



TEF 2017: What makes Gold?

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GLOSSARY

BME	Black and minority ethnic
BAME	Black, Asian and minority ethnic
CPD	Continuing professional development
DLHE	Destination of leavers from higher education.
GP	Gold awarded providers
HEAR	Higher education achievement record
HSE	Highly skilled employment
LEO	Longitudinal educational outcomes
NSS	National Student Survey
NTF	National Teaching Fellow
PSRB	professional, statutory or regulatory body (accreditations)
SR	student representative
SU	student union
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
TLA	teaching, learning and assessment
UKES	UK Student Engagement Survey

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2017 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) pilot awarded gold to 42 higher education institutions in England, Scotland and Wales, including 38 Universities, 8 institutions specializing in music, drama and/or the arts and the Royal Veterinary College. Most gold submissions were of a clear standard above those receiving a silver award across a range of dimensions and this report seeks to investigate what stands out in gold submissions. Twenty-three of the 2017 gold awarded universities were selected for this review to represent institutions of a wide range of sizes and missions, including those at the very top of national league tables, those that are research intensive and those with a greater focus on teaching. The objectives of the report are to identify instances of both good and innovative practices amongst gold submissions in order to inform future TEF submissions and to provide a review of the higher education literature that should underpin future decisions concerning teaching and student outcomes.

The report is structured around key themes that were identified partly by a careful analysis of each gold providers submission and otherwise upon the TEF recommendations of what could be discussed in the narratives. The following themes were selected for further investigation and discussion:

- language and tone
- mission, values and ethos
- widening participation, inclusivity, equality and diversity;
- students as partners/producers;
- teaching, scholarship, reward and promotion mechanisms;
- curriculum, research-led teaching, assessment and feedback;
- employability skill development, graduate opportunities and the role of stakeholders;
- monitoring mechanisms and responding to student feedback;
- student support and personalized learning; and
- resources and investment.

A literature review was conducted on each theme with two aims in mind: firstly, to consider the evidence base that underpins major teaching and learning related assertions associated with each; and secondly to add some overall criticality given that the TEF submission are largely descriptive narratives written to present the institution in the best possible light. The literature review also helped to shape the recommendations that follow each section.

After each thematic literature review, factors that stand out in the 23 gold award winning submissions are presented, and recommendations provided. Following a brief discussion of the method used to interrogate the documents, the report opens with a consideration of the role of academics in the TEF, a voice noticeably absent in all narratives. Consideration then turns to how gold submissions used language, tone and style; and how the discussions were anchored within mission, vision and values statements. Following a review of the eight remaining themes, the report concludes with a section outlining various note-worthy aspects of the 23 gold submissions, followed by a list of the most interesting and engaging in terms of presentation and content, and finally a restating of the recommendations shaped by the literature and the examples of good practice described. It is hoped that the report will spur discussion and debate not only around what makes for a gold TEF submission, but of the vital importance of establishing a solid evidence base when developing institutional policy around teaching and learning. The report also provides a wealth of examples of excellence, innovation and best practice that may be replicated or adopted elsewhere to continue to raise the overall level of student engagement and outcomes across the sector.

Key findings from each thematic area are provided below:

- **Language and tone**

Language use and tone are discernibly different in gold submissions. While a variety of different styles can be found, all are used effectively to create a connection with the reader and to pull him/her into the narrative. Whether the language and tone are supportive and caring or more confident and forward-thinking, all create a strong sense of believability and, as a result, conviction in the reader.

- **Mission, values and ethos**

All gold awarded providers (GP) discussed their mission or values. Many shaped their narratives around a particular ethos that defines the culture of the university. However, not all were successful in demonstrating a distinctive position within the UK higher education sector through their mission, values or ethos statements and not all showed how the mission or values underpinned their strategies. Those that did however created very coherent and convincing narratives.

- **Widening participation, inclusivity, equality and diversity.**

Gold submissions provide considerable evidence of investment in and support for disadvantaged students, those with gaps in attainment, disabled students across a wide range of disabilities as well as international and mature students. Evidence is provided comparing attainments (grades, employment, HSE) of these groups against peers and showing improvements over the past 3-5 years. Metrics are linked to specific, often highly innovative

support projects. Four demonstrate an embedded, institution-wide commitment to inclusivity, diversity and equality.

- **Students as partners producers**

Most GP provide evidence of student-staff partnerships operating at many levels within the university and all go beyond simply responding to student surveys as a way to better engage students and to improve the student experience. Across the submissions, evidence is provided of students managing or collaborating with staff to identify and deliver quality enhancements to learning and teaching; students co-producing knowledge in both pedagogy and subject-based research with staff and/or employers; students designing or co-designing curricula and assessments (such as MOOCs) and also delivering the curricula, and students delivering peer academic support and engaging in peer marking. Three institutions demonstrate a university-wide commitment to student-staff partnerships and provide evidence of the positive outcomes from various projects.

- **Teaching, scholarship, reward and promotion mechanisms;**

Only Cambridge notes that teaching staff were involved in the TEF submission. Otherwise, the voice of teaching staff is notably absent in the submissions and this impinges on the credibility of the process. The main teaching-related topics discussed across the submissions are NSS scores on teaching and how teaching quality is monitored; investments in training, professional development and in learning and teaching centres; how the university engages with the scholarship of teaching and learning; and, promotion and reward mechanisms with many institutions now offering routes to reader and professor levels for teaching-focussed staff. However, the lack of voice given to teaching staff in the submissions made these sections more formulaic than others.

- **Curriculum, research-led teaching, assessment and feedback**

Many GP use design principles to enhance the curriculum review process and all discussed their commitment to research-led teaching. Multi-disciplinary learning opportunities are evident at many institutions, the aim of which is to develop more well-rounded, globally minded graduates. Where initiatives have been developed to improve assessment and feedback, it is evident that scores are not improved by using a single tool or approach, but through institutional investment in evidence-based practices shown to enhance assessment outcomes and improve feedback.

- **Employability skill development, opportunities and graduate employment.**

Students at the majority of gold rated institutions have an enormous range of opportunities to develop employability skills, to engage in extracurricular activities and to work closely with employers. Most institutions have recognition schemes that allow students to document and/or gain additional credit for undertaking a range of credit and non-credit bearing activities. Perhaps more than any other component of the submissions, the discussion on employability

is well supported with evidence of how the investment in a wide range of work-related activities has led to increases in the number of graduates in good and highly skilled employment. The narratives are not always clear however on how employability skills are developed with some discussing how they embed employability across the curriculum and others referring to dedicated employability modules and opportunities. Entrepreneurship and innovation opportunities are extensive at most GP.

- **Monitoring mechanisms and responding to student feedback.**

Most GP have invested in learning analytics platforms that capture student data and track their engagement, progress, feedback and use of university services. The data is up to date, on accessible platforms and made available to personal tutors as well as those in support positions. Although not all, many gold providers have invested in a range of mechanisms to gather student views and feedback, not relying solely on surveys and student representatives. Two have developed apps to gather ongoing feedback and five use student-staff partnerships to enhance the monitoring and response processes.

- **Student support and personalised learning**

Gold submissions discussed the many different kinds of support offered to students, often at considerable length. All 23 of the reviewed GP have a personal tutoring scheme and most see it as the cornerstone of their support for students, noting that the personal tutor is often the first one to identify issues related to student engagement, progression and/or well-being. Support systems are extensive and generally made up of an interconnected system of personal tutors, peer mentors, centralized or school based academic support units, career and employability units, student engagement officers and health/well-being services. In various submissions, the institutions demonstrate how they have developed a complete and integrated package of support that is available as a ‘one-stop shop’ in physical locations or via a university app. At least half of the universities invest significant resources into applicants, those in transition to year one and first year students, emphasizing that first year is the most crucial to retention and good degree outcomes.

- **Resources and investment**

Investment in learning resources and library services is high at all GP as is the investment in digital resources for learning including online chat forums, apps for learning, and lecture capture systems. Other significant investments include those for STEM subjects, teaching and learning resource centres (see above), pedagogic CPD, new or refurbished teaching buildings or spaces with digital capabilities, and in support services.

The 2018 TEF

Since this report was written, the results of the 2018 TEF have been published. Twenty-three institutions applied, three from the previous year. Of these, nine have achieved gold, including

the author's university, (Hertfordshire) which received a silver in 2017. Although the numbers applying are small in 2018, the percentage of golds is not very different from the previous year (39% against 34%). In addition, subject level TEFs are being piloted this year for the main roll out in 2018-19.

While the report is based on the original TEF metrics and the first round of awards, it is hoped that readers will find interesting and at times unique insights into how complex organisations such as modern universities are directing their resources and efforts towards improving the lives and prospects of students.

How to use this report

The report is designed to be a detailed review of the submissions from 23 gold awarded institutions set within the context of the literature on key themes in higher education. Readers may choose to use the report as a reference on these themes and how related practices are being implemented in gold institutions. Or, they may choose to 1) read it in its entirety, 2) consider only the themes of greatest relevance or concern to their areas of interest, 3) review only the GP discussion and example sections, 4) use the recommendations to start discussions at their own institutions, or 5) review the summary of unique and worthy examples from the twenty-three providers.

I defy anyone who chooses to read the institutional submissions to be anything other than awestruck by the breadth, imagination, challenge and stimulation offered across the sector”

Husbands, 2018

Lynn Vos

University of Hertfordshire, 2018

Figure 1: 2017 Gold TEF providers reviewed for this report and number of students 2016-17 (UG+PG)

		 UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM	
		 UNIVERSITY of DERBY	
 Edge Hill University		 UNIVERSITY OF EXETER	
 Imperial College London	 50 THE LAST 50 YEARS	 Lancaster University	 UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

 <p>UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN</p>	 <p>LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY</p>	 <p>Loughboroug University</p>	 <p>Newcastle University</p>
 <p>The University of Nottingham</p>	 <p>NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY</p>	 <p>UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH</p>	<p>TEF Gold Awards 2017</p>

Disclaimer: While a very careful reading of the submissions was undertaken by the author, mistakes in interpreting the narratives may have occurred. Please contact the author if you feel that your institution has in any way been misrepresented. That was not my intention and I would be pleased to revise the document accordingly. Any opinions given in the report are strictly those of the author and are not meant to reflect the views of my own institution.

-Lynn Vos, July 2018

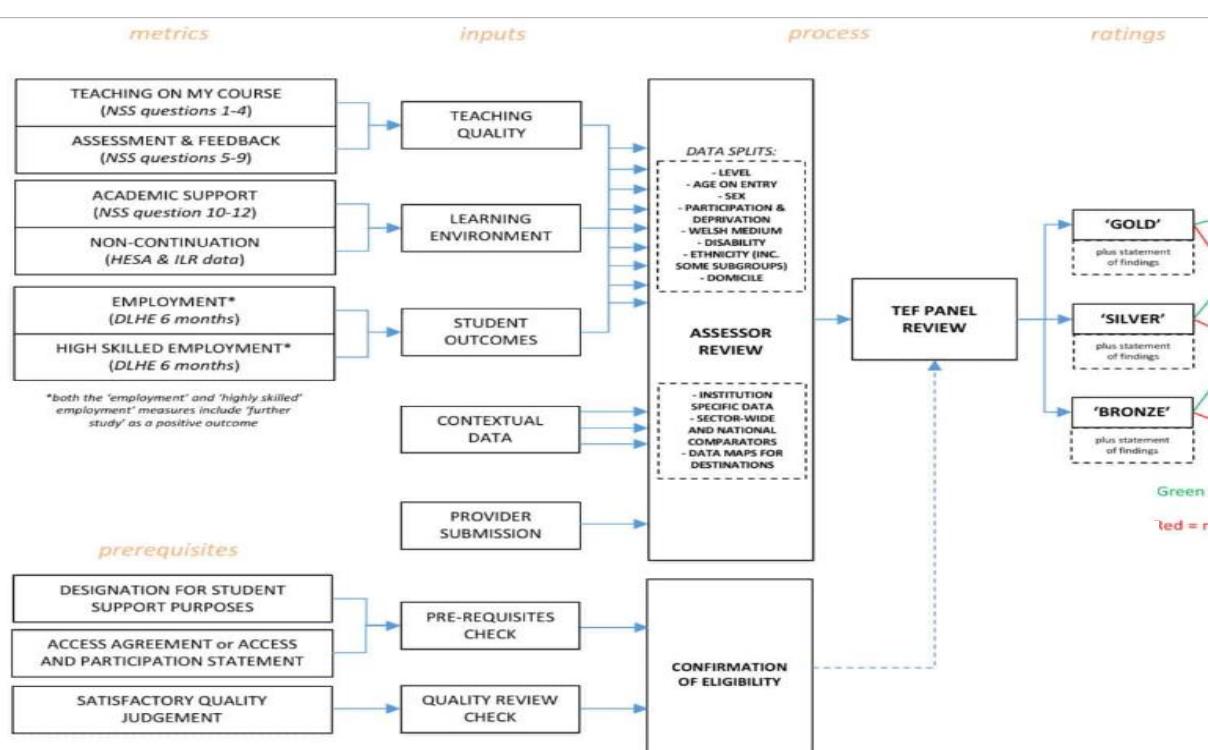
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THE TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK: AN OVERVIEW

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) had its origins in the Conservative government's 2015 election manifesto written by Jo Johnson, Minister for Universities and Science at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS). Johnson argued that many students in the UK were experiencing 'lamentable teaching' and that something needed to be done to improve the situation, particularly given the high fees that students were now paying. Part of the problem, he argued, lay in the privileging of research over teaching and that a new balance needed to be struck to raise the esteem for teaching and to recognise and reward examples of teaching excellence (Bagshaw, 2017).

In arriving at the final framework, a number of issues had to be ironed out, including what metrics would be used to assess institution-wide teaching excellence. Among the most controversial aspects of the TEF was the decision to use metrics from the National Student Survey (NSS) and HESA data on retention and employment. Excluding the questions about 'teaching on my course' none of the metrics can be viewed as directly relating to teaching excellence (see Figure 2 below). As Bagshaw (2017) from WONKHE has pointed out, the TEF would be better badged as 'student experience' rather than teaching. However, a number of revisions were made to the original proposals and the TEF has been rechristened the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework, so as to better reflect the new focus on outcome measures such as degree classifications and graduate employment.

Figure 2: The TEF framework (Source) WONKHE, 2017



Another early controversy was that scores on the TEF would be tied to how much Universities could charge their students, with gold awarded institutions having more leeway to increase fees. This unsurprisingly led the National Union of Students (NUS) to urge students to boycott the National Student Survey (NSS). In March 2017, however, the House of Lords voted down this aspect of the TEF by a vote of 263 to 211 (Havergal, 2016).

A third controversy surrounded the question of how institutions should be compared against each other. It is widely recognized that UK higher education providers are highly stratified by entrance qualifications, investments in research, and by the impact of local economic factors on student intake and longer-term outcomes, so comparing all institutions on the same criteria would likely privilege already well recognized and supported universities. To overcome this issue, the TEF was revised to measure an institution's performance against benchmarks based on their student intake rather than on absolute performance against others. As Stevens (2017) noted, "rather than reflecting how institutions across the sector have performed in absolute terms, the TEF can more accurately be described as a tool to identify the institutions performing well *against expectations* for their particular student intake"¹.

The final TEF framework allowed for institutions to be judged by an expert panel against metrics noted above and in the public domain. These included two each in three categories: teaching quality, learning environment and student outcomes and learning gain (See figure 2 'Inputs'). The institution is given 'flags' for their performance in terms of how well they performed against a benchmarked expectation for their student intake (Bagshaw, 2017). Institutions' metrics which are both at least ± 2 percentage points and ± 2 standard deviations away from the benchmark are flagged + (positive) or - (negative). Metrics that are both at least ± 3 percentage points and ± 3 standard deviations away from the benchmark are flagged ++ or --. A provider with three or more positive flags (either + or++) and no negative flags (either - or--) is considered initially for a gold award. Those with two or more negative flags are given an initial bronze. Because the TEF is also aimed at ensuring that institutions are doing their best to support the needs of diverse and often underrepresented student groups, institutions are also measured against split metrics for gender, ethnicity, age and disability.

