Name of Provider: University of Hertfordshire
UKPRN: 10007147

TEF Year Three provider submission

Provider Context

The University of Hertfordshire's vision is to be internationally renowned as the UK's leading business-facing university. This vision is supported by our Strategic Plan objectives, which are challenging and progressive. They are based on our values of ambition and enterprise and are achieved in a friendly, collegiate environment where the positive transformation of the lives of our students is our core purpose. A Hertfordshire student embodies the University's Graduate Attributes: professionalism, employability and enterprise; learning and research skills; intellectual breadth, depth and adaptability; respect for others; social responsibility and global awareness. These attributes ensure that they stand out in the workplace, **enhancing their career aspirations and conferring high employability.**

A key performance indicator for the university is to develop students with the knowledge, skills and attributes to succeed in business and the professions. Our challenging, inclusive learning environment engages students with the workplace to enhance their career aspirations and entrepreneurial spirit, leading to high levels of employment (Destination of Leavers in Higher Education, (DLHE) 2016, 96.1%) and long-term success (Longitudinal Employment Outcomes (LEO) data, median earnings threshold). Our ten Academic Schools drive our key strategic objective to '*provide expert teaching informed by research, business and the professions*' and offer diverse degree programmes ranging from vocational subjects such as paramedic science to innovative history degrees from one of the UK's top-ranked research groups in their field (Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014). Our teaching is informed by active external partnerships: 100% of new programme validations are shaped with the input of relevant businesses and professional partners and each School works with an Employer or Professional Advisory Board to ensure the relevance and currency of our programmes. **Eighty five percent of our single honours undergraduate awards are accredited, approved or recognised by Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)**.

Our track record on student achievement and social mobility is impressive. Approximately half of our students are from a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) background. Three quarters of our students in our largest School (Health and Social Work) are mature students. A significant proportion of our students are first generation into Higher Education. We estimate (from the 'Parental Education' question from our Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) student return, and our own data collected from our Start of Term Student Experience Survey) 42% of our new UK domiciled undergraduate students are the first in their family to attend university. Our student community of over 24,500 includes more than 3,700 students from 134 different countries. We are proud of the diversity of our student body across all of our Schools and value the individual experiences and expertise that they bring. **To deliver on our core purpose of transforming lives the University is committed to widening participation and outreach.** We sponsor two University Technical Colleges (UTCs) and four local Free Schools. We are the lead partner in the National Collaborative Outreach Programme (NCOP) for Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. The University of Hertfordshire has a vibrant consortium partnership with the four Hertfordshire Further Education (FE) Colleges: over 15,000 students have progressed to the University from the consortium since it was founded in 2000. Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics demonstrate the impact of our institutional drive on positive outcomes for disadvantaged, BME and male students.

The University is proud of the recognition it has received over the past three years for the quality of its work as a modern, business-facing university. In 2017 we were nominated in the Times Higher Education awards for the 'most improved student experience'. In 2016 we were ranked by Times Higher Education as one of the world's top 150 universities under 50 years old. Hertfordshire is one of only 2 universities to receive no recommendations following Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) HE Review (2016). The University holds an Athena Swan (Bronze) award and received the Race Equality Charter Mark Bronze award in 2015; one of only 8 applicants to achieve this recognition.

Underpinning all that we do is an institutional commitment to student-staff partnership working, which is pervasive, pioneering and wide-ranging. This submission evidences the deliberate steps that we have taken, in partnership, over a sustained period to develop and maintain outstanding experiences and outcomes for students. The President of Hertfordshire Students' Union (HSU), Shelby Loasby, has been engaged with our submission and the Teaching Excellence Framework from the outset and has embedded the student voice throughout this submission. She notes: ***"The University and HSU have a strong working partnership with the student voice as a prominent feature in every aspect of the student experience. The University has remained transparent and inclusive with the TEF, and the Students' Union co-authored this submission."***

Demonstration of Excellence in Student Outcomes and Learning Gain

Through our business-facing vision, we prioritise student outcomes and employability. The result has been outstanding employment figures for our graduates, aligned to our mission and reflected in our TEF metrics. Our strategic approach places us at, or near the top, of all non-benchmarked measures of employability compared to all other East of England HE providers. For two consecutive years we have had the best employment rate of graduates in the East of England region, additionally outperforming the whole of the Russell Group in 2014/15 and behind only one Russell Group institution in 2016/17. Our Longitudinal Employment Outcomes (LEO) are also excellent: we lie in 2nd position after the University of Cambridge for median salary 5 years after graduation; and 3rd position in the East of England for median salary after 3 years. We are particularly proud of our success and track record in ensuring outstanding outcomes for all of our students as evidenced in our split metrics.

Other independent analyses rank Hertfordshire in the top quartile of UK HE providers in terms of graduate outcomes. *The Economist's* ranking (August 2017) which compares graduates' salary with how much they would have been expected to earn regardless of their university, places us in 18th position overall, with a 'Value Added' figure, calculated as the difference between the predicted and actual amounts that students earn, of +£1,261.

As a business-facing university, UH strives to develop professionalism, employability and enterprise in all students (a Graduate Attribute), producing graduates who are skilled and highly employable. We are one of the institutions taking part in the HEFCE Learning Gain Project and, whilst it is commonly accepted that learning gain is difficult to measure, one important factor is learners' confidence levels. In this regard, our students complete their courses feeling highly confident about the skills they have developed. NSS development scores were at or above the sector norm for all questions in 2016 and showed continued improvement in the NSS 2017 when we asked students about personal confidence as optional questions:

	Personal Development overall (Q19-21)	The course has helped me to present myself with confidence (Q19)	My communication skills have improved (Q20)	As a result of the course I feel confident in tackling unfamiliar problems (Q21)
Sector 2016	83%	81%	84%	82%
UH 2016	83%	81%	85%	83%
UH 2017	84%	82%	87%	83%

Our highly skilled graduate employment figures are consistently well above our benchmark, and for the third year in succession we have also increased the gap between us and the rest of the sector. Our professional/managerial employment level for 2015/2016 is 78.1% (7.1% higher than the HESA average). In 2014/2015 it was 77.2% (6.1% higher than the average) and in 2013/2014 it was 73.8% (5.8% higher than the average). These results, taken alongside our moderate average UCAS tariff scores, demonstrate outstanding student outcomes and indicate the 'distance travelled' by our students through their study. In addition to our excellent employment and highly skilled

employment figures, UK companies have chosen Hertfordshire as one of the top Universities in the UK at preparing graduates for the workplace (Times Higher UK employability ranking, 2016).

