PROVIDER CONTEXT

Solent University is an employment focused, lively, inclusive academic community with a diverse student body serving a region that is characterised by low educational attainment and subsequent low participation in HE (Solent LEP 2015). The University's vision is to ***'enable learners from all backgrounds to become enterprising citizens and responsible leaders while also promoting economic and social prosperity for the communities we serve'*.** We are an agent of social transformation as indicated by the Student Mobility Graduate Index, ensuring graduates from the least advantaged groups (SEC 4-9) gain professional employment, whilst also adding value through boosting salaries. The most recent DLHE results (UK full time, first degrees) show 95.2% of leavers in employment or further study six months after graduating (HESA, 2017). LEO data shows that Solent is the 12th best British university for boosting graduate earnings (Economist, 2017).

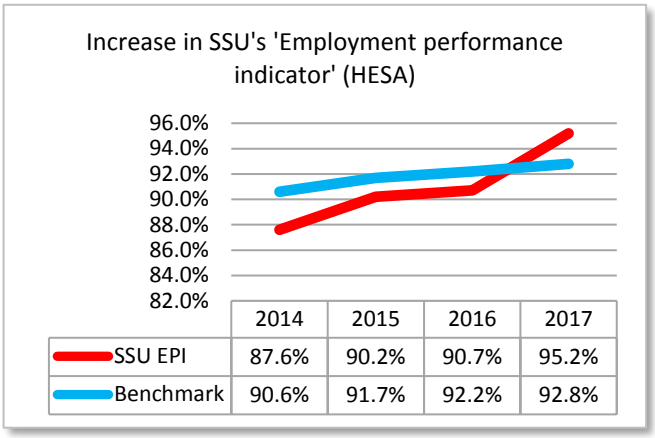
The University appointed a new VC in 2014 and launched its 2015-20 Strategic Plan with learning, teaching and student achievement as central aims. Two years in, we are ranked in the top 10 (9th) for number of graduate start-ups (HE-BCI survey); in the top 50 (42nd) for graduate employment (Employability Performance Indicator, HESA, full time UK first degree leavers) and, as this submission shows, meeting the silver TEF criteria, exceeding them in places.

Professor Graham Baldwin, one of the few teacher trained VCs in the UK, systematically drives teaching quality from the top. The Plan maps a route to ensure that whether students are from the 71% who are first in family to attend university, the 50% with BTEC qualifications (national average: 24.4%), the 18% from an ethnic minority background or the 20% with at least 136 UCAS points, they experience excellent teaching and applied research in state of the art, award winning facilities.

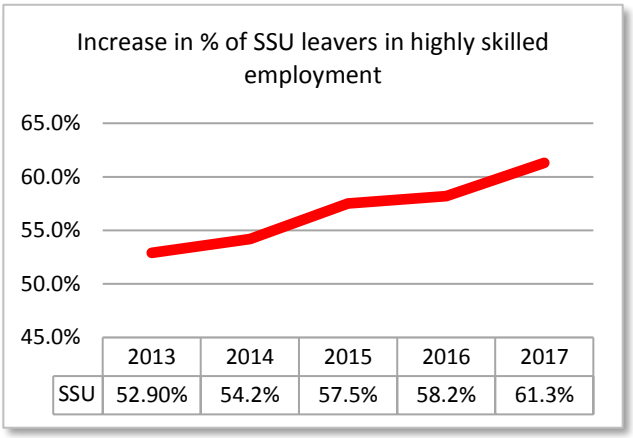
This submission provides further context, covering the three interlocking Aspects of Quality: Teaching quality, Learning environment and Student outcomes and learning gain.

Silver Criteria	**Summary**
High quality provision that consistently exceeds UK quality requirements.	Excellent PSRB, external examiner reports & student feedback. Quality processes to guard against grade inflation.
Excellent student outcomes particularly for retention and graduate level employment and further study.	Excellent retention rates supported by proactive central student achievement team. Strategic and multifaceted approach to supporting students achieve graduate level jobs/further study, aimed at ensuring a level playing field for all.
Course design and assessment practices provide stretch ensuring all students are significantly challenged, and acquire knowledge, skills and understanding that are highly valued by employers.	Systematic course design responds to the needs of employers and professions. Authentic assessment practices stretch students by meeting challenges in real world and professional environments.
Appropriate levels of contact time, including personalised provision, secures high levels of student engagement and commitment to learning.	Personalised learning and excellent SSRs ensure individualised support. Students engaged in transformative real world learning.
High quality physical and digital resources are used by students to enhance learning.	Free access to industry standard facilities. Award winning, accessible state of the art buildings. £38m investment.
Students are engaged with developments from the forefront of research, scholarship or practice, and are sometimes involved in these activities.	Students are taught by and work with research active staff and leading practitioners. Students present and publish their work. Vibrant research community.
An institutional culture that facilitates, recognises and rewards excellent teaching has been implemented.	Career development pathways recognise and reward excellent teaching as a route to promotion and to academic title. Staff awards and support for professional development.

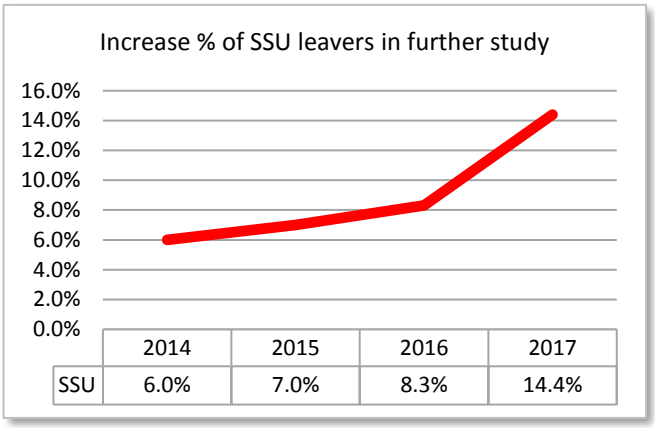
Our 2015 Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Strategy (LTSAS), which we monitor continuously, drives forward a distinctive, challenging curriculum offer, inspiring teaching and a relentless student achievement focus. The Strategic Plan places Solent as the applied university of Southampton and the regional hub for higher level skills. Solent graduates are the passionate, creative professionals of the future, bringing expertise and energy into their communities and workplaces. The LTSAS themes align with TEF criteria and these are referred to in bold throughout the document. Two years into this strategy there is clear evidence of sustained impact on student outcomes.