¹ Stevens, S. (2017). TEF results must be carefully communicated to improve students' choices. Available at: <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/tef-results-must-be-carefully-communicated-to-improve-students-choices/> [Accessed June 6, 2018]

Figure 3: From Teaching Excellence Framework Mapping of Submissions HEA 2017



Source: HEA, 2017

Once the award level (gold, silver or bronze²) is decided upon, institutions are invited to submit a 15-page narrative that allows the institution to argue why it should receive a higher score than the metrics alone would indicate. It also allows them to highlight innovative practices and policies to support student success. Most, but not all, universities who submitted in 2017 used the categories in Figure 2 to structure their narratives.

The 2017 TEF was considered a trial year, providing insights and lessons learned for the first actual TEF in 2018. Nonetheless, 134 higher education institutions from England, Wales and Scotland participated, with 45 receiving a gold rating (34%), 67 a silver (50%), and 25 a bronze (15%). Results surprised many commenters as some of the most highly ranked institutions in terms of league table positions performed less well than expected. For example, the London School of Economics received a bronze award despite being third on the Complete University Guide's league table in the same year. The Universities of Liverpool and Southampton also achieved only a bronze award. However, institutions were permitted to contest their award "on the basis of a significant procedural irregularity in the consideration of their TEF application" (Moores, Higham & Sanders 2017)³. Eighteen institutions chose to do so, with one being

² Institutions with insufficient data for a full assessment but which meet the quality standards can receive an unrated *provisional* award.¹

³ Moores, J., Higham, L., & Sanders, J. (2017). Evidencing Teaching Excellence: Analysis of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF2) provider submissions. York: Higher Education Academy. Available at: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/hub/download/TEF2%20Provider%20Submissions%20Review_2.pdf https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/hub/download/TEF2%20Provider%20Submissions%20Review_2.pdf [Accessed June 6, 2018]

upgraded from silver to gold (University of East Anglia), and three additional providers brought into the group of provisional awards.

In terms of ‘lessons learned’, Universities and Science Minister Jo Johnson announced in September 2017 that the value of the NSS results used in the core metrics would be halved and a supplementary metric added on graduate earnings using the Department for Education’s Longitudinal Education Outcomes data. These include data on the proportion of graduates who are in either ‘sustained employment’ or further study three years after completing their degree and also data on the proportion of graduates who are earning over the median salary of £21,000 for all of those in the age category 25-29. Given the concern in the sector over grade inflation, the new TEF will also consider how many 2.1 and firsts a provider has awarded in years 1, 2, 3 and 6 prior to the submission (Morgan, 2017). For subject level TEF’s in particular, a measure of ‘teaching intensity’ has also been proposed and is being trialled in the 2017/18 period within the five disciplines chosen for the trial (business and management, engineering, creative arts and design, history and archaeology, and nursing). Finally, the TEF awards will now run for five years instead of three, taking account of the time and resources needed to make important changes to improve outcomes, not to mention the investment of additional resources in completing the submission.

Controversy continues. Commentators have raised concern about using the additional data on salaries, noting that there is little to no relationship between teaching excellence and earnings. Salaries are more often a reflection of a university’s reputation and location as well as its subject mix; furthermore, it is well known that most of the firms that pay the highest salaries still recruit principally from traditional and Russell group universities (Artess, Hooley, & Mellors-Bourne, 2017). Of greatest concern and debate, however, is the proposed ‘teaching intensity’ metric that requires institutions to submit data on how many contact hours students receive annually and the student/staff ratios for each type of learning they participate in (e.g. lectures, seminars, tutorials, studio, and from teaching staff office hours) (OfS, 2017). Critics note the research evidence showing that contact hours have only a very weak relationship with student learning gain; what matters more is the quality of teaching, the intellectual challenge offered during that contact time and how much commitment students put into their studies and independent learning hours (Stevens, 2017). Once again, metrics have been chosen that are not the best measures of teaching quality available or known to make a difference to student learning.

During the spring of 2018, the government undertook a sector wide consultation of the TEF, TEF metrics and the subject-level framework. A response document is to be published in the

autumn (2018). In addition, a statutory independent review of TEF is scheduled for 2018/19. The outcomes of the review and the nature and scope of any changes to the framework will not likely be fully known until late 2019.

Since the first TEF results came out, a number of reports have been published which analyze how the scores were arrived at and which investigate what the submissions have to say about the general state of teaching and learning in the UK. Two particularly detailed examples are recommended reading:

- Evidencing Teaching Excellence: Analysis of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF2) provider submissions, by Moores, Higham and Sanders (2017) for the HEA available at: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/evidencing-teaching-excellence>
- Going for Gold: Lessons from the TEF provider submissions (2017) by Diana Beech, the Higher Education Policy Institute's (HEPI) Director of Policy and Advocacy, available at: http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/FINAL-HEPI-Going-for-Gold-Report-99-04_10_17-Screen.pdf

References:

- Artess, J., Hooley, T., & Mellors-Bourne, R. (2017). *Employability: A review of the literature*. York: Higher Education Academy.
- Bagshaw, A. (2017). A beginner's guide to the teaching excellence framework. Available at: <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/a-beginners-guide-to-the-teaching-excellence-framework/> [Accessed June 5, 2018]
- Beech, D. (2017). Going for gold: Lessons from the TEF provider submissions. London: Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI). Available at http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/FINAL-HEPI-Going-for-Gold-Report-99-04_10_17-Screen.pdf [Accessed June 6, 2018].
- Havergal, C. (2016) House of Lords rejects plans to link TEF results to tuition fees. Available at: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/house-lords-rejects-plans-link-tef-results-tuition-fees> [Accessed June 5, 2018].
- Moores, J., Higham, L., & Sanders, J. (2017). Evidencing Teaching Excellence: Analysis of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF2) provider submissions. York: Higher Education Academy. Available at: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/evidencing-teaching-excellence> [Accessed June 6, 2018].
- Morgan, J. (2017). Teaching excellence framework changes 'will favour the Russell Group'. Available at: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/teaching-excellence-framework-changes-will-boost-russell-group> [Accessed June 6, 2018].
- Stevens, S. (2017). TEF results must be carefully communicated to improve students' choices. Available at: <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/tef-results-must-be-carefully-communicated-to-improve-students-choices/> [Accessed June 6, 2018].

NOTES ON METHOD

Submissions were first selected from the 38 gold awarded institutions based on two criteria: type of institution and geographic spread. Institutions were chosen to represent Russell group, pre- and post-1992 institutions from the areas with the highest concentration of Universities in the North, Midlands and South. One Scottish university is included to represent institutions with four-year undergraduate degrees. To identify the key themes, a grounded analysis approach was used in the first instance. Each submission was read through a first time for language, tone, style and structure as well as to gain an initial impression of the overall approach used and material covered. After the first reading was completed, it was clear that most submissions had included a discussion of all the TEF categories as suggested in the guidance document, frequently using them as sub-headings.

Figure 3: From Teaching Excellence Framework Mapping of Submissions HEA 2017



Source: HEA, 2017

Other themes were also apparent in the narratives, including institutional mission, vision and values; approach to widening participation, student-staff partnerships, quality monitoring processes; and responding to student feedback, among others. Using these as well as the TEF categories, this report endeavours to include the widest possible coverage of details in the narratives and to link conceptual areas logically, such as widening participation, inclusivity, equality and diversity; and monitoring mechanism with responding to student feedback. The groupings within the themes also represent coherent conceptual themes discussed in the higher education literature.

Once the overall themes were determined, the author then reread each submission for evidence of discussion and practices around each one, considering the themes one at a time. Literature reviews were conducted on each theme to provide an evidence-base upon which to make recommendations. A final rereading of all the submissions was undertaken before completing the report to ensure accuracy and also to identify what was unique and worth noting about various institutional practices that may not have been highlighted previously in the report.

1. ACADEMICS AND THE TEF

The TEF submissions are meant in part to describe and explore teaching quality and yet almost none have given voice to the academics who deliver the teaching. The author sees this as a significant oversight and one that needs to be addressed. If those who are delivering the teaching do not have a voice in the submission, the veracity and validity of any case for quality is called into question.

The TEF has been criticized on many fronts, among them for using proxy measures of teaching quality and for adding more measurements to an already highly performative sector, but one issue which has not been addressed sufficiently is the lack of voice given to those who are on the frontlines of teaching practice. Many gold submissions provide direct quotations from students, student union presidents, external examiners, employers and senior managers, but only Cambridge states that the submission was developed with input from academics across its University and Colleges. The other submissions do not appear to have included the academics who develop, deliver, assess and reflect upon learning and support students. Without the voice of educators themselves, the TEF is in danger of remaining an exercise that lacks any real credibility. Sincere and genuine conversations need to be held with academics about the concerns and challenges they face in the current HE environment. For example, prior research by the author has evidenced a growing problem with stress and, at times, an undervalued and overstretched teaching resource (Vos, forthcoming).

The work of Stevenson, Burke and Whelan (2014) on how a marketized higher education sector is shaping the discourse around teaching excellence across the UK supports the findings from my own study. Among the factors emerging from their survey of 350 teaching staff in 11 UK universities, the following are deemed to militate against excellence: lack of time for developing teaching practice or for collaborating with others; excessive administration; restructuring and reorganisations occurring far too often, generally resulting in less resources; limited funding for teaching related resources; the increasing use of metrics such as module feedback including the NSS that are not particularly good measures of teaching quality - or learning gain-- but soak up a great deal of time and resources to deal with particularly when scores fall below a mandated threshold; fearing to innovate teaching practices for the risk of getting lower scores on student surveys; having to prioritise research over teaching; and growing gaps in student's prior learning and skills that academics find challenging to redress (p.31).

Gibbs' (2010) report 'Dimensions of Quality' and Hattie's (2008) meta-analysis of 800 research articles on teaching are just two important works demonstrating that teaching quality is a major predictor of student learning gains and outcomes, thus making the case for significant investment in and support for the early and ongoing development of teachers and teaching practice. Academics acknowledge that within their ranks there are examples of both excellent and poor practice but the better often suffer for the weaknesses of the few, particularly when programme survey scores are lower than expected. Good management and support is needed for those who are not delivering on their role, proper recognition given to those who are excelling, and KPI's developed around ongoing staff training and evidence-based practice to ensure that the best practices are being shared and embedded. Ultimately, a strong support and recognition culture is needed to encourage the best teaching practices.

Academics should be providing a large input into the TEF and yet their views are largely unsought. This speaks of a divide that must be addressed if teaching quality is to be truly enhanced and the TEF is to achieve its full potential as a measure of quality.

Recommendation One:

Engage academic staff in the TEF submission both as a means to address specific challenges they may be facing and to provide validity to the submission. This should not be done in a way that adds additional pressure to teachers' schedules.

References:

- Gibbs, G. (2010). *Dimensions of Quality*. York: Higher Education Academy.
- Hattie, J.A.C. (2008). *Visible learning: A Synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London: Routledge.
- Stevenson, J., Burke., P.J., & Whelan, P. (2014). *Pedagogical stratification and the shifting landscape of higher education*. York: The Higher Education Academy.

2. LANGUAGE AND TONE

The tone, mood and style of writing in gold awarded submissions is demonstrably different from many of the silver and bronze winners, making them a pleasure to read and encouraging the reader to feel connected to the institution and to support their success.

Tone: While a variety of different tones can be found in the submissions, all of them are used effectively to create a connection with the reader and to pull him/her into the narrative. Whether the tone is supportive and caring or more confident and forward-thinking, each creates a strong sense of believability and, as a result, conviction in the reader.

Examples of Language and Tone



Edge Hill
University

Caring/Supportive/Committed: 'our culture places the highest value on establishing meaningful relationships both with and between students at the earliest opportunity.... We believe this focus on relationships, and fostering an open and transparent culture where staff and students work in partnership, enables us to best support, stretch and challenge our students, aiding them to achieve their full potential.'



Collaborative/Partnership/Confident: 'We are creating an internationally excellent education, which gives our talented students the ability to go on to make a difference in the world.... Our education is characterised by the partnership we have with our students in developing their own learning and helping them to become agents of change'.



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Forceful/Leader/Confident: 'outstanding campus', 'outstanding quality assurance', 'achieved the most positive outcome of all institutions in the UK to date', 'sector-leading', 'in the absolute and benchmarked excellence of undergraduate education', 'consistently outperform', 'outstanding student learning experience' 'outstanding teaching'.



Earnest/Socially Responsible: 'our commitment to the public good and ...our ability to challenge convention and create impact' 'use our talents to create a better, more fulfilling life for ourselves and for others', 'students are the beating heart of DMU' commit to helping all students to thrive irrespective of race, ethnicity or background'.

Style deepens the interest that the reader feels towards the institution and even where the narrative is shaped by more powerful and forceful language, the reader feels persuaded and convinced by the claims made. Figurative language is also used to good effect and repetition of key words is common (Beech, 2017). Words and phrases such as 'outstanding', 'fusion', 'partnership', 'transformative', 'commitment', 'personal', 'research-led' and 'continuous improvement' are employed to demonstrate focus and core values. Portsmouth's submission included 103 uses of the word 'support' for example, making it very clear that providing a personalized, tailored support system for every student is their priority.

As Beech (2017) noted in her report 'Going for Gold - Lessons from the TEF', words and phrases that demonstrated humility and the willingness to accept shortcomings are also commonly used in GP submissions - thus showing a recognition that teaching excellence is a road rather than a destination and one that requires continuous reflection and investment.



Influential/Strength/Excellent: 'demonstrating excellence in teaching and ... educational development', 'commitment to excellence in both teaching and research', ' recognises, celebrates, shares and promotes excellence', 'global network', 'globally ranked' 'world class', 'forefront of scholarship, research.'



Momentum/Continual Improvement: 'we recognise and actively seek out where we can make improvements', 'targeted improvements', 'Forward momentum as with past success, will be achieved in meaningful partnership with our students, staff, alumni, industry, and the professions.'

Recommendation Two:

Language use and tone are very important in creating a convincing and compelling narrative.
Choice of key words should flow from and be linked to a clear mission statement, ethos and/or values.

Use the submission to provide examples of how the institutional ethos and values are demonstrated, have had an impact on student outcomes and are foundational in decision making. A narrative with a richer prose style (as opposed to one that is quite terse and economical) is more convincing because of the subject matter - the ways an institution invests in and commits to educating and transforming the lives of students.

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3. MISSION, VALUES, ETHOS

3.1 Notes from the literature

Kosmutzky and Krucken (2014) note that from the early 1990s, English universities were tasked by HEFCE to develop strategic plans set within the context of mission statements (HEFCE C17/93). By 2011, almost all universities across the UK had mission/ and or vision and value statements, the main objectives of which are to: set the institution apart from others on the basis of distinctive features; act as the focal point for strategic planning; develop an internal culture of individuals working towards a common purpose; set out the institution's main priorities; and provide the language and metaphors to be used in branding (Davies & Glaister, 1996; Stearms & Borna, 1998; Fumasoli & Lepori, 2011; Morrish & Sauntson, 2013; Morphew, Fumasoli, & Stensaker, 2016; Jungblut & Jungblut, 2017).

The rise of mission statements within university documents and policy development is an outcome of a marketizing higher education environment. By adopting the language and practices of business, universities manifest the shift from an academic focus to one where economic and measurable outcomes such as financial stability, tangible results of applied research, and the production of job-ready graduates have become their *raison d'être* (Morrish & Sanntson, 2013). While mission statements have been highly criticised in the literature on strategy and organisational development for being too generic (Dimmagio & Powell, 1983), little more than window-dressing (Davies & Glaister, 1996) or simply a response to whatever general goals are currently of concern -- particularly to government bodies (Collini, 2012), it has to be conceded that for higher education institutions with their similar, but complex set of offerings and wide range of stakeholders, such statements are difficult to make meaningful. However, where they are developed as part of a purposeful analysis of an institution's ethos, profile, strengths and weaknesses, and its "specific ambitions and reality", they can act as "important indicators for a university's strategic choices...[defining] the core of [the] institution as well as its central values and what goals it aspires to" (Jungblut & Jungblut, 2017, p. 538).

Creating a distinctive (and thus appealing) offering in the crowded marketplace of higher education is viewed by many as critical to institutional success and survival; thus, a mission statement can, as noted above, serve the purpose of not only aiding managers in identifying what is unique and thus competitive about their institution, act as the foundation for strategic choices and investment, but also be a unifying force amongst employees. The key is to strike a balance between voicing the university's commitment to its core public and social

responsibilities (which generally means using similar language to that of other institutions such as research and teaching excellence and impact; inclusivity; employability of graduates; contribution to society, etc) and declaring what genuinely and meaningfully sets it apart from others. Kosmutzky & Krucken (2014) refer to the outcome of this balancing act as the ‘Janus-faced’ characteristic of most university mission statements (p. 128).