Together, our Values, Graduate Attributes, Student Charter and Strategic Plan create an environment where we enhance our graduates' social mobility, employability and develop students with the knowledge, skills and attributes to succeed in business and the professions. Our qualifications hold value and our students benefit from sustained employment and salary premiums above expectations. We have taken deliberate steps, outlined below, over a prolonged period to develop a strong culture of employability and enterprise within a student-staff partnership approach to deliver these outstanding results.

1. A focus on employability from the very first engagement with the University. New students receive a pre-arrival quiz about our Graduate Attributes followed by a survey on their future career aspirations at enrolment which is then used to provide tailored support to students as they progress through their studies. Over 22,700 students participated in the Careers Registration Scheme at the start of Academic Year 2017. All new staff joining the University are challenged at their induction to consider how they will support the development of Graduate Attributes, and embed this in every encounter with students.

2. **Employer and PSRB engagement with, and input into, 100% of our programmes of study** ensures that students acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes that enhance their personal and professional lives. Overall, 81% of our undergraduate students study on PSRB-approved/accredited courses with 85% of our single honours students graduating with a degree that is professionally accredited. The range of engagement with professional practice is extensive and includes all academic Schools who make excellent use of experts from business, industry and the professions in the design of courses as well as delivery. Some examples of industry engagement and professional practice are:

- The Creative Ideas Office engages all second- year interior and creative design students with live industry projects;
- In the School of Education practising teachers lecture alongside university staff and are involved in all interviews in addition to supporting students in school;
- Students from mathematics, physics, astrophysics and aerospace engineering courses work collaboratively on a space mission design project module judged by an industry professional who also mentors the students on their projects.

3. Employability embedded within the curriculum and through our extra- and co-curricular activities. We draw extensively on subject experts from industry and the professions to provide real-world relevance and enhance our students' learning and assessment experience. For example, within health-related courses, both service providers and service users are involved in the design and delivery of courses. Most Schools offer extra and co-curricular opportunities and qualifications (research/consultancy work, peer mentoring, City & Guilds awards, Microsoft qualifications, pilot's licenses, small awards, standalone short course credit, etc.) to complement their students' core studies. Career management skills are assessed formally and accredited in all programmes, via different methods of assessment, depending on the course requirements and content. The HSU actively supports employability embedded within the curriculum and, together with the University, has championed the development of our *Go Herts Award* to celebrate students achieving more than a degree during their time at UH. The award is closely tied to our Graduate Attributes and highlights employability through extra and co-curricular activities.

Student comments consistently demonstrate that input from industry and the professions is particularly appreciated: *'Fantastic industry links and work opportunities – every effort is made to make sure you're ready to be hired in the competitive industry', (*Animation student, NSS 2017). Professional Bodies also recognise and value our outward, industry-facing approach and partnerships, for example, the College of Radiographers commended *'the embedded involvement of experts'*; and the Royal Aeronautical Society praised the *'contributions from a dynamic set of*

Industrial Advisory Group Chairmen and their active involvement in a number of industry focused MEng, MSc and BEng final year projects'.

4. Deeply embedded work-based and placement learning. As an institution with a strong vocational history, work-based and placement learning opportunities are not new, but with a requirement for all undergraduate programmes to offer curriculum-based placements (an institutional KPI) the University has seen several innovations. Key has been the uptake of work experience schemes presenting more flexible opportunities for students and employers. In 2016/17 over 3,000 students across all schools undertook a placement, and over 300 students participated in study abroad activity. In addition to professional practice placements, for example in the Health and Education Schools, the range of provision includes:

- Sandwich placements in disciplines not traditionally associated within this form of work-based learning, such as Creative Arts and Humanities;
- Project-based placements with employers where students work on cutting edge research such as Life and Medical Science students working in partnership with Rothamsted Research (an internationally renowned research institute);
- Innovative self-employment opportunities hosted in the University's Innovation Centre to support entrepreneurial students with a business development idea;
- The i-shadow scheme – the umbrella name for our various work shadowing schemes, including targeted schemes such as STEM BME and female shadowing;
- Our Placement Ambassador Scheme where we recruit returning placement students to share their experiences and encourage other students to undertake placements and work experience. To date we have 49 Ambassadors;
- Over 200 students are employed by HSU in part-time work including as research and marketing assistants and graphic designers.

5. A focus on entrepreneurship and enterprise. In support of the University's 'Enterprising' Graduate Attribute, there is a range of highly successful enterprise development activities across the University. The *Flare Ignite* scheme recognises and celebrates in-curricular entrepreneurial work. Academic schools nominate students in recognition of their creativity and innovation demonstrated through curriculum-embedded projects and assessments. The winners of this year's £1,000 award were two Sports Science students who developed an all-natural healthy cake bar. Our annual *Flare* competition, now in its 13th year, is a student business start-up challenge programme. More than 100 entrants are shortlisted to around 10 finalists on the basis of business plans and the 3 winners each receive £5,000 to support their new business. In 2016/17 winning ideas were as diverse as an online sportswear and sports services pairing app; innovative software which allows users to enhance their content by inserting 360-degree video; and an online bespoke formal wear business. Previous winners have gone on to run highly successful businesses. Greg McClarnon, managing director of Splaat Media and winner of the 2015 Flare competition attributes this to the support he received at UH: *'Winning the Flare competition enabled me to run my business full-time once I completed my degree. The Flare prize money, expert coaching and networking opportunities enabled me to do this meaning that once I graduated, I was able to hit the ground running - working full-time growing my business. I now have a team of 45 and photograph more than 1600 school events each year across the UK*.'

