University of Southampton Teaching Excellence Framework Submission

1 INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

1.1 The mission of the University of Southampton is ambitious: we are here to change the world for the better. We are a large civic university, with an aspirational and global outlook. We are education-focussed, with a strong comprehensive subject base offering over 350 courses to more than 24,000 students. Our world-class research, innovation and enterprise adds significant value to the experience of our students, and contributes to their outcomes and success.

> "Our University community is committed to the highest quality in everything we do. We have a global reputation for our passion and ability to work collaboratively in delivering world-class education, research and innovation that makes a real impact on society's biggest challenges. Our exceptional students share in these journeys of discovery and become confident thinkers who can realise their full potential."
> *University Strategy*

1.2 This submission has been written with extensive input from the University of Southampton Students' Union – the Vice-President (Education) of which is a member of our TEF Submission Steering Group – and has the full endorsement of the Students' Union.

1.3 In 2016 we launched our new *Simply Better* strategy, giving us a focussed institutional emphasis on a culture of continuous improvement and commitment to quality in everything we do. Our Strategy, informed by both student and staff feedback, puts students and the impact of our educational mission at the heart of our Vision for the University.

1.4 Our underpinning Education Strategy 2016-2021 – Supporting Student Success – is grounded in our conviction that delivering a transformative experience that enables our students to succeed, and to continue succeeding as graduates, is a fundamental element of our mission to change the world for the better. The Education Strategy has been developed through partnership with students, academic staff, and professional services colleagues across our community not only to support delivery of the broader University Strategy, but also to inform the development of teaching and learning through significant investment in our physical estate and systems infrastructure, as well as the development of our academic structure and staffing profile.

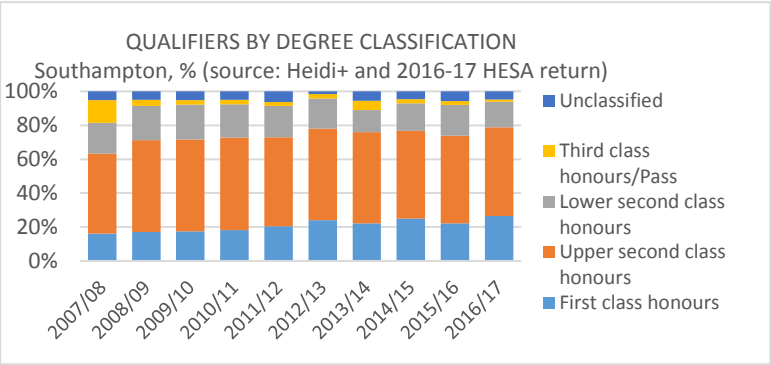
1.5 Supporting Student Success is a living strategy that incorporates areas of work that we have been engaged in for some years as well as more recent initiatives, and it brings these together with a clear institutional strategic focus on the key role of student support in enabling positive student outcomes. The Strategy has six workstreams: Employability, Teaching Quality, Academic Support, Assessment and Feedback, Course Organisation, and Recruitment. Each of these areas of focus is led by a Programme Board, co-chaired by a student, a senior academic, and a senior professional services colleague.

1.6 The profile represented in our core and split metrics is one that we have recognised, analysed and used in developing the Supporting Student Success Strategy, and the 2016 and 2017 TEF data have been valuable as we continue to refine our approach. We will comment in the body of this submission on how our policies and practices contribute to excellent outcomes for our students.

1.7 The TEF data confirm that our work to support successful student outcomes has very positive impact. We support our students in ways that allow them to fulfil their potential: they have very high progression and continuation rates, and their experience at Southampton translates into excellent post-graduation outcomes. We are proud that our core metric on Continuation indicates that our students are in the top decile nationally in terms of absolute performance. The supplementary data derived from the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset further demonstrate our students' post-graduation success, with positive flags

for 'above median earnings threshold or further study' both overall and in nine of the associated split metric areas.

1.8 The data show a gradual uplift in the number and proportion of students obtaining first class degrees over a ten year period. Since 2012-13 the distribution of our awards has been relatively stable. The change in award distribution since 2007-08 is consistent with the fact that over the period we have been recruiting ever more academically capable students and we have seen significant growth in programmes (particularly in Engineering and Computer Science) into which we recruit particularly highly qualified students. At the same time we have placed increasing emphasis on the development of our educators and the importance of our educational mission, to provide a curriculum that both stretches and supports our students. The strong and scrupulous use we make of external examiners, and the scrutiny of our programmes by more than 50 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, give us assurance that our grade profile is in keeping with maintenance of high academic standards, with many comments from external examiners suggesting that our procedures are robust and provide a stretching framework for students. (The data we have supplied on grade distribution reflect an error in our HESA submission in 2007-08, reported to HESA and League Table compilers at the time, where approximately 450 diploma students were wrongly recorded as third class honours students.)



"The highest standard I have seen in any institution in all of [the 30 years I have acted as an external examiner]."
External Examiner, 2015

1.9 In summary, we provide effectively supported programmes that stretch our students while allowing them to achieve their potential and successful outcomes, and we believe that this is key to delivering our mission of 'changing the world for the better'. Our University Strategy reflects our commitment to this, and is underpinned by an Education Strategy that makes supporting student success a clear institutional priority. The TEF metrics based on Continuation, Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) and LEO data are very positive evidence that the policies and practices that follow from this strategic commitment are continuing to have real and positive impact.