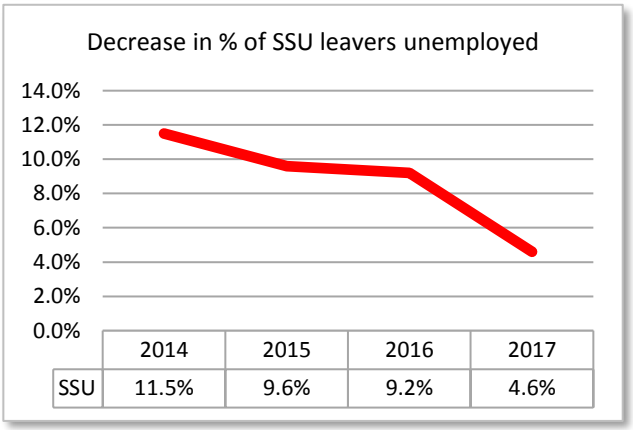
	2014	2015	2016	2017
SSU EPI	87.6%	90.2%	90.7%	95.2%
Benchmark	90.6%	91.7%	92.2%	92.8%



	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
SSU	52.90%	54.2%	57.5%	58.2%	61.3%



	2014	2015	2016	2017
SSU	6.0%	7.0%	8.3%	14.4%



	2014	2015	2016	2017
SSU	11.5%	9.6%	9.2%	4.6%

METRICS: A SILVER PROFILE

Our metrics clearly demonstrate our silver profile. We have excellent student retention and employment and the graphs show great improvement in student outcomes over the TEF period. We have a negative flag in one metric for our full time population, discussed later. Part-time student numbers represent just 9% of our student body and therefore negative flags need to be taken into account in a proportionate way. University processes had identified and taken action on those matters for both full time and part-time students well in advance of the current exercise. This document addresses action taken and its impact.

With 11,062 students across five Schools (Business, Law and Communications; Media Arts and Technology; Sport, Health and Social Sciences; Art, Design and Fashion and The Warsash School of Maritime Science and Engineering), we provide traditional undergraduate and postgraduate programmes alongside innovative foundation degrees, and apprenticeships responding to local/national skills agendas and widening access. Designed with employers, they respond to particular industry needs. For example, we are one of only three universities providing flexible bespoke academic provision accredited by the Merchant Navy Training Board meeting the International Maritime Organisation regulations. These students, undertaking a distinctive and challenging foundation programme, form the majority of our part-time student population.

Since the launch of LTSAS in 2015, learning and teaching have been key priorities with school-based Learning and Teaching Leads working as part of the School Senior Management Team ensuring pedagogy, curricula and assessment are inspiring, engaging and industry focused. The Strategy is closely monitored through a Learning, Teaching and Student Achievement Committee chaired by the DVC who is a National Teaching Fellow and Professor of Higher Education. Interventions are systematically planned, piloted, evaluated, discussed in partnership with students and launched more widely where we see impact. Service departments support teaching through student focused Annual Business Plans. Innovative in-house agencies such as Solent Creatives, Solent Productions and Solent Music provide students with real world learning, professional networks and live briefs and work closely with academic teams. Good practice is developed, shared and KPIs are monitored by the Director of Learning and Teaching who heads the Solent Learning and Teaching Institute (SLTI) that encompasses the library, learning services and enhancement and reports directly to the DVC.

A STRATEGIC APPROACH TO TEACHING QUALITY

Throughout the document examples illuminate ways that LTSAS themes have a positive impact on student outcomes and the quality of teaching. Projects and targeted interventions reflect a university culture that partners with students and engages large numbers of academics in celebrating success, creative curriculum development and reflection on teaching quality while challenging students to engage in real world learning and exciting transformative experiences. We show how our distinctive real world curriculum framework ensures all programmes provide a rigorous employer facing learning experience that permeates the University.

We know our students well and the LTSAS responds to particular needs. Of the relatively high numbers of the University's students who are local, over one quarter come from the lowest POLAR quintiles, but this is not the whole picture: our home undergraduate population consists of nearly 1,400 white working-class males studying sport, media technology, maritime science and engineering. The national picture for this particular category is one of underachievement (HEPI, 2016). The LTSAS reflects our determination to ameliorate this and our data indicate success in terms of attainment, retention and employment. Our focus on the quality of teaching and a proactive, analytics driven Student Achievement Team were highlighted as best practice by OFFA. (Access agreements for 2018/19). Student contributions to this submission, collected by the Students' Union reflect an appreciation from those who are first in their family to enter HE: ***'Solent University is here for the students. When you join in year 1 it's scary for people like me. You've no idea what's going on. Some lecturers really understand our mind sets and are there for us whether it's personal issues about the work or explaining how to improve work even more.'*** (Student quote)

EXCELLENT TEACHING THAT EXCEEDS NATIONAL QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

Experiential, immersive learning promotes critical reflection, academic curiosity and strong engagement with underpinning theory and research. We believe learning and teaching should be personalised and that student-centred teaching, using a coaching model, is critical to student success. We encourage innovative teaching to develop in partnership with students and industry leaders and thus LTSAS themes are aligned with a wide range of projects, interventions and student opportunities as the examples show. They build an institutional culture of creativity, confidence, community, challenge and innovation that is driven by the performance indicators we work towards and monitor. For example, a recent evaluation study highlighted Lecture Capture having an identifiable positive impact on achievement of lower performing part-time students on our distinctive work based maritime engineering courses: a mean improvement in grades from 49% to 66%. Progress is reflected in improvement in NSS teaching metrics against benchmarks. 11 of our programmes recorded 100% student satisfaction in 2017. Comparing NSS results for 'Overall satisfaction' across all institutions, six of Solent's subjects were in the UK top ten.