Morphew, Fumasoli and Stensaker (2016) reviewed the mission statements of research intensive universities in northern Europe and North America and found three categories: those that focused on organisational mobility or the institution’s ambition to improve its performance and rankings through a process of continuous improvement; those whose core values were aimed at serving society and sustaining the civic values of democracy; and those focusing on the economic contributions that universities make to their region through entrepreneurialism, commercialisation of research and graduate employability. Jungblut and Jungblut (2017) reviewed the mission statements of German universities and found two clusters - those focusing on excellence in research and regional cooperation (the majority) and those that focused on outcomes such as knowledge transfer, employability and entrepreneurialism.

In their study of the mission statements of Russell Group and University Alliance institutions, Morrish and Sauntson (2013) found that while Russell Group universities place greater emphasis on research, teaching and the environment for learning (using phrases such as international powerhouse, intellectually demanding, excellence, highest quality, world class, highest standard and fully equipped), University Alliance mission statements focus on the student experience, employable graduates, employment opportunities and distinctive learning approaches (where we tend to find language such as: driving innovation, entrepreneurial, professional, meeting the needs of the economy, creative, modern, engaging, inclusive, accessible and practical). The authors were less enthusiastic about the value of mission statements than other researchers, stating that “despite claims about uniqueness, mission statements are evidently formulaic and predictable”, with a strong “leaning towards economic rather than social benefits and heavily influenced by the language of business, industry, managerialism and neoliberalism” (p. 78).

Ultimately, the literature on university mission statements conveys the perspectives of their researchers - those that see the marketization of higher education as focusing university discourse on economic outcomes and those that view mission statements as a potentially effective way of conveying what is unique and valuable about an institution. Where mission statements are developed with the purposes of creating an institution-wide shared culture of values and purpose in addition to meeting the needs of students, and where there is evidence

that the mission is not fixed but an evolving perspective where continuous improvement is the metaphor for change, it can potentially act as a unifying force and a meaningful tool to distinguish the university amongst its many peer institutions.

3.2 The submissions

Most, but not all, gold providers demonstrated strong and clear statements of mission, core values and/or ethos. The more coherent and focused submissions demonstrated how the university was delivering on its mission or value statements by using the language in these statements to underpin strategic decisions and demonstrating how achievement is measured or assessed. Where mission statements were not used, providers talked about strategies, generally based around a 5-year strategic plan. Below are examples of mission and/or vision statements that stand out.



'Shared goal of promoting excellence; developing graduates who are knowledgeable, informed, intellectually curious, responsible, self-aware and self-motivated, independent learners set for success in their future careers'.



'We are a dynamic, global and transformational University group. Creating better futures, we will be world leading in all that we do; global in outlook and impactful in all that we do'.



'Aston University has a distinctive mission to be the leading provider of graduates for business and the professions, and the journey that we offer our students is one of added value, high aspiration and achievement;[a] leading University for business and the professions'.



'The Teaching and Learning (TL) Strategy supports the Strategy Map; its focus is on highly-distinctive professionally-oriented research and practice-based teaching and learning, supportive and accessible to all who can benefit ... ensuring innovation and inspiration in the student experience, leading to student satisfaction, achievement, and positive career outcomes.'



'We will develop our students as individuals, enhancing their capabilities as creative, confident and adaptable 21st Century citizens who will make a significant contribution to global society'.



'All our students will be inspired by intellectual challenge to acquire expertise within and beyond their chosen academic field. In addition the Exeter graduate will be: • An imaginative critical thinker and problem solver; • An active global citizen; • A creative and enterprising team player; • An engaged and participative leader able to effect change; • A confident resilient and adaptable individual'.



'The University of Bath's mission is to deliver world-class research and teaching, educating our students to become future leaders and innovators, and benefiting the wider population through our research, enterprise and influence'.



'Nottingham Trent is a teaching-intensive and research-active University, committed to enabling our students to transform their life chances and to enhancing the social, cultural and economic environment within which they live, study, volunteer and work; articulated through five themes: Creating Opportunity; Valuing Ideas; Enriching Society; Connecting Globally; and Empowering People.'



'The University has consciously, for over a decade, shaped itself as 'a collegium' in which students and staff work closely together in small fora [lectures are used sparingly] enjoying the benefits of an environment in which we know one another and engage on a daily basis in discussion and debate'.

In many cases, gold providers (GP) did not succeed in creating a sense of their distinctiveness through their mission, vision or values statements. More than half used very similar language with phrases such as 'transforming lives', 'inspiring students', 'fostering student engagement', 'excellence', 'global influence', 'quality of the student experience' and 'staff-student partnerships' being used repeatedly. Half of these institutions focused on students in their mission statements while the others made research, teaching, and contributions to local, regional or global society the focus of theirs.

Dissimilar to the findings of Moorish and Staunton (2013) (see above notes from the literature), there is no distinct clustering of mission statements by university type (e.g. post 1992, pre-1992 and Russell group), although older and Russell group gold institutions did mention their world class research and teaching more often than post -1992 gold providers.

One compelling mission statement is particularly worth note. The University of Lincoln avoids commonly used phrases and through its statement demonstrates that managers acknowledge a changing higher education landscape that is neither certain nor fixed thus requiring universities to experiment and take risks while seeking their distinctive place in the sector.



"our intention to experiment, innovate and explore new ways of working together so that by 2021 the University will be known as a leading small-city university, with a reputation as a 'thought leader' for 21st Century higher education globally [through our] willingness to take risks" (p.2).

Recommendation Three:

If using a mission statement, aim for a distinctive vision of the institution that is emergent rather than determined and one that shows a capacity for flexibility and adaptability in a rapidly changing higher education sector.

Demonstrate how the mission and values underpin all aspects of the strategy discussed in the submission, thus creating coherence and focus while also providing evidence that all organisational structures, systems and processes are aligned to these outcomes and are flexible in the face of change.

Provide examples of how the institution measures the achievement of values. Give clear evidence of an institutional ethos at work.

Use language that shows evidence of distinctiveness.

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4. KEY THEMES AND FINDINGS

Figure 4: From Teaching Excellence Framework Mapping of Submissions HEA 2017

Themes within the provider submissions were often applied across different TEF assessment criteria. Some examples are given here.



	Student feedback	Investment in technology	Teaching qualifications	Staff development	Active learning pedagogies	Assessment and feedback	Research-informed teaching	Academic support	Personal tutors	Peer support	Student experience	Employability skills
Teaching quality	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Learning environment			✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Student outcomes & learning gain	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student engagement (TQ1)												
Valuing teaching (TQ2)			✓	✓	✓							
Rigour and stretch (TQ3)	✓		✓			✓					✓	
Feedback (TQ4)	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓			
Resources (LE1)	✓	✓						✓		✓		
Scholarship, research and professional practice (LE2)			✓	✓	✓		✓					✓
Personalised learning (LE3)	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Employment and further study (SO1)					✓							✓
Employability and transferable skills (SO2)					✓						✓	✓
Positive outcomes for all (SO3)								✓	✓			✓

Source: HEA, 2017.

The TEF guidelines recommended that the following be discussed in the provider submissions:

- **Teaching Quality**, including a discussion of student engagement (TQ1), valuing teaching (TQ2), rigour and stretch (TQ3) and assessment and feedback (TQ4);
- **Learning Environment**, including a discussion of resources (LR1), scholarship research and professional practice (LR2) and personalised learning (LR3); and
- **Student Outcomes**, including employment (SO1) and further study and employability (SO2).

In reviewing the 23 gold submissions, several themes emerge in terms of coverage and structure. Mission and values have already been considered. The following additional themes were identified and used to interrogate the submissions:

Figure 5: Key themes in the 23 TEF 2017 Gold Submissions

Key Themes

- 4.1 Widening participation, inclusivity, equality and diversity
- 4.2. Students as partners/producers
- 4.3. Teaching, scholarship, reward and promotion mechanisms
- 4.4 Curriculum; research -led teaching; assessment and feedback
- 4.5 Employability skill development, opportunities and graduate opportunities and the role of stakeholders
- 4.6 Monitoring mechanisms and responding to student feedback
- 4.7 Student support and personalized learning
- 4.8 Resources and investment

Each section below begins with an overview of the research literature related to the theme as a means to provide both a context and an evidence base for the practices being developed and embedded in UK higher education. How GP's are addressing these themes then follows.

4.1 WIDENING PARTICIPATION, INCLUSIVITY, EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

4.1.1. Notes from the literature

The 2004 Higher Education Act created the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) to promote and ensure fair access to higher education for disadvantaged and under-represented groups (Offa, 2014). All publicly-funded universities and colleges wishing to charge tuition fees above the threshold were from that date required to have an access agreement approved by OFFA setting out the institution's targets for widening participation and the measures put in place to achieve them, including outreach work and financial support. Access agreements are updated annually and published at offa.org.uk. In March 2018, OFFA was closed, and its responsibilities transferred to the newly created Office for Students.

In addition to opening up opportunities for students who may be hindered from going into higher or further education due to issues of cost and or background, the widening participation agenda seeks to understand and mitigate any **attainment gaps** for students from specific populations. These differences in experience and attainment are not explained by entry profiles alone; other factors are at play and much research has gone into understanding these phenomena (see for example: Archer, 2007; Griffiths, 2010; Hockings, 2010; Larkin, Nihill & Devlin, 2014). GP discuss their policies and practices related to widening participation and the measures they are taking to reduce attainment gaps. This section begins with a brief review of the literature on widening participation, focusing particularly on the concept of **inclusive education**. It is followed by examples of the innovative and creative ways that many GP are improving the outcomes for students from disadvantaged, under-represented and special populations where access to and success in higher education has often not been guaranteed.

Inclusive Education

An inclusive higher education is one that values the benefits of differences within the student cohort, viewing difference as an opportunity to enhance the educational experience for all, rather than focusing on factors that limit individual student attainment. An inclusive approach begins from an understanding that certain social, economic, cultural and physical factors may act to limit attainment in HE, while also recommending that changes should be made to the learning environment rather than to the students themselves. Throughout the literature on inclusive education is a strong emphasis on social justice and equality (Hockings, 2010).

In the UK, inclusive educational approaches are a response to widening participation in which learners are coming from a greater range of social classes, ethnic and faith backgrounds, and

are often the first person in their family to go to university. Mature and part time students, international students, those with disabilities and those from LGBT communities are also considered within this agenda. As Hockings (2010) notes in her detailed synthesis of the literature, “[u]nderpinning the concept of inclusive learning and teaching are values of equity and fairness [and]...taking account of and valuing students' differences within mainstream curriculum, pedagogy and assessment” (p.30).

Several factors can hinder an **inclusive education**. Among them are educator beliefs about what students 'should' know and be able to do when they enter university; quality assurance procedures that limit a teacher's capacity to adapt curricula in a timely manner; a lack of appropriate support services; students falling through the 'cracks'; an expectation that no students will fail to seek out help if they are having difficulties or do not understand feedback; failure to address issues early in the student's academic journey; unawareness of how marginalised some students may feel; lack of variety in assessment tasks; and unconscious bias, among other factors (Archer, 2007; Griffiths, 2010; Hockings, 2010; Larkin, Nihill & Devlin, 2014). While gaps in attainment may be a core issue to be addressed in an **inclusive educational policy**, the choice of language in the policy and processes is also very important. Words and phrases such as 'difference' and 'gaps in attainment', are not helpful in creating an environment where everyone is meant to feel equal.

Hockings (2010) provides an overview of inclusive educational practice from the literature. She focusses on the design of the curriculum, methods of delivery, inclusive assessment methods and institutional commitment to (and careful management of) inclusivity as key to developing an effective strategy so that difference is celebrated and is not a barrier to achievement. Inclusivity should be linked to the theme of **student-staff partnerships** (see below), the underpinning value of which is a highly supportive community that involves staff and students from all backgrounds participating in decision making and sharing their unique experiences.

Enhancing the inclusivity of the teaching and learning environment is critical considering the findings from the HEA-HEPI 2017 Student Academic Experience Survey which demonstrate that Chinese, non-Chinese Asians, and mixed-background students feel that they are receiving lower value for money, and that their expectations are not being met in terms of teaching quality, support, connection with other students and the amount being learned. Students from black ethnic backgrounds also feel that they are not getting as much support as they need, including, not being well supported in exploring their own areas of interest.

However, it is important to note that the 2017 UK Engagement Survey conducted by the HEA across 42 universities reported a somewhat more positive picture. Black and UK-based Chinese students and students coming from more disadvantaged backgrounds tend to engage more deeply with their studies and report higher levels of learning gain. This demonstrates a positive trend, but the attainment gaps remain, and more is needed to understand and respond to why these students are not seeing the benefits of their commitment to learning in terms of better degree outcomes (Neves, 2017).

4.1.2. The submissions

GP submissions included some if not all, of the following in their submissions:

1. **Widening participation:** All submissions discussed how the institution is implementing their OFFA (Office for Fair Access)⁴ access agreement⁵. Submissions generally set out the number or percentage of students from under-represented and disadvantaged groups using SEC (4-7) or POLAR3 low participation neighborhood categories. In addition, reference was also made to students who came from homes with no prior experience in higher education.
2. **Inclusivity, equality and diversity:** The split metrics in the TEF meant that GP presented data based on gender, ethnicity, sexuality and/or disability. In most cases, GP discussed how they were tackling attainment gaps, particularly amongst BME or BAME populations, but also by gender and economic background, some with very positive outcomes.

In discussing widening participation providers made the case for how they were improving the outcomes for students who were likely to face greater challenges in: accessing higher education, staying on their programme, achieving good degree outcomes, finding good employment and/or achieving higher salaries. The employment and salaries issues were contextualized based on location, with institutions in the North and parts of the Midlands commenting on how their region had been hit more severely by austerity policies or represented an area of greater economic hardship. Despite the well accepted definition of inclusivity as one that celebrates difference rather than focuses on individual student deficits, few used truly inclusive language and only four submissions discussed inclusivity in any depth. These providers - **Demontfort, Derby, Edge Hill and Kent** -- demonstrated a more holistic,

⁴ From April 1, 2018, OFFA was rolled into the Office for Students and its work continues within that organisation.

⁵ An access agreement sets out how a university or college charging higher fees intends to safeguard and promote fair access to higher education through its outreach work, financial support and other measures. It also includes targets and milestones that are set by the institution itself.

institution-wide commitment to inclusivity, equality and diversity, indicating that it is a strategic driver for change.

Below is a brief summary of the policies, practices and approach taken to inclusivity by **De Montfort University, Derby and the University of Kent**.



Demontfort University is leading in the sector on inclusivity, equality and diversity:

*[With our] DMU Freedom Equality and Diversity Charter 2016-2020, where we commit to helping all students to thrive irrespective of race, ethnicity or background; **embedding inclusivity and choice for students**, and utilising multi-modal learning opportunities to deliver programmes that are barrier-free (p. 13).*

This university offers all students a range of opportunities to develop employability skills, including 70 volunteering projects targeted at 'hard to reach' groups in the local community (#DMULocal). Students receive equality and diversity training as part of their commitment to a project, one objective of which is to give them the confidence to stand up against racism and prejudice when they encounter it.

More recently, the university has instituted '**DMU Freedom**', its new equality and diversity charter. The charter is backed by strategic initiatives designed to put inclusivity at the heart of all decision making and to cultivate "an environment in which staff, students and partners have freedom: freedom to be, freedom to inspire and freedom to succeed" (De Montfort TEF submission, 2017, p.13). These initiatives include changes to assessment and feedback practices, training for staff, and well-resourced support services that are staffed by highly qualified experts in a range of equality, disability, and student well-being issues. The main objective of these initiatives is to close any diversity-related gaps that may reduce both staff and student retention, progression and attainment. **De Montfort** has been commended by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in its 2015 Higher Education Review for its commitment to equality and diversity and has received an Athena SWAN award. It was ranked 3rd in 2017 among higher education institutions in the Stonewall Top 100 Employers league table, an annual audit of workplace culture for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender staff.

