, and in 2013 won a Times Higher Award for Innovation for its approach to engaging students in knowledge exchange, giving a strong base to build on.

**2.24** The creative process is necessarily one that engages students in the creation of new knowledge through the production of artefacts and concepts developed using independent research and practice. This is underpinned by our academic staff engaging in research, professional practice and/or knowledge exchange. Staff developing practice-based research alongside students in the teaching environment stretches the students' perception of what is possible. Staff collaborating with students in knowledge exchange projects contextualises teaching in the real world as well as bringing the learning from industry back into the studio.

**2.25** To support our staff with their professional engagement, the University has continued to develop three professional pathways: Teaching and Student Engagement; Research; and Knowledge Exchange. Staff align to a pathway to develop their professional aspirations and may switch between pathways as their careers progress. This professional environment was enhanced through the creation of two new Dean roles in 2021, a Dean of Creative Education and a Dean of Research and Knowledge Exchange. Pathways are embedded as follows:

**2.25.1 Teaching and Student Engagement:** Staff on this pathway engage in pedagogic research disseminated within the University and across the sector through conferences and publications, supported by our Learning and Teaching Excellence Fund. Since the last TEF, staff participating in our PGCHE programme have designed and conducted action research projects investigating: student anxiety and group critiques; increasing access to work placements; playful pedagogy; teaching sustainability in architecture; decolonising games art and design literature; increasing participation online; use of virtual learning environments (VLEs); and designing inclusive physical sessions for disabled actors.

**2.25.2 Research:** Academic staff routinely bring their individual practice research to lead collaborative projects involving our students. For example, between 2017 and 2021 students of User Experience Design and Illustration were co-creators of the Mapping the Broads research initiative which sought to connect the communities of Norfolk with their natural landscape - presented as an Impact Case Study in our latest REF submission. The continuing success of staff research projects can be seen directly in the increased percentage of staff submitted to the REF



2022 (up 150% from an FTE of 7.45 in 2014 to 18.1 in 2022, representing 22% of our permanent academic FTE), and a significant increase in quality with 71% rated as 3\* to 4\* outcomes in REF 2022 compared with 55% in REF 2014.<sup>9</sup> For students, the opportunity to engage in research stretches their approach to creative risk-tasking and strengthens their understanding of context, both of which are core aspects of learning.

**2.25.3 Knowledge Exchange:** staff on the Knowledge Exchange pathway provide opportunities for students to work directly with industry partners. These projects explore new territory in creative practice and industry in their relevant disciplines; they are opportunities for live CPD for academics and they involve students directly in industry R&D, offering excellent opportunities for employability learning. Previous partners have included Aviva, BBC East, Marsh and Associated British Foods. Two recent projects, the 'Clever Pea' design collaboration with John Innes Centre (JIC) and Virtual Production collaboration with October Films for Channel 5, have resulted in outcomes that stretch sector knowledge, with the result that the students involved will graduate with knowledge in advance of many industry professionals. Furthermore, the JIC Clever Pea project, which has developed effective communication design of glycaemic index science to prevent and reverse Type 2 Diabetes, exemplifies our approach to regionally based projects with the potential for global reach. Students involved in these projects have been inspired by the opportunity for their creative practice to be part of positive change with far-reaching impact.

**2.26** Additional opportunities for students to engage with practice, research and knowledge exchange are provided through the University's *East Gallery*, which according to its strategy works to "*proactively engage with our students and support the research and knowledge exchange culture through creating a programme of high-quality, vibrant, and inspiring exhibitions and events, enhancing the creative environment of the University.*"<sup>10</sup> It regularly features exhibitions from contemporary artists and designers from Grayson Perry to Orla Kiely, with recent exhibitions of original and challenging work by Ryan Gander and by the Singh Twins. Academic workshops designed to promote student engagement with exhibitions are a core element of programming.

**2.27** The richness of the practice, research and knowledge exchange environment we provide for our students is evident in the exceptional quality and industry recognised outcomes of our student work [SE2 2.22]. We continue to enhance our approach through appointment of a new Dean of Research and Knowledge Exchange role and the consequent development of the 2022-27 Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy. The strategy aims to further embed research and knowledge exchange into our core approach to creative education, through "*combin[ing] our inquiry-led pedagogy with our research practice... enabling us to debate with one another, see the world differently, and create new possibilities for a more equal and sustainable future.*"

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

**2.28** Training and professional development for academic and technical staff is delivered through the Learning and Teaching Department. Training is open to all student-facing staff, with needs identified through an annual Appraisal and Development Review process.

**2.29** Teaching quality and enhancement is supported by Peer Observation of Professional Practice Scheme (POPPS), an annual system of teaching observations facilitating peer feedback and creating networking opportunities across disciplines. All substantive academic, student support and technical staff are included, and participation feeds into annual developmental reviews.

**2.30** The University maintains a Professional Recognition Scheme accredited by AdvanceHE. The scheme has two routes: the PGCHE, completion of which awards professional recognition at Fellow (FHEA) level; and the CPD route for professional recognition at Senior Fellow, Fellow or Associate Fellow levels. The scheme is led by an Educational Development Coordinator who provides training, writing support and facilitates a mentoring system.

**2.31** Academic staff who do not have a teaching qualification are required to engage with the professional recognition scheme. The scheme is open to all staff, including part-time hourly lecturers. Since 2018, 36 staff have successfully completed the PGCHE, and as of 31 July 2022 a total of 76 staff hold a PGCHE qualification. We currently have 73.8% of academic staff with AdvanceHE at Associate, Fellow or Senior Fellow level, considerably above the sector average of 45.6%.<sup>11</sup> We have increased this figure by 10% since 2019-20.

**2.32** A programme of lunchtime development sessions is offered annually, addressing training needs identified through annual monitoring and the POPPS process. These range from essential training in assessment and feedback through to workshops on innovative lesson structures and encouraging student participation. Six of these bitesize workshops have been grouped together into a synchronous online programme for new starters called *Developing Your Teaching Skills*. In addition, Human Resources facilitate regular training in leadership, project management, and the support of students with specific learning differences (SpLD).

**2.33** Recognising the importance of regular CPD to maintain and enhance our assessment processes, workshops are delivered each year for staff engaged in assessment. All staff who are new to assessing students are required to attend. Workshops are delivered to course teams where an improvement need is identified through data analysis during the annual monitoring process.

**2.34** Norwich's approach to holistic assessment [see SE1 (2.11-2.12)] and support of an assessment for learning approach was presented at the AdvanceHE Assessment and Feedback symposium in 2019. The pedagogical theory underpinning our approach is highlighted in advanced CPD sessions and in an annual seminar delivered as part of the PGCHE.