At the University of Southampton Students' Union our work is aimed at *unlocking the potential and enriching the life of every student*. We are a full service Union with over 330 Clubs & Societies and 15,701 students directly involved in these, and a wide range of activities that support students from pre-sessional arrival through to an alumni sports day. The Union prides itself on listening to and representing the views of our student members. As a Students' Union we work closely with the University to ensure that our students get the best possible experience and we aim to nurture an environment where the student voice is heard, recognised, and valued across the institution. We provide representation (voice, campaigns, elections), support (advice, training, careers), opportunities (sports, clubs, societies, activities, transportation, employment) and places (spaces, food, drink, retail, events, lettings): this wide ranging offer provides something for everyone.

As a Students' Union we aim to empower and support our members, allowing them to influence and drive change at the University of Southampton. Our online *You Make Change* platform has seen over 700 submissions from the student body on topics ranging from hot water access to the quality of study spaces; through a robust framework we have been able to guarantee responses within a 20-day period. Students at Southampton have

more opportunities now than ever before to engage with the improvement of the University, helping to make the institution and Students' Union something which all of us can be proud of.

Samuel Dedman // Vice-President Education, University of Southampton Students' Union 2017-18

2 TEACHING QUALITY

2.1 The University has actively worked to develop a culture in which excellence in teaching is facilitated, recognised and rewarded. Several years ago, the University Executive Board (UEB) took a strategic decision to revise our academic career structure, to ensure that the contributions of members of staff who are teaching-focussed can be appropriately acknowledged through the promotions process. This decision drove the formation of the 'Reward Project', and led to the introduction of a specific Education career pathway for teaching-focussed colleagues. Since October 2014, 126 staff members have been appointed at or promoted to Senior Teaching Fellow and Principal Teaching Fellow levels on the Education Pathway, and 19 members of staff have been appointed at or promoted to professorial rank on it. In all, 430 of our academic colleagues are on teaching-focussed contracts. The establishment and active use of the career pathway for teaching-focussed staff has been effective in demonstrating to both staff and students the reality of the University's commitment to the recognition and reward of teaching excellence and leadership.

2.2 We recognise and celebrate teaching excellence through Vice-Chancellor's Teaching Awards; around 30 awards are made each year to celebrate innovation and creativity in education and academic support. Each year the Students' Union also celebrates good teaching, academic support and academic representation through the student-led 'Academic Awards'.

2.3 Our strategic commitment to the facilitation of excellent teaching is reflected in policies that require all members of staff involved in teaching to engage in developmental activities (e.g. peer observation, peer mentoring, good practice workshops) that are organised and delivered at Departmental, Faculty and University levels. Postgraduate research students involved in teaching are required to take professional development modules that focus on the aspects of teaching most relevant to their involvement; newly appointed academic staff take professional development modules that lead to the award of a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP). Our National Teaching Fellows (NTFs) contribute to the design and delivery of the PGCAP modules. In addition to these locally designed and delivered developmental activities, the University takes full advantage of the opportunities offered by Higher Education Academy (HEA) accreditation to develop the skills and experience of our teaching staff. We actively promote and facilitate staff engagement with the Professional Recognition of Educator Practice (PREP) framework, which offers colleagues a means by which to demonstrate and develop their practice, knowledge and professional values throughout their career and achieve recognition through the award of HEA Fellowship. The impact of this work is reflected in a doubling of the number of staff successfully following the PREP route to HEA Fellowship between 2013-14 and 2016-17. As of December 2017, there were 18 Principal Fellows, 48 Senior Fellows, 560 Fellows and 58 Associate Fellows of the HEA teaching at the University.

"The PGCAP modules encouraged me to reflect on my teaching practice in ways that have made a real difference to what I do not only in the seminar room but in how I think about course design"
PGCAP participant, 2017

2.4 In 2016, UEB made the decision to consolidate and reinvigorate existing staff development and teaching support activity into a new Centre for Higher Education Practice (CHEP), to lead on the facilitation and development of excellence in teaching and pedagogical innovation across the institution. This represents a significant investment (£2.5m in 2016-17) by the University in its strategic commitment to its educational mission. CHEP has a direct reporting line to UEB through the Vice-President (Education), to ensure that delivery of this aspect of our mission is monitored and evaluated at the highest level.

2.5 We have seen significant national recognition of teaching excellence at Southampton in recent years. Our strategic decision to deploy systematic and focussed mentoring support for applications to the HEA NTF scheme resulted in three (the maximum number allowed for a single institution) of our colleagues being recognised as the University's newest National Teaching Fellows in 2017. Also in 2017, two colleagues were short-listed (in a group of six) in the 'Most Innovative Teacher' category of the *Times Higher Education* awards (an award won by one of our colleagues in 2013), and a third was shortlisted in the 'Outstanding Research Supervisor' category. We are ensuring that the innovative work of these colleagues has impact across the institution by involving them at the heart of activity led by CHEP. (For example, one of our NTFs has been seconded to work with CHEP to enable him to contribute significantly to developing the practice of lecturers in ways that maximise the positive impact of lecture capture for our students.)

2.6 Our strategic commitment to enhancing the quality of teaching has driven the evolution of our Programme Validation process. This has been designed to ensure that 'rigour and stretch' and a focus on student engagement, both underwritten by strong student support, are fundamental to all of our programmes. The process ensures that student involvement is pivotal in curriculum design by mandating student membership of the scrutiny panels that hold programme teams to account in the process. Programme teams are required to test curricula against national and professional body standards in order to ensure appropriate rigour and stretch, and to explore opportunities for innovative and engaging modes of delivery to maximise student engagement. Scrutiny panels test for evidence that assessment has been designed appropriately to enable students to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes. Programme design is tested against inclusivity criteria, to ensure that all students are appropriately supported to benefit from programmes that are rigorous and stretching. Employability is also considered from the early stages of programme development, to ensure that curriculum design nurtures development of the academic and transferable skills that students will need to succeed as graduates, as our TEF metrics for student outcomes demonstrate that they do.