Pitch 4 a Pitch offers students the chance to test out a business idea by trading on campus or at a local market. Students who have the skills to work as freelancers (e.g. web designers, photographers, copywriters etc.) are supported through workshops and one to one appointments to enable them to apply for and provide services to employers offering these opportunities. Recent graduates can apply to be supported through their first year as a graduate entrepreneur. They are provided with a base in our Incubation Centre and receive a grant of £3,000 plus mentoring support through this transitional period, as well as being part of a community with other entrepreneurs based at the University. There are currently 30 regular users of the space. Business Start-up Bootcamps are run each year for students who want to explore self-employment. In 2016/17,106 students and graduates took part in the programme and over £24,000 was awarded

to support 14 student and graduate businesses. Hertfordshire Student Union offers a range opportunities for students to showcase skills and professional development such as Enactus, a nationally recognised entrepreneurial society. UH is one of the most successful teams, winning awards for their innovative programmes such as Glasscycle and Motive-8 which engage and empower the wider community.

6. A high profile and highly accessible Careers and Employment Service (CES) offering personalised advice and guidance alongside a bespoke School-based provision, ensuring that each discipline gets the approach that their students, staff and employers need. The CES has a prominent presence on both campuses with the front-line service offering an average of approximately 120 student appointments per week over the 51 weeks they are open. The CES resources website 'Career Hub' has over 20,000 active users providing just-in-time support, resources, virtual meetings with careers advisors and online courses to prepare students for work placement.

School Engagement Teams (SETs), each comprising an Enterprise Advisor, a Careers Advisor, a Careers Officer and an Employment Advisor, work together to build relationships with academic staff and students within their assigned Schools and to improve employment by taking 'the Service' to the Schools. These teams are particularly effective, designing bespoke support specifically for each School. Schools supplement this with their own activities such as "Think Like an Employer" events (commended by the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET)), co-delivered with CES and employers, to enable students to step into the shoes of industry recruiters. These sessions involve students working with employers to understand job requirements and then experience what it is like to recruit to typical roles in the industry. The Business School and the School of Humanities provide a full-day Assessment Centre experience to all second year students. In 2017, more than 1,200 students took part, with feedback demonstrating a clear increase in confidence levels in applying for Graduate jobs/placements. For the Business School, those students stating 'confident' or 'very confident' rose from 19% to 53% after attending the Assessment Centre and, at that same time, those feeling 'not confident' fell from 24% to 5%. Humanities showed a similar pattern with those stating 'confident' or 'very confident' rising from 14% to 41%, alongside a significant fall in those feeling 'not confident' from 43% to 5%.

Direct support for students from CES includes workshops, work experience, boot camps, business start-up support, employer presentations and Careers Fairs. The employer team builds links with a range of employers with a focus on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). The reach of this service is impressive, contributing to our high employability figures. For example, in 2016/17:

- 150 careers workshops were held with 3,019 bookings made;
- 33 events were run in conjunction with Schools e.g. Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Fair, Creative Edge, Life and Medical Sciences (LMS) Symposium. The STEM Fair had a total of 580 bookings;
- The 3 main Careers Fairs attracted a total of 156 employers and 2,698 student registrations.

A crucial element of the CES support team and an example of our institutional commitment to student-staff partnership working are our 30 Careers Link Students working in paid roles to support their peers in accessing relevant CES support and services.

7. An institutional approach to student success and positive outcomes for all. The University's core purpose is to transform the lives of all our students through a high quality, distinctive educational experience. Our Widening Participation and Student Success Strategy aims to mainstream our approach to widening participation and social mobility and it is evident from our TEF split metrics that we have been successful in achieving this. Data shows that outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and disabled students, are comparable with, and sometimes exceed, the University's high employability outcomes.

Outcomes for BME students in relation to employment and highly skilled employment are above the sector average and continue to improve. Of particular note is our '++' flag for the 'Employment or further study' metric for BME students. Our nationally renowned 'Herts Success' initiative offers targeted support to over 3,500 eligible students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The results of this programme are striking with 97.3% of Herts Success graduates employed or in further study in 2015/16 (compared to 96.2% across all UH graduates). Outcomes for students with disabilities are also excellent, with disabled students as likely to gain a good degree as their non-disabled peers (66% of students who declared a disability compared to 65% of those students who did not in 2015/16).

A core element of the University's widening participation work is our arrangements with the four FE Colleges which, together with the University, comprise the Hertfordshire Higher Education Consortium. (HHEC). The Consortium's work is supported by the University to offer a range of progression opportunities from further to higher education. Outcomes are excellent. In 2016/17 63% of students transferring from the Consortium went on to achieve 'good' Honours degrees.

Feedback from our most recent QAA HER review (Dec. 2015) confirms our institutional focus and resulting success in ensuring excellent outcomes for our students: *'The University aims to support its diverse student population and enable all students to achieve their potential. This particularly relates to employability, in respect of which the University works to strengthen partnerships, develop placement opportunities and ensure that its students are aware of and equipped to fulfil employer expectations.' (p.19)*

Demonstration of Excellence in the Learning Environment

The impact of our continuous, strategic investment in the learning environment is best evidenced by our excellent and sustained continuation metric. This has consistently exceeded our benchmark for over 10 years, and is positively flagged in year 3 of our metrics. We regularly outperform our competitor set and are second only to the University of Cambridge in the East of England region on this measure. Our record on 'distance travelled', evidenced in excellent student outcomes and increased confidence levels, supports our claim that we provide an exceptional learning environment. Additionally, in the NSS 2017, our overall % agree score for the learning community questions was 79%, 2% above the sector overall score. We have taken purposeful steps and made significant investments in our physical and digital infrastructure, outlined below, to create a learning environment for our diverse student body that is personalised, shared, enriching and inclusive, resulting in excellent rates of retention, attainment and progression.

1. Personalised learning. From the outset of their journey, we have support measures in place to maximise the retention, progression and attainment of all our students. Prior to their arrival at the University, and as part of their transition, students can access our 'Preparing for University' MOOC (Massive Open Online Course). Development of the MOOC was particularly important as 42% of our students are first in family to go to university. In the recent start of term survey, 88% of participants rated it useful or very useful. UH and HSU work closely together from student induction, recruiting over 60 Freshers' volunteers each year to ensure face-to-face interaction that helps students to settle into university life.