**2.35** Each year our programme of University Development Days includes opportunities for staff across all academic, technical and professional services departments to take part in impactful continuing staff development on issues affecting students including over the past several years sessions specifically on assessment, feedback, anti-racist pedagogy, teaching and student engagement, research, and knowledge exchange.

**SE5. The provider ensures a supportive learning environment, and its students have access to a wide and readily available range of outstanding quality academic support tailored to their needs.**

**2.36** Academic support is centred on a needs-based and student-centred approach throughout the student life cycle. It is embedded in our courses and is supported through professional services provided by the Library, Careers and Student Support.

**2.37** Our students come from a diverse range of backgrounds and educational experiences, and our student profile demonstrates a strong widening participation element [see Size of provision data]. Consequently, our students require diverse forms of support at significant levels [see Provider Context, 1.10].

**2.38** Students engage with our support before they arrive, using information and services offered through our pre-enrolment portal, and are fully inducted into the range of support available as soon as they arrive. Academic and technical staff work closely with students to co-design their support as they progress through the course. We continue to monitor and engage with students through tutorials, attendance monitoring, and assessment, to ensure that we identify when an individual is at risk of academic 'failure' or may require more specialised support or intervention.

**2.39** Enhancing the transition to higher education has been a focus over the past 5 years as we have monitored unit pass rates in Year 0 and Year 1 and listened to student feedback. Over this time, discrete initiatives made to help students settle into university have been brought together and developed further under the banner of *Wayfinding Week*. Using feedback from student representatives and the recommendations from *A Student Futures Manifesto*<sup>12</sup>, every year group now takes part in a "freshers' week" to help them navigate the year ahead. Activities during the

week support students in making the transition into and within higher education. This helps students to feel part of a community of creative learners and reinforces their sense of belonging. *Wayfinding Week's* impact is amplified by social and society events hosted by the SU.

**2.40** An important element of the *Wayfinding Week* is participation in the university wide *Make it Manifest(o)* project, developed through our partnership with students and the SU. *Make it Manifest(o)* brings all undergraduate students together in a creative project that fosters cross-course engagement (an experience repeatedly requested by students), collaboration and opportunities to build friendships. Two *Interchange* weeks later in the year take these opportunities further as students across years and differing disciplines work together on global challenge projects and workshops. [see SE1 (2.5)]

**2.41** In 2020/21 the *Need to Know* initiative was developed in collaboration with our SU as a vehicle to embed wellbeing practices, life skills and study strategies directly into curriculum delivery. The programme is delivered through on-demand resources and is targeted at incoming Year 0 and Year 1 students. It addresses topics such as creative self-confidence, resilience and risk-taking. Course teams promote and refer to *Need to Know* within their taught sessions. Resources are located on a VLE page which received over 7,500 hits in its first year (2021/22). Initial findings from the pilot were presented to the AdvanceHE symposium on Student Success and Retention in February 2022.

**2.42** The impact of embedding curriculum initiatives can be seen through further improvement in our strong continuation results, which at the end of November 2022, showed the number of undergraduate students who had withdrawn as just 0.26%, compared to 0.62% at the same point in 2021. We have also seen improvement in the 'pass at first attempt rates' in Year 1, which have increased from 91% in 2017-18 to 96% in 2021-22 (first unit BA1a) and from 88% to 94% over the same period for the second unit BA1b. To date we have not seen the same level of increase in our Year 0 pass rates and so this remains a focus in terms of enhancement.<sup>3</sup>

**2.43** In Spring 2022, the PVC Academic and PVC Student Experience met the SU and Student Representatives from all courses to present sector research on the positive impact of belonging on wellbeing, mental health and academic performance<sup>13</sup>. A range of activities and interventions were proposed through this meeting, including SU social and society opportunities and institutional support for wellbeing and living as a student. In response the University has prioritised the co-design of new initiative, the *Belonging Project*, included within our Operational Plan. In November 2022 we joined the *Building Belonging* collaborative project run by AdvanceHE, alongside eleven HEIs across the country, to gain insights from the sector and facilitate development of the project.<sup>14</sup>

**2.44** The Library provides academic support to students through a range of on-demand and one-to-one support that can be tailored by students to meet their needs. Library inductions are provided when students first arrive on their course, and students can book further appointments as they progress. The Library has developed a programme of asynchronous Information Literacy (IL) sessions which are complemented with face-to-face practical workshops with specialist Subject Librarians. Students engage with the programme to learn research skills, refresh their knowledge, or stretch themselves by exploring more complex information. The asynchronous provision of the core components allows students to engage with the materials at their own pace, which is of particular benefit for students with SpLDs.

**2.45** Students have access to a Study Skills programme which covers a range of topics such as time management, effective reading, critical thinking, academic writing, and getting the most out of lectures. The service is delivered through a combination of one-to-one sessions, workshops and online guides and videos. Sessions are designed to support students at each stage of their course, who can also tailor this support through the one-to-one tutorials. Engagement with one-to-one tutorials has more than doubled from 320 appointments in 2019-2020 to 640 in 2021-22. Overall,

there were 2924 student engagements with the study skills service in the last academic year compared to 998 in 2019-20.<sup>3</sup> Evaluation of evidence shows that study skills support has a positive impact on student attainment. Comparing the before and after average marks for 308 students who attended one-to-one study skills sessions showed a four-percentage point improvement for 61% of students who attended one or more sessions.

**2.46** The Employability service provides academic support through timetabled sessions in the integrated employability curriculum and students can book additional one-to-one tutorials with the Careers team to obtain tailored support depending on their needs. [ see SO1 (3.1 – 3.11)].

**2.47** In addition to the embedded academic support delivered through the curriculum, students can access a range of individual support through Student Support services. This includes: wellbeing guidance, disability support (including help with Disabled Students' Allowance applications), SpLD and Mental Health/Autistic Spectrum Condition Mentor support, study skills, financial advice and support (through hardship funds and bursaries), and accommodation services. Student Support also work with course teams to enhance curriculum delivery to create more inclusive environments and experiences.

**2.48** A high percentage of our students declare disabilities (increased from 25.5% in 2016/17 to 28.7% in 2020/21 [see *Size\_of\_provision\_workbook\_10004775*]) with an increasing number declaring a mental health-related disability as one of their categories. Mental health was identified as a significant contributory factor to gaps in progression and attainment for disabled and ethnic minority students in our Access and Participation Plan 2020 – 2025<sup>15</sup> and we have made enhancements to our service in response to this evaluation in order to strengthen mental health and wellbeing support.