> "Student groups gave input through the redesign, especially on the development of the new careers, communication and employability module. Student comments on feedback and support have encouraged us to add in the extra support time to the curriculum."
> *Programme Validation Report, 2017*

2.7 Southampton students learn in an environment where knowledge is actively created. Our Programme Validation process is designed to ensure curriculum content and design is informed by current research and scholarship. Fundamental to our conception of research-led education is the principle that our students should benefit from our research-rich context from the very start of their studies, not only through ensuring that examples from the forefront of knowledge are built into the curriculum at every level, but by integrating opportunities for research and enquiry into all their learning. Our students are challenged by this principle to demonstrate creativity and originality in their work, but always with an underpinning emphasis on sourcing and appraising supporting evidence in a rigorous manner. This means that our programmes are inherently stretching and challenging, and hence not always comfortable; but it also means that students' engagement with and commitment to their

studies is essential to their success. We recognise the importance of providing excellent support to enable this, and our student continuation data indicate the effectiveness of this support.

2.8 Our students participate actively in research. For example, students in Mechanical Engineering spend time in our research labs as a part of a first year module; in Psychology students at all levels can gain academic credit for participating in research projects. Students working in any area related to Sustainability can publish in our journal *Meliora* (an international interdisciplinary student journal of sustainability research, with student and academic co-editors and a student editorial board). Our Excel scheme offers internships within our research groups, leveraged where possible by research council funds, that allow students to take an active role in a live research project within a team of more experienced researchers. A number of programmes such as Geography, Archaeology, Biological Science and Oceanography involve research-based field trips, which contribute to outstandingly high NSS performance (e.g. 100% overall satisfaction for both Archaeology and Biological Sciences in 2017). All students undertake a significantly sized and coherent research-based piece of work, usually in the form of a final-year research project or dissertation, to allow them to demonstrate mastery of the skills of research and inquiry relevant to their discipline.

> "It's really nice to see how our professors collect their own data in the field. It made me feel part of something bigger."
> *Geography module survey respondent, 2017*

2.9 The impact of the involvement of undergraduate students in our research culture is demonstrated not only in their local success but also through national and international recognition. Some examples of which we are particularly proud include one of our students winning the Best Student Paper in *Varieties in Democracy*, another being the Global Winner in the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Sciences category at the 2016 Undergraduate Awards, and a group of our Engineering students winning 1st place in a recent national Eurobot competition. DHLE data for 2012 to 2016 shows that a little over 13% of all finalists continue to further full-time study with, on average, 25% of those choosing to enrol for a PhD with us or with another leading research university.

2.10 Further evidence of our students' engagement with their studies can be seen in the number of them who choose to serve as academic representatives, and to engage with the University's feedback fora.

> "A core part of our work as a Union is the Academic Representation structure - something which has been constantly developed over a number of years and in which we invest a great deal of pride. We have over 400 reps working across the institution to represent the views of each and every cohort of students. While this structure is owned, developed, and sustained by staff from the Students' Union, much of its work sees it collaborating with members of departmental staff. This is achieved through joint Staff-Student Liaison Committees, leading to successes ranging from increased adoption of online submission, wider use of lecture capture, and even the launch of a new unisex uniform for our students in Health Sciences; all of which demonstrate the commitment of both the University and Union to improving student experience. The launch of regular Student Forum meetings in partnership with the Union is a further example of this, giving students the chance to provide direct and instant feedback to the Vice-Chancellor who attends all the fora. This achieves a four week turn around with resolution on many of the issues raised. We work closely with the University on many elements of its strategy, with student co-chairs on each of the six Supporting Student Success Programme Boards and representation on many more academic and support groups outside of this."
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> Samuel Dedman // Vice-President Education, University of Southampton Students' Union 2017-18

2.11 Since 2009, the University has had a strategic focus on curriculum innovation and the development of flexible curricula. Our goal has been to enhance rigour and stretch and the engagement of students with their studies, by enabling them to take advantage of opportunities for additional skills development and learning outside their core programmes. This work is now driven through the Course Organisation workstream of our Supporting Student Success Strategy. It has resulted in the development of a set of 35 interdisciplinary modules specifically designed to challenge and stretch students beyond the confines of their 'home' discipline. Modules such as 'Global Health', 'Sustainability in the Local and Global Environment', and 'Critical Thinking in the Information Age' have introduced innovative approaches to teaching and assessment, as well as offering students opportunities to develop interdisciplinary knowledge and skills to support their future success. We have seen the impact of this work in increasing numbers of students availing themselves of these opportunities. Since 2012, our strategic focus on curriculum innovation has driven a project to develop 'Major / Minor' patterns of study for a number of programmes, mostly in Humanities and Social Sciences. The impact of this initiative is reflected in student take-up: nearly 300 students are now registered on a Minor pathway. In 2012 we also took a strategic decision to develop a 'Year in Employment' opportunity for students. This sits alongside opportunities for study abroad, exchange and discipline-specific work placement opportunities, and allows students enrolled on programmes that do not otherwise have a work placement element to undertake a year's employment in a context that will contribute to their final award. We believe that this initiative will have positive impact on our students' post-graduation success. Although it is too early to test this with data (our first 'Year in Employment' cohort were out during the 2015-16 academic year) we will be rigorously evaluating not only the operation but also the impact of this popular programme as it develops.