Our excellent SSRs (15.5 compared with a sector average of 17.2), innovative personalised pedagogies and pro-active Student Achievement Team ensure a relentless focus on achievement and curricula which meet the needs of a diverse student body and local and national employers. '***It is an advantage having an open-door policy where you can visit your tutor at any time for any***

query from academic to personal. This is the benefit of a low student-lecturer ratio.' (Student quote)

56% of our students are on courses with professional recognition. Those where professional accreditation is not possible offer industry standard additional qualifications such as those from Adobe or the British School of Coaching. Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) regularly comment on teaching quality and student engagement with programmes informed and enriched by research and scholarly activity. The British Psychological Society report commended us for the outstanding student support: ***'Students were very articulate about their psychological literacy skills and how they could use them in a number of different career pathways. This grounding and understanding of their skills will help with future careers.'***

PSRBs recognise that the type and quantity of teaching contact is highly personalised. This is supported through high quality award-winning teaching space and equipment (see pp12-13). Curricula are systematically designed and evaluated to ensure opportunities for real world learning through placements, internships, work based learning and live briefs. Creative Skill Set, the accrediting body for Media Technology, noted the: ***'Excellent depth of industry contact at all levels of this course formally and informally. All staff are active practitioners and the students reported being offered numerous opportunities to work alongside their tutors on extramural projects.'***

Solent is one of only three UK universities identified as beacons of good practice in creativity (Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacturers and Commerce Report). In Health, service users and carers participate in course development through the Public Partnership Group, ensuring that learning takes account of service user needs. The Society of British and International Design stated ***'I am keen to hold the university out as the high achieving destination of innovation and creativity that it is.'***

RIGOUR AND STRETCH

Feedback from students, external examiners and employers as well as our silver metrics confirm that the LTSAS themes of **employability, enterprise, professional development and technology enhanced learning** are having an impact. Activities are embedded in workplaces as diverse as the Merchant Navy, Glastonbury Festival, the University itself and after school football clubs in the local community. These demanding immersive learning experiences are supported by lectures, seminars, studio work, virtual learning environments and work in laboratories that stretch learning through applied research, scholarship and theoretical debate. This external examiner comment is typical: ***'Links to industry are fantastic. This is transferred to the student learning and teaching experience. When I met students from the programme I was impressed at their maturity, networking skills and knowledge of the industry they desire to work in.'***

Amber Hamson, the first female to graduate as a Marine Electro Technical Officer (METO) and the first Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) female METO officer cadet (2016) explains this: '***I particularly found the workshop rewarding, especially applying what you are learning in the classroom. I found the advanced maths challenging but now see it was all relevant and crossed-linked to our learning.'***

Themes are reflected in the range of opportunities across all programmes. NSS student feedback indicates how much students appreciate this strategy: ***'I've been stretched personally. Incredible support for course and outside problems. Pushed to focus on ideas I wouldn't have thought of to begin with. Helped to work outside the box.'*** (Student quote)

World class employers frequently endorse our excellent quality and standards: ***'We are proud to work with Solent and be able to offer opportunities to experience our organisation and the many challenges that operating a global maritime business presents. In turn the knowledge and ideas we get from students help us develop how we think about our future generations of guests. As such Solent is not only helping us find future talent but is shaping our thinking around our products.'*** (Director, Carnival UK, 2016)

Recognising that most of our students need to work while studying and do not have professional contacts, in-house agencies such as Solent Creatives provide relevant paid professional freelance work locally. Unique within the sector when it launched six years ago, Solent Creatives has offered 1,100 new projects to almost 2,000 students during the TEF period. In this way we are ensuring our students extend their cultural capital, learning in real world situations. This creates exceptional engagement because students recognise the relevance and impact of their learning and the demanding nature of professional work. ***'Solent Creatives has been that exciting and different thing that I couldn't replace with anything else as an experience at the University. I would recommend this to everyone as it puts you out of the comfort zone as it is really good for your professional development.'*** (Student quote)

The LTSAS ensures that other opportunities are woven into the very fabric of the University with students managing university events, social media campaigns, web design, marketing projects, research projects and change management initiatives working alongside university staff. The impact of this is shown by four years of improving professional / managerial employment rates (indeed, our TEF metrics show an improving profile with no negative flags in year 3) and Solent is now a top ten university for graduate start-ups.

This focus on teaching quality is driven by the performance indicators we work towards and results in enhanced attainment, employment, progression to further study and prizes. Examples include students gaining the Association of Independent Professionals 'Freelancer of the Year' Award; The Creative and Cultural Skills 'Award for Outstanding Music Graduate', and first and second place in the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technology (CIAT) 'Student Award for Excellence in Architectural Technology'. In previous years students have won Valspar's 'Young Interior Designer of the Year', England and Wales Cricket Board's 'Young Coach of the Year', and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's 'Trainee Officer of the Year'.

EXCELLENT CURRICULUM DESIGN

LTSAS ensures that real world learning is integral to course design. Re:So is a unique retail store in the centre of Southampton run by students from our fashion-related courses, the first of its kind in the UK. They get involved with every aspect, from stocktaking, merchandising and store design, to promotion and retail management. The store sells items designed by our students and graduates. Re:So has a 'learning zone' managed by students hosting guest speakers from the fashion industry, as well as workshops, photo shoots and exhibitions, all with an emphasis on developing retail, enterprise and employability skills. Re:So brings together students and academics who value creativity, interdisciplinary working and applied learning. The impact on the student experience and learning is demonstrated by three fashion courses increasing NSS to 100% satisfaction and in the highly skilled jobs attained. ***'The Live Project and International Communications were amazing units. The experience of working with actual brands in Re:So and live briefs was great. Perfect balance of academic and industry related.'*** (Student quote)

The Solent Personal Training Initiative matches students studying for fitness industry qualifications with the local community as personal training clients. This provides invaluable practical real world experience and authentic assessment. Utilising the health and exercise laboratories, a purpose-built gym dedicated to practical teaching, students achieve professional awards and undertake research for final dissertations. Students report increased skill levels and confidence with the latter rising from an initial average of five out of ten to nine out of ten.

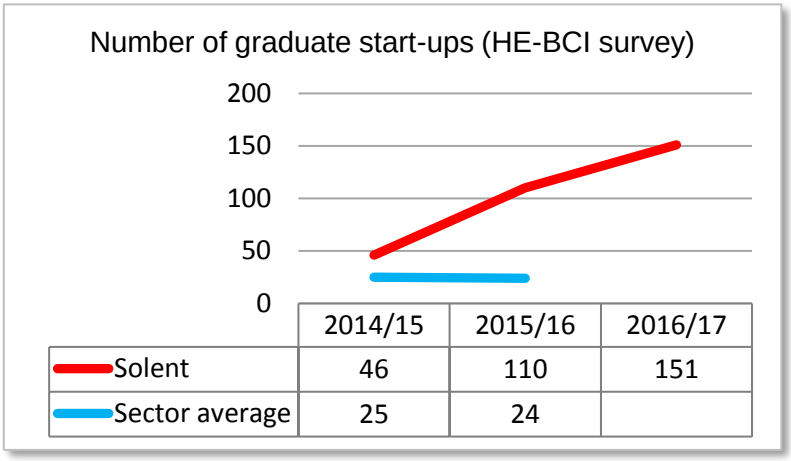
Students use composite material and material testing facilities to undertake undergraduate research for yacht racing teams, investigating and reporting on the use of recycled carbon fibre in maritime structures. Similarly, first year students complete a series of integrated problem-based activities, including manufacturing scale models of their own yacht designs, testing them in a series of races to provide a link between theory and practice.