**2.49** We have increased the resource dedicated to specialist mental health provision through the addition of a Mental Health & Safeguarding Manager in November 2020 and a new Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisor in July 2021. Our team of Student Support Advisors has increased from two to five in the period between 2020 and 2022. We also created a new post of Associate Director of Student Support in 2022 to provide greater strategic and operational leadership. This appointment has enabled a closer alignment of Student Support with our academic support to provide an integrated approach, with the Associate Director collaborating with the Dean of Creative Education on several projects including *Need to Know* [see SE5 (2.41)] and our new *Belonging Project* [see SE5 (2.42)].

**2.50** Tailored, individual support is an essential feature of our Student Support service ensuring that our students can access their learning, and post-Covid they can choose to engage with our Student Support team digitally or in-person. We also work with a range of partners, including youth charities, support agencies, counselling services and NHS mental health services to provide a broad range of services in those areas that fall outside our in-house specialisms.

**2.51** We have developed a range of in-house resources that students can use to identify their own support needs and build their resilience, allowing them to work through challenges and find their own enablers to better mental health. In 2021-22 we developed a set of resources, available in digital and hard copy format, that enable individual students to identify their challenges through a *Wheel of Needs*. In 2018, using a grant from AdvanceHE, Student Support collaborated with students and recent alumni to create a set of animated resources, featuring an engaging character 'Blue' who experienced common triggers to anxiety. The animations are disseminated through foyer screens, prompting early contact with Student Support services.

**2.52** The impact of our student support approach is evident in our indicators. Our aggregated NSS Academic Support percentage from students reporting a disability is 6.8% higher than benchmark and is 0.8% above the value for students with no disability. Additionally, the value for Black students is 13% above benchmark and for Asian students 5.4% above benchmark. These



are reassuring statistics for as we maintained a focus on effective support for each and all of our students [see TEF\_workbook\_10004775].

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

**2.53** Creative education at Norwich is contingent upon the studios, labs and workshops that form our campus. Making is integral to our curriculum and our resources support students to produce original and resolved physical and digital artefacts, performances and services by the time they graduate. The quality of the facilities we provide students has been repeatedly recognised in our being in the Top 5 for University Facilities in the WhatUni Student Choice Awards and top 5 for Student Facilities by IDP Connect (2019).<sup>2</sup>

**2.54** Our commitment to providing excellent, industry-standard facilities and equipment is exemplified through our range of technical workshops, each of which are available to all students to support their creative projects. The campus includes 15 specialist workshops to support traditional and digital fabrication, image making and creative science. We invest heavily in technical resources through an annual enhancement programme to ensure facilities remain industry standard and appropriate to the current and future needs of creative professionals.

**2.55** Each workshop is staffed by skilled technicians who are also creative practitioners. Technicians provide both group instruction and individual advice to students wishing to experiment with new materials and processes to advance their practice. Our technical team are consistently praised by external examiners and students in both the NSS and internal surveys, for example: *"There is also good technical backup to support workshop access and the delivery of students' technical ambitions for their work."* (EE Report 2021-22)  
*"Excellent technical staff and support is evident, and the comments from the students were glowing"* (EE Report 2018-19)

**2.56** Courses are housed in studios and labs tailored to the requirements of the discipline. Equipment and spaces are designed to facilitate collaborative working and reflect the creative industries that students will enter. We invest in our campus and identify additions and enhancements as our portfolio develops. In 2021, we opened Duke Street Riverside building, a £15M investment containing purpose-built studios for performance and a 275 square metre production studio with lighting grid and gantry and retractable seating for 300.

**2.57** Our Media Resource Centre (MRC) provides industry-standard equipment for students to borrow, enabling them to advance their practice and gain industry relevant technical skills. Over 1,300 items of professional Photography, Video and Audio equipment are available to borrow, ranging from entry level stock for documenting practice, to high end specialist equipment for photography and film production. Technicians within the MRC provide advice on equipment selection and operation.

**2.58** There are over 500 Apple and PC workstations available across the campus housed in computer labs, studios, teaching spaces and the library. The computer labs offer professional hardware and software, appropriate for the full range of disciplines at Norwich. Over 150 new high specification workstations were installed within the St. Andrews House building in 2017-18, shortly after it was acquired, in response to the expansion of our Computer Arts and Technology courses. The last major computer refresh took place in 2019/20.

**2.59** We provide excellent library resources and our spend as a percentage of institutional expenditure is double the UK average, according to 2020-21 SCONUL data. Our resources have grown considerably and diversified as the course portfolio has developed, for example our e-book provision increased from 843 titles in 2017/18 to over 500,000 in 2022, more than three times higher than the sector in terms of eBooks per student FTE. The library team work closely with academic staff to ensure disciplines are appropriately represented and resources promoted.

**2.60** The library is an important physical and digital space facilitating a sense of belonging to the Norwich learning community. Following the launch of its website in 2017 to facilitate easy access for students through enhanced search facilities, additional webpages were added in 2021 to promote resources on themes such as decolonising the curriculum, inclusivity, and sustainability; encouraging students to research more broadly and independently explore wider global issues.

**2.61** Students are encouraged to co-create the library space and define their place within it. Library display takeovers promoting important themes such as Black History Month are enabled through collaboration with the SU and course teams. Vitrine spaces are available for students to display their work, with library staff supporting installation and promotion across the university. In 2020 the library developed a Zine Collection to help highlight unpublished artists. Zine making workshops are offered to students, who create zines on topics important to them and submit them for the collection. Both the zines' submissions and library takeovers help students to see themselves within the library collection, increase their sense of belonging and ownership, and realise the library is not only a space of creative research, but of creative production.

**2.62** Students access information about their course, technical workshops, digital resources, and the wider services available to them through our VLE. Following feedback from students we initiated a review to improve the user experience in 2021-22. An Educational Developer led the project which involved widespread consultation with staff and students through exercises that drew on our own expertise in user experience design. Extensive user testing followed, resulting in a redesigned VLE with improvements to the structure and navigation of content.

**2.63** Within our hybrid learning model we have implemented virtual collaborative whiteboarding platforms, Padlet and Miro, and polling software, Vevox. These platforms are used within creative industries to facilitate collaboration and develop and manage projects. These tools are essential for all our specialisms where work is predominantly visual, and collaboration is required. They have also become key to not only working on group projects but also an efficient way of gathering student feedback.

**2.64** In 2021 we received funding from the OfS for capital investment in a 50-access point Virtual Desktop Interface (VDI) to enable students in any location to remotely access high specification computers and software such as Maya or Unreal Engine on their own machines, providing flexibility in location and times of study. Further OfS funding is allowing us to double the capacity to 100 access points in 2023. This supports our move into creative computing and technology and the increasing demand for our BA Games Art and Design course.