Registrations on UOSM (interdisciplinary modules)

2016-17: 1593
2015-16: 1508
2014-15: 1387
2013-14: 1327
2012-13: 934

2.12 Our strategic focus on curriculum innovation drove our early development of Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) and engagement with the FutureLearn platform. This highly successful initiative – 326,914 learners have been actively engaged in our MOOCs – led to the formation of our Learning Technologies and Digital Innovation Service, which was tasked with ensuring that all of our MOOCs were designed so as to be complimentary and related to curriculum content for our campus-based students. As a result of this strategic directive, our work on MOOC design has led to module redesign and evolution of teaching practice in our core undergraduate curriculum (for example in Oceanography, Archaeology and Modern Languages), and has enabled staff skills development that is contributing to the delivery of innovative approaches to blended learning across our provision.

2.13 The effectiveness of our assessment and feedback processes in supporting students' learning and achievement continues to be a priority for the University, and is one of the six key areas of focus of our Supporting Student Success Strategy. Assessment practice across the institution has been enhanced by the work of the University's Researching Assessment Practices Group (RAP), which we established in 2015 to develop a systematic and university-wide research-informed approach to assessment practices. The group comprises more than 250 colleagues – including our NTFs, teaching award winners, and academics whose research expertise is in assessment – who are leading changes in assessment practice across the University. RAP works in partnership with students to enhance assessment literacy, feedback practice and assessment design across the University. Over 1000 people – staff and students – have attended RAP events in the last year. Supported by two HEFCE Catalyst-funded projects that focus on the development of assessment practices across the University, RAP's work centres on small-scale but high impact innovations to enhance students' self-evaluation in assessment and feedback.

2.14 This work continues to be a strategic priority, and is overseen and given direction by the Assessment and Feedback workstream of the Supporting Student Success Strategy. Within this workstream, focus on ensuring a high quality assessment experience across the institution, and thus on sharing good practice, has been a key priority. Recent NSS data indicate that we are making progress in this area. Faculties and departments have been supported to ensure that their assessment practices converge with a model that has been developed in collaborative work between the Assessment and Feedback workstream and the Students' Union. A range of pilot studies have been undertaken to trial good practice, such as design and testing of a new feedback form in Engineering and unifying approaches to the quantity and style of feedback offered in Health Sciences. These 'proof-of-concept' projects are being rolled out across the institution following their completion and rigorous evaluation of their effectiveness.

2.15 We have seen the impact of this work qualitatively in student feedback and quantitatively in improvements that are now feeding through to the NSS, with good increases in the latter at an institutional level and in 33 of our 48 subject areas this year. This work continues to be a strategic priority, and is overseen and given strategic direction by the Assessment and Feedback workstream of the Supporting Student Success Strategy.

2.16 In summary, we have a culture focussed on continuous improvement, led from the top of the University, in which excellence in teaching is actively supported and rewarded. Our Supporting Student Success Strategy drives an innovative approach to programme design that is delivered through policies and practices that have rigorous Programme Validation processes at their core. The latter ensure student involvement in programme design, a focus on students' engagement with their programmes of study, and reflect our institutional commitment to flexibility and choice in curriculum design. They also allow the University to be confident that every programme we offer is marked by rigour and stretch, solidly underpinned by excellent student support. We see the positive impact of our work here not only in successful student outcomes and post-graduation student success (reflected in the DLHE and LEO data), but also in reports from our external examiners and from accrediting bodies, which are overwhelmingly highly positive.

3 LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Our University Strategy has established campus revitalization as an institutional priority. As a result we have embarked on an ambitious £600m revitalization programme, having secured £300m through a public bond to help us to realise our goals. At the heart of our plans is the creation of a forward-looking student learning environment across all of our campuses, which will provide new space for study, support, and social facilities, and an outstanding digital and physical infrastructure to support students' formal and informal learning and skills development.

3.2 We are committed to ensuring that we deploy our resources in ways that contribute as effectively as possible to students' learning and their development of independent study and research skills. To help us achieve this, we engage and work in partnership with our students; this partnership working is aimed at ensuring the development of pedagogically appropriate space for formal and informal learning, drawing on ethnographic user experience methodology and sector benchmarking data. Students are represented on all steering groups that inform decision-making on learning, teaching and pastoral space.

3.3 We are constructing a state-of-the-art Learning and Teaching Building (a £53m investment), following extensive consultation across the University staff and student community, due for completion in early 2019. This will provide contemporary teaching and learning space, including a 250-seat lecture theatre, a Harvard-style lecture theatre, flexible teaching and seminar rooms, approximately 250 additional independent study spaces, computer suite provision and informal spaces including a learning café.

3.4 Our strategic commitment to the development of both physical and digital resources designed to enhance student learning can be seen, for example, in the following projects, which represent an investment of over £8.5m across two years:

- the opening of a vibrant Learning Commons at the University's Avenue Campus, providing inclusive and varied learning space, which has resulted in significant increase in student use of the space,
- the transformation of a large space in our Students' Union building, which enables us to use it creatively as both a large flat space and as a tiered lecture theatre for 256 students,
- redevelopment of specialist laboratories for teaching in Engineering, Ocean and Earth Science, and Computer Science to improve students' learning experience,
- the redevelopment of social and learning spaces at our Halls of Residence,
- the redesign and landscaping of external spaces to support informal learning and the creation of areas of 'quiet space' in tranquil settings,
- a substantial increase in the quality of WiFi coverage across all campuses, and particularly in high-demand areas such as our Libraries, residences and external spaces.

All of these initiatives have been designed to support students' learning, and their impact on this will be assessed as part of our process for continuous improvement for future investment decisions.

3.5 In consultation with students we have continued phased redevelopment of dynamic learning space across our five campus libraries. We have significantly increased opening hours, including, in response to student demand, 24/7 opening of our main University Library for most teaching weeks. Space redevelopment has taken account of varied learning preferences by providing: technology-enhanced training space; areas for focussed individual study; varied spaces for group work and the provision of 500 new study seats across our campuses with increased power and data to support student laptop use. Our student-centred phased approach to development has enabled us to use observation and student feedback to inform each subsequent stage of development. We have seen the impact of our work in the ever-increasing popularity of our libraries as places for individual and group study.