The media arts curriculum offers demanding and rigorous opportunities to work in professional circumstances across discipline boundaries. The 2016 LTSAS project to centralise specialist facilities ensures students have access to industry level equipment (on average 100,000 equipment loans per year). For example, a wide range of students become skilled at operating in our custom

built outside broadcast vehicle. This means that students graduate with BBC credits on their CV from the filming and sound provided at Glastonbury Festival.

Students are encouraged to work in a cross disciplinary way sharing skills and creating synergistic curricula outcomes. Computer Games students are utilising motion capture equipment and are working with students and staff in Sports Science. Students in Engineering are training Special Effects Design students and staff on equipment, while fashion students have worked on a project with IBM.

In line with LTSAS, Solent Futures, the University careers service, works with course teams to offer programmes of workshops, training days and funding to support business start-ups. This reflects our understanding that our students' career pathways increasingly involve freelance work in creative and media industries.



	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Solent	46	110	151
Sector average	25	24	

In 2016, over £67,000 was awarded to 45 different student start-up projects. As a consequence of this, and of 110 intensive enterprise surgeries and 6 annual boot camps, Solent witnessed 110 graduate start-ups in 2015/16, an increase of 64 from the previous year. This was the 9th highest in the sector, and over four times higher than the sector average of 24 (2016 HE-BCI Survey). This number will further increase to 151 in the reported 2016/17 HE-BCI cycle. Solent Sparks Society is Solent's popular entrepreneurs' student society. SENSE (Solent Entrepreneurs' Network for Sustainable Enterprises) is an established training and networking group that meets monthly for current and past students. The University was shortlisted for the 2017 Times Higher Outstanding University Entrepreneurship Award.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN RESEARCH

Our students are also **research informed and confident in applying theory in the real world**. This aspect of the LTSAS is led by the professoriate and SLTI which includes one of only two UK Professors of Research Informed Teaching, appointed in 2016. The Curriculum Framework ensures there are significant links between research-based teaching, student learning and the development of professional and entrepreneurial skills at each programme revalidation. All courses include research skills and research-based modules. Two years into the LTSAS there is an increase in students progressing to further study (see graph p2) and contributing as assistants on staff research projects, co-creating knowledge and applying specialist skills in professional settings.

The Solent University Research Internship Scheme (SURIS) enables students to work with staff as research partners. In 2016, 97 students registered to take part and 17 academic research projects were supported. Students are also engaged in academic student societies and attend events with visiting scholars. This ensures they are exposed to research at the forefront of knowledge. For example, Solent Productions' investment in broadcasting technologies has created a critical mass of applied research that has spawned Solent TV. This is an online channel run by students with an associated research project investigating online viewing tastes and preferences. Further examples:

In Sport Health and Social Sciences 17 peer reviewed journal articles have been co-written with students during the TEF period, mainly from dissertation research with students as lead authors. A further four articles are undergoing peer review and six are in preparation.

Diegesis is a print and online publication produced in the Film Department with an editorial board comprised of undergraduate students and staff. Students research and write all the content for the print magazine and website and work with the student and staff editors in refining their work.

A range of UG programmes include student-led research conferences and 17 of our students presented at the British Conference for Undergraduate Research (BCUR) in 2017, (the fifth largest contingent at the conference).

Engaging the local public with research and scholarship is also an important part of Solent's civic mission, its research strategy and the LTSAS theme of **research informed teaching and social justice**. In the School of Art, Design and Fashion, for example, students participated in a two-year research project to design a focal path, as part of Southampton City's Decent Neighbourhoods Initiative. Outputs have included journal articles and conference papers and an exhibition co-curated by students.

Working with business, Solent students set up a temporary test laboratory at an innovation centre in Southampton that is home to 40 businesses. Testing new websites that were due to go live, the students assessed the usability of desktop and mobile interfaces, focusing on conversion rate effectiveness, eye tracking and content strategy. The research aimed to improve conversion rates for businesses, maximising returns on web-investment. The benefits were clear to the Director of the innovation centre: ***'It's very encouraging to see real-time knowledge transfer partnership in action between the talent of the University and businesses in the innovation centre.'***

POSITIVE OUTCOMES FOR ALL

An emphasis on teaching quality ensures that course design responds to those who might nationally underachieve such as the large cohorts of male students described earlier. Academic staff in Sport have sought to create a closer bridge between academia and industry through The Coaching Innovation Programme. This programme allows students to design, deliver and evaluate their own sport-for-development projects within the Southampton community, allowing students to apply theory to practice. Students collaborate with a range of industry practitioners in order to identify and address an array of social issues, with the programme facilitating around 20 projects per annum. These projects subsequently address and work with a diverse range of populations, from holistic sessions within schools that combine the curriculum and physical activity through to walking football sessions for the elderly community in an attempt to tackle social isolation. Approximately 500 people benefit from the programme each year, suggesting its significant contribution within the local sport-for-development landscape. This has been acknowledged by the CEO of the Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity: ***'Our challenge is to have a workforce that has the correct knowledge, skills and behaviours, and the work that is undertaken through the Coaching Innovation Programme is ensuring that the next generation of sport and physical activity Solent professionals are able to hit the ground running in this new era.'***

During the TEF period, the SLTI was awarded HEFCE Catalyst funding to explore the impact of learning analytics on pedagogic practice and students' learning behaviour. 500 students in 10 different modules utilised a dashboard based on VLE activities. Early outcomes indicate that engagement with analytics has a positive impact on continuation. Vlogs were recorded by 50 students alongside academic staff focus groups and questionnaires. The SEAtS attendance monitoring system introduced in 2016/17 with a workflow designed by Solent has resulted in a 12% improvement in average attendance in 2016/17.

Nationally, the University is at the forefront of learning and teaching research and scholarship linked to real world learning, retention and curriculum design. SLTI annually funds pedagogic research in particular areas linked to LTSAS through seed funding to the value of £2,500 per project. One identified best practice for using blogs as a tool for promoting early student engagement which informed how blogs are used in courses. This demonstrates our evidence-led culture. In 2017 a

national conference on our effective work on retention held at the University attracted more than 100 delegates from 40 universities.