Thereafter, personal or academic support tutors work with individual students in their Schools. In 2017 we extended the monitoring of student attendance across all Schools alongside other indicators of engagement such as accessing of study materials and non-submission of early assignments to identify and support students at risk. Throughout the year, within our Learning Resources Centres (LRCs), drop-in areas enable students to gain individual maths support and academic English guidance. In the first term of 2017/18, over 760 students attended individual drop-in sessions. Academic English and study skills development workshops, open to all students, also run weekly, and this year we also provided intensive support sessions for maths and English over two weekends at the start of term. Academic Confidence survey scores for first year students indicate these measures are having an impact. On the question 'how confident do you feel to

produce your best work in coursework', first year students gave a mean score of 4.13 in 2017 (where 5 is very confident on a Likert scale), compared to 3.67 in 2016.

We have taken action to improve the services that support student learning and encourage independent study. We provide a personalised timetable for every student, with timely notification of changes through Herts Mobile App. Both of our LRCs are open 24/7 and, since 2016, the University has introduced Christmas opening hours resulting in more than 1,000 students using the facilities over the period (including Christmas day). 2017/18 has seen the introduction of a new laptop loan service that allows students to borrow a Chromebook at any time for use within the LRC. In the first 8 weeks of this academic year laptops were borrowed on 2,142 occasions and the service is especially welcomed by our commuting students. Following student feedback and HSU input, and recognising financial pressure that comes with university, the University now provides a quota of free LRC printing credits to students each year, and HSU offers free printing to every student.

Hertfordshire is a recognised innovator and leader in technology enhanced learning. UH was the UK's Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) in Blended Learning from 2005-10. Our VLE (StudyNet) facilitates a continuum of engagement from blended approaches to studying via online or distance learning modes. StudyNet has its own video portal enabling the easy booking and use of virtual classroom technology. With extensive input from students (2,500 were involved in the pilot), we recently re-designed StudyNet around a set of pedagogic principles, to form the 'Guided Learner Journey', ensuring more personalised routes through learning, higher student engagement with better access for mobile devices, and greater integration of reading lists and video (including lecture capture and flipped classroom). The effective, mature and embedded use of our VLE is one of the reasons our NSS scores for Resources has been consistently above the sector overall for the last 10 years.

Personalisation extends to modes of assessment. Programme validation panels promote assessments that, where possible, give students individual choice. This is externally recognised. Recently, the Joint Audio Media Education Services (JAMES) commended the flexibility of the provision on the BA (Hons) Games Art: '*Students who embark on the course are allowed a period of discovery within the first year… the flexibility of allowing students to evolve into areas they may not have originally considered is likely to increase levels of both motivation and attainment'.*

The impact of personalisation is evident in our split metrics with '+' non-continuation flags for mature, disadvantaged, BME, and male students. It is further demonstrated by '++' flags in terms of highly skilled employment or further study for graduates regardless of whether they are young, mature, disadvantaged, BME, male or female.

2. A shared endeavour. There is a deeply embedded culture of student-staff partnership working which supports student integration into university life as well as enhancing teaching excellence. It underpins all our curriculum design work, student engagement activities and the continuous enhancement of the student experience. All Schools have partnership projects, and activities are disseminated annually in our Student-Staff Partnership poster conference in addition to communication at external conferences and via national publications. Partnership working is evident in all types of activity within the University, for example; astrophysics students host school pupils at our inflatable planetarium coordinated by staff members as part of our outreach work; all learning and teaching innovation award funded projects have at least one student member as part of the project team; and modules in many schools have been co-designed by students and staff members. Our partnership approach is nationally recognised as part of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Strategic Enhancement Programme - Engaged Student Learning (2014-15) who have published case studies and an online resource to provide a framework for staff and student groups initiating partnership working that we have developed. Partnership projects, whether curriculum based or co-curricular activities, all provide leadership and team working opportunities for our students, further supporting their employability upon graduation. Student 'Wireless Warriors'

and Technology Mentors provide digital literacy support for staff as well as for students using the VLE. BME student advocates are in place in each School as part of our BME Success Project and work with staff members to critique curriculum ensuring inclusivity. Student proctors/fellows are appointed in the Schools of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics; Creative Arts; and Health and Social Work. The Business School and School of Engineering and Technology deploy in-class student assistants; and the Schools of Computer Science, Education and Humanities make use of, and train, peer mentors. This culture of student partnership pays off: our overall University score for the student voice in the NSS 2017 was 1% above the sector overall score; and 86% of our students agreed they had had the right opportunities to work with other students (compared with 84% for the sector overall).

Listening to the student voice to enhance the student experience is key to our culture of shared endeavour. Over 600 HSU trained, elected student representatives and 10 HSU part-time officers sit on programme and School level committees; students are involved in annual monitoring and periodic review of programmes (including as panel members); and School Community Officers work with senior management in Schools. At university level, HSU elected officers are members on all committees and project management groups. For example, our learning spaces and VLE projects involved students at all stages, including HSU officers, student reps as members of the project management groups, student focus groups; and 1:1 discussions. This academic year we have enhanced the effectiveness of the student voice by introducing mid-module surveys, rather than end-of-module surveys, to facilitate a two-way conversation between students and staff whilst the module is running. HSU have welcomed this new approach with one student commenting, '*The mid module feedback was really useful as we were able to improve our modules. I was struggling with the deadlines in one module and based on this feedback our lecturer managed to alter the timings to help us succeed*.' (Physics, Astronomy and Maths Student Rep)

3. An enriching academic and social culture. Working together, UH and HSU provide a learning and social environment in which students can take advantage of a wide range of extra- and co-curricular activities. The knowledge, skills and experience gained in this way supports our students' employability and their acquisition of the Graduate Attributes. There are over 150 student societies with 2,500 student members, including vibrant academic societies. Additionally, HSU promotes volunteering, supports the Duke of Edinburgh Award, and offers training and workshops such as First Aid training for all students to boost skills and development. Engagement with HSU societies aids employability, for example students involved with Trident Media, have gone onto employment with the BBC and ITV. The University's free 'Active Students' programme aims to improve resilience, and physical and mental health of students through increasing participation in sport. The programme attracts over 900 student visits each week. CONNECT, the UH Common Reading Experience Programme, co-led by students and staff, offers all members of the University a free copy of a selected book and enables them to participate in joint discussions, activities and events related to the topic. This year 5,000 books were distributed.