**2.65** The need for a VDI was explored following the Covid-19 pandemic and can be identified on the TEF dashboard which shows that our results for Learning Resources are at or above benchmark in all categories except for the computing subject group. That dip in our data is attributable to problems experienced by computing students during lockdown who had difficulties accessing the higher specification software they rely on. Our end of year survey in 2020 indicated that 83% of students used a laptop as their primary device, but 34% had experienced difficulties in accessing high-end computing power and specialist design software.<sup>16</sup> As may be expected, we returned to previously high satisfaction levels from a low of 71.9% in Year 3 (NSS2021) to 78.2% in Year 4 (NSS2022), when campus access was reinstated [see TEF\_workbook\_10004775].

**2.66** As access to workshops and facilities is an important aspect of our students' educational experience, we were particularly challenged during the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. Our response was agile; technical instruction moved online, and we provided Adobe Creative Cloud licenses to all students to enable them to access the software remotely. We provided remote printing services and equipment loans across all technical areas including film production equipment, cameras and lighting kits, mannequins and large format printing, fabric printing laser

printing, 3D printing and laser cutting processing. We continued our library service through remote borrowing and Covid-safe collection services.

**2.67** Once Covid restrictions were lifted we extended opening hours in our studios and workshops to evenings and Saturdays to enable students who had been affected by the restrictions more time to spend in the specialist facilities and have retained these opening hours since. We also continue to provide Adobe Creative Cloud licenses to all students.

**2.68** Our approach to the design and delivery of physical and virtual learning environments provides freedom for experimentation, collaboration, and enhances student sense of belonging and being part of a creative community. It helps to build confidence by providing opportunities to work alongside students from different areas and levels of study.

***SE7. The provider embeds engagement with its students, leading to continuous improvement to the experiences and outcomes of its students.***

**2.69** At Norwich we offer many formal and informal opportunities for students to work with us as partners, co-creating their educational and wider experience. We have actively increased opportunities for student involvement in curriculum, course design and enhancement processes since the last TEF by including the Students' Union as members of key working groups and adding further feedback opportunities and mechanisms at course and programme level.

**2.70** We introduced a programme of Deans' Forums (now titled Student Forums) in 2017 which provide opportunities for student representatives to receive updates, ask questions and raise concerns, and engage with new initiatives. In 2019, the VLE was enhanced to include a Student Voice section for each course which provides information on actions taken in response to issues raised, along with details of Student Representatives and mechanisms for raising concerns. These initiatives complement our firmly established formal mechanisms for engaging with the student body through: student representation system at course level (two elected representatives per year group per course), Student Representatives Group (SRG) (chaired by the PVC Academic), and student representation on periodic review and course approval events.

**2.71** The SU Sabbatical President, Sabbatical Vice-President, Liberation Officers and other students are active members of all governance committee and working groups across the University. Students and their representatives co-developed the University Strategy, and work with us on many areas of university business including the TEF, Access and Participation Plan, Technical Review and Workshop Expansion, and Sustainability Working Groups; and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Students co-deliver the planning and organisation of collaborative events and activities such as *Interchange*, *Need to Know*, *Make it Manifest(o)*, End of Year Shows and Graduation. Our SU President is a member of our Board of Governors and sits on all governance committees including Academic Board; the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee; and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee.

**2.72** From January 2021 to the end of the academic year (the second COVID 19 lockdown period) we offered all students the chance to ask questions and express concerns to senior management through a fortnightly series of informal online 'townhalls'. This contributed to all five of our Student Experience indicators being materially above benchmark in 2021 [see TEF\_workbook\_10004775]. As attendance had dropped by the end of the year, the sessions were not continued into 2021-22. We now consider this to be a contributory factor to the dip in our 2022 NSS score for Student Voice, and we have, in response, increased the quantity and quality of feedback loops with students through the mechanisms described in this section.

**2.73** Our BaSELINE (Belonging and Student Engagement Leading INnovation and Enhancement) initiative, combines a vertical analysis of the NSS institutional scores with a horizontal analysis of course results to define a set of priorities for enhancement. We draw on sector research and best practice to provide a framework for targeted enhancement activity. This

year as part of the BaSELINE project, the Student Forums, chaired by Programme Directors, have facilitated co-production of course enhancement plans and brought a wider pool of students into the enhancement process. This has provided a forum for students to engage with concerns beyond their own personal experience, feed into initiatives to help tackle them and monitor progress on actions throughout the year.

**2.74** We respond to the institutional concerns students raise by encouraging co-creation of solutions. Some examples of responses to student-led initiatives are: the drafting and finalisation of our student Trans\* policy (approved in June 2022) which involved consultation with students and the SU; the implementation of an Interfaith and Quiet Room in September 2021; and implementation of a Student Kitchen to provide commuter students with facilities to heat food and access lockers to store their work and belongings.

**2.75** We believe in students as partners and activists in their education journey. We continue to embed engagement and work with students to make enhancements that improve the learning experience and university more widely.

### 3. Student Outcomes

#### ***SO1 The provider deploys, and tailors approaches that are highly effective in ensuring its students succeed in and progress beyond their studies.***

**3.1** Our approach to student outcomes is designed for a diverse widening participation student population with enhanced needs for tailored support. We have overhauled student support services through both increased staffing [see SE5 (2.49)] and a range of new initiatives and services. We have enhanced the *Profile* employability programme [see 3.5] with a new set of award-winning resources that use gamification to enable students to identify their development needs and the support they need. The *Need to Know* wellbeing project [see SE5 (2.41)] is now available to all students. We have implemented *Wayfinding Week* [see SE5 (2.40)] at the start of each year of study. The combined effect of these initiatives is that, beyond the time series of the TEF data set, we continue to achieve high levels of continuation [see SO2 (3.20-3.23)].

**3.2** We monitor and analyse attendance at taught sessions to help us identify students in need of intervention. Course teams offer supplementary tuition as needed and the student support team are alerted if students start to disengage. We are now developing an increasingly robust engagement strategy based on detailed learning analytics, which we will use to tailor our approach further. This will enable students to make informed decisions about how they navigate their university experience through an engagement dashboard.

**3.3** The *Belonging Project* [see SE5 (2.43)] will provide additional information that feeds into our data-driven approach to enhancement. We will evaluate the project using a model adapted from sector research and knowledge gained through the Advance HE *Building Belonging* collaboration. The model will use longitudinal data to track interventions at multiple levels, including the ability to analyse targeted interventions based on demographic data and other characteristics. This methodology will enable us to embed a continuous improvement approach.