In line with the **global** theme of LTSAS an adapted curriculum ensures a stimulating experience through an international dimension to studies. We offer shorter mobility options as well as offering financial support recognising the constraints faced by our students. They return to the UK describing a 'life changing experience'. As part of the UUKi commitment we are developing this work further to increase the number of UK-domiciled students, particularly from lower POLAR quintiles, who have an international placement by 2020. Latest figures show a rise of 182% in the numbers of students accessing outward mobility opportunities. International Week, One World Fair, and study abroad sessions extend the opportunities for students. With more than 10% of our undergraduate cohort from the EU, the classroom regularly provides a space for global perspectives in the discipline.

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

The **effective assessment and feedback** theme of LTSAS has had a great deal of attention at University, School and course level. We provide assessment for learning and effective and timely feedback. This theme is underpinned by interlocking projects which address issues identified. Since 2016 the University has committed to implementing TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students through Assessment) led by our expert Professor for Research Informed Teaching. Graduate interns work with the Professor to systematically address assessment issues in programmes with lower NSS scores. There have been improvements in NSS assessment and feedback on many of our biggest subjects, including fashion, football, journalism, photography and merchant navy cadets. Curriculum design includes a review of assessment practices with the aim of instituting programme based assessment ensuring maximum learning gain.

A **personalised approach to assessment** is central to LTSAS. Student NSS feedback indicates an appreciation of authentic personalised assessment and opportunities for projects to relate to placement, volunteer or community engagement and personal interests*: '**All projects are geared towards students individually so that you produce your best work possible.'*** (Student quote)

External examiners note the excellent quality of feedback. '***The feedback gives lots of suggestions and methods to reflect on work and supports students in continuing to develop their work and highlights areas for improvement. The feedback is supportive critical and technical and is very effective...'***

We understand the importance of students having confidence in our assessment expectations. Responding to student feedback TESTA calls on course teams to adjust the presentation of assessment and personalise where possible. In Fashion for example every module produces short videos explaining the brief 'live'. One School has gone a step further ensuring learning outcomes align with assessment. A 'Living CV' is refined as students increasingly engage with feedback and meet more complex learning outcomes. This is being piloted across the University. '***Wow! I hadn't realized I knew so much. It took someone to point out all the things I've got to offer. This has given me so much more confidence when looking for a job. Thank you.'*** (Student quote)

Based on 3% of the University's NSS respondents, there is a negative flag in a single year over the TEF period for assessment for our small cohort of part-time students. Our split metrics also have negative flags in relation to teaching and assessment for 'other undergraduates'. There is a strong overlap in the characteristics of these two populations, with students taking different modes of the same distinctive provision and the negative flags reflecting local circumstances as noted in relation to academic support (p11). The students represented in these metrics are from two distinct groups on atypical foundation provision characterised by particular circumstances linked to demanding professional frameworks.

VALUING TEACHING

Valuing teaching and caring for the student experience are embedded in the 'People Experience' strand of the Strategic Plan and the **recognising and rewarding teaching excellence** theme of the LTSAS. The Strategy is firmly based on the concept of students and staff as members of the same

community of learners and partners in the lifelong pursuit of knowledge. We expect our academics to have teaching, research and/or professional credibility. All are engaged in research or professional practice and all academic staff reflect upon and develop their teaching expertise as part of performance and development review.

HEFCE data shows that at 68%, Solent has a high proportion of staff meeting the UK Professional Standards through appropriate teaching qualifications. This is significantly higher than the sector average of 44% for the 2014/15 year - the latest sector figures available.

Staff new to teaching must complete the HEA accredited PGCert (HE) and staff with teaching experience must gain HEA Fellowship as a condition of employment. Those who support teaching are also expected to engage with the SLTI and many are associate fellows of HEA and contribute to the annual learning teaching conference. The HEA's 2016 re-accreditation report noted: ***'… a clear institutional commitment to supporting staff to engage with professional development which is closely aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF); individual's objectives are linked to the institution's strategic priorities demonstrating a commitment to using the PDR (Performance Development Review) process to support personal development related to the UKPSF; the introduction and embedding of the 'Peer Practice Exchange' (teaching observation scheme) to support the professional practice of staff aligned to the UKPSF.'***

Teaching excellence has always been an important element in promotion and as a result of the LTSAS **student voice theme** we have partnered with students to develop clear, stretching and transparent expectations for teaching at all levels. Recognising teaching excellence, Solent Career Pathways includes a teaching and professional practice route to professorial title. All academic interviews include a simulation exercise to students who provide feedback to appointment panels. Many working in vocational and professional areas are professionally qualified practitioners, retaining strong industry links and recognised as outstanding contributors to the field. They include ships' captains, lawyers, social workers, ex BBC editors and award winning film makers. A number of academics have won national awards such as the 2015 Higher Education National Enterprise Educator award and we have two Principal Fellows of the HEA and one National Teaching Fellow.

Academic workload is planned centrally and monitored rigorously. The majority of teaching is undertaken by staff on permanent contracts, which ensures that they can commit fully as teachers. Data for 2016/17 shows 84.7% of academics are on permanent contracts (HESA sector average is 63.7%). Staff are expected to engage with Performance and Development Review (96% completed in 2016). We motivate our staff through the setting of clear objectives and regular feedback.

Academic staff development in SLTI supports teaching, from the enhancement of digital skills through to experimental approaches to teaching. Peer practice exchange ensures that all academics observe teaching and host an observer. Reflections, along with evidence based research papers are presented at the annual Learning and Teaching conference which regularly attracts more than 250 staff. In line with the LTSAS we have moved to course and school-based approaches which have greater reach. Every School has one or more learning technology advisors working directly with academics and curriculum teams to embed the latest digital resources and enhance engagement with the VLE. All staff undertake equal opportunity and Prevent training.

CPD workshops are delivered by SLTI experts and national and international externals. Teaching staff attend the workshops that they feel are most appropriate to their development, or they choose to take a structured programme of workshops culminating in HEA fellowship applications.

Solent works in partnership with students to enhance the university offer. **Student partnership** is a theme of the LTSAS and feedback is sought regularly through formal and informal channels and resulting in changes in learning and teaching outlined below. Over the last two years the course rep system has been developed by the Students' Union supported by an Executive Dean (Student Experience). Course reps meet regularly with course teams and contribute to deliberative committees such as Learning and Teaching and Student Achievement Committee. Student feedback is also sought through module and course surveys.