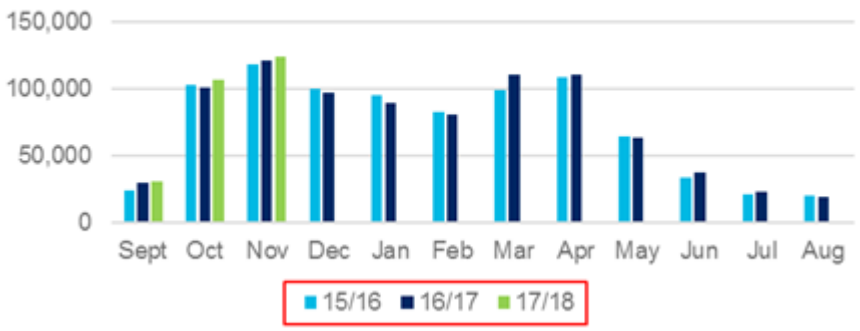
Accredited and non-accredited activities are provided in all academic schools to enhance discipline specific skills and knowledge. Students are supported to take part in national and international events with considerable success, for example:

- Karting, Race Car Simulator, and Formula Student extend over the duration of students' programmes. The Formula Student project team build racing cars and compete against other universities in the UK, Europe and across the world. UH Racing is the UK's most successful Formula Student racing team of all time.
- The Law School has a vibrant credit bearing co-curricular programme, as part of which, over 100 students are involved in the mooting team. It is one of the most successful national and international teams, achieving multiple wins and finalist places in the last few years.
- The School of Computer Science has the longest continually active robot football team in the UK and one of the most successful, reaching the quarter final of the 2017 World Robo Cup.

These enrichment activities are appreciated by students and employers. PSRBs frequently comment on the effectiveness of co and extra-curricular activities. The British Computer Society (BCS) commended the School of Computer Science for *'encouraging [students] in their innovation and the extra-curricular support given to allow them to follow their interests and engage more fully with the subject'.* Students also frequently comment on their value: *'this university through the co-curricular courses, gives the opportunity to students to take part in competitions international and national and it gives the opportunity to students to challenge themselves.'* (Law student)

The learning environment is enriched by significant investment in physical resources over the last ten years to provide a sector-leading physical and digital learning environment designed to support students' exposure to specialist, industry standard resources. This investment includes: a Law Court Building containing a simulated law court and flexible teaching accommodation (£12m, completed in 2011); a new Science building (£47m, completed in 2015, containing one of the largest Clinical Simulation Centres in the UK including intensive care and hospital ward areas); new student accommodation, social spaces and sports facilities (£120m, completed in 2016). Refurbishment of the College Lane campus (£27m, completed in 2014) included the introduction of new informal learning spaces, and the 'Hutton Hub' a student one-stop-shop, which co-locates the Student Centre, Careers Office, Student Wellbeing, Medical Centre, Hertfordshire Students' Union and the Campus Pharmacy. In the School of Engineering and Technology a Smart Systems Laboratory enables students to develop smart solutions to modern-day technical challenges. Students have built a 'smart' house and competed in the prestigious Imagine Cup.

Research, including a recent JISC Library Impact Project, shows a statistically significant correlation between library activity data and student attainment. Our library usage statistics, below, show high and continued growth, reaching over 2 million engagements in November 2017 since August 2015.



NSS scores for resources demonstrate the impact of these investments and have been above the sector average throughout the last 10 years (including 2017):

NSS 2017	Learning Resources (Qs 18 - 20)	Q18. The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well	Q19. The library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning	Q20. I have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g. equipment, facilities, software, collections) when I needed to
Sector	85%	83%	86%	86%
UH	86%	85%	88%	87%

The resulting impact on the learning environment has also been externally recognised. The Chapman Lounge (a digitally enabled social and study space for staff and students), won regional awards from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Royal Institute of British Architects (2015). The Science Building simulation suite teaching spaces won the AV Awards 2017 Best Education Product of the Year Award and the Law Court building was listed 8th most

impressive Law School in the world by the organisation BestChoiceSchools.com. PSRBs continue to commend the physical resources and facilities available to students. For example, recently, the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) commended*, 'the upgrading of resources such as skills facilities; and new developments in virtual learning platforms'*. Visits from the General Optical Council (GOC), British Dietetic Association (BDA) and the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) have all resulted in commendations for '*the range and level of specialist facilities, equipment and technology available to students.*'

4. An inclusive approach to student support. The University is proud that over 40% of its students are from 'non-traditional' student groups, but recognizes that such students may require additional support to ensure retention, employability and success. All full-time undergraduate students from low-participation areas, with a household income of less than £25,000 are automatically awarded a bursary. Our Widening Access and Student Success strategy (2017-20) adopts a broad definition of under-represented and disadvantaged groups, taking a reflective and evidence based approach in order to maximise the impact and reach of everything we do. This ensures that curriculum design, learning and teaching, and student support activity is successful in meeting the needs of our diverse student body. Our flagship 'Herts Success' programme has received national recognition as one of the institutional case studies in UUK's recently published *Widening Participation in Outward Social Mobility Toolkit (2017)* and in 2016/17 the withdrawal rate of these students was reduced by 18% compared to 2015/16. In 2017/18 we extended Herts Success to new students with family income of less than £45,000 so that over 3,500 students are now eligible for targeted support. The expanded provision includes activities to support resilience and well-being; additional English and maths guidance (outlined above); and an academic coaching programme. In addition, the highly impactful model provided by the centralised approach is being replicated to create Student Success Groups in each School.