**3.4** Our Employability initiatives were commended in the 2017 TEF. However, a detailed data review in 2017-18 together with student consultation, identified three issues that continue to undermine graduate success: confidence to aim high, relocation (graduates in highly skilled jobs outside of Norfolk had average earnings 30% higher than those who stayed<sup>17</sup>), and the breadth of highly skilled jobs available.

**3.5** In 2017 we appointed a Director of Innovation and Engagement with a background in industry innovation who worked with employers to identify the ten most sought-after transferable skills and design our gamified employability programme, *Profile*. The ten skills are: Teamwork, Positive Attitude, Flexibility, Communication, Responding to Feedback, Resilience, Attention to



Detail, Customer Focus, Interpreting the Brief, and Meeting Deadlines. This year as part of our continuous improvement of *Profile*, we are incorporating 'Creative Risk Taking' and 'Subject Knowledge' as two new metrics for self-assessment. These titles reflect the language of our unit handbooks for consistency and clarity.

**3.5.1** *Profile* is the start point for one-to-one consultation with employability advisers. All *Profile* interactions link employability skills to lived experience, through course activities, industry projects, part time work or volunteering. We use the concept that difficult thinking (such as career planning) is easier to navigate by engaging a 'play' state. Physical 'props' (specially designed playing cards, board games and VR experiences), which were co-designed with students to look like games, help induce a play state that facilitates difficult thinking. *Profile* encourages students to consider their career futures by facilitating high-quality person-to-person interactions.

**3.5.2** *Profile* is supported by *Profile Digital*, a bespoke platform that enables students to track their own skills gain, log evidence of their progress and connect to employment opportunities through our jobs board. Students access the platform on desktop and mobile devices and the resources are voice-control enabled to reduce barriers for different types of learners.

**3.6** In 2021, we ranked in the top ten universities for careers advice by StudentCrowd.<sup>2</sup> The sustained success of our approach can be attributed to four work strands since TEF 2017: deploying and continually improving *Profile*; promoting opportunities to develop transferable skills; working with the academic teams to deliver *sector-specific* employability preparation and developing better awareness of alternative career routes; and enhancing opportunities for work-based learning.

**3.7** Employability was integrated into the curriculum in 2018 with sessions designed and delivered by the Careers team for all courses at key points in the timetable and assessment requirements added at the end of Year 2 and Year 3. Following this enhancement, student interaction with the Careers team increased from 30% to 80% within a year. At the end of 2021/22, over 90% students had actively engaged with the Careers team and the resources we offer<sup>3</sup>.

**3.8** In Year 1, *Profile* skills are introduced using card games to help students reflect on the link between their experience and skills gain. Immersive *Profile* games delivered in VR (funded by HEFCE Catalyst) enable students to safely experience creative workplaces and further contextualise the ten *Profile* skills. Year 2 is designed to build confidence and familiarity with the world of work. It starts with a detailed *Profile* skills audit (in the form of a board game) followed by sessions to support students to develop creative CVs and elevator pitches and prepare for interviews. Towards the end of the year students are offered sessions on business start-up and freelancing, which is emphasised to reflect the structure of the creative industries and respond to data that shows 21% of our 2021 graduates started their careers as entrepreneurs. Since Covid, and in response to student data harvested from *Profile Digital*, the Year 3 employability curriculum begins with a resilience audit and continues with support for career launch through development of portfolios, showreels and/or evidence-based job applications. In 2021 we introduced a course-linked employability adviser system which helped to bring employability advisers and academics together and tailor careers advice to discipline-specific knowledge.

**3.9** In 2021, the University designed and piloted a virtual work experience project, *Connected Threads* in which Year 2 students worked online with design agencies. *Profile* was used to help students identify skills to develop within the placement opportunity. Students were then supported to reflect on their development after the placement. Student feedback indicated that they found the experience highly valuable, with online engagement enabling them to learn professional etiquette on Teams and Zoom.

**3.10** We are launching a Level 5 Diploma in Creative Professional Development in 2023-24 which builds on the success of *Connected Threads*. The diploma is an innovative one-year taught

programme available to all students as an additional year, consisting of employability and entrepreneurship education complemented by creative industry work placements.

**3.11** We offer students employment opportunities as Student Ambassadors who work with prospective students to provide information at Open Days and other recruitment events. Ambassadors are available to discuss aspects of the course with applicants and currently we have 150 students employed across all courses. In 2022 we enhanced the Ambassador scheme by offering Student Library Assistants, Gallery Assistants and Technical Assistant roles to students interested in working in library, archive or gallery settings and those interested in developing skills in technical instruction. This initiative offers valuable work experience to students, which enhances their preparation for employment.

**3.12** Graduation marks an important transition for students. Showing work publicly in various forms has always been an important element of our courses and in response to lockdown in 2020 we introduced an annual online Graduate Showcase, which had 8,629 discrete visits in 2022.<sup>3</sup> The showcase is orientated to employers who can search student work tagged by skill or discipline. After Covid, students and industry partners told us that a physical degree show remained important in the graduation process, and this was re-introduced *alongside* the digital showcase in 2022.

**3.13** The transition to alumni is supported by a week-long seminar and podcast series, 'So What's Next?' delivered by recent graduates which offers resilience strategies for creative graduates. Six months after graduation, we carry out the Graduate Outcomes Predictor Survey, using the format of the HESA Graduate Outcomes Survey. Graduates are contacted by our Careers team to collect data and engage them in Careers services and resources. Alumni retain access to *Profile Digital*, along with all other employability and start-up support.

**3.14** The funded graduate internship programme we developed with creative SMEs ran from 2019 to 2021 and resulted in more than 90% of the graduates involved securing full-time employment as a direct result.<sup>3</sup> The programme, designed in a similar way to a blue-chip graduate training scheme, integrated coaching and peer learning based on *Profile*.

**3.15** Creative graduates add value to all sectors of industry using the skills in critical thinking, analysis, problem-solving, active learning, resilience, and flexibility<sup>18</sup> that are intrinsic to our creative curriculum. We promote Knowledge Exchange (KE) projects that offer students and recent graduates the chance to develop their creative practice within the context of *other* economic sectors. Beginning with a project with the international insurance business, Marsh in 2018 we have developed an innovative approach to offering design-led solutions to business problems using a cross-university team of staff and students and demonstrating the value that creative graduates can add to many different workplaces. We went on to launch *Connecting Creative Capability* (2020/21) funded by New Anglia LEP, which comprised workshops and student internships within non-creative sector businesses.