Underpinning all teaching, learning and assessment at De Montfort is UDL or **Universal Design for Learning**. UDL is the product of decades of research and over 800 studies about how people learn. At the heart of UDL is inclusive education that embeds flexible ways of learning, flexible study resources (e.g. handouts can be modified to edit the font and backgrounds;

lectures are recorded in audio format - DMU Replay) and flexible assessment (e.g. providing a range of assessment methods to suit different learners and learning situations). They note that the heart of this “approach is the idea of embedding inclusivity and choice for students using multi-modal learning opportunities to deliver programmes that are barrier free” (De Montfort TEF submission, 2017, p. 4).

(see <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/dmu-students/udl/universal-design-for-learning.aspx>).



With a HEFCE catalyst fund, Derby developed on its existing Student Attainment Project to research and develop interventions for BME attainment gaps.

Researchers at **Derby** identified a number of individual hurdles to attainment before developing a number of different interventions across programmes. One output is the ‘Practical Recipes for Student Success (PReSS)’, a series of ‘recipe cards’ for academics and students to raise the attainment of learners. Among them are ‘Belonging and Connectedness’, ‘Digital Literacy’, ‘Inclusive pedagogy’, ‘Fit to Submit: Assignment Checklist’, among others, all freely available at <https://uodpress.wordpress.com>.

The main aim of the project is to close the attainment gap between the ‘Good Honours’ degrees achieved by BME and non-BME students. The impact of their work over the last five years has been to halve the BME attainment gap at Derby from 28.2% in 2011/12 to 14.7% in 2014/15.

The submission with the best evidence base for reasons behind poorer achievement amongst particular groups and for ways to best enhance outcomes is that from the **University of Kent**. Their two phase **Student Success Project** has identified a number of reasons behind lower attainment:



'Key sources of lowered performance are: difficulties adjusting to formal lectures and seminars; reduced motivation following unexpectedly low marks; lack of exam practice and essay-writing skills; fear of disappointing family; lack of experience of academic communities; and occasionally, module content that privileges students from some cultural heritages'. (p.5)

The university is now rolling out a series of initiatives to address specific issues. Much of the research has been published and is accessible to all. In addition, Kent has an extensive set of resources for staff on inclusivity and how to embed it within the curriculum.

The university publishes an equality, diversity and inclusivity annual report each year detailing both its strategy and achievements. (See for example: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/hr-equalityanddiversity/annual-reports/edi-annual-report2015-2016.pdf>)

Table 1: Examples of support, services and related outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds.

Examples from Russell Group Universities	
University of Cambridge	Maintains rigorous entrance requirements of 3A* or A*AA. Well supported disability resource center has developed a significant evidence base with support for Asperger's syndrome and students with high functioning autism; heavy investment in students' mental health provision; BME students exceed their benchmarks for highly skilled employment by higher margins than white students; 2600+ bursaries in 2015/16 to those from low income households.
University of Exeter	Spent ca £2.7M in 2015/16 to provide 4100+ students with financial support through fee waivers and bursaries (£7.8M). Tracking shows no difference in attainment across groups.
Loughborough University	The Equality and Diversity Working Group considers attainment by different groups and prioritises relevant projects and interventions, including researching ways to encourage more BME students to take placements given that data show completion of a placement increases students' likelihood of good degree classification and a positive DLHE outcome. The % of BME students obtaining a 1st class or 2:1 degree has increased by 16% for those completing a placement.
University of Leeds	'Access to Leeds' is a pre-entry module to develop students' confidence and skills to enter university. Financial aid is also available to those who may not be able to attend due to money issues. The 'Plus Programme' supports students from disadvantaged backgrounds in a range of ways. These programmes are credited for the high retention levels and the lowering BME attainment gap.
Newcastle University	++ Flag for supporting students with disabilities . Use social mentoring, pre-registration transition events and more specific and targeted support; 87% take work experience. OFFA Agreement shows record of Widening Participation (WP) is outstanding. Exceeds all national WP benchmarks in terms of the WP profile of North East entrants. PARTNERS Scheme follows these students from pre-entry stage onwards, offering information, advice and

	guidance around career planning and employability; higher levels of employment but some issues remain to be tackled.
University of Birmingham	The ‘ Inclusive Curriculum Working Group ’ includes staff development workshops and website resources to create more inclusive teaching, learning and assessment. Has set up a BME ambassador scheme (with HEA funding) to improve BME student inclusion, engagement, and representation. All students have access to an online equality training module. Developed a ‘mental health’ strategy underpinned with investment in resources. With the Guild of Students, set up an Equality Executive Group to embed principles from Athena Swan. By the end of 2015, the university had created its own Race Quality Charter .
Examples from Pre-1992 Universities	
University of Essex	Research with students led to two key initiatives: “ Internationalising the Curriculum ” (Summer 2014) and “ Inclusive Practice at the University of Essex ” (Summer 2016) that have fed into an institution-wide Curriculum Review to ensure that practice is inclusive of the wide variety of students that make up its diverse student body. Set up an ‘Achieving Potential Steering Group’ to diversifying modes of assessment. Supported by the Student Union’s work ‘ Why is my curriculum white? ’ they are also working on wider social and cultural aspects of student attainment to ensure visibility of role models on campuses. A significant decrease in the size of the ethnicity attainment gap for home students from a gap of 23% in 2011-12, to 14.5% in 2015-16. Disabled students are also more likely to obtain a good degree than their counterparts.
University of Lancaster	25% of UK students from Socio-Economic Class (SEC) Group 4-7 and 91% from state schools in 2016-17. Split metrics for disadvantaged students show that, compared to benchmark, these students achieve very good grades for ‘ Student Outcomes and Learning Gain ’ with positive flags for each metric. Initiatives to enhance outcomes, including the critical transition phases (into Year 1 and between Year 1 and Year 2) plus significant increases in OFFA expenditure committed for 2017-18 to expand direct support to Widening Participation (WP) students.
Aston University	42% of students are from SEC groups 4-7 vs 33% in sector; 42% Asian, 35% white, 10% black; much lower attainment gap compared with others; initiatives mean Aston outperforms on all metrics of student achievement: grades, employment, high salary employment.
University of Kent	36% BME; 16% disability; 26% Polar3; 14% BTEC entry; specifically targets students from low SEC; significant investment in a two stage Student Success Project (SSP) ; evidence-based research showing why certain groups underperform and initiatives put in place to support; much of the research has been published (see above).

Examples from post 1992 Universities	
Edge Hill University	At the forefront of widening participation, leading the sector both nationally and regionally. It is the lead institution for Aimhigher North West and for the Greater Merseyside and West Lancashire Lifelong Learning Network --co-chaired, at PVC level. Have hosted the National Action on Access project for many years. Embedded within the culture and the strategy are the principles of fairness, accessibility and inclusion. Maintain a £million+ Student Opportunity Fund for extracurricular activities to ensure all students can take part and benefit. Fastrack summer programme for transition to university for disadvantaged groups
De Montfort University	DMU Freedom Equality and Diversity Charter 2016-2020, where the university commits to helping all students to thrive irrespective of race, ethnicity or background; embedding inclusivity and choice for students (UDL, see above), and utilising multi-modal learning opportunities to deliver programmes that are barrier-free; 56% Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students; 25% disabled students; 47% mature students; and 49% had parents with no experience of HE - Tracked and supported through a range of initiatives; ' Get set for DMU ' scheme to build up the skills and confidence of those coming through clearing; Significant investment in disability support ; sector leading in providing support to students with mental health issues ; EPI shows a significant reduction in the gap between the employment of BAME graduates compared to white graduates between 2012/13 and 2014/15 leavers.
University of Portsmouth	24% of students are BME, 10% have a disability, 23% from POLAR3 Quintiles 1 &2, 36% from low income households, 45% have qualifications other than A levels. Achieved ++ flags for outcomes for mature, disadvantaged, BME and students with disabilities.
University of Huddersfield	2nd amongst UK universities in the Social Mobility Graduate Index ; 24 out of 123 institutions for number of students from POLAR3; almost 50% commute; minority ethnic population consists predominantly of students of Pakistani origin; most still live at home; females need to make large contribution at home and typically have no history of HE; high levels of unemployment. However, the university has high employability outcomes for all students and in student satisfaction levels for BME, disadvantaged and disabled students. Also note that mature students form a significant minority (25%) of FT students and are positively double flagged for academic support; Student priority support team provides specific support to students likely to drop out (living at home) through the Back on track service . Also, additional academic support is provided for students with learning difficulties, disabilities, mental health problems, plus personal and social challenges. Support groups available for those with mental health difficulties, eating disorders and Asperger's syndrome and for transgender students, bereaved students and Care Leavers. All staff take equal opportunity training.

All GP have put in place a variety of programmes to support disadvantaged students, disabled students and students with mental health issues (this issue is on the rise, please see below Section 4.7 on Support). In all cases, providers demonstrate that they have narrowed the gaps in achievement and employment for these students by investing heavily in outreach programmes and financial, academic, health and personal support. In the majority of narratives, statistical evidence is provided showing improvements in retention, employment, further study, salaries (HSE), and take-up of university support services, work placements, study abroad and extracurricular activities by these groups. Where scores were lower than expected, the results were generally contextualised in terms of the local economy.

Recommendation Four:

Gold submissions provide considerable evidence of support for disadvantaged students, those with gaps in attainment, disabled students across a wide range of disabilities and support for student well-being. Evidence is given comparing attainments (grades, employment, HSE) of these groups against peers and showing improvements over the past 3-5 years. These metrics are linked to specific, often highly innovative support projects. Four of the submissions demonstrate an embedded, institution-wide commitment to inclusivity, diversity and equality.

Institutions should work towards an institutional culture of inclusivity that celebrates difference rather than focuses on individual attainment challenges. The language used in inclusivity documents and practices should avoid deficit phrases such as 'attainment gap' and 'disadvantaged' wherever possible.

Submissions should provide clear evidence of benefits to all stakeholders of an effective widening participation and inclusion strategy, showcase innovative projects to reduce gaps, and provide compelling evidence of improvements in attainments across all groups.

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4.2. STUDENTS AS PARTNERS/PRODUCERS

4.2.1. Notes from the literature

Students as partners is a theme that is well supported in the literature for the benefits to both institutional culture and student's engagement with learning (Trowler, 2010; Trowler & Trowler, 2010; Dunne & Owen, 2011; Little, 2011; Healey, 2012; Dunne & Owen, 2013; Bryson, 2014). Evidence demonstrates that students who work collectively and collaboratively with staff are less likely to align with the '**student as consumer**' perspective where learners are passive recipients of knowledge. Instead a strong partnership in which students actively participate in and jointly own decisions about the learning environment, the curriculum, assessment and feedback, and who also work with staff in creating and disseminating knowledge, can lead to much deeper learning, better outcomes, a greater sense of personal responsibility and the possibility of a truly transformative educational experience (Healey, Flint & Arrington, 2014). Furthermore, as the UK Engagement Survey has demonstrated (Neves, 2017), partnerships can lead to greater skill development, including significant and sought-after career skills particularly for those who collaborate and interact with staff on both university related projects and academic research.

At the UK policy level, Seale, Gibsons, Haynes and Potter (2015) note that the origins of the idea that students should be consulted on issues related to their higher education "can be traced back to 2007 when the Department for Innovations, Universities and Skills launched its student listening programme as part of a commitment to citizen engagement and the amplification of the 'student voice'" (p.535). Over the next decade, organisations including the National Union of Students (NUS, 2012), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (QAA, 2014), Student Engagement Partnership (England), Student Participation in Quality Scotland and the Wales Initiative for Student Engagement have written statements of purpose on what constitutes effective partnerships and set out guidelines for developing these relationships. The Higher Education Academy (now Advantage UK) has also undertaken considerable research into this theme, offering institutions an evidence base, numerous case studies and a change programme that can be implemented in individual departments or across the university (HEA, 2014).

Universities are using an increasing range of mechanisms to collect and respond to student feedback: national surveys such as the UKES (UK Engagement Survey - HEA); the HEA/HEPI Student Academic Experience Survey; the NSS (National Student Survey), often adapted to the local context; the International Student Barometer survey, the Postgraduate Taught

Experience survey and local mechanisms such as the student representative systems, boards of study, module feedback questionnaires and focus groups. However, the concept of '**students as partners**' is much more than listening to and responding to the student voice. While these activities are extremely important and fundamental to ensuring that issues of concern are flagged and dealt with, it does not completely succeed in preventing students from becoming passive consumers of the learning process.

With only these mechanisms to express their concerns and suggestions for change, students remain dependent on the institution to correctly interpret their needs and, as is often the case with data gathering of this kind, things get lost in translation. A true '**student as partners**' institutional culture is one where students are active members of the decision-making processes through their participation on key university committees and through jointly conceived and directed staff-student research and working groups. As Healy, Flint and Harrington (2014) note "by working together to a common agreed purpose, steps can be taken that lead to enhancements for all concerned" (p. 12).

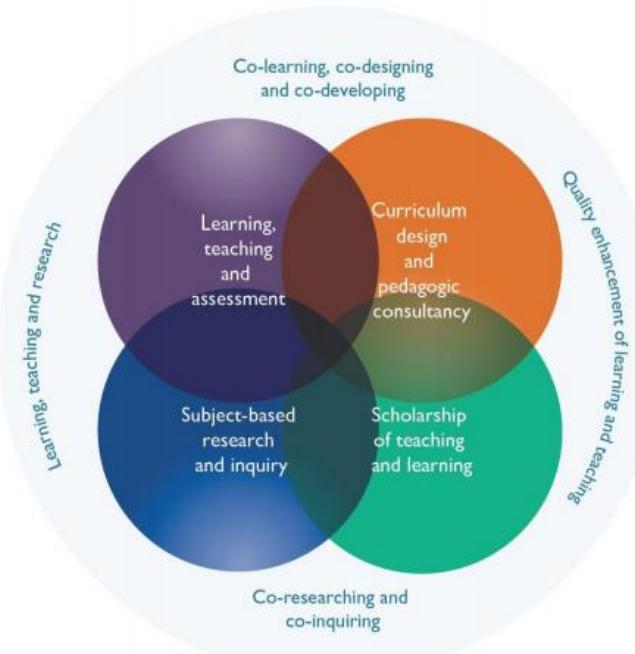
The National Union of Students (NUS), working with the HEA, differentiates between four stages of student engagement: student **consultation** (opportunities for students to give feedback, opinions and discuss their experiences and provide suggestions), **involvement** (opportunities for students to take a more active role such as being members of university committees), **participation** (where students are involved in decision-making at the institution and often take the decisions themselves) and **partnership** (where there is a true collaboration between staff and students with both involved in decision making and both taking joint ownership over the process and outcomes (NUS/HEA 2017 Student Engagement Toolkit)). Consultation is still the most common form of engagement at UK Universities, but some, such as **Lincoln's** Students as Producer's ethos, and **Exeter's** Students as Change Agents programme, have more of the features of true partnerships.

In their work to conceptualise the theme, Healey, Flint and Harrington (2014) note that staff-student partnerships are most effective when they are founded on a commonly agreed set of values and set within a truly supportive community where members strive to reduce power hierarchies and inequalities in the relationship (see also Seale et al, 2014). Figure 6 presents the ways in which students can be engaged as partners. At one level, students are collaboratively engaging with staff to design and deliver the teaching and assessment in a discipline. In addition, students may themselves be producers of knowledge, through co-researching and co-inquiry, on projects related to academics' research, on projects put forward by the students or on community or employer-based projects (e.g. **University of Lincoln**).

Deeper forms of engagement involve students identifying and then, through scholarship research and consultancy, co-developing an evidence base to support changes to discipline-based curricula, teaching and learning or making recommendations regarding other quality processes.

A starting point for developing collaborations between staff and students is through the institution's student union or guild. From here, a whole institution approach to partnership can emerge over time that includes students working with management and academics, but also professional services, education and learning developers, disciplines and departments, quality assurance, institutional governance and external stakeholders. As noted above, where a culture of student-staff partnerships is embedded across all institutional processes, the relationships go much farther than that of gathering student feedback and responding to it. Having the willingness to genuinely empower students with decision making capabilities requires a leap of faith before they can become true agents of change within the university where they are involved in identifying areas for enhancement and have access to the resources necessary to design and implement alternative processes and structures (Healy, Flint and Harrington, 2014).