Whilst our inclusive approach to student support enables strong continuation and excellent employment outcomes as evidenced by our metrics ('++' flag for <u>all</u> groups for highly skilled employment) and is recognised by PSRBs, it is disappointing that this is not reflected in NSS scores for a small number of students. For example, quantitative data suggested students who declare a disability are less satisfied with their support compared to other groups. However, the qualitative comments from this group are overwhelmingly positive and include: '*Incredible support was offered to me as a disabled student…The understanding and help I have received from the staff on my course has been phenomenal and has allowed me to achieve great things'.* Our Inclusive Teaching strategy (2016-20), developed to support Strategic Plan objectives, aims to offer timely and appropriate support which is available for all students. For example, both LRCs have integrated assistive technology areas, learning resources are provided in appropriate formats, and contact channels for the Helpdesk include email, Live Chat and text. Additionally, all students who disclose a disability are supported by the University's Student Wellbeing Team. Study Needs Agreements (SNAs) are created for students who need individual support or adjustments for their learning. To improve inclusive practice further, we have committed to universal recording of lectures and provision of all resources in digital formats where possible by 2018. The Students' Union contributes to this inclusive approach: HSU has an independent support service for legal, financial and academic advice as well as mental health and housing issues. This service works in partnership with University departments taking an institutional response to tackling student problems. Last year the Advice and Support Centre saw 628 students.

For part-time students, the University's core metric for NSS academic support was in the lower 10% of absolute performance (i.e. a '!' indicator). However, the very low student count (164 part-time students completing the NSS, compared to 8945 full-time students) shows that this applies to a very small proportion (1.8%) of students. In addition, we have identified that 58% of the eligible part-time student population in this data set relates to students registered at the University but taught at 5 of our partner institutions. Although we cannot identify which students from the eligible population responded to the NSS, it is clear that a significant proportion of respondents are likely to be students who are not taught directly at UH. Although the data for part-time students is dependent on a very small sample, and mostly reflects the feedback from students taught in

partner institutions, we are not complacent. We continue to work closely with our partners to provide an excellent student experience for all UH students, wherever they are taught. This was recognised in our 2016 QAA HE Review report, with reviewers commending the '*inclusive, developmental and enhancement-oriented approach to its engagement with its extensive and complex range of collaborative partner institutions*.'

Overall, Year 3 TEF data shows that part-time students are generally now more satisfied with academic support than in previous years. We also recognise that we need to cater for their specific needs. For part-time students attending at UH, our own data shows that these students are primarily concerned that timetabling arrangements are structured around the needs of full-time students. The Campus Life and BME Working Group (which includes the HSU Vice President Education and staff members) have considered data on the impact of commuting on student engagement and attainment. Our start of term survey (2017) suggests that 41% of students commute from home and a significant percentage (26%) of these have daily commutes of more than 30 miles. In 2017 the University provided funding for a research project into the perceptions of our undergraduates on commuting and its effect on student experience. Practical outcomes are already underway. For example, as the University has its own bus service we are well-placed to support the needs of commuting students and work is ongoing with timetabling to balance the differing needs of on-campus and commuting students in terms of the spread of class contact time each week. HSU has also worked with the University to make the Park and Ride service more affordable and it has regularly arranged commuter breakfasts to engage and support students travelling to the University.

Reducing the BME attainment gap has been a University Equality Objective since 2012. Our well established BME Success Working Group is a diverse student-staff group with a focus on initiatives to close the BME attainment gap. The Group was successful in a Leadership Foundation bid to develop case studies of good practice of leadership at the programme level in relation to race equality; and through our involvement in the HEFCE-funded collaborative project '*Using a value-added metric and an inclusive curriculum framework to address the black and minority ethnic attainment gap*' we have worked with over 190 staff members from 37 undergraduate programmes to challenge them to reduce any attainment gaps as evidenced in value added scores. A successful University Learning and Teaching Award to develop a BME student advocate programme (10 students, each linked with one Academic School) proposed by a student member of the BME Group, provides support and leadership from BME students who also critically review curriculum documentation to ensure a more inclusive academic content. One of our Governors, Dawid Konotey-Ahulu (Co-Founder, Redington) who has led a BME mentorship programme in the City working with business leaders to support young people to aspire high, actively engages with the Working Group.

PSRB reports speak positively of the level of support provided for students. For example, most recently, the College of Radiographers praised the '*high level of student satisfaction in relation to student support and guidance from teaching staff*', the Royal College of Nursing commented on the '*excellent academic and pastoral support*' for students on the Contemporary Nursing programme and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development rated '*the breadth and depth of support offered to students'* including *'academic skills support provided by both Department and central resources*'. Finally, OFSTED recognised that teacher trainees in the School of Education '*gain significantly from excellent advice and guidance.'* There were also many positive comments from students in the NSS 2017 including, *'As a mature student with young children the staff have been really supportive with my learning and have definitely made me want to achieve my best.'* (Social Work student)

Demonstration of Excellence in Teaching Quality

As stated in our Strategic Plan, **the University provides expert teaching informed by research, business and the professions**. We value and celebrate the teaching expertise of our staff and are very proud that 79% of our academic staff hold Fellowships of the HEA, compared to the sector

average of 39%. Our assessment and feedback NSS scores have shown year on year improvements rising by 7% over the last 4 years, and our NSS Teaching score is above our benchmark and continues to improve. Our approach to curriculum design fosters student enquiry, critical thinking and curiosity, enabling excellent student outcomes, particularly employability. All programmes undergo a rigorous validation and periodic review process ensuring effective stimulation, challenge and the development of all our Graduate Attributes.

1. Curricula informed by research, business and the professions. Our business-facing vision means we use a range of employability-focused pedagogic approaches including real world simulation, live industry projects, and work place learning. These learning and assessment activities stretch our students and we set high expectations to ensure they develop to be creative, professional and enterprising graduates. All programme development teams must demonstrate that experts from business and the professions contributed to programme design and that they are working with professional engagement groups to ensure involvement in and the currency of the programme. Undergraduate student experiences are enhanced through the invitation of guest speakers either from the professions, as industry leaders and/or alumni. For example, Tom Cahill of the Hertfordshire Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (named chief executive of the year in the 2017 Health Service Journal Awards) teaches on programmes within the School of Life and Medical Sciences. We aim to ensure that guest speakers are representative of our diverse student body, acting as role models for our students. Grace Ononiwu OBE (an alumnus of the University, recognized in the Powerlist 2018 and the first Afro-Caribbean person to hold the role of Chief Crown Prosecutor in the UK) shared her experience working for the Crown Prosecution Service in the West Midlands with our Law Students.