**3.16** Crucial to our employability approach has been the way that the University has developed its strong sense of place through its campus and links to regional creative industry. Students experience learning in a physical place where creative business is evident all around them. Over the last 10 years, the University has invested in the regeneration of Norwich's 'Creative Quarter' not just to create future-facing, state of the art teaching facilities, but also to attract creative entrepreneurs to Norwich. Most recently we have acquired a new building, 20 Bank Plain, which in addition to providing a central hub for our own community, marks a new approach in our civic mission, opening the University up to the business community, knowledge base partners and the citizens of Norwich.

**3.17** The Creative Quarter is now home to a diverse range of creative businesses that are founded or staffed by our graduates including Foolproof, Krow, Immersive Studios, Copper Crayon,

Thyngs and User Story. Some of these businesses were supported by the University's incubation programme between 2016-2020 which facilitated the start-up of 65 businesses.

**3.18** We work with employers in an agile manner, ensuring that our industry knowledge remains current and relevant and responding to employer needs through fast-tracked course innovation that has a high level of graduate employability success by design. Most recently we introduced our Creative Science portfolio, developed in response to the New Anglia sector skills plan and New Anglia Tech Board. Using knowledge exchange to inform our innovation approach we are developing routes where strong graduate outcomes are predicted. More recent portfolio additions, BSc Games Development and BSc User Experience Design, have seen almost 100% employment in their first cohorts.

**3.19** This year we launched three new Creative Science short courses, funded by the OfS Short Course Trial, targeting mid-career learners and offering a 'tech top-up' to undergraduate students on any course. The development of these short courses signals our commitment to expanding the flexibility of our provision through short courses and CPD offers.

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

**3.20** Our TEF metrics show that our rates of continuation are all at or materially above benchmark for all split indicators. We are particularly pleased with our results for Black (2.7% above) Asian (2.9% above) and mixed-race (3.1% above) students as continuation rates for under-represented groups was an area of improvement that we identified through our Access and Participation Plans [see SE5 (2.48)].

**3.21** Completion metrics are even more positive with 27 out of 29 reportable completion indicators materially above benchmark, and the other two within benchmark.

**3.22** This can be attributed to our work across both student support and academic enhancement. The enhancements can be seen in the continual work on our cross-university ACS and its unified work on clarity and consistency of Learning Outcomes; our work on holistic assessment – including staff annual CPD on best practice in assessment; our statistically high number of both academic and technical staff with PGCHE and/or Advance HE Fellowship; and our responsiveness to the needs of our demographic of students.

**3.23** We are pleased to have continued these high levels of continuation and completion through the Covid-19 pandemic, without grade inflation. Our response to supporting our students through the pandemic restrictions comprised flexing our delivery to bring teaching online, providing innovative solutions to remote access to our workshops and equipment, and through a regulatory response with extended deadlines, extenuating circumstances mitigations which allowed greater flexibility around the borderline and the removal of capping on resubmissions<sup>19</sup>.

Norwich University of the Arts  
Award Analysis - All Undergraduate Courses (Home, EU and Overseas)

Academic	Classification							Classification %						
	1	2.1	2.2	3	ORD	DIP HE	Total	1	2.1	2.2	3	ORD	DIP HE	Total
2016/17	194	227	118	29	9	9	586	33.1%	38.7%	20.1%	4.9%	1.5%	1.5%	100%
2017/18	207	223	120	36	11	15	612	33.8%	36.4%	19.6%	5.9%	1.8%	2.5%	100%
2018/19	152	280	126	45	6	9	618	24.6%	45.3%	20.4%	7.3%	1.0%	1.5%	100%
2019/20	152	251	131	25	4	9	572	26.6%	43.9%	22.9%	4.4%	0.7%	1.6%	100%
2020/21	216	267	134	26	3	21	667	32.4%	40.0%	20.1%	3.9%	0.4%	3.1%	100%
2021/22	227	257	122	13	7	17	643	35.3%	40.0%	19.0%	2.0%	1.1%	2.6%	100%

***SO3. There are outstanding rates of successful progression for the provider's students and courses.***

**3.24** Our TEF metrics show a rising profile of results in the time-based series. All but six of the 219 split indicators (3%) are at or materially above benchmark. Of the six, two have been

previously addressed and the remaining four were simply past markers within progression – a metric that we have now significantly improved from 62.2% to 69.4% over three years. Currently our Progression is 1.8% above benchmark [see TEF\_workbook\_10004775]

**3.25** 94% of graduates were in employment or further study at the time of the Graduate Outcomes survey (2020 cohort). This measure has shown a small increase from 93% in the 2018 cohort (Graduate Outcomes, 2021)<sup>22</sup>

**3.26** Our challenge in employability is closely linked to geographical location and our commitment to widening participation. Not all creative sectors are present in the East of England, with Fashion, Publishing and Screen Industries particularly poorly represented. Many of our students are recruited from the region, and from economic backgrounds that do not allow them to relocate to London and the Southeast, where 62% creative businesses are located<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, 52% creative industry employees are from high socio-economic backgrounds compared with 38% of the total working population. This, along with the fact that creative industry employees are also more likely to be white, financially privileged and male<sup>21</sup> makes the challenge of connecting our students to highly skilled employment in their chosen area particularly difficult. Against this demographic backdrop that we have achieved a 21% increase in highly skilled employment<sup>22</sup> and a corresponding 13% increase in median salary.

**3.27** At course specific level, the increases in highly skilled outcomes between 2018 and 2020 are most pronounced in BA Animation (68%) and BA Games Art and Design (32%), industry sectors which are under-developed in our region. These results indicate graduates are developing sufficient confidence to move away from Norfolk to centres of industry concentration.

**3.28** Each year, as part of our strategy to share and act upon data, every course explores outcomes data through a 'clinic' which feeds into course enhancement planning. Positive progress in graduate employment has been monitored and shared through other data and positive outcomes noted since 2017<sup>3</sup>:

**3.28.1** At the end of 2021 there were 3442 active accounts on *Profile Digital*, 1446 of which belonged to graduates who continue to use the resources as they develop their career approach.

**3.28.2** Google stats indicate that assessment points in the Employability curriculum trigger *Profile Digital* interaction, reinforcing the link between delivered sessions and learner-driven activity.

**3.28.3** The percentage of graduates who feel that their life is 'on track' (agree+ strongly agree) has increased from 73.5% (2018 cohort) to 80.1% (2020) with 36% of graduates agreeing strongly that they are 'on track'.