Changes to teaching in response to feedback are recorded in annual course reviews and reported annually to LTSA Committee and shared with students through the autumn term 'you said/ we listened' campaign through posters, our VLE and through social media. Changes have included increased library hours, increased student social study space, new specialist design software, better spaced assessment deadlines, Lecture Capture and a plain English campaign. '***My tutors encouraged us to give honest feedback on which things worked for the course and elements that didn't. They would take on our feedback and adjust the course accordingly.'*** (Student quote)

The monthly VC group meeting with the Students' Union explores learning and teaching concerns as they emerge, feeds back on changes and develops joint solutions. The Education sabbatical officer works directly with the DVC on (the low numbers of) student complaints and areas of strategic focus such as the TEF submission. The SU also runs the very popular annual Teaching Awards for inspirational teachers and other university staff who have made a difference.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT - PERSONALISED LEARNING AND ACADEMIC SUPPORT

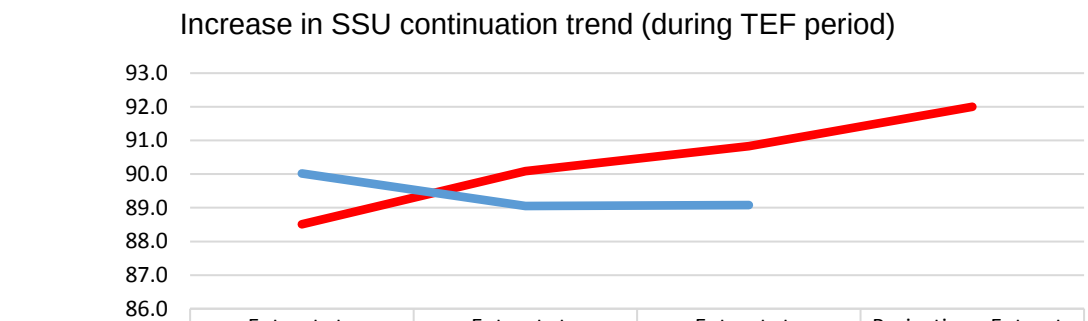
In line with the LTSAS, the Student Hub and Achievement Team were created in 2015/16 to strengthen academic services, increase online digital solutions and improve progression using predictive analytics and specialist staff. This coordinated quality academic support focuses on the **fulfilment of potential** LTSAS theme. NSS scores for our full time students are above benchmark and the quality of academic support is noted in PSRB reports. For example the British Psychological Society noted in its 2016 report the '***…welcoming and supportive learning environment, and high quality academic and pastoral care which is appreciated by the students.'***

The Student Achievement Team (SAT) provides personalised learning, tailored to the individual and working closely with the Student Hub and Access Solent, led by the Dean of Students and academic course leaders, so that attainment support connects with personal and financial support. The SAT focuses on understanding trends in retention and achievement, identifying students with lower progression/achievement rates, investigating reasons for this and implementing intervention programmes targeted to meet at risk groups. It provides data and skills support to Schools, to inform and support retention and achievement plans which are monitored as part of LTSAS.

There is evidence of impact in 2016: an increased number of students took resits as a result of engaging with post-results information and advice, resulting in an 11% higher achievement / progression rate. Students returning from having suspended their studies were offered a programme of support and this group showed a 9% improvement in those eligible to progress. Retention of repeat level students (369 students) improved by 14.4%. The Early, Winter and Spring intervention programme (393 students) where students perceived to be at risk were referred to the Student Achievement Team received 100% satisfaction scores in evaluation. In 2017 we have extended intervention to include encouraging stretch in high achieving students on the cusp of a first or 2:1. We are confident that this work will positively influence NSS metrics.

More specialist and intensive support is available through the 'On Track' programme which is a collaborative case management system supporting vulnerable students at risk of non-continuation. The programme is open to all students, but typically students on the programme include care leavers and students with a declared complex disability such as a mental health issue, autism, ADHD etc. whose attendance and achievement are at risk. Students are assigned a key worker to meet with regularly and who coordinates their support. Of those supported in 2016/17, the engagement of four students had improved to the extent that they were no longer judged at risk of non-progression, 38 progressed on their course and 23 students graduated.

We note a negative flag for academic support for our small (9%) part-time cohort. As discussed earlier (p8) institutional research indicates some complex issues linked particularly to our maritime cadet provision, the professional body assessment requirements and the possibilities for academic support when cadets are at sea in phases through their programme. Part of our strategy to address this includes the 2016 move of The Warsash Maritime Academy in to a new state of the art campus closer to the University. Already we are seeing more officer cadet students availing themselves of university services, including online provision when at sea. Academics who teach on the programme developed a highly interactive online course for first-year students to sharpen their maths and statistics skills. This particular online course experienced nearly 5,000 sustained page views within two weeks of its launch in 2016.



	Entrants to 2012/2013	Entrants to 2013/2014	Entrants to 2014/2015	Projection - Entrants to 2015/2016
SSU	88.5	90.1	90.8	92.0
Benchmark	90.0	89.1	89.1	

This kind of active support is a critical factor in our successful **continuation metrics (which include a double positive flag for part-time students)** as well as improved student achievement. We believe that these kinds of initiatives counter arguments of grade inflation and are entirely appropriate for the kinds of challenges many of our students face. '***I feel as if the lecturers really do have your best interests in mind and want us to succeed and do well in the course and after we graduate. The support team is brilliant too, any issue they are just an email away and are happy to offer brilliant services such as counselling. The university really cares about our well-being and success on the course.'*** (Student quote)

The positive metrics are exceptional when our foundation provision, contextual data and the diversity of our student body are taken into account. As the data illustrate, we have a high proportion of males and of students who have little or no family experience of HE. Our focus on proactive academic support recognises this.

Access Solent delivers specialist academic support to students with Specific Learning Difficulties, on the autistic spectrum, and with mental health disorders. It provides assistive technology, encourages use of Lecture Capture and creatively considers adjustments to allow disabled students to achieve their potential. We are proud that we are close to closing the attainment gap for disabled students.

The Wellbeing Team handles up to 30,000 enquiries annually, presented by students with complex, multi-faceted circumstances. In the last two years the number of queries needing referral to other services has decreased from 20% to 2%.

As part of a strategic approach through LTSAS to extend support across the University, students are trained as peer educators, to support awareness around mental health, managing academic stress, domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Recognising the needs of our distinctive student demographic and particularly the high number of students entering with BTECs or other vocationally oriented qualifications, we have developed succeed@solent which provides structured and interactive online learning skills material. Student engagement with this is demonstrated by 9,000 different students using this resource in the last two years, or 17,000 when including repeat users.

HIGH QUALITY RESOURCES TO ENHANCE LEARNING

The learning environment at Solent is outstanding. Students benefit from a high-quality estate. The University spent £38m on teaching facilities during the TEF period. This figure includes the innovative Spark building which sets new standards for learning and teaching space. In 2017 The Spark won the Best Student Experience award at the Education Estates Awards.