Our research culture, which is defined by a strong spirit of enquiry, innovation and enterprise, feeds directly into teaching and learning. For example, History undergraduate students, working with the top-rated department for research impact (REF 2014) provide ‘instant history’ memory gathering for a range of community groups, this is then archived and made available for public access. Their work was featured in a BBC Radio 4 'Instant History' programme focusing on retirement (broadcast on December 17th 2016). Undergraduate geography students annually undertake glacial research in the Arctic. In addition to their work featuring in peer reviewed journals the students have produced online guidance for field-research techniques for other students. Validation and periodic review panels require evidence of research-rich and informed teaching, including highlighting how the curricula and assessment incorporates students’ engagement in research and inquiry.

Research professors regularly teach on undergraduate programmes, inspiring students with their latest research. The research-informed nature of the curricula is also enhanced through the involvement of our postgraduate research students in teaching and assessment activities. Mandatory engagement in the first module of our PGCert in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PGCertLTHE) ensures that research students are fully supported in their teaching activities so they feel confident and are fully competent in their practice. The personal achievement of gaining Associate Fellowship of the HEA also supports their employability within academia following completion of their doctoral studies.

Pedagogic research is supported and promoted via the University’s Educational Research Network co-chaired by the PVC Education and PVC Research. The network enables pedagogic researchers from all 10 Academic Schools plus staff from central units (Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre [LTIC] and Centre for Academic Quality Assurance [CAQA]) to share practice, identify collaboration opportunities and support publication in pedagogic journals including our own online journals ‘Blended Learning in Practice’ and ‘LINK’ (published by the LTIC and School of Education respectively).

2. Inclusive Curricula. Transforming lives and successful outcomes for all is based on an inclusive approach to teaching, which is central to all programmes. Having engaged in sector

projects such as the HEA's 'Developing an Inclusive Culture in Higher Education Project' (ICP) and the HEA's' BME Summit programme', we have developed guidance and support for our staff to ensure that teaching materials are inclusive and accessible and that learning takes place in intercultural groups. The University provides seminars and workshops (including unconscious bias training which over 700 staff members have attended), top tips and case studies, plus an inclusive teaching strand of our curriculum design toolkit (the toolkit has received over 5,300 online views). Our commitment to inclusive curricula was specifically commended within our Bronze Race Equality Charter Mark (2015) and we are currently working towards an application for Silver in 2018. The research of one of our academics (Dr Theo Gilbert) in the development of compassion-focussed pedagogy (CfP) has been promoted by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) as an example of excellent practice requiring students to consider their responsibility in the learning and social experiences of their fellow students. Quantitative analysis demonstrates a statistically significant improvement in academic (assessed) performance scores for BME students working in CfP managed groups and seminars, compared with BME students in control groups. Through our inclusive practice initiatives the attainment gap between White and BME students has narrowed by 10%, from 27% in 2009/10 to 17% in 2016/17 and we have been invited to disseminate our institutional approach at a number of other institutions as well as the following National groups: Office For Fair Access, University Alliance and Higher Education Race Action Group (HERAG).

3. **Rigorous curricula.** Providing high quality teaching and intellectually challenging courses is an Education strategic objective. Our NSS teaching score is above our expected benchmark and is improving (difference from Yr2 benchmark = -0.1; difference from Yr3 benchmark = 0.6). Crucially our courses ensure rigour and stretch which ultimately result in excellent employability outcomes for our students. Aligned with intended learning outcomes and teaching activities, our assessments are designed to stretch and challenge our students. Review and validation processes require programmes to include varied, authentic assessment to support personalised learning; enhance employability; develop Graduate Attributes; and, where relevant, to meet the requirements of PSRBs. In reviewing our assessment and feedback activities, 55 different types of summative assessments were identified across the University. This variety is important in enabling validity, creativity, choice, and authenticity but also presents challenges: while NSS qualitative comments show that students are inclined to be less satisfied with challenging assessments, other evidence, such as external examiner and PSRB reports, demonstrates overwhelmingly the high quality of our assessments and our assessment processes: *'There is a range of innovative assessment across the programme, with opportunities for formative as well as summative assessment taking place across all modules. Work with 'live' partners is to be commended, maintaining a level of currency within the programme'.* (Edwards, Hertfordshire Business School)

Challenging courses do not always result in high levels of student satisfaction yet, acknowledging our lower than sector average NSS student satisfaction scores for assessment and feedback, we identified this as a key priority and have taken deliberate and specific steps to address this. The impact of the work we have undertaken is evidenced by significantly improved student satisfaction scores for assessment and feedback which has risen by 7%, compared to a 2% rise across the sector over the same period (table below). Through our continuous enhancement of practice we have seen year on year improvements:

NSS Assessment & Feedback (Q5-9)	% Agree				
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
UH	64%	66%	69%	70%	71%
All HE Institutions	71%	72%	73%	73%	73%

The demonstrable improvements we have made in assessment and feedback have been driven by student-staff partnership working within 'The Assessment and Feedback Working Group' (where students make up 50% of the membership). The Working Group was longlisted for an HEA Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) in 2016. Some of the enhancements/recommendations made by the group include; work to address bunching of

deadlines; development of assessment landscapes for each programme; improvements to the electronic management of assessment; revision of moderation requirements; consistency of approach to extensions; 'Five Feedback Commitments' cards for staff and students; and student-designed information videos about plagiarism, assessment and moderation processes.

Our current focus is on students' perceptions of fairness in assessment. We have narrowed the gap between the University and the sector but there is further work to be done. (NSS scores for 2017 'Marking and assessment has been fair'; University (68%); Sector (73%)). The introduction of anonymous marking across the University in 2014/15 improved perceptions of fairness. Student NSS qualitative comments suggest that it is assessments designed to promote student employability, most notably group-work and placements, which frequently attract criticism about marking fairness. However, we believe in the importance of group work activities and assessments for the advancement of employability. Our above sector average score for the newly added NSS question; 'I have had the right opportunities to work with other students as part of my course' (UH = 86% Sector = 84%) reflects our commitment to the development of team working skills.