**3.29** Progress has also been sustained throughout the pandemic. Through *Profile Digital* data we were able to identify in real time that students finishing Year 2 felt less resilient after lockdown. This is the only time we have seen skills gain go backwards in this manner. Within three months, we introduced a new two-part session *Resilience, Reflection, Response* at the start of Year 3 to reinforce confidence and a flexible approach [see SO1 (3.8)].

**3.30** There have been two unanticipated positive outcomes from the *Profile* project:

**3.30.1** Although developed with creative industry, *Profile* has been explored by many different organisations since 2017, from prisons to primary schools, and each time has opened the door for high quality graduate employment.

**3.30.2** Autistic spectrum learners have told us that they find *Profile* helpful in navigating evidence-based job applications and interviews. This observation echoes the wider student community who say it helps them 'de-code' the world of work.

**3.30.3** Creative employers, aware that their teams are not sufficiently diverse have told us that *Profile* is a common language that helps them to 'decode' Generation Z.



**3.31** The effectiveness of our integrated approach to progression is underlined by increases between 2018 and 2020 (Graduate Outcomes) in graduate happiness (+13%), life satisfaction (+21%) and those claiming life is worthwhile (+23%)<sup>22</sup>. This indicates that graduates have a sense of purpose, an achievable career plan are more successful in securing highly skilled work.

**SO4. The provider clearly articulates the range of educational gains it intends its students to achieve, and why these are highly relevant to its students and their future ambitions.**

**3.32** The University Strategy 2022-27 states our commitment to academic excellence which ensures educational gains. We aim to support students to succeed as partners and activists in their education journey and enable them to graduate with the energy and confidence to activate change and transformation, shaping the worlds in which they live, the enterprises they establish and the places they work. These aims are actioned through the architecture of course design and curriculum at Norwich.

**3.33** The shared framework for undergraduate study within the ACS is designed to provide clear progression routes from year to year through consistent thematic areas of study known as curriculum areas. The curriculum areas articulate the headings under which we intend students to achieve learning gain. Consistent use of the thematic curriculum areas, with progressively complex demands and syllabi as the course progresses, enables students to track their learning through the course.

**3.34** For the BA awards the curriculum areas across years 1 to 3 are: Creative Practice; Research and Communication; and Careers and Employability, while the BSc awards include an additional curriculum area of Scientific Practice. For clarity and alignment with PSRB requirements, the curriculum areas for BA Architecture are Design Studio; Technology and Environment; Cultural Context and Professional Studies.

**3.35** These curriculum areas have been developed through industry consultation and our expertise in identifying criteria for graduate success. We expect students to advance their skills and understanding of creative practice; develop knowledge and understanding of research methods and the relevant historical and theoretical contexts of their practice; become articulate communicators with an understanding of audience; and gain the skills and experience to become inclusive, ethical and highly skilled workers, entrepreneurs and researchers in the creative industries and beyond.

**3.36** General expectations of the topics covered under each curriculum area at each level of study are stated within course documentation and offer clear guidance for course design and enhancement, which apply across disciplines. The complexity of the topics and the marking criteria increase at each level, for example within Creative Practice the topic at year 1 of '*Learning Creative Skills and exploring materials and processes*' progresses to '*Advancing creative practice with technology, materials and processes*' in the final year.

**3.37** The curriculum area topics map readily to Rand's thematic areas of learning gain of content knowledge, skills and competencies, and personal development providing confirmation of the relevance of the curriculum and our commitment to learning gain<sup>23</sup>. Topics within Creative / Scientific Practice span all three themes, while those in Research and Communication and Careers and Employability generally span the two themes of content knowledge and skills and competencies.

**3.38** The ACS provides a direct link between curriculum areas, learning outcomes and assessment requirements which not only provides a clear and consistent method for students to engage with their learning, but also offers a comprehensive method of tracking learning gain across the University.

***SO5. The provider's approaches to supporting its students to achieve these gains are evidence-based, highly effective and tailored to its students and their different starting points.***

**3.39** We support all students to achieve educational gains, recognising their diverse educational and life experiences both before and during their creative studies at Norwich. This begins with pre-enrolment activities that lead into Welcome Week, followed by Wayfinding Week, [see SE5 (2.36)] at the beginning of the academic year, designed to help students map their expectations and experiences onto our framework for university study and recognise the value they bring to creative endeavour through their individual knowledge, understanding and experience of the world.

**3.40** Creative Practice is central to all courses at Norwich and the Project-Centred Learning approach [see SE2 (2.17)] provides the vehicle for effectively supporting students through their creative education. Teaching comprises workshops, lectures and briefings focussed on content knowledge and skills development with tutorials and crits (reviews) focussing on personal development. Projects enable students to develop their individual creative response to a brief; the projects do not anticipate a single correct outcome but offer the opportunity for students to co-create their learning experience through their practice. Creative endeavour is an iterative process requiring experimentation, risk-taking and the confidence to understand failure as part of a process that ultimately leads to resolved outcomes. The curriculum supports students to reflect on and develop their own iterative processes and gain the confidence to take creative risks through engagement in projects, live briefs and integrated approach to wellbeing and life skills.

**3.41** Reflection is an essential element of creative practice and from the start of their studies students are introduced to the techniques and benefits of developing reflective practice. Tutorials and crits invite students to consider how and why they have made creative decisions and explore how the views of others may influence and impact their practice. Students are encouraged to maintain a reflective journal and each unit of study concludes with submission and assessment of a reflective summary or evaluation that critiques their Personal Development over the unit.

**3.42** Students engage with research, critical analysis and written, verbal and visual communication through the Research and Communication curriculum area. As they progress, students build research skills and link their research and practice through exploration and application of research methodologies and historical and theoretical concepts. Learning is measured through assessment of written tasks which allow students to experiment with a variety of research methods and forms of writing. In their final year, students are supported to undertake a research report on a topic of their choice related to their practice. Students choose one of five formats for their report, enabling them to select a format most suitable to their personal strengths, creative practice and future career aspirations.

**3.43** In Careers and Employability, students are introduced to the concept of learning gain through their use of the *Profile Digital* employability resource. Like other *Profile* resources, the digital platform aesthetic appeals to creative visual learners, making use of symbols and gifs as engagement tools, and using language that is creative industry appropriate. Students rate themselves on the on the 10 skills, logging 'evidence' of their skill level [see SO1 (3.5-3.8)]. Scores are used to reflect on progress and identify individual development needs. Students are supported in this process by sessions that coach them in reflection, and the role of evidence within self-assessment. By learning to self-assess in the 'safe' space of the *Profile* game, students become confident to assess their own personal development and gain confidence in responding to valuable peer feedback.