3.6 Development of our Library collection is intimately aligned to the Supporting Student Success Strategy objectives, and is based on understanding the research-led demands of our students, the requirements of our stretching curriculum, the balance between physical and digital resources, and the optimum location of physical collections alongside the development of learning space. The Library's Special Collections (e.g. the Wellington, Palmerston and Mountbatten papers) are used to inform undergraduate research topics in Humanities and Social Sciences.

3.7 Our Academic Skills Hub, physically located in the Library and supported by a wide range of online material, represents an important strand of the support that we provide for students. Staff in the Hub provide guidance and resources that have been developed in partnership with the Students' Union for independent learning across a wide range of areas including academic writing, critical thinking, research skills and academic integrity. We use web analysis tools to understand how our online resources are used, adapting and planning our future investment in those digital tools that are most in demand by users. Between 2015 and 2017 we saw a 147% increase in visits to our Academic Skills Hub online home pages. Our Writing Centre, which is embedded within the Academic Skills Hub, runs workshops on topics such as structuring assignments, preparing arguments, proof

> "These [Writing Centre] workshops and 1-to-1 tutorials are life saving for me… University in the end is about writing and it is vital to learn how to master this tool. I now have an appreciation, thanks to these workshops, that writing can be improved but really only when one is aware of how it works."
> *Student Feedback, 2017*

reading and referencing for students. In its first year of operation, the Writing Centre supported more than 2000 students in a mixture of one-to-one tutorials and group workshops.

3.8 Our Libraries are dynamic and welcoming places where undergraduate students are working alongside researchers in shared spaces, and where a wide range of events and learning activities take place -- for example, activities supporting Mental Health Awareness week, and Mindfulness events during exam periods. The positive impact of our University libraries as central hubs of student learning activity is reflected in student comments on the NSS and the Students' Union 'You Make Change' initiative, and is confirmed by data on student use: we have seen a 5.7% increase in footfall in 2016-17 compared to 2014-15. Our investment has increased correspondingly, with the University increasing its financial allocation to information resources by 14.6%.

3.9 Every undergraduate student has access to tailored, individual academic advice and guidance from their Personal Academic Tutor (more than 1400 of our academic staff act in this role). In addition, students have access to Senior Tutors (68 of them across the University), who are trained to provide another tier of targeted support to students facing particularly complex and non-academic problems. Senior Tutors also take general responsibility for and maintain an overview of the work of Personal Academic Tutors in their area. To ensure that all Personal Academic Tutors are able to support students in a consistent manner, we have a range of training and guidance information available to them, including an 'Essential Guide for Personal Academic Tutors' and the Personal Academic Tutor Handbook. The Senior Tutors' Forum meets three times a year, bringing together Senior Tutors, and academic and wellbeing support services to enable the sharing of good practice, and the promotion of a consistent approach to student support. The Forum reports on its activities to the Academic Support programme board. We see evidence of the positive impact of our Personal Academic Tutoring system and the work of Senior Tutors in student feedback in the latest iteration of the Southampton Student Survey.

> 91% of respondents said their personal tutor responded well to what they needed.
> *Southampton Student Survey 2017*

3.10 Our students' academic experiences are supplemented by a very strong extra-curricular offer that contributes to excellent rates of retention, attainment and progression. For example, our distinctive arts offer, available to all students, fosters student engagement with outstanding music, theatre and art. We work in partnership with three internationally recognised Arts Council England-funded National Portfolio Organisations: Turner Sims Concert Hall, Nuffield Southampton Theatre and John Hansard Gallery on the development of student awareness of professional practice, leveraging these partnerships to offer internship and ambassador opportunities to our students. Support for specific University programmes is provided by access to professional practitioners and facilities; for example, our students are able to rehearse and perform in the Concert Hall and Theatre. We also have dedicated spaces in the Winchester School of Art and Hartley Library, used to mount student exhibitions.

3.11 Our extensive sports facilities, including swimming pool, sports ground, watersports centre and five gyms, are open to all students and form part of our popular wellbeing offering. Our dedicated Sports Performance Centre devises individualised programmes to maximise performance by student athletes in major competitions. Our students are thus provided with a wide variety of opportunities that support their development and contribute to their attainment of positive post-graduation outcomes.

> "The Strength and Conditioning coaching at the University of Southampton has been invaluable in helping me reach my full potential as an elite athlete"
> *Adam Knott, Paralympic Athlete.*

3.12 We continue to roll out audio-visual lecture capture to support the student experience. Further data storage, new cameras and investment in staff time, as well as the availability of increasingly sophisticated technology to support tutors in organising their courses, have led to the development of c.350,000 hours of video streamed in 1.5 million sessions over the past three years. We are also using the Panopto system to improve assessment options: students can record their own content with the system, allowing them to make assessed presentations in their own time. This is part of our increasingly innovative approach to technology-enhanced assessment, which also includes the use of podcasting, animation and photo presentation.

> "The use of Blackboard for this course was a vital part of my success and improved learning." *Blackboard awards nomination, 2017*

3.13 Personalised learning is further supported by use of Blackboard, our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), where students have access to resources to support their learning, organised at module and programme level. The VLE is available to students via apps on smartphones and tablets as well as on computers, and is extensively used by students. Our annual Blackboard Awards scheme (based on student and staff nominations, and decided by a judging panel that includes both students and staff) promotes and rewards innovation and excellence in the use of the VLE to support student learning. The student experience is also supported by the MySouthampton app, which provides students with a wealth of other information to support their academic journey, including information on timetables, IT support, library resources, employability and careers events, and graduation ceremonies.