Figure 6: Students as partners in learning and teaching in higher education - an overview model



Source: Healy, Flint and Harrington, 2014.

The motivations for developing student staff partnerships can be based on different reasons, including those identified at a 2013 HEA summit on Students as Partners:

- to design and deliver engaging student learning experiences
- to make higher education more accessible and inclusive
- to develop a sense of community and belonging
- to develop student and staff knowledge and capabilities
- to offer a constructive alternative to consumerist models of higher education
- as an ethical responsibility to students and staff
- as a response to the current multi-faceted challenges facing HE.

(in Healy, Flint and Harrigan, 2014, p. 19)

The literature is rich with case studies of students participating in these ways and in bringing significant and successful changes to processes and practices (Little 2011; Solomonides, Reid & Petocz 2012; Dunne & Owen 2013; Cook-Sather, Bovil & Felten, 2014; Bryson 2014; Curran & Millard, 2015; O'Shea, Bennett & Delahunty, 2016; Norby, 2016). Projects include developing university-wide peer assisted learning and peer mentoring schemes, co-researching and co-publishing with academics, community-based change projects, co-designing assessments, consulting during course design and revalidation processes, designing a better first-year experience, consulting on ways to improve various university resources and services, running services for staff and students, designing more effective feedback processes and mechanisms and creating and teaching specialist modules. The opportunities for partnership and co-production are unlimited as long as the barriers to their development are recognised and mitigated.

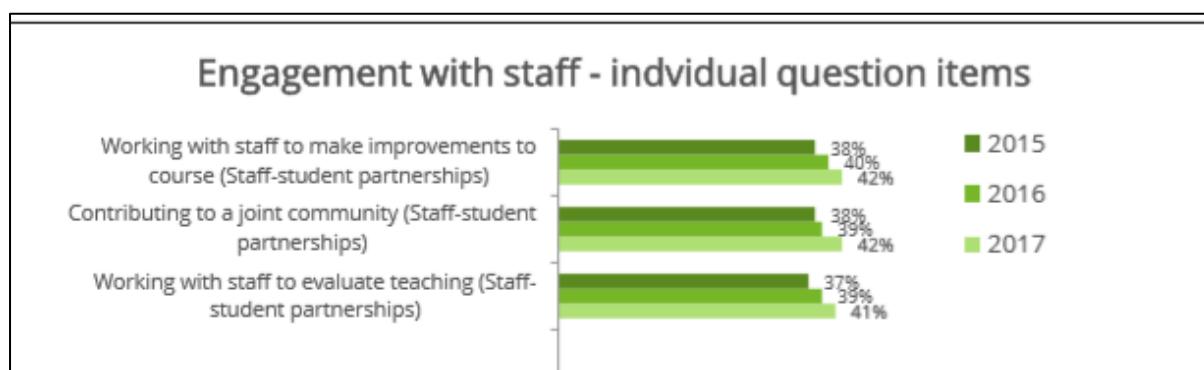
As noted, creating effective collaborative partner arrangements is not without challenges (Seale et al, 2014). Among the issues that can emerge are students preferring the traditional relationship and failing to engage as an equal partner; staff feeling challenged to break down existing hierarchies; staff maintaining the role of gate keeper and final decision maker; academics' possible discomfort in being challenged to share the depth and breadth of their expertise in student-staff research; and, finding the time and resources to commit to joint projects. Another issue is that given the internal and external pressure upon institutions to improve metrics such as NSS scores, many institutions fall back upon the standard default position of simply gathering more feedback from students and using reactive mechanisms to respond as the main form of engagement.

Universities operate along a continuum from simply responding to students' concerns flagged up in feedback to having a fully embedded, institution wide collaboration between staff and

students across all systems and processes, the latter situation being quite rare. Reporting on the results of the 2017 Student Engagement Survey (HEA, 2017), Neves summarises ways in which students at the 42 institutions that took part (see Figure 7) have collaborated with staff and there has been encouraging progress over the past three years.

Universities such as **Lincoln, Loughborough, Exeter and Bath** are examples of those who are well on the way to fully embed partnership thinking, learning, managing and designing and their submissions provide examples of excellent practice. Yet, despite the wealth of literature and evidence on how to engage students, in developing effective partnerships and on the benefits to students, staff and other stakeholders of true partnerships, many institutions are still much closer to the old-style ‘responding to concerns’ end of the continuum. As a consequence, they are more likely remain in a reactive mode, using resources less effectively and most importantly, limiting the possibility for significant and positive change and for truly transformative learning experiences.

Figure 7: Student staff-partnerships at 42 UK Universities: UK Engagement Survey, 2017.



Source: Neves, 2017.

4.2.2. The submissions

Student-staff partnerships are conceived in different ways by the GP, some emphasizing ways in which they respond to the student voice in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and support services; others involving students in deeper levels of engagement through student-led research projects, students as change agents and students as producers and co-producers of knowledge.

The student unions or guilds from **Aston, Dundee, Essex, Exeter, Lancaster, Leeds, Lincoln, Loughborough, Nottingham and Nottingham Trent** participated in the TEF submission for their institutions, sometimes co-writing them. At each of these institutions and other GP there appears to be a developing culture of student-staff partnership. The very positive and strong relationships between unions/guilds and staff lead to collaborations on many major decisions including resourcing decisions at their respective institutions and there is evidence of deep respect between these groups. Furthermore, at institutions with the strongest partnerships, the Student Unions/Guilds scored much higher on NSS (2017) question 26 than the sector average of 57⁶ - '*The students union (association or guild) effectively represents student's academic interests*'. For example, at **Bath**, where the student union has won awards for the best student union in the country in 2014/15 and for the best officer team 2015, students rated the SU at 83%. Nottingham Trent whose SU also won the best Student Union award in 2016 scored 85% on question 26 in that year.

Where the student-staff partnership is strong, GP also achieve much higher scores on NSS questions 23-25 about the student voice⁷. Sector wide in 2017, the average on question 25 in particular (25 - 'It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on') was only 56% whereas the average score overall at GP is 64.5% (Cambridge was not included in this study). The university that is most responsive to the student voice is **Liverpool Hope** (score on question 25 was 83% 2017), although it is by far the smallest (5,240 students in 2016/17 - HESA 2017), followed by **Imperial College** (73%), **Coventry** (72%) and **De Montfort** (71%). However, despite claims of strong student partnerships, some GP scored poorly on students' perceptions that their feedback is being acted upon. **Kent** scored below the sector average at 55%; **Dundee**, 58%; **Newcastle**, 58%; **Exeter**, 59%; **Nottingham** 59% and **Essex** 60%. Clearly not all students are benefiting from partnerships and this reminds us that the narrative and descriptive form of the TEF can hide important information. It is interesting to note that despite scores being quite low, some GP such as **Derby** (scored 64% on question 25) describe the result positively as evidence of how well they are meeting student expectations. **Huddersfield** claim that their dialogue with students has led to exceptionally low numbers of student complaints reaching the formal complaint stage; however, only 63% of students in final year felt their feedback was acted upon.

⁶ 2017 average across institutions in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.
<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lts/nss/results/2017>

⁷ NSS (2017) questions 23-26 are in the section 'Student Voice' and include: 23. I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course. 24. Staff value students' views and opinions about the course. 25. It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on) in addition to 26 on the student union.
thestudentsurvey.com.

Almost every GP submission describes the extent of student representation, having students on most if not all statutory bodies and committees, including (where appropriate for the institution) the Senate, Academic Board, Board of Governors, academic quality committees, learning and teaching committees, faculty boards, facilities and estates, and health and safety. Generally, students holding these positions are drawn from the student union or guild, but **Exeter** runs a more extensive ‘**Mirror**’ shadowing scheme that pairs various students with staff (including the Vice Chancellor, Provost and DVC Education) in order to foster understanding, deepen collaboration and bring about positive change. In the last two years over 140 students and staff have taken part. At **Derby**, **Dundee**, **Leeds** and **Loughborough** students sit on staff recruitment and selection committees, including those for senior management posts. All GP have robust student representation (SR) systems and processes, and many have formal student charters. **Lancaster**, for example, reviews its charter annually to set particular priorities to be acted upon.

For the most part, when GP discuss ‘student engagement’ they are referring to students’ role in decision making and consultation rather than the meaning assumed by the HEA-HEPI Student Academic Experience Survey where the term refers to **learning gain**. In addition, many submissions place greater emphasis on how they gather feedback and listen to the ‘student voice’ more often than demonstrating an institution-wide ethos of student-staff partnership. At **Derby**, student union representatives sit on all committees and are involved with gathering feedback from their peers on various issues related to teaching and learning, including validation and review panels, digital capacity and student learning spaces, and collaborate to identify and implement solutions. Like **Essex**, **Lancaster** and **Nottingham Trent**, the **University of Derby** has a system to gather ongoing feedback from students, not just from module and external surveys such as the NSS. At **Derby** the student portal hosts ‘**Tell Us Stuff**’ - a mechanism for students to give feedback in at any time. Twitter is used to communicate how the university has responded to this feedback, however the university only scored 64% on question 25, so only two-thirds of final year students feel their feedback has made a difference. **Essex** has created a suite of new survey tools to gather ongoing feedback. Their ‘**Accelerate**’ system was initiated by a student-staff committee in 2015 to create ways of improving responses to student issues. **Lancaster** uses a wide range of mechanisms to gather feedback including “committees, surveys, roadshows, carousels and joint working groups, together with significant and effective informal networks through which students’ views are shared with university and LUSU members, and then channelled through more formal processes” (Lancaster TEF submission, p. 3). **Dundee** also uses annual focus groups to supplement quantitative data from surveys.

All GP have invested heavily in peer mentoring and support schemes, but these will be discussed in more detail in section 4.7, Student Support and Personalised Learning. Further details on how students are involved in research with staff and co-produce knowledge is provided in section 4.4, Curriculum, Research-led Teaching, and Assessment and Feedback.

Overall, there is variation in the extent to which GP have the kinds of engagement described by Healy, Flint and Harrington (2014). All demonstrate quite robust systems for gathering and responding to student feedback (more below in Section 4.6, Monitoring Processes and Responding to Student Feedback). However, while there is clear evidence of students working with staff to enhance the quality of teaching, learning and student support services, not as many are being engaged as co-producers of knowledge, in learning and teaching research or in the co-design of learning and assessment. Where these are in fact occurring, they are summarised in the examples below.



Lincoln has an international reputation for its pioneering work in the area of 'students as producers' and it is the underpinning principle for teaching and learning on all programmes. Students work collaboratively with staff in producing knowledge through research projects but also in the design and delivery of their teaching and learning programmes. Development funds are available for staff and students and 100s of projects have been undertaken and completed as part of this university wide ethos . All programme validations must demonstrate how this principle is embedded. The project was initiated and led by Professor Mike Neary (see <https://nearymike.wordpress.com/>)



Each year the Student Union identifies '10 educational priorities' informed by student feedback and working with the University's Learning and Teaching Committee outline specific actions and interventions to address the priorities. They are closely monitored and followed up on to ensure completion. Loughborough has also created the post of 'Programme President' for each programme. The president is a student who oversees the student reps and along with the support of the Programme Leader (academic staff member) and the student union they work to ensure priorities are addressed.



Coventry's student union CUSU members participate in more University committees and projects than any other GP. In addition the CUSU runs 15 co and extra curricular modules as part of the University's Add+vantage scheme to develop students employability skills. These include opportunities to volunteer in the community, in local schools and as sport and society officials. Students gain credits for these modules at FHEQ levels 4-6.



Exeter's student as change agents programme (SACA) is a student initiative that is in its 8th year. Students are supported in developing and leading research projects designed to effect change in their programmes and to date several hundred SACA projects have been completed including student run career and module fairs, a buddy scheme for students who are on study abroad, resources for students with mental health issues and improved support for international students.



Huddersfield won an Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Award for their Conciliation Scheme. Academic staff undergo conciliation training to address students concerns related to their academic study, services at the University or peer relationships before students make a formal complaint. The scheme has been shared with other UK institutions, in Europe and in Australia and is credited with leading to a reduction in 75% of formal complaints over a five year period.



Dundee has a formal student partnership agreement that is revised annually to include the priorities and actions of importance to students in that year. The Principal and the Student Union President sign it off and each theme is given a key performance indicator and a lead person to ensure that each is carried out. Progress is tracked in key committees (e.g. Learning and teaching; quality assurance) and people are held accountable.



The Staff-Student Committee (SSC) system at Imperial is particularly strong. ICU has a network of around 500 Academic Representatives at year, department and faculty level. The College has invited ICU (Union) to play a full and equal part in forming and writing a new Education Strategy which is currently being developed. The College also recently funded the President and Deputy President (Education) of ICU to attend the AACU conference in Boston, USA on transforming STEM education, as part of our commitment to equip them to play a full and influential part in improving education.

Recommendation Five:

Commit to developing a university-wide policy of student-staff partnerships. Begin by examining current instances of exemplary staff-student partnerships that have resulted in effective change or innovative outputs. Set up department or school-based working groups to emulate these partnerships and, over time, develop partnerships at all of the levels suggested by Healy, Flint and Harrington (2014): students managing or collaborating with staff to identify and deliver quality enhancements to learning and teaching; students co-producing knowledge through research amongst themselves and with staff, in both pedagogy and subject-based research; students designing, co-designing curricula and assessments (such as MOOCS) and also delivering the curricula, and students providing peer academic support as well as peer marking.

As a starting point, consider student driven and designed processes for gathering, analyzing, and reporting both quantitative and qualitative feedback on teaching and learning. Staff-student partnerships can determine sets of annual priorities, conduct pedagogical research to provide an evidence-base, agree on time-frames for change and set KPI's to measure achievement. Allow all students to participate by instituting a live feedback mechanism and opportunities to engage in implementation.

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4.3 TEACHING, SCHOLARSHIP AND REWARD AND PROMOTION MECHANISMS

4.3.1. Notes from the literature

As Elton (1998) has noted, teaching excellence is a multidimensional concept. Trying to reduce it to a single dimension to meet the demands for rank orders and classification leads to “serious confusion” (p. 3). The TEF submissions do not necessarily reduce this confusion given that they make claims for teaching excellence across an entire institution, and thus conflate excellence at the individual, departmental and institutional level. Before considering the submissions, it is worth reviewing the importance of good teaching and how excellence in teaching can be differentiated at each of these levels and why it is important to do so. Since one of the main objectives of the TEF is to assess teaching at an institution, this section is more detailed than others.

The importance of good teaching: Time and again what comes up from the student point of view and in educational research is the importance of good teaching. Multivariate analysis of the factors on the NSS that most predict overall satisfaction (question 27), demonstrate that the two categories of most importance are questions 1-4 ‘teaching on my course’⁸ and questions 15-17 ‘organisation and management’⁹. Among the weaker relationships with satisfaction are the questions associated with assessment and feedback, and yet often more effort is put into making improvements in these two aspects of teaching and learning rather than into training academic staff to be better teachers (Bell & Brooks 2017; Burgess, Seniors & Moores, 2018).

Gibbs (2010) and Hattie (2008) who undertook a meta-analysis of 800 research articles on teaching have demonstrated that teaching quality is among the top predictors of student learning gain. Gibbs (2010) also argues that despite frequent complaints that student ratings of teaching quality are not reliable, the research shows them to be relatively immune to bias. His conclusion is based on “the use of thoroughly developed and tested feedback questionnaires” (Gibbs, 2010, p. 27) such as the US Student Evaluation of Educational Quality

⁸ NSS Questions (2017). 1. Staff are good at explaining things. 2. Staff have made the subject interesting. 3. The course is intellectually stimulating. 4. My course has challenged me to achieve my best work. (NSS, 2017 version)

⁹ NSS Questions (2017).15. The course is well organised and running smoothly. 16. The timetable works efficiently for me. 17. Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively. (NSS, 2017 version)

(Marsh 1982). Furthermore, there is strong evidence to show that teachers who commit to initial training and CPD can considerably improve their practice.

One of Gibbs' longitudinal study on

[t]he impact over time on students' ratings of their teachers, and on teacher's thinking about teaching [and] of (mainly) compulsory initial training during their first year of university teaching in eight countries...found improvements on every scale of the 'Student Evaluation of Educational Quality' [US-Marsh, 1982], ... and improvements in the sophistication of teachers' thinking (as measured by the 'Approaches to Teaching Inventory', a measure of teaching that predicts the quality of student learning, Trigwell, et al, 2004). This improvement in measures of teaching quality could not be attributed to mere maturation or experience as teachers in a control group in institutions without any initial training were found to get worse over their first year on the same measures (Gibbs & Coffey, 2004). (Gibbs, 2010, p. 27)

The implication is that every teacher can improve their practice with training, reflection and CPD and should continue to do so in order not to become complacent.