**3.44** In recognition of the different starting points from which our students come to us, we have, over the last five years, made enhancements to the first-year programme to support the transition to Higher Education, including revisiting the first 40 credit unit of study to increase opportunities for

collaboration, creativity and community building and reduce the emphasis on technical competence at this crucial early stage of student experience<sup>24</sup>. We are continuing to build and consolidate these enhancements through the Belonging project.

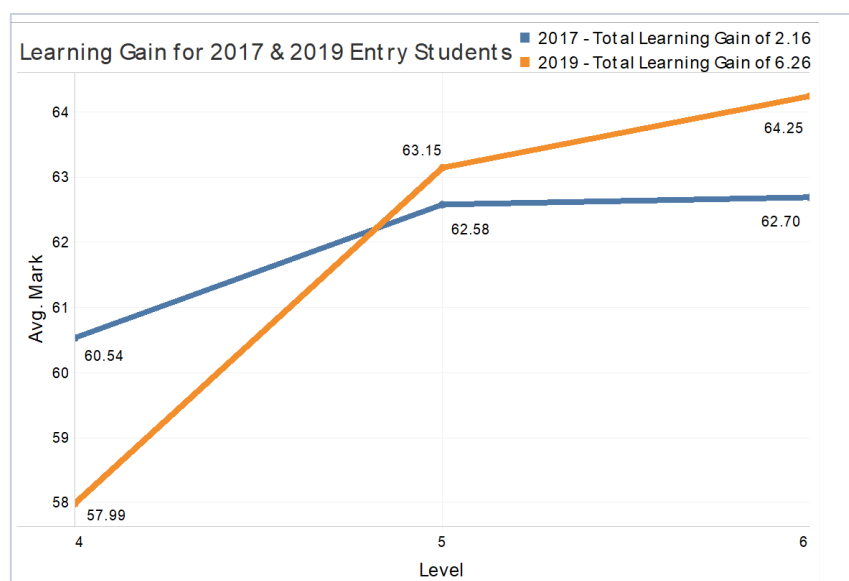
***SO6. The provider evaluates the gains made by its students, and demonstrates its students are succeeding in achieving the intended gains.***

**3.45** The learning gains we enable for our students are evaluated regularly at course and institutional level. Course teams are provided with assessment data that allows analysis and comparison of unit grades across time and against other courses, providing a quantitative method of evaluating data. Data is also analysed regularly through our Learning Teaching and Quality Committee which feeds into the Institutional Academic Quality Enhancement Plan. Where data indicates lower than anticipated comparative results, the course team are required to develop and implement an enhancement plan through the annual monitoring process.

**3.46** The shared framework for undergraduate study within the ACS facilitates this approach to evaluating learning gain both through horizontal comparison of unit grades across disciplines and vertical comparison of thematic Learning Outcomes through levels of study. We are now developing processes to support systematic and embedded tracking and analysis of learning gain.

**3.47** Our current methodology involves comparing unit grades at different points in time (outlined as the most reliably comprehensive method for evidencing learning gain in the Rand report). It is helpful that we can evidence comparability of marking between courses because of our unified ACS. Because the areas where we anticipate learning gain can be identified through the increasingly complex and/or advanced demands of the unit Learning Outcomes at each year of study, student achievement in Year 1 can be taken as a predictor of final grade if *no* learning gain is achieved. i.e. a student completing year 1 with an overall grade of 54% may be expected to leave university with a 2.2 classification if no learning gain is achieved.

**3.48** Using this methodology, we can demonstrate not only that there is learning gain evidenced by the overall improvement in grades for students who entered at Level 4 to Level 6, but also that the learning gain we enable for students is consistently increasing year on year: overtime it has been significant, as for students starting in 2017 the evidence of their learning gain was a 2.16 points increase by their third year, whereas for students starting in 2019 it was 6.26, which represents a 158% increase in our delivery of learning gain over time, with strong continuation and completion, without a resultant inflation in the overall qualifications.



**3.49** Learning Gain is evident for all individual characteristics tracked by the TEF Data metrics. For example, a comparison of marks in the ethnicity indicator for students who started in 2019 shows average gain in marks from Level 4 to Level 6 as 6.26 for White, 6.21 for Asian, 5.67 for Black and 6.24 for mixed-race students<sup>25</sup>. For Disability Status, students without a declared disability who started with us in 2019 improved from an average mark of 59.18 in their first year to 64.91 in their third, which equates to a 10% improvement in marks above their 1<sup>st</sup> year baseline. Whereas students with a declared disability improved from an average mark of 55.48 in their first year to 62.66 in their third year which equates to a 13% improvement. Through this methodology we can effectively evaluate the gains made by all of our students in ways that help us to monitor and eliminate disparities and inequities through our continuing analysis, whilst working to improve the outcomes for all of our students significantly above their baseline attainment, without a resultant escalation or inflation in marks in the University as a whole.

**3.50** We are now developing a mixed methodology approach to measuring Learning Gain which will combine grade analysis with qualitative data from *Profile Digital* [see SO1 (3.5)], hence strengthening our understanding of Learning Gain in the area Personal Development. Work on tracking learning gain at a more granular level will be achieved by evaluation of performance within thematic areas and building our understanding of gains made in content knowledge, skills and competencies.

## Conclusion

Moving forward, the University will focus on the following areas for improvement, building from the priorities addressed in the last TEF period, and as indicated by data and the specific needs of our student community:

- **Cross-disciplinary working:** we will continue to enrich student experience through collaboration, and in line with our University Strategy will take positive action to internationalise and diversify our community.
- **Co-creating the student experience:** we will continue to develop frameworks that enable greater student voice in their learning experience, involving students in all aspects of the creation of their learning journey.
- **Graduate employability;** progression has significantly improved over the last 3 years to 69%, but this means that 31% graduates are *not* securing highly skilled work. We will continue to strengthen discipline-specific support, build our person-centred approach and work with partners in regional economic development to create high quality, accessible jobs in our region.
- **Learning gain:** we will further embed the use of this data to inform our enhancement processes, disseminating through academic staff to share understanding and maximise impact, and encouraging students to engage actively in their own development.
- **Integrating research and knowledge exchange further with teaching and student experience:** engagement in ambitious and creatively risky initiatives will not only refresh and expand our academic expertise, but stretch and inspire student thinking, creating new opportunities for them to shape their world on graduation.
- **Building our role as a civic partner:** with our new Bank Plain building as the centrepiece of Norwich's Creative Quarter, we will continue to build partnerships with business partners and regional knowledge bases that deliver regional impact and global reach.

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