> "The learning tools were outstanding." *Blackboard awards nomination, 2016*

3.14 Our Welcome process supports all new undergraduates through their transition to Higher Education. Commended in our 2015 QAA Higher Education Review, this process involves a digital campaign lead-in to registration events once students reach campus, to provide entrants the opportunity for initial engagement with Academic Skills, Enabling Services and Peer Support. The development of the Welcome process began in 2013-14 following our identification of scope to improve our incoming student experience, which at that time required students to plot their own transition through a variety of Faculty, Halls of Residence, Students' Union and central University organised events. The Welcome project worked towards a more cohesive approach to induction, and year on year since the project's initiation we have focussed on incremental but significant improvements that have positive impact on the student experience. These have included a centralised communications plan, a dedicated experience for our pre-sessional course students, a much-improved International Registration process, and a dedicated project for those students at our Winchester School of Art site. This range of connected and interactive welcome events and activities sets the tone for continuing engagement with the personalised support available. Particular cohorts – including mature students and students with disabilities – are supported through their transition into the University community through targeted events designed to support their continuing success. The impact of Welcome has been very positive: queueing has almost entirely disappeared despite more than 16000 individual student interactions during the registration period, and our pre-entry 'Are You Ready' website now routinely receives more than 110,000 hits each year. After the first year of the project we saw a 38% increase in student registrations at the University Health Service, and the international student registration experience, which once took students up to four hours to complete, has been cut down to an average of 28 minutes.

> "Registration was the first example of an organised event in England for me – the people were friendly and the process seamless". *Student feedback, 2016*

3.15 Our commitment to widening participation is reflected in a range of evidence-based initiatives. Our contextualised admissions policy is designed to ensure that we attract applicants from as broad a range of backgrounds as possible. We are using an OFFA toolkit to analyse the impact of our financial support, including our Access to Southampton Bursaries. We are now able to identify at which stages of the student lifecycle particular groups of students may be in need of additional support, and so to put in place specific measures to support the success of particular groups of students in their transition to, and journey through, higher education. We monitor the performance, continuation and qualification rates of cohorts throughout the student lifecycle. This work allows us to know, for example, that students on the Access to Southampton scheme are as likely to progress as any other student, and are less likely to repeat a year.

3.16 Our Supporting Student Success Strategy mandates a granular approach to identifying the needs of particular groups of students. For example, recognising that we are below benchmark for 'Mature' across NSS 'Teaching', 'Assessment and Feedback' and 'Academic Support', our own analysis of our NSS position has allowed us to work with our students, to develop initiatives designed to meet their specific cohort needs. For example:

- We have understood that and how the timetable and preparation for practice are significant issues for a large cohort of mature students in Nursing (by far our largest mature student cohort, many of whom have caring responsibilities, and where there is significant overlap with students from POLAR Q1 / Q2 and National IMD Q1 / Q2), and we have changed our timetabling practice to give priority to this group. Work with our student representatives suggests that our approach is understood and appreciated by the cohort.
- For another large group of mature students, based in Law, the issues are quite different, and relate to the ways in which these students, who are predominately graduates from overseas but studying for our undergraduate degree programme, are co-taught with our Home / EU undergraduate students. A change to the ways in which we organise small group teaching for this cohort is having a positive impact on their experience.
  In a more generic approach to meeting the particular needs of our mature students, we have developed a tailored welcome event for them, designed to identify the resources they may particularly need to call upon during their time at University such as the provision of dedicated study space – and, following consultation with students, this now includes storage lockers.

We are proud of the success of our mature students. The most recent data shows that 93% of them are in highly skilled employment, and the positive impact of our work in supporting them is reflected in the split TEF metrics for Continuation / Employment / Highly Skilled Employment / Further Study (on two of the three split metrics here we meet the criteria for positive flags).

3.17 The TEF data on Continuation and post-graduation outcomes for students with disabilities indicate that our provision is having positive impact for these students, but we recognise that students with disabilities report below-benchmark levels of satisfaction in the NSS. Students with declared learning differences constitute by far the largest proportion of this group. Our analysis of the NSS and collaborative work with students indicates that among students with disabilities, it is those with declared learning differences who have expressed the least positive levels of satisfaction with our provision. In response, we have put in place specific measures to support them, including a targeted welcome programme designed to provide reassurance and additional support to these students in their transition into higher education, and including a full introduction to our Assistive Technology Service. This service gives students access to private spaces for using dictation software, larger work spaces, and PCs with dual screens. These spaces have been carefully designed and draw on sector best practice to ensure that they are as supportive of student learning and the development of skills as possible. 96% of attendees who completed our most recent survey on their

experience of the welcome event for students with disabilities recommended the event to other students, and the survey results indicated that participants' self-declared levels of 'preparedness for study' increased from 20% to 59%.

3.18 Our recognition of the growth in numbers of students declaring mental health difficulties led us to develop and implement a revised model of mental health support in 2016. Our model encourages students to seek support at as early a stage as possible, and crucially before they reach the point of needing counselling. Students are assessed by our specialist team and directed to one or more of a wide range of resources, including self-help tools, group workshops and local support groups as well as resources offered by organisations outside of the University, such as the NHS. As a direct result of this strategic focus on early intervention, we have seen a very positive 309% increase in demand for our early-stage drop-in / triage support services which has contributed to a 36% decline in demand for later-stage counselling. This has enabled us to target even more resource in delivering positive early interventions for students, so further reducing the number of students reaching a point of crisis. We also offer alternatives to traditional counselling, for example, hypnotherapy courses, which have had a dramatic impact – the average student attending presented with an anxiety score of 13.1, which reduced to 6.6 on completion of three sessions of hypnotherapy.