Schools are set annual budgetary targets to generate surpluses for investment in learning environments for students. This is driven and monitored centrally through the planning process. This means that investment in outstanding resources aligns to courses and student needs as well as through large scale centrally funded projects. The quality and student experience relating to Solent's physical and digital resources are evidenced by our consistently high scores in NSS relating to the learning environment which have exceeded sector average scores for the TEF period. The score in the 2017 survey was 88%, three percentage points higher than the sector average.

University policy has determined that all facilities should be made available to as many students as possible. The University has invested in excess of £16.5 million over the last three years in specialist equipment and facilities which are accessible to all students. 60 technical staff provide high quality support and training to students to prepare them for industry practice. Specialist facilities include TV studios, maritime simulators and engineering, audiology and sports science laboratories. In media alone equipment is loaned to 2,600 students on a daily basis**. '*We have access to some incredible equipment and facilities, including industry-standard cameras and other technical equipment, and access to all the software we need to produce and complete our work.'*** (Student quote)

Solent is one of only ten English Universities to have BASES accredited sports labs. These £1.3 million facilities are used by individual clients, including the Team GB wheelchair rugby team and Southampton Football Club. Systems such as 2D and 3D motion analysis cardiopulmonary testing systems are used in teaching and directed practical sessions, as well as in student and academics' research projects. In 2019 we will open a new £28m indoor sports complex to complement the existing external facilities.

Art and Design students have the very latest and traditional specialist equipment including etching and letter presses and a state of the art multi-material printer. Students have 295 sq. m of bookable studio space supported by lighting, IT and specialist technical support and a large, industry standard infinity cove. A highly popular self-service and technician supported set of laser cutting facilities supports students' projects.

A built environment suite offers a soil testing lab, fully equipped concrete manufacture and testing facilities. Civil engineering is supported by traditional theodolites, LIDAR scanning and infra-red and thermal camera technology. A whole range of specialist software and complimentary PCs/Macs are available to students to support their studies including the full Adobe suite, Rhino, Autocad, Solid Works, AutoDesk REVIT, V-Ray, Sketch Up Pro and Lumnious.

The University's Hydrodynamic Testing Centre, incorporating the towing tank, is one of the UK's best facilities of its size, and final year project students get directly involved in the running of experiments to analyse vessels and maritime structures. Students have recently been involved in a high-profile superyacht design and testing at the invitation of a Monaco based company who are developing a range of designs to take to market. Our ship handling centre at Timsbury Lake is unique in the UK and one of only five worldwide. It provides a realistic environment in which ships masters and officers can develop advanced skills using scaled manned models.

Solent has three television studios, a mock courtroom, 12 radio studios and eight photography studios. We have a dedicated Multimedia Newsroom/teaching space containing multiple workstations and technical facilities that meet industry standard requirements. Students benefit from 'open access' video editing workstations and additional workspaces for production work.

Music students have five professional specification recording studios (each with separate control room), four ensemble rehearsal rooms, five individual practice rooms and a group drum teaching

room. Facilities include a 200 seat studio space for live recording and performance. We are one of only a few universities in the world to have a 3D Dolby Atmos cinema. Film and television students work closely with staff on projects and productions, often through the in-house production company Solent Productions, providing invaluable work experience. Computing students benefit from a Virtual Reality studio, the latest software games development kits, network security and hacking labs. Students in Acoustics and Sound Engineering also have their own anechoic sound chamber. Across all Schools the environment is strengthened by well qualified and experienced visitors including honorary graduates and a Visiting Fellowship body of professionals from the top of their fields, which currently includes four Oscar winners and numerous BAFTA winners.

The library is one of only 23 university libraries to be awarded the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) award. The library consistently achieves high scores in the NSS, outperforming the majority of the sector. NSS scores were 90%, 91% and 90% over the last three years compared with sector scores of 88%, 88% and 87% respectively. Specialist academic librarians link to each School and support students in independent learning and information literacy. The service has excellent, pro-active relationships with the Students' Union and has worked collaboratively with them on initiatives such as video guides for 3rd year students and targeted communication and specialist learning resources for our part-time maritime students. The library and Student Achievement Team identify cohorts of students who were making unexpectedly low use of library resources and work with academics and their students to increase engagement. The University is committed to providing a high quality IT infrastructure via its strategic capital plan.

EMPLOYMENT, ATTAINMENT, LEARNING GAIN

At Solent, learning gain is linked to social mobility and to developing self-confident and highly employable graduates who have maximised their professional potential and the attributes that benefit the economy and community. LTSAS will primarily affect graduates who will be surveyed in future cycles of the DLHE survey. The University is already seeing clear improvements in graduate outcomes and we are proud of the exceptional success of our graduates.

In 2017, HESA's 'Employment Performance Indicator' showed that 95.2% of our graduates were in work or further study six months after finishing their course, above benchmark and the 42nd highest rate in the UK. Mirroring this success, the University's rate of unemployment has decreased for four consecutive years, and in 2017 was the lowest rate that Solent has recorded (4.6%). For the last two years Solent has gone from the top 25 to the top 10 in the sector for number of graduate start-ups.

The metric for highly skilled occupations is flagged negatively, but there have been clear improvements in this area demonstrating the effectiveness of our approach: the rate of professional / managerial employment has improved for four consecutive years (see graphs p2). The rate of further study has also increased. Both of these rates are the highest recorded here.

LEO data indicates further (longer term) employability success. Comparing Solent's subject-level median earnings after three years with all other HEIs, median earnings for five of the University's 11 subjects were in the top 50% nationally, including Creative Arts and Mass Communications that make up over half of the University. Moreover, when ranking against only those HEIs with similar educational prior attainment (which LEO showed to have a clear effect on earnings), success is even more pronounced: median earnings for all of Solent's subjects ranked within the top 50% nationally.

While LEO data receives a negative flag in TEF we consider it evidence of strong success. LEO data does not consider earnings from self-employed graduates, yet the rate of Solent graduates is over four times higher than the national average. TEF guidance states that ***'…less weight should be put on these metrics for providers with higher proportions of graduates with self-assessment records.'***

There is a negative flag for employment of part-time students. Analysis of the data underpinning this metric shows that across the three years, only 24 graduates were unemployed (451 out of 475 were in employment). Only one out of the three TEF years (year 2), a year that only nine graduates were unemployed, has a negative flag. Considering the low numbers involved, and the spread of courses (40+), this negative flag does not represent a significant issue. The most recent 2017 HESA

published employment performance indicator (EPI) for part-time leavers at SSU showed that 100% of part-time leavers were in employment, the joint highest in the UK. Previous years it had been 97.5% and 95.2%.