Further evidence of the impact of good teaching on learning comes from the 2017 HEA-HEPI Student Academic Experience Survey). The sample of 14,057 undergraduate students from 42 institutions across the UK demonstrates that the four questions related to teaching¹⁰ had the greatest impact on student learning (although the correlations were admittedly only moderate). However, Blackman (2018) used logistic regression to explore the relationships between the Student Academic Experience Survey (2017) question 'since starting your course how much do you feel you have learnt?' to other questions on the survey, including those related to teaching. He computed the teaching quality variable by clustering the ten questions on the survey to teaching

into three clusters to create a single categorical variable that represents high-quality, intermediate-quality and low-quality teaching... [and found] the effect of this variable is striking and that there is a 'dose-response' relationship: the better the teaching, the larger the odds of reporting having learned a lot". (Blackman, 2018, p.2)

Given its clearly demonstrated influence on learning, what do we mean when we speak of teaching quality or excellence at the individual, departmental and institutional levels?

¹⁰ Teaching staff were helpful and supportive; Teaching staff maintain and improve their subject knowledge on a regular basis, Teaching staff motivated you to do your best work and Teaching staff made their subjects interesting (HEA-HEPI 2017 Student Academic Experience Survey)

Individual teaching excellence may be expressed by the qualities and behaviours presented in Table 2. Much has been written on what makes an excellent teacher and the research is surprisingly consistent across studies, disciplines, nations and the differing groups studied (students, alumni, faculty, administrators) (Keeley, Ismail & Buskist, 2016). While studies demonstrate that some of these criteria are more important than others, most include at least some of those found in Table 2 (Dunkin, 1995; Lowman, 1995; Fried; 2001; Hativa, Barak & Simhi; 2001; Trigwell, 2001; Carr; 2002; Kreber, 2002; Ramsden, 2003; Revell & Wainright, 2003; Bain 2004; Faranda & Clarke, 2004; Trigwell & Ashwin, 2004; Barnett, 2007; Vulcano, 2007; Barnes et al., 2008; Gibbs, 2010; Keeley et al., 2012; Su & Wood; 2013; Buskist & Keeley, 2014; French & O'Leary, 2017). Many of these qualities and behaviors are within the remit of the individual teacher to develop and improve through reflection, training, ongoing CPD and through engaging with peers who can act as mentors and reviewers, particularly if there is an open, well-functioning community of practice within the department (number 30 in Table A). As Gibbs (2010) has argued, some of the best teaching happens within departments where the majority of teachers are full time and thus have opportunities to discuss and share ideas on a regular basis. The importance of a particular kind of leadership to teaching excellence is discussed further below.

The main challenge is not perhaps in identifying what makes an excellent teacher, but **how to measure** it. We have seen above that there are very good and reliable measures such as the 'American Approaches to Teaching Inventory' (Trigwell et al., 2014). Unfortunately, this instrument is rarely used in the UK. Perhaps it is the case, as Elton (1998) argues, that teaching excellence - like other forms of excellence in human endeavor - cannot be measured using quantitative tools alone; it must be judged by experts. Students are one set of experts as are members of the profession who have been recognized as valid assessors. In the UK we have systems such as the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) and HEA accreditation procedures for training and recognizing higher education teachers. If not perfect mechanisms, they are nonetheless useful frameworks by which individual teachers can reflect upon and benchmark their practices; they are also well established and accepted within the profession and use acknowledged expertise to make judgements about individual teachers. The UKPSF also offer opportunities for development (as noted above, an important aspect of good teaching is the willingness to engage in regular CPD), the celebration of individual excellence (National Teaching Fellowships) and higher levels of recognition over time (e.g. Senior and Principal Fellows).

TABLE 2: CLAIMS FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE

1. Being enthusiastic and passionate about teaching and the topic.
2. Constantly reflecting on one's practice and engaging in scholarship, CPD and peer discussions in order to improve; willingness to take on criticism; uses evidence-based approaches to teaching, learning and assessment (TLA); debunks educational myths.
3. Knowledgeable about the subject matter and up to date; well versed in theory as well as practice; willing to acknowledge what they do not know.
4. Approachable, supportive, open, caring and personable.
5. Having a keen sense of each individual student's level of understanding and is effective at finding ways to move their learning forward no matter what the level; understands potential barriers and attainment gaps and addresses these through TLA methods/activities.
5. Being an effective communicator to students at all levels, has a sense of humor, and builds effective interaction into all engagements with students.
6. Provides prompt, constructive feedback that clearly indicates how and where the student can improve; uses frequent formative feedback in a variety of ways.
8. Is inspiring, increases the students' interest in the topic and raises their level of curiosity and desire to learn; is illuminating and creates insight.
9. Confident with educational technologies, uses a variety of tools to convey information and does so creatively.
10. Shows respect for students and is open to learning from them.
11. Has a deep sense of responsibility for student learning.
12. Develops reciprocity and cooperation amongst students and is willing to step in when groups are not functioning well; recognises the importance of teaching students how to work together in a team, including how to have compassion for others and the value of collaborative learning.
13. Employs active learning techniques to help students construct meaning; uses a wide range of 'real world' examples to explain theory.
14. Communicates high expectations; uses material, assessments, and teaching that stretch the students.
15. Has a repertoire of assessment methods and is flexible in offering assessment types that bring out the best work in different students.
16. Spends time on 'assessment literacy', making sure that the students are aware of how they will be graded and on what criteria; uses peer assessment to develop literacy and understanding of the marking process and to demonstrate how it is fair and balanced.
17. Encourages students to reflect on their learning and to engage their metacognitive processes.
18. Is well prepared for all lessons, does not waste time and ensures that time is well spent; each lesson has clear learning goals.
19. Creates TLA opportunities that develop critical thinking skills and effective reasoning skills for ill-structured problems that offer no obvious solution.
20. Is a good listener - no matter what the topic the student brings up.
21. Offers pastoral support, can spot issues with student's well-being and knows where to send him or her for further professional support; follows up to ensure the student was cared for.
22. Close relationships with university support service personnel to enable quick intervention to support study skills and personal issues.
22. Is accessible.
23. Provides clear guidance on how students should spend their independent study time.
24. Awareness of how the teaching, learning and assessment scaffolds and how each element builds specific skills as well as knowledge.
25. Is a collaborative and effective member of teaching teams and departments. Shows goodwill beyond the need for personal recognition.
26. Is an advocate for the students, the discipline and for colleagues.
27. Has intra and interdisciplinary awareness and uses methods that encourage students to take an integrative approach to their learning - bringing together learning from within the module, across discipline modules, from learning in other disciplines and from their personal and professional experiences as a means to build their knowledge, understanding and skills to higher levels.
28. Demonstrates the linkages across subjects and ideas; takes a critical approach to discipline knowledge and encourages students to do the same.
29. Is ethical with high levels of integrity.
30. Works within a well managed department that has a culture of valuing, supporting, discussing and rewarding good teaching.

The problems with normative systems such as the UKPSF are that they are accepted in principle as evidence of good teaching but tend to carry little weight in **regimes of quality that are principally driven by quantitative data**. Today, teachers are increasingly judged using quantitative tools such as module surveys and, more broadly, by the National Student Survey (NSS). Yet, as noted above, many aspects of teaching excellence are affected by context, including, the programme, departmental and institutional environments where the teaching takes place. The accredited teacher who receives lower scores in a given semester may thus not be remembered as the qualified member of the Academy who has demonstrated his or her abilities against the criteria. Thus, while the accreditation system is expected to evidence ability and quality, it ultimately has limited credibility when student survey scores are lower than expected. This unfortunate circumstance is often overlooked by managers and department heads who on the one hand set targets for the numbers of academics who will achieve accreditation but on the other use more limited mechanisms when judging teaching quality.

In considering the three areas in which HE providers were asked to show evidence of teaching excellence in the TEF - **teaching quality (TQ), learning environment (LE) and student outcomes and learning gain (SO)** (See Figure 8) it is important to separate out those that are within the remit of the individual teacher and those that are affected by other factors including diversity within the student cohort and departmental and institutional factors. At these three levels (individual, department, institution), some criteria (see below) act as good indicators of individual teaching excellence; some are contextual or institutional factors necessary to support good teaching; the remaining are affected by the student cohort as well as cross-departmental or institution-wide initiatives and investments that involve not only teachers, but a wide range of academic services including libraries, study skills support, careers, extra-curricular activities, student unions and institutional programmes that help to reduce any attainment gaps across student groups.

Figure 8: TEF Categories (HEA, 20017)



Whether a student gains **meaningful and rewarding employment** upon graduation and whether they have developed the skills to capitalize on their knowledge to continue learning and developing over their lifetimes, (Figure 8: SO criteria) are only partly related to individual teaching excellence. Gaining good employment after graduation generally indicates that a student has worked hard and excelled in their study and that they have been exposed to a range of career development opportunities such as employment centers, internships, volunteering, placements and job fairs. It is also related to social capital. However, university systems and processes that include specialized services and staff awareness training, among other initiatives and programmes, are important in removing (or at least mitigating) individual barriers that may stand in a student's way, such as a disability or a background known to create attainment gaps. Developing the **employability or transferable skills** that make graduates flexible, adaptable, information savvy, globally-minded, ethical critical thinkers and problem solvers, involves the design of the **entire curriculum**, not just a single module, as well as the input and support of external experts in professional bodies and internal experts from a range of university services. Where students have shown high levels of these skills, it is more a case of programme, department or even institutional excellence - and student engagement - rather than individual teaching excellence.

The **learning environment (LO)** for teaching excellence is also beyond the scope of the individual teacher, although academics contribute to the enhancement of learning through engaging in the scholarship of teaching and learning, working collaboratively with colleagues and by helping to create more opportunities for personalized, one-on-one learning. In general, however, the learning environment is constructed and supported by departments and institutions who provide the specialized resources that allow teachers to develop and enhance their practice. These include physical resources such as books and articles; specialized equipment (for labs, simulations and demonstrations); technology for delivery, sharing of information and assessments; and appropriate learning spaces. They also include a range of expert services to support learning and to develop skills and reduce attainment gaps.

Investment alone is not the answer, however. Gibbs (2010) comments on studies by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) and Ewell (2008) in demonstrating that there is no relationship between institutional funding per student and what he views as the ultimate measure of teaching quality - **learning gain**. In the Ewell (2008) study, while some colleges

[receive] only 60% of the revenues per student that others receive...[they achieve] near identical performance on a whole range of outcome measures.... What distinguishes these effective institutions was that the funding was used differently; for example on

faculty development...teaching and learning centres and academic support staff such as [personal] tutors and counsellors...[thus creating] "a campus ethos devoted to student success" (Gansemer-Topf et al., 2004 as quoted in Gibbs, 2010, p. 14).

It is not the absolute level of resources available for teaching, but how they are deployed that makes for effective teaching environments.

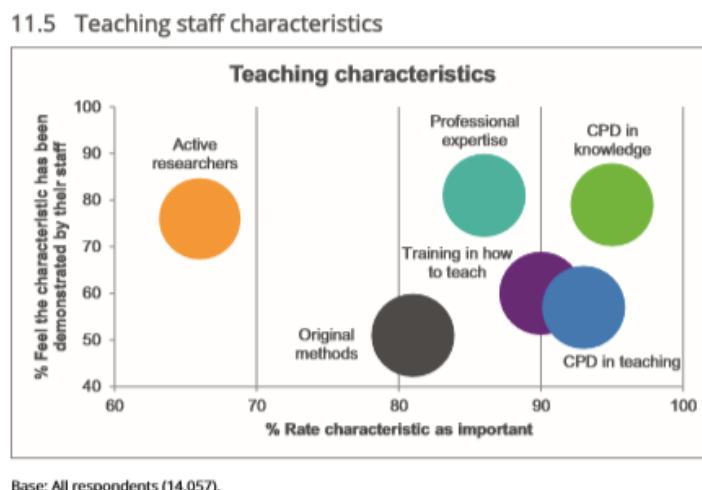
The learning environment (LO) section of the TEF asks providers to comment on **scholarship, research and professional practice (LE2)**. (How GP conceptualized and commented on these aspects of their institutions varied and will be discussed further in the section below.) One criterion for excellence is the willingness to engage with the literature on pedagogy and evidence-based practices to improve one's teaching. The set of practices known as the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) was laid out in Boyer's 1990 work *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. He differentiated types of scholarship in an academic setting to include *discovery research* (generally carried out as part of the academic's research activities), *integration* (synthesizing information for research, teaching and other purposes), and *application* of research to problems in professions or in society and, finally, the *scholarship of teaching*. According to Hutchings, Huber, and Ciccone (2011), SoTL "encompasses a broad set of practices that engage teachers in looking closely and critically at student learning in order to improve their own courses and programs, and to share insights with other educators who can evaluate and build on their efforts" (p. xix).

From research conducted by the present author within the discipline of marketing, the willingness or habit of engaging with the pedagogic literature in order to enhance one's practice is, sadly, **not as common** as one could hope. Since education is subject to a range of myths and contentious practices - such as tailoring teaching to students' learning styles, left versus right brain thinking, and the use of discovery learning techniques in first year courses (see for example Coffield, et al., 2004; Kirschner, Sweller, & Clark, 2006), all of which have been shown to be without value - the need to engage with scholarly research and evidence-based practices could not be more important. Stevenson, Burke and Whelan (2014) also found that among the 33 managers interviewed for their work on pedagogical stratification in English universities, the discourse of pedagogy is either limited or restricted mainly to the context of how it can be used to improve institutional scores on key metrics such as the NSS, league tables position, and (although not mentioned in their study), the TEF.

In my own view, teaching excellence requires a focus on the scholarship of teaching and learning at all levels - individual, departmental and institutional. Embedding it across each level is not only critical for improved student outcomes but for purposes of enhancing credibility.

Nowadays, at least, one cannot claim excellence in any human endeavour unless there is clear evidence that it is based upon the best scholarship and research. Such scholarship should be a required part of an individual's work programme and annual appraisal; a departments' priorities, staff meetings and discussions, and included in institutional mission and values. Certainly, students see it as a priority. In the HEA/Higher Education Policy Institute's (HEPI) UK-wide Student Academic Experience Survey (2017), 87 - 95% of students indicated their belief that training in how to teach and regular CPD in teaching are important -- more so than whether their tutor is actively engaged in subject-based research (See Figure 9 below).

Figure 9: Teaching staff characteristics: Important to student vs whether it was demonstrated



Source: UK Student Academic Experience Survey, 2017 (HEA/HEPI)

Excellence at the level of a programme or **department** is helped if a particular kind of **department leadership** is in place and is enhanced when the teaching team is made up largely of full time academics who are in the habit of talking over such matters informally or get together regularly to discuss teaching (Gibbs, 2010). Discussing leadership at the school level, Martin et al. (2003) found in their research "the quality of leadership is a distinguishing factor that separates more effective schools from less effective ones. More successful schools enjoy collaborative management...[and] purposeful leadership" (p. 248) where the head has a strong vision of effective teaching and learning and works to support innovation, develop individuals' capabilities, and is effective in getting colleagues to embrace change initiatives. As Elton (1998) points out, management and leadership of departments is made particularly difficult by the **traditional individualistic cultures** that prevail in universities. This presents one of the greatest challenges is managing the performance of those who are not effective

teachers. Similar to drivers who are most likely to rate their own abilities as better than others on the road, teachers are less likely to see their own faults and weaknesses. Unfortunately, the response of many departmental and school heads to the few academics who are not performing effectively is to create general rules that apply to everyone without focusing on the skills of the teacher or teachers in question. Given how important good teaching is to both learning gains and satisfaction, departments and institutional leadership should prioritise training, reflection and CPD over reactive approaches to improving assessment and feedback (more on these in section 4.6).