3.19 We are proud of our long-term track record of supporting access and success for students from under-represented groups, which is evidenced by our very positive retention and progression data. Our recruitment of students from state schools is consistently high (85.6% of our young full-time first-degree entrants in 2015-16), and we have seen eight years of continuous growth in the proportion of first year undergraduate home students from a BAME background.

3.20 We focus on supporting our students throughout their living, as well as their learning experience at University. Our Residences Support Team have operated an 'awake' service throughout the night for students, primarily at our Halls of Residence, since 2010; we saw a 28.6% increase in demand for this support between 2014-15 to 2016-17. We have recently reviewed this support, and have concluded that we can do even better. Working with our students, we have devised a model which has seen the evolution of our Residences Support Team into our Student Life Service (part of our wider Student Services Directorate) which offers support to all students, irrespective of where they are living, outside of daytime hours and every day of the year.

4 STUDENT OUTCOMES AND LEARNING GAIN

4.1 Our University Strategy commits us to 'develop[ing] graduates who are confident global citizens, equipped to make a positive contribution to the world'. Employability is thus one of the areas of focus of our underpinning Supporting Student Success Strategy. The Employability Programme Board monitors the progress and performance of the University in relation to career outcomes.

4.2 With a focus on quality, our award-winning Careers and Employability Service is dedicated to supporting staff across the University to promote student success. The Service maintains a website for sharing good practice, and organises our annual employability conference. It produces annual reports to support faculty- and discipline-specific employability strategies. It also co-ordinates the University-wide Employability Network, largely comprised of academic Employability Leads, which promotes consistency and quality of employability provision across the institution. In the past two years, the Careers and Employability Service has won five national awards from the Association of Graduate Recruiters and the National Undergraduate Employability Awards.

4.3 Our Careers and Employability Service supports successful student outcomes through carefully planned partnership working across the University. Specialised Career Practitioners

work with academic Employability Leads at discipline and Faculty level to provide tailored and innovative learning opportunities within and alongside the curriculum. Examples include the development of tutorial materials in Engineering, the 'Spotlight on Careers' Physics programme, the 'Futures Day' in the Faculty of Social, Human and Mathematical Sciences, and the Health Sciences Employability Week. Careers Practitioners also work with student societies: for example, with students from BioSoc to jointly design, plan and deliver the annual Biological Science Careers Day, recently attended by 338 students.

4.4 The Careers and Employability Service has been supporting the development of the *Graduate Capital Model* (Tomlinson, 2016), which we are using to support students in the development of the skills, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes they need in order to succeed in the graduate job market and beyond. In addition, over 500 students in the last year have used the 'Career Readiness Test', a psychometric test developed recently with colleagues in Psychology to enable users to reflect on their progress in their career planning and skills reflection. The test has been used in tutorials with Law and Health Sciences students, and is now available to all students on an individual basis.

> "[During my internship] I have obtained skills in so many areas that I never had the opportunity to develop before. I have become confident in my abilities, both technical and interpersonal."
> *Aaron Teo, Excel Placement Student, 2017*

4.5 In addition to the provision of embedded work-based learning in some programmes, we also encourage all our students to participate in extra-curricular developmental activities. We have developed a series of work experience programmes (2 to 12 week paid internships (439 students); project-based 'consultancy' working in groups of 4/5 on real-life business issues (246 students); a volunteering programme (83 students) (numbers refer to 2016-17)) to engage students at all levels of study and on all academic programmes. These programmes are designed to allow students to develop their employability as they progress through their academic careers, building up their skills and experiences by participating in increasingly more challenging opportunities. A dedicated Employer Engagement team works with local and national employers to develop high quality placement opportunities, many of which are bespoke to the University of Southampton. A University-wide marketing programme, professional branding, a strong network of faculty engagement and a comprehensive support package to help with applications, ensures that students are well-informed about and encouraged to apply for opportunities. In total, in 2016-17, 871 students participated in our optional placement opportunities, an increase of 50% since the 2014-15 cohort, and each year we have over 300 further students engaging in work placements and/or study abroad as part of their curriculum (not including our Medicine and Health Science students). Student achievement is recognised in the annual 'Employability Excellence Awards', which celebrates the talent and achievement of all students who participate in our work experience programmes.

4.6 We are able to leverage our significant research and enterprise links with more than 1100 companies to identify significant opportunities for our students and graduates. We attract top graduate recruiters to join our Recruiters' Club, attend our Careers Fairs and lead on events on campus. We are the University of choice for recruitment for many companies – for example, Steller Systems, a leading independent consultancy practice specialising in naval architecture and systems engineering, has only recruited Southampton graduates in its recent recruitment round – and some graduate recruiters have internship opportunities reserved for Southampton students. We also work with smaller employers, and have an annual SME Networking event to connect smaller businesses with each other and to promote our work experience programmes.

4.7 Around 4000 students attend our three annual Careers Fairs, which attract c.300 exhibitors / employers from many sectors (e.g. PWC, Virgin, Amazon and Dyson). In the most recent survey of our exhibitors, 100% of them said they would return. Recognising the diverse

ambitions of our students, we also encourage SMEs and third sector organisations to participate in our fairs and offer them discounted or free-of-charge entry. We also run a number of smaller events, and an additional annual Careers and Employability Festival. In 2016-17, 129 employer events took place (up from 96 in 2014-15), engaging 4367 students.