We believe our approach to improving our NSS assessment and feedback scores, namely, working in close partnership with our students to provide clearer understanding, guidance and better assessment and feedback tools; while maintaining our focus on the validity, quality and rigour of assessment has resulted in a sustained, continual improvement and contributes to excellent student outcomes. The work we have undertaken to improve assessment and feedback was recognised in the 2015 QAA HE Review report which affirmed '*the actions being taken to improve the quality and utility of marker feedback on assessed work, to meet the needs of all students'.*

Ensuring students are properly supported within assessments is crucial to enable student improvement, yet at the same time the University has monitored its assessment processes and degree algorithm to prevent grade inflation. Following concerns of a previous classification methodology (introduced in 2007/08) that had encouraged students to put unequal amounts of effort into modules at levels 5 and 6, we reviewed our approach and approved a more stringent classification algorithm across the University in 2012. The outcome has been a levelling off in the proportion of the University's students graduating with 'good' Honours Degrees while remaining below the sector average overall (grade inflation metric). Consequently, over the past 3 years, we have held firm on grade inflation while the sector has continued to see a more rapid rise. While this was strongly supported by HSU, in some Schools transition to this adversely affected student satisfaction, and specifically the NSS, over the period of introduction (2012/13 to 2014/15). As further evidence of our focus on grade improvement, we have introduced a Grade-Point Average (GPA) system from September 2017, calculated from Grade Points allocated to all modules that contribute to the award, including first year modules. We believe that GPA will contribute to rigour by maximising student engagement across all levels of a course and continue to support our very good continuation rates and individual student outcomes.

4. **Valuing teaching.** People are at the centre of our University Strategic Plan. We are committed to attracting and developing outstanding people as well as recognising, rewarding and celebrating excellent teaching. Learning and teaching promotional routes are embedded within HR policies including readership, associate professorship and professorship titles and our annual Vice Chancellor's Awards reward excellent teaching. Tutor of the Year is directly chosen by students (this category had over 160 nominations in 2017) and the Teaching Roll of Honour includes a staff member from each School identified by the Dean of School for their exemplary teaching.

The University recognises continuous professional development (CPD) as both an entitlement for staff and an expectation, embedded within our appraisal and review process. Recent work to articulate the offering of education-related CPD for staff at different stages of their academic careers has been very well received by staff members and line managers. All academic staff are actively engaged in Peer Review of Teaching where we foster a culture of support and reciprocity, leading to excellent practice. We encourage cross-school collaboration as well as focus on

particular areas of enhancement (e.g. assessment). Our Learning and Teaching Conference is an important arena for sharing excellent practice and annually attracts over 260 members of staff, including staff from our collaborative partner institutions. The funding of 21 Learning and Teaching Innovation Awards in 2017 (totalling over £100K) demonstrates Institutional commitment to learning and teaching scholarship. Applications from central departments such as Wellbeing and the Library and Computing Service as well as Academic Schools were funded and project titles include: '*Images of inquiry - what do learners entering university understand by 'research and inquiry?';* '*An evaluation of staff mental health awareness training across the UH schools*'; and '*Disabled students' experiences of support for practice placements.'*

We expect all of our lecturers to be experts in their field and to be professionally recognised in teaching. It is a condition of probation for all new academic staff without teaching experience to achieve a teaching qualification and Fellowship of the HEA. As well as delivering our accredited PGCertLTHE, the LTIC also supports more experienced staff (both academic and staff in student support roles e.g. library information managers, educational technologists and student centre staff) to gain HEA recognition at Associate Fellowship, Fellowship and Senior Fellowship level through our accredited CPD Framework (introduced in 2013). According to HEA records we have 365 Associate Fellows, 839 Fellows and 57 Senior Fellows. We are very proud of our 4 Principal Fellows of the HEA who chair our Senior Fellowship panels and our 7 National Teaching Fellows (2 of whom were awarded NTF in 2017). The HEA's Annual Review of Accredited CPD Schemes (2016-17) showed that with 79% of our academic staff holding Fellowship of the HEA, the University is well ahead of the sector average (39%). Our focus on teaching quality has led to enhancements, as shown by the year on year improvements of the teaching section of our Module Feedback Questionnaires: 2014/15=80%; 2015/16=81%; 2016/17=84%. Most importantly it is also evidenced by our students in their feedback to us: *'The course owes its success to the lecturers, who consistently go above and beyond what is required of them…they push us to be the best students we can possibly be'.* (Animation student)

Conclusion

In conclusion, Hertfordshire outperforms many universities with a similar socio-economic and widening participation profile nationally and is one of the top two providers within our region for graduate prospects, median earnings and sustained employment. Our innovative, embedded approach and strong focus on employability, employer engagement as well as targeted support for widening participation students has delivered outstanding outcomes for all. As a University and Students' Union, we are immensely proud of our achievements in 'transforming lives'. When linked to our student demographic, our student outcomes are even more noteworthy. Through our core mission and values, we value our people and work in close partnership with professional bodies and business partners to offer an inclusive and challenging education that provides our students with opportunities to succeed and achieve their aspirations. Our student-staff partnership ethos ensures success in supporting students, particularly from BME and disadvantaged backgrounds, and has delivered outstanding results which our students and employers value. As befitting our emphasis on partnership and shared endeavour, we leave the last word to one of our students: "*I am so blown away with the help available at University. I feel like whatever I want to do there will always, at the very least, be someone there to discuss it with me and most of the time, someone is available to help me through it in stages. I am so happy I decided to come to Herts. I feel privileged that I am able to talk to my lecturers one-on-one and they know my name and my work — a lot of other Universities don't have that kind of support there for the students. I think the careers services are second to none. I am proud to be a student at Herts and I feel so passionately that my experience at University has opened my eyes to opportunities that I previously didn't even consider. I have become much more self-aware during my course and I have really enjoyed learning, which is something I haven't experienced since primary school." (*NSS 2017, Humanities student*)*

Sal Jarvis, (PVC Education & Student Experience)

Shelby Loasby, President, HSU