As Gibbs (2010) notes: "Educational leadership of departments makes a difference, creating cultures that value teaching, that engage in a constant process of improving teaching and that create rich and engaging learning environments" (p.47). The most effective departments according to Martin et al (2003) are those in which **transformational leadership styles** are in place to encourage collaboration with peers and where "individuals within the group [are] empowered to pursue their own aspirations within a framework or previously agreed objectives" (p. 256). Such leadership takes into account the individualistic natures of academics while also inspiring staff to embrace a collaborative learning culture. Unfortunately, the TEF submissions say almost nothing about leadership at the departmental level. They do however discuss ways in which the institution rewards and recognizes good teaching (Valuing Teaching, TQ2).

All GP have annual teaching awards (from student unions as well as from the institutional level). Until recently, there has been little **parity in status**, or reward and promotion opportunities, for those who demonstrate excellent teaching over research expertise (Elton, 1998). An academic who chose to focus on teaching rather than research was automatically limiting their career progression; the only option for greater responsibility and status was to go into management. However, the TEF can be credited with encouraging institutions to reconsider the **reward and promotion mechanisms** for good teachers and as we will see below, most gold providers state they now offer promotion routes through to Reader and Professor for excellent teachers as well as for researchers.

Promotion opportunities are only one of the ways in which departments and universities can help to **stimulate and improve teaching quality**. Research by this author and others (Vos - forthcoming; Stevenson, Burke & Whelan, 2014) has uncovered considerable pressure on and disaffection of teaching staff in UK Universities resulting from a) the growing performative culture which requires ever more rapid responses to an increasing number of metrics; b) from increasing job roles and responsibilities; c) reduced autonomy; d) greater diversity in students skills; e) reduction in funding for innovation, conferences and external events; and f) pressure

to publish in 3 and 4 star journals (for the Research Excellence Framework). In their research with university managers and academics, Stevenson, Burke and Whelan (2014) found that ‘excellence’ at institutional, departmental or individual level is viewed by many HE managers as something “that can be quantified or codified” and this has led to “the espousal of performative modes of assessing teaching excellence” (p.5) whose main purpose is to improve institutional scores on key metrics such as the NSS, league tables position, and although not mentioned in their study, the TEF. This approach to assessing excellence “potentially precludes deeper consideration of pedagogical issues so that teaching risks becoming technicist and performative rather than critical and transformative. [It also] risks standardizing teaching and assessment practices and, potentially suppressing diversity and innovation in pedagogic approaches” (p. 5).

As noted above, a **performative approach to excellence** often means that much departmental activity is driven by the scores that individual teachers and programmes receive on internal and external student surveys; lower than expected scores can put immense pressure on managers and academics to make reactive changes to their TLA in order to improve student satisfaction rather than to invest the time and resources into investigating and embedding the pedagogical and evidence-based approaches that would genuinely improve student outcomes over the longer term. Another danger of using so many student surveys to assess teaching quality is that it risks further embedding the notion of **student as consumer** thus misrepresenting and undermining the modern academic-student relationship with its (ideally) shared value creation (see above - 4.2 Students as Partners). The same can be said for value added scores and those that measure graduate employment. In terms of value-added scores, institutions can be very Janus-faced about student grade outcomes: the claim is found in many TEF submissions that the institution is working very hard to avoid grade inflation, while a closer look reveals that staff are in fact feeling pressured to ensure more students achieve 2.1 and first-class grades (Vos - forthcoming).

Given that there is considerable evidence as to what makes an excellent teacher but no well-accepted definition of teaching excellence, that in the TEF teaching excellence is conflated at the individual, department and institutional levels, and that the submissions themselves are largely descriptive self-reported accounts of university policies and practices around teaching excellence, three key questions appear to remain unanswered:

1. Where do the responsibilities for teaching excellence lie and what factors contribute to or inhibit its development?
2. What is the internal reality felt by academics in the institutions whose TEF submissions claim a 'culture of valuing teaching' and heavy investment in and reward for teaching practice?
3. If there is a gap between rhetoric and reality, how can it be understood and breached if no member of the teaching team has been involved in or has a voice in the TEF submission?

I believe that these questions need to be brought forth and answered if staff or students are to have confidence in the TEF outcomes and if the exercise is not to be perceived as an emperor without clothes. (Fortunately, it seems that research is underway -- the UCU and Mathew O'Leary at Birmingham City have undertaken a project to address at least the second question above).

In terms of the first question, it is important to remember that teaching excellence is an individual responsibility, but it is best achieved if viewed as a shared venture between academics, supporting staff, departments and the University. Furthermore, barriers to good teaching can happen at every level. Knowing what they are and implementing measures to reduce or eliminate them should include good performance management, investing in evidence-based pedagogy at all levels, and involving students as well as all staff in detecting and reducing these barriers through collaborative, rather than punitive, regimes.

4.4.2 The submissions

Within the twenty-three gold submissions, the main themes discussed in teaching include: NSS scores on teaching and monitoring of teaching quality; training, professional development, and the investment in the scholarship of teaching and learning; and promotion and reward mechanisms. Two of these will now be discussed in more detail.

Training and continuing professional development: All but four GP (**Leeds, Dundee, Imperial College, Cambridge**) provided data on how many academics have teaching qualifications, but the data was provided either in percentages or in raw numbers, thus complicating the task of

making comparisons. On average, post-1992 institutions have more academics with teaching qualifications, although it is not always clear whether they are HEA accredited or other HESA approved qualifications. For example, **Nottingham Trent** claims that 98% of their academic staff have teaching qualifications but the types of qualifications are not specified. **Leeds** has the highest number of National Teaching Fellows (24) and **Exeter** has 86 Senior Fellows. All GP require probationary staff to work towards their qualifications and most discussed plans for higher numbers of accredited staff by 2020. The most ambitious is **De Montfort**, which has targeted 100% of its staff for accreditation by the end of 2018.

Every institution has a centre for teaching and learning; a few come across as very impressive initiatives, such as the new HEFi centre at **Birmingham** (see below) and the Trent Institute of Teaching and Learning (TILT - **Nottingham Trent**) with its 19 practice and scholarship groups that meet regularly on themes such as 'creativity', 'maths and stats for non-mathematicians', 'multi-disciplinary learning' and 'inclusive assessment' (https://www4.ntu.ac.uk/about_ntu/tilt/index.html). Below are some excellent examples of teaching and learning centres and their websites from the GP.



Centre for teaching and learning: <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/>



Birmingham <https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/university/hefi/about/index.aspx>



Coventry: <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/research/areas-of-research/global-learning/>



Imperial College: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/staff/educational-development/>



Cambridge: <https://www.cctl.cam.ac.uk/>



Bath: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/professional-services/centre-for-learning-teaching/>

All gold providers run an annual learning and teaching conference and have a multitude of related CPD events each year, although participation rates are rarely given. At many institutions, HEA Senior, Principal and National Teaching Fellows take the lead in the

conferences - helping to organize them and presenting papers plus contributing to CPD. At seven GP, students are also invited to attend and participate.

Investment in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Eleven of the submissions discuss how they allocate resources to pedagogical development and **teaching and learning projects**, many of which are listed on their teaching and learning websites. Below are some examples:

- **Bath** has awarded over £130,000 in the past three years to teaching and learning projects.
- **Portsmouth** provides academics with work load relief to carry out teaching excellence and pedagogical projects as do **Loughborough** and **Lincoln** (particularly for programme leaders).
- **Nottingham Trent** provides funding as well as a sabbatical scheme for teaching and learning innovation.
- **Imperial College** has a highly resourced excellence fund for TLA projects.
- **De Montfort** set up an Academic Innovation Project Fund that makes awards to projects that meet the criteria for specific institution-wide educational priorities. Currently the priority is for projects that can enhance the ongoing curriculum review.
- **Newcastle** has made 82 grants for TLA projects since 2012 via its Innovation Fund. All projects must include students as researchers (in addition to being members of the sample studied).
- **Leeds** awards Student Education Fellowships with funding. Current students must be involved in all projects. One hundred and twenty such fellowships have been awarded since 2001).
- **Edge Hill** notes they are fully committed to the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and ensuring the latest findings are included in curriculum development and TLA. They have hosted many international teaching-related conferences and workshops.

GP submissions provide some particularly interesting approaches to developing their expertise in teaching and learning which are included here:



Employs the expertise of its 15 principal fellows, 15 Senior fellows and 50 university learning and teaching fellows. They are the bedrock of training delivery in TLA; Has held over 20 international conferences or seminars on TLA since 1996.



Newcastle

10 National teaching fellows that make significant contributions to University learning and teaching development; 3 lead a Scholarship of teaching and learning forum; 2 provide expertise on how to apply for awards and fellowships.

NOTTINGHAM
TRENT UNIVERSITY

Trent Institute for Teaching and Learning (TILT) - 15 pedagogy and scholarship expert groups that set annual teaching and learning priority areas; colleagues develop their practice through participated shared endeavour in areas such as game based learning, multidisciplinary development, UG research and active and enquiry based learning, among others; TILT expert groups ensure pedagogy ideas are researched and drawn from practice across the University; sabbaticals and seed corn funding for pedagogy ; investment in cross University initiatives such as Delivering Engaging Lectures and Interactive Teaching (DELITE); and SCALE-UP



Uses 3 different forms of teaching observation and every colleague must show how they have improved after each; each course team has two development days per year to discuss all programme metrics as presented in a sophisticated dashboard; offered 135 teaching and learning CPD events in 2015/16.

UNIVERSITY OF
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Uses a mandatory peer dialogue model of reflection that staff engage in annually; annual learning and teaching conference includes students; uses a scholarship of teaching and learning community of practice approach; all disciplines have an annual educational away day.



Mentoring and support networks are part of the culture. Two key frameworks - the framework for good practice in teaching and learning based on two core values - consistency and creativity; informs all curriculum development as well as TLA; Framework for personal development and review - staff need to engage in annual CPD as well as reflect on their development annually against a set of established criteria; University fellowship scheme allows academics time in their work load to focus on pedagogy



Scholarship of T&L is developed through 71 communities of practice across the University; all staff must engage; approach to collegial sharing of good practice was recognised in 2016 through a grant of £50,000 from the Catalyst Fund at HEFCE; recognised in 2015 QAA review as an area of excellent practice; Liverpool Hope is in the Top 2 in the UK for teaching excellence.



Large CPD investment in developing programme leaders; work together in action learning sets; Staff have a significant workload allocation for enacting this role, and staff are financially rewarded for undertaking it. Mentoring and oversight of Programme Leaders is ensured through School and College Directors of Education; sophisticated dashboards of information allow PL's to monitor all aspects of the programme and student outcomes



Hosts an Annual Education Away day with only a given number of spaces in order to raise the profile of the event and encourage active engagement



Significant work being done on the use of digital technologies for enhancing TLA; learning analytics project funded by HEFCE; has an 'Ideas Factory' to promote innovation and share good practice; digital badging awards to innovators; has three funds related to pedagogy: research inspired curriculum fund; teaching informed research fund and T&L discipline based research fund.



Highlights the fact that the vast majority of teaching is undertaken by full time staff so they can commit fully to the students; 790 staff on full time contracts and only 55 part time contracts; Experienced staff are encouraged to experiment with new teaching methods by completing a 20 credit module, The Inspire Module. Findings are reported at the annual L&T Conference.



Created the Leeds Institute for Teaching Excellence (LITE) to coordinate activity of 16 centres for teaching scholarship and innovation; LITE also brings together NTF and University student Education fellows and showcases innovation, allows for debate discussion and exchange



Established a new centre for teaching and learning - the Higher Education Futures Institute (HEFI); each School provides one Professor who is active 50% on school research/teaching and 50% in pedagogical research and development. Each week a short video or microCPD is recorded for all staff and monthly a 'Big Question' is set, inviting responses from across the institution. In March 2018, the discussion was on the best definition of research led teaching. In addition, the Teaching Academy appoints 'Distinguished Fellows' from among the academic staff who then lead training for others.



Uses Peer Exchange is for the observer to identify areas of good practice that they can adapt and use within their own teaching as opposed to the observer providing feedback to the observee.



Revised the curriculum design proces to include robust evidence from the research into teaching and learning; this evidence-base must be embedded into curriculum revision documents.

While these examples show particular instances of institutional investments in developing evidence-based TLA practices, prior research by Stevenson, Whelan and Boyt (2014) paints a different picture. As noted above, in a critical discourse analysis of the websites and key teaching-related documentation of 11 UK universities, they found no meaningful consideration of issues of pedagogy. Nor did they find deeper discussions of pedagogy in their interviews with 33 managers of these institutions. They found evidence for:

pedagogic stratification' ... with institutions both striving to distinguish themselves as distinct while, at times, homogenising their approaches to teaching excellence, pedagogic practices and the overall student experience (p. 5). The absence of meaningful engagement with issues of pedagogy in institutional documentation [and in discussions with managers] risks sidelining core issues of teaching and learning ... institutions should think beyond the buzzwords of 'teaching excellence' and the 'student experience' to engage with deeper issues of pedagogy; this necessitates genuine engagement and dialogue with teaching staff. (p.6)

This lack of engagement with pedagogy may be changing since their report was written (2014 - pre TEF), but as noted above, this author has also found limited engagement with the pedagogic literature at the academic level in marketing departments, thus providing evidence for a kind of academic-practitioner divide, where the teacher is the practitioner who is not, for whatever reason, engaging with the literature on pedagogy as much as might be desired. Whether this is due to an institutional culture that focuses more on easy fixes to lower scores in teaching surveys, whether it is evidence for an already stretched teaching resource or other reasons requires further study. However, it does again point out that the narrative form of the TEF submissions can obscure important policies and practices around teaching. Providers could more clearly (and thus more usefully) outline the outcomes of some of these investments in terms of improvements in student learning, in order to better support their data on investment in pedagogy. In addition, there needs to be more evidence of an institution-wide commitment to pedagogy. As Stevenson, Whelan and Boyt (2014) so aptly put it:

Senior academics need to create opportunities in higher education for all academic staff (including themselves) to engage in critical reflections on teaching, in order to critique and deconstruct neoliberal discourses and to develop richer, more inclusive and critical pedagogical understanding. (p.6)

Given the nature of the submissions, there was also very limited discussion of teaching at the departmental level. As noted above, evidence demonstrates that collaboratively managed departments (especially those made up of full time academics) where individuals are encouraged to develop, share and discuss practice have an enormous positive impact on student learning gain (Gibbs, 2010). Evidence that these kinds of departments are operating in gold awarded institutions would also demonstrate that investment is being made not only in CPD and pedagogical projects, but also in developing the kinds of departmental cultures that are known to enhance teaching quality.

Rewards and promotions: All GP have both university level and student led teaching awards; many also have peer nominated award schemes. **Portsmouth** and **Lancaster** include a cash bonus for their award winners (£1000 at Lancaster). At **Coventry** University, students act as reviewers for the teaching awards and are also active via their student union's teaching award scheme. At more than half of the gold TEF institutions, teaching award winners are encouraged to become active in mentoring others or in providing and delivering CPD, thus making further use of this excellent resource.

The following universities discussed their parity-of-esteem policies to ensure that staff who are teaching - (rather than research) - focused can also be promoted to Reader and Professorial levels: **Aston, Bath, Birmingham, De Montfort, Edge Hill, Essex, Imperial, Lancaster, Lincoln, Liverpool Hope, Leeds, Newcastle, Nottingham Trent and Portsmouth**. Not many of the submissions provide data on how many academics have achieved Reader or Professorial level awards based on excellence in teaching and learning, however. **Lincoln** has 5 professors of teaching and learning, and states that 40% of appointments to professor level have been supported through strong contributions to teaching and learning; **De Montfort** has instituted an Associate Professor scheme at Reader Level to ensure more promotion opportunities for teaching focused staff.

The University that has gone the furthest to provide an environment where both teaching and research are regarded as equal in terms of status and promotion is **Dundee**:



Introduced a radically new academic promotion system in 2013/14 to remove the binary divide stopping good teachers from becoming Readers and Professors. The new system removes the words 'research' and 'teaching' from promotional criteria for promotion at any grade. ...the candidate makes the case for promotion under 3 headings 'excellent academic practice', 'valuing people and working together' (which encompasses effective leadership), and 'making a difference'. Sitting alongside the promotions criteria are 'Indicators of Excellence' which provide guidance to candidates on what constitutes outstanding performance in learning and teaching, research, wider impact, and valuing people and working together. The University has also established a performance indicator to ensure that sufficient numbers of good teachers are promoted to the highest positions. Now sits at 31%'

Recommendation Six:

Involve teaching staff in the TEF submission process. Make an institution-wide commitment to understanding the health and well-being of teaching staff, the pressures they are under and how they perceive departmental and institutional leadership with respect to teaching and learning. Commit to identifying all the barriers to effective teaching at the individual, departmental, school and institutional level. Set annual priorities and/or KPI's for reducing or eliminating these barriers.