4.8 There is an innovative, dynamic and vibrant Student Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Development (SEED) ecosystem at the University, where a holistic range of opportunities and support are provided through our distinctive partnership delivery approach. This work gives students varied opportunities to develop their skills. For example, our Future Worlds Incubator supports student start-ups and spin-outs with world-class mentors, events and investment opportunities, and our Social Impact Lab delivers leadership development for students through social enterprise. Collaboration is at the heart of the Southampton approach to enterprise and entrepreneurship development, both across the core delivery partners where events and activities are mutually supported and students are cross-referred, but also between other universities through the SETsquared partnership (Southampton, Surrey, Bristol, Bath and Exeter) and local universities through events such as Dynamo Challenge and VentureFest South (Southampton, Solent, Portsmouth, Bournemouth), encouraging inter-university student collaboration, and supporting the regional enterprise eco-system. Students also benefit from close partnership with the University of Southampton Science Park through staff-supported events such as Catalyst Challenge, based at the Park.

4.9 We are proud of the engagement and success of our students' enterprise and entrepreneurship activity. Enactus Southampton, part of a global non-profit community, supported by our academic staff, had the largest student University membership in the UK in 2016-17, following its success in winning the Enactus World Cup in 2015. Our student Jeremy Mutebi was a Young Start-Up Talent 2017 winner, winning £50,000 worth of business support. The student start-up *Proofer*, founded by Southampton Aeronautics and Astronautics student Sharif Alvis, reached the semi-finals of the Santander Universities Entrepreneurship awards in April 2017. The innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of our students is reflected in their graduate success, as measured in the core and supplementary metrics.

4.10 We make our resources for developing employability available to our entire student and alumni community. Mindful of the particular challenges faced by some students, we ensure that our resources are appropriately deployed to achieve positive outcomes for all. This work was recognised in 2016 by the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services award for the outstanding collaboration between the University's Enabling Service and the Careers and Employability Service. The work saw the development of a 'transition into work' programme including workshops, assessments, and disability café networking events. Our commitment to ensuring positive outcomes for all led us, in 2016, to undertake Higher Education Careers Service Unit-funded research into the needs and aspirations of first-generation students at University. This has helped us to better understand this group of students and how to support their ambitions. As part of our Career Mentoring programme we offer the opportunity for tailored mentoring with one of our Diversity Mentors, and students can express a preference to be matched with a mentor who has similar protected characteristics; in 2016-17, 45 out of 118 of students participating in the Career Mentoring programme expressed such a preference.

4.11 Students have increasingly engaged with the services provided by the central Careers and Employability Service, with a 20% rise in face to face enquiries in the past three years. Since 2014, over 8000 students have been supported through our drop-in services, with demand increasing 36% between 2014-15 and 2016-17. We can see the impact of this work reflected in the DLHE and LEO metrics.

4.12 We see the impact of our work in our improved ratings as measured in the *Destination of Leavers from Higher Education* Survey. We are delighted that graduate prospects (those in

highly skilled employment) in the most recent survey (2015-16 cohort) have increased to 80.2% (from 78.3%) overall, and that there has been a decrease in unemployment. We have also seen an increase as measured in the most recent Sunday Times Good University Guide. We note the impact of our work with specific groups, with latest outcomes identifying particularly positive outcomes for mature (93%), disabled (82.3%) and graduates with a Specific Learning Difficulty (up 7.7% to 81.5%). In particular, we have analysed the impact of our work in improving the outcomes of our students, and are proud that students who participated in the University's own Excel Internship Programme or Business Innovation Programme have on average 18% and 9% better graduate prospects respectively, compared to those who did neither. We also note the increase in our graduates who have gone into further study, up 3.2% on the previous year.

4.13 The Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data demonstrates the added value for Southampton graduates in terms of earning potential. *The Economist*'s analysis of this data showed that Southampton is ranked 5th within the Russell Group and in the top quartile in the sector, with an added value of £813 on average. Four subjects (Computer Science, English, Maths and Physics) appear in the top 10; Computer Science is ranked 2nd, adding £7429 to the earnings of equivalent graduates. This success is reflected in the supplementary TEF metrics derived from LEO. The success of our graduates as recorded in 'Above median earnings threshold or further study' is 2.99 above benchmark with a Z-score of 3.7, demonstrating that our graduates go on to earn higher salaries than average. The split metrics in this category indicate the strong performance of our students, with female and BAME graduates among the categories of those who out-earn their peers.

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 Our University's mission is to change the world for the better, and we are clear that supporting a transformative educational experience that enables our students to succeed, and to continue succeeding as graduates, is key to our delivering on that mission. Our Supporting Student Success Education Strategy drives an institutional focus on the development and delivery of policy and practice, the implementation of which has demonstrable impact on the quality of the experience of our students, the effectiveness of our provision to them, and their outcomes and success.

5.2 The priority and focus that we have given to student engagement, specifically directed by our Supporting Student Success Strategy, has led to improvements in our students' experience of Assessment and Feedback and Quality of Teaching, and has driven a major emphasis on enhancing Student Support that encompasses all student groups including those whose members need tailored support. We have also developed new routes that are facilitating engagement with students, including regular student forum meetings with the Vice-Chancellor and the Vice-President of Education from the Students' Union, and a new on-line 'Student Voice' feedback facility available through all University computers as well as the student portal.

5.3 The impact of our work that supports student success is realised in very positive outcomes for our students, with sector top decile continuation rates and high levels of well-paid highly skilled employment, as evidenced by the TEF metrics. The demand for our graduates is demonstrated by the high level of employer-student engagement, and further by a high level of employer engagement with our Careers Fairs and related events. Our students further demonstrate their fulfilment of their potential through national and international extracurricular awards, and particularly in entrepreneurship and social enterprise.

5.4 In summary, our strategic emphasis on quality and innovation in the education and development of our students is at the heart of our University mission. We do change the world for the better, in large part by providing a transformative and overwhelmingly positive experience for our students.