The University's employability success is demonstrated in more than metrics. We have a reputation for excellence in industries such as sport where our graduates work in 11 of the 20 Premier League football clubs, and many more outside the top division; Media where graduates work at Sky, BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Warner Bros, Virgin Records and the Guardian; and Fashion where graduates work at Zara, Gap, Jimmy Choo and the Arcadia Group, all in professional or managerial positions. More than 50% of the yachts present at 2016 Monaco Yacht Show were designed by Solent alumni; and among the British and associated 'Red Ensign Group' fleet of superyachts, there are few ships that are not commanded or managed at senior level by alumni. '***The course has helped me create and build relationships with people in the industry. If it were not for my application to the course, this would not have been achievable. Credit must go to the lecturers, as they have been able to shape and form my potential career.'*** (Student quote)

Solent Futures (SF) is fully integrated into the life of the Schools, with a seamless link between teaching and employability. The Academic Framework was reviewed in June 2017 and enshrined the principle that the curriculum should be 'enriched throughout with real-world learning'. SF supports course teams by sourcing live briefs and work placement opportunities, course development, employability events, auditing employability activity, and sharing best practice. The outstanding nature of SF's work to support graduate business start-ups has been recognised: in 2017, SF was short-listed for the AGCAS Award for Enterprise and the THE University Entrepreneurship Award.

Cross-institutional initiatives aimed at enhancing employability include the growth of a professional mentoring scheme. In 2016/17, 119 mentors from 66 companies mentored 126 student mentees from 73 courses. 59 of the mentees were female, 25 mature, 40 from a BME background, 29 were disabled and 18 were white males from a low socio-economic background. In 2017, 99% of graduates who worked with a professional mentor whilst at Solent were in employment or further study, and 70% were in professional / managerial level roles (higher than university averages, and TEF benchmark). SF provides tailored action plans to support courses who are under-performing on DLHE metrics. This support includes using the University's unique Employability Self-Evaluation to identify areas of intervention based on strengths and weaknesses across the areas of human, social and psychological capital.

While DLHE surveys measure employment six months after graduation, we know that graduate careers - especially in the arts - may take time to develop and offer a 'Careers Advice for Life' service to all our graduates. This gives students reassurance that their career needs will be supported throughout their working life and provides practical assistance to graduates as they seek to further their ambitions.

Solent Futures works with a range of employers, from local micro-businesses to global corporations, enabling students to build relationships with them. In the most recent academic year, SF co-ordinated 426 employers who came onto campus as a part of various different employability initiatives.

Our rise in degree classification results comes from a strategic focus on teaching quality, including a sustained investment in the clarity of assessment briefs and criteria and our increasing investment in supporting students with non-traditional and lower entry tariff points to flourish and succeed (noted above). During the periods under review, a deliberate step was taken to change our approach to marking and to introduce the use of grade mark. This decision was taken after multiple sustained comments from external examiners across the academic portfolio that the full range of marks was not being used, and particularly that marks for outstanding work rarely exceeded 70%. One external referred to what appeared to be a 'glass ceiling' of 70% in some cases. The effects of this can be seen in the rise in proportions of good honours in 2011/12 when there was a substantial increase in first degrees awarded from a low base rate (6% of firsts against a sector of 12%) and a smaller increase in 2:1s, after which a steady increase has been recorded which corresponds to the factors noted below. While Solent has continued to award lower rates of higher classified degrees than the

sector, the introduction of grade mark meant that its profile is more aligned to sector norms. External examiners endorsed this move: the University closely monitors data through external examiner reports and in 2011/12 98.1% confirmed satisfaction with the standard and consistency of marking. The change was introduced within a rigorous quality system including the scrutiny of modules with average marks of 68% or more. Across the metric time period there have been a range of other factors in play that have had an impact on degree classifications:

- Students' average entry qualifications increased by more than 70 UCAS tariff points (28 new tariff) over the period rising from 206 (82) to 280 (112). Increases in the classifications profiles for each of the years noted correspond to increased tariff points for the student cohorts. Increases between 2010/11 and 2011/12 correspond with a rise in average tariffs from 258 (103) to 275 (110) between 2008/09 and 2009/10, i.e. three years before 2010/11 and 2011/12. Increases between 2013/14 and 2014/15 corresponds with a rise in average tariff points from 271 (108) to 275 (110) between 2011/12 and 2012/13, i.e. three years before 2013/14 and 2014/15.
- A change in the University portfolio: the University's student population for those studying business and administrative studies decreased by 9 percentage points (from 29% to 20%). This subject area has a national profile of good honours that is 6 percentage points below other subjects. There were also decreases in the proportions of students studying other subjects with nationally fewer higher awards Law (-2%) and Architecture (-4%). The balance of the student population moved towards subjects such as Creative arts and design and Biological sciences where students nationally achieve higher degree classifications.
- An improvement in staff student ratios from 21.4 to 15.5.
- An increase in staff qualifications, including high levels of teaching qualifications noted above.

The very high levels of confidence expressed by external examiners continue with 99.6% confirming marking consistency and standards in 2016/17. We remain below sector norms for 'good honours' and our rigorous quality processes confirm that grade inflation has not occurred.

We pride ourselves on our inclusivity and on enhancing life chances. Across all cohorts including our BME students, students from low participation neighbourhoods and those who are disabled we see a steady rise in degree classifications. Nationally, we are part of the HEFCE-funded catalyst project on BME attainment and will be reporting on this in the next TEF period. We are also proud of the highly skilled employment outcomes for disabled and disadvantaged students.

CONCLUSION

In 2015 we launched the five year Strategic Plan with its associated Learning and Teaching and Student Achievement Strategy. We went on to win the 2015 Times Higher Education Most Improved Student Experience Award. A relentless focus on teaching quality has resulted in metrics which meet the silver criteria and exceed them in some areas. Previous TEF feedback recognised that we know our students well and LTSAS targeted interventions are resulting in some exceptional outcomes, ensuring that the support, the stretch and the opportunities needed are on offer across all programmes systematically. Our first class facilities are a major attraction and students recognise that the learning environment and access to real world learning support them to achieve exceptional outcomes, regardless of their route into university. We are proud to be making such progress and to be transforming lives and the regional economy through higher education. We leave our final words to one of our former students commenting in the NSS: ***'All in all, I have had the best experience of my life at this university, and…would recommend anyone to go there, as I think that the place keeps improving year after year.'*** (Student quote).