Provide training for all, but particularly for departmental managers in transformative and collaborative leadership styles. Develop effective performance management systems for teachers who need support and development and mentoring, and also set up communities of practice within departments to share good practice. Where possible, use as many full-time academics for core teaching as possible.

Recommendation Seven:

Avoid a performative approach to excellence, that is, one which views teaching quality as something that can be quantified, codified and thus rewarded based on numerical data alone. Recognise the contradiction within an institution that invests in accreditation only to then assess teaching quality almost exclusively according to survey outcomes.

Recognise qualitative strengths of individual teachers and consider ways to improve the institutional training and CPD for teaching and learning. Make use of Senior, Principal and National Teaching fellows in CPD. Include discussions of types of CPD in TEF submissions that show evidence of improving teaching quality.

Recommendation Eight:

Develop an institution-wide commitment to evidence-based pedagogy of the highest quality and make it a performance indicator - in order to give it the recognition and status it deserves and to enhance the credibility of marketing materials that report on the institution's pedagogy. Ensure that engagement with this evidence and critical reflection on teaching is a requirement for all staff, including those providing specialist services. Include pedagogical CPD and research as part of reward and recognition. Discuss the outcomes on teaching quality and student learning gain of investments made in pedagogy in the TEF submission. Ensure that all course reviews and revalidations include robust evidence and support from the pedagogical literature for all TLA strategies.

Recommendation Nine:

Following from Gibbs Dimensions of Quality (2010), ensure that institutional measures of teaching quality are linked to not only to satisfaction, but to learning gain. Use evidence-based measures of learning gain where possible, perhaps using the HEA UK Engagement Survey annually. Establish a qualitative framework for teaching quality using evidence-based frameworks such as Chickering and Gamson's (1987) Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. Discuss current practices that demonstrate these principles and their outcomes in the TEF submission. Encourage more qualitative feedback from students and develop processes to make better use of qualitative data.

Recommendation Ten:

Involve students in all teaching related developments including appointments and promotions, curriculum development and pedagogical projects as part of a student-staff partnership model that involves students in teaching and learning (see above). From induction, educate students about responding to surveys to improve the usefulness of their feedback and to manage expectations.

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4.4. CURRICULUM, RESEARCH-LED TEACHING, ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK

TEF Criteria

Teaching quality	Student engagement (TQ1) Valuing teaching (TQ2) Rigour and stretch (TQ3) Feedback (TQ4)
Learning environment	Resources (LE1) Scholarship, research and professional practice (LE2) Personalised learning (LE3)
Student outcomes & learning gain	Employment and further study (SO1) Employability and transferable skills (SO2) Positive outcomes for all (SO3)

Source: HEA, 2017

In this section, **curriculum** and **assessment and feedback** are considered separately.

4.4.1. Curriculum and research-led teaching

4.4.1.1 Notes from the literature

Curriculum means different things depending on the context in which the term is used. For the purposes of this review, the curriculum is defined as operating at programme level and representing the learning outcomes, modules and the teaching learning and assessment practices in a given subject area (Stark & Lattuca, 1997; Knight, 2001; Barnett & Coate, 2005; Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006; Diamond, 2008; Kelly, 2009; Huyghe & Verhagen, 2013). Curriculum is, for the most part, dynamic with adjustments being made by faculty regularly in terms of content and approaches to its delivery. However, one challenge for those delivering the curriculum in the UK is the restriction on innovation that can occur because of quality assurance processes and the validation cycle, the latter typically being 5 years long. Most institutions have their own guidelines for how much change can be made to modules, TLA and the programme curriculum between validation periods. Some are highly restrictive in terms of any changes to assessment, syllabus or core resources, particularly in light of regulations around published materials that make the institution legally responsible for its content.

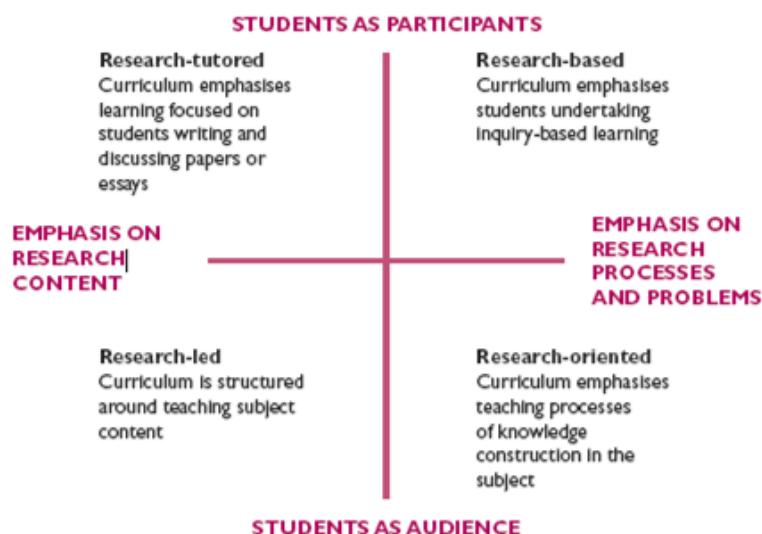
Other factors restrict curriculum development. For example, where a programme is accredited by a PSRB, flexibility in terms of what is taught and how it is assessed is typically reduced. For example, The Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) requires that Strategic Marketing must be assessed by a final exam.

Developing curriculum requires a consideration of '**what, why, how and when**'. What and why questions relate to issues of epistemology and balance in the curriculum, particularly in professional subjects, between teaching 'how to' and 'about'. This can be a particularly challenging and contentious set of decisions. On one hand, it is important to prepare job ready graduates equipped with a set of skills that employers seek and on the other to interrogate the discipline, taking critical, historical and theoretical perspectives into consideration such that graduates are not only able to undertake job related tasks but can move the field forward with new and fresh ideas (and through a critical lens). Some would argue that the latter approach to discipline study is what a university education is for. If the main objective is to prepare students for jobs, then a more vocational education may be called for (Barnett & Coate, 2005; Diamond, 2008; Hubball & Burt, 2004; Kelly, 2009; Knight, 2001; Letschert, 2004; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2009).

In addition, what and why questions also consider issues of **research-led teaching**, and how to embed **research and inquiry skills** into the curriculum. Much discussed within the literatures on the scholarship of teaching and learning and student-staff partnerships, research-led teaching has been conceptualised in a variety of ways. Healy (2005) did much to clarify the different ways in which research could inform teaching, learning and assessment. His version of the '**research-teaching nexus**' has been explored in numerous studies and reports that offer case-based examples (Jenkins, Healy & Zetter, 2007). His work is built upon that of Boyer (1990) who differentiated types of scholarship in an academic setting (see above, p. 77) and Griffiths (2004) whose typology of teaching-research links include teaching that is **research-led** (curriculum content is chosen from the research interests of faculty), **research-informed** (curriculum draws on systematic inquiry into the teaching and learning process), **research-oriented** (careful attention is given to developing inquiry skills and on students' acquiring a research ethos) and **research-based** (the curriculum is designed around inquiry-based activities) (Jenkins & Healy, 2005). Jenkins et al. (2007) include a more succinct version of the above in their study from Mike Bradford, then Pro-Vice Chancellor of Learning and Teaching at the University of Manchester: "Learning about others' research; learning to do research - research methods; learning in research mode - inquiry-based; [and] pedagogic research - enquiring and reflecting on learning" (Jenkins and Healy, 2005 p.21). Healy (2005)

uses the concept of ‘research-tutored’ instead of ‘research-informed’ in his model of the research-teaching nexus. The linkages are shown across two axes (see Figure 10). The first represents a continuum based on a curriculum that emphasises research content on the one side to one emphasising research processes and problems on the other. The second axis represents research where students are involved as participants on the one hand to an emphasis on teacher led demonstrations of research on the other. Jenkins and Healy (2005) argue that institutions need to purposefully develop the mechanisms to ensure that students are engaged in (or at least exposed to) all four quadrants. In 2007, Jenkins, Healy and Zetter further developed the research to include more UK and international examples of best practice, and to emphasise the need for teaching and research initiatives to be discipline-based; thus, their document is very helpful in planning a new curriculum.

Figure 10: Curriculum design and research-teaching nexus.

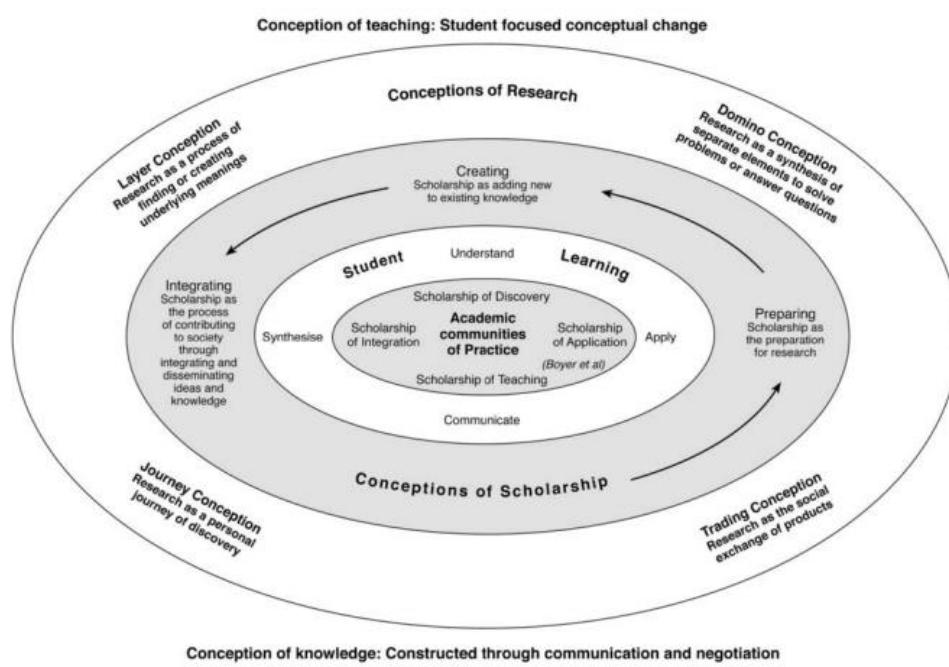


Source: Jenkins, Healy and Zetter, 2007.

Brew (2003), departing somewhat from these approaches, argues for teaching-research links that are based in communities of practice rather than disciplines. Along with others (see for example Catterall, McLaren and Stevens 2002 and Spiro et al, 1998), she argues that the problems facing society today are often global in scope and complexity and multidisciplinary knowledge is needed to address them. To deal with problems that are ill-structured, difficult to demarcate and contextualize and that require knowledge from other disciplines, Catterall, McLaren and Stevens (2002) call for students to have greater cross-functional thinking skills; Pappas (2004) calls for the enhancement of meta-cognitive skills; Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich and Anderson (1988) speak of the need for greater cognitive flexibility; and Perkins and Salmon (1989) advocate a greater and more sophisticated emphasis on preparing students

for a future wherein they will increasingly have to transfer learned skills from old contexts to new ones. Designing a curriculum that develops these higher-level research, inquiry, critical thinking and problem-solving skills while also ensuring job-ready graduates is extremely difficult in a three (or four)¹¹ year undergraduate degree; it represents a significant challenge requiring a broader, more multidisciplinary approach. Brew (2003), therefore, revises the concept of the teaching-research nexus to take account of both the *personal*/research journey and research as a *multidisciplinary* phenomenon, involving both students and staff in the search for solutions to what are often boundary-spanning and very complex global problems (see Figure 11). The work by Fung (2017) on the Connected Curriculum also follows a similar pattern of thinking.

Figure 11: Research and teaching as communities of practice



Healy (2005), Jenkins, Healy and Zetter (2007) and Brew (2003) include scholarship in their models and emphasise that curriculum should also reflect **evidence-based practice** from the **pedagogical** literature. Assessment too is best designed with programme objectives in mind and within an evidence-based framework such as TESTA, founded on principles known to enhance student engagement and learning (Testa.ac.uk).

¹¹ English, Welsh and Northern Irish universities have three-year undergraduate degrees. Scotland has four.

The curriculum questions ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ have been partially addressed in the discussion above. The question ‘**when**’ is about scaffolding the curriculum to ensure that knowledge and skills are developed coherently over the duration of the degree, moving from a grounding in core concepts and ideas to a point where students are integrating material from across their learning and experiences over the previous two or three years. Recently, there has been much discussion within the educational literature on **high impact practices** and the importance of **integrating** learning across the curriculum. Barber (2009), who has done much to advance the discussion of integration of learning (IOL), contends that when problems are complex and ambiguous, managers need to draw upon multiple areas of knowledge and skills, “from multiple sources and experiences; applying theory to practice [across] various settings; utilizing diverse and even contradictory points of view; [and understanding] issues and positions contextually” (p.6). Early research into IOL was championed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Both organisations expressed concern that undergraduate education has become highly fragmented and is not preparing students for the complex decision-making required to solve many of today’s problems (Huber & Hutchings, 2008). They argued that graduates who can make connections between ‘disparate information, and meaningfully synthesise concepts, are better prepared for success in the...evolving knowledge economy of the 21st century’ (Barber, 2009, p.1). Building on earlier work by the AAC&U and the Carnegie Foundation, Barber (2009) coined the umbrella term ‘**integration practices**’ to mean the structures, learning, strategies, and activities that span at least three ways of making connections: the ability to make connections across multiple contexts (intecxtuality), across ideas within a discipline (intradisciplinarity) and across domains and disciplines (interdisciplinarity).

Huber, Hutchings, Gale, Miller and Breen (2007) propose that the curriculum be redesigned to include specific opportunities and guidance for integration. They suggest adding in curricular ‘enriching activities’ (p.48) or what Kuh (2008) calls ‘high impact practices’, such as internships, cross-disciplinary courses, final year projects/dissertations, and allowing choice of subjects outside of the main discipline, among other initiatives. They also recommend experiential learning activities such as simulations that allow students to make connections between theory and practice and between ideas learned in other contexts and disciplines. A number of other factors affect integration and transfer of learning from across the curriculum, thus Huber et al. (2007) argue that the ability to integrate ideas successfully is a relatively sophisticated skill. They suggest that students should have many opportunities for both guided and unguided practice in this skill during their university education.

Curriculum design and development is enhanced when sufficient resources and time are made available and when the department uses it as an opportunity to reflect on and improve the climate for teaching practice. Ideally, curriculum review will get members of the department talking about and sharing ideas on evidence based TLA that will continue well after the validation panel has approved the documents. Additional resources could help the department to carry out research with a wide range of stakeholders as noted above; to ground the curriculum in evidence-based pedagogy; to create a good balance between the theoretical and the practical and to ensure that a wide range of opportunities are made available to students, including employability skill development, international opportunities, work placements and/or internships, integration of learning and extra and co-curricular activities that offer credit against an employability or graduate attribute development scheme.

When considering the curriculum aspect of **subject level TEF submissions** in particular, a few key questions should be asked:

1. Is the University and the individual department allocating adequate time and resources to curriculum development/revalidation?
2. Is the curriculum development process grounded in a set of design principles or an evidence-based methodology that enhances outcomes?
3. What does the institution and the discipline mean by research-led teaching, how is it being carried out to include students and what are some of the challenges and outcomes?
3. How is the institution or department ensuring that evidence-based practices are driving changes to teaching, learning and assessment?

The subject level TEF will likely consider curriculum development in a more detailed way than institutional TEF documents. At university level it is difficult to speak of ‘a curriculum’ since every subject may approach curriculum development and TLA practices differently. Amongst the GP, curriculum is discussed in a few general ways only:

- in terms of institution practices or design principles for curriculum enhancement and development
- commendations received by the QAA on their curriculum development processes
- input from employers and/or PSRB’s
- how the curriculum ensures rigour and stretch (TQ3)
- evidence of research-led teaching and learning practices
- innovative approaches to ensuring that students’ have opportunities to broaden their horizons and deepen their critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Not all institutions make such claims, but examples of providers' discussion of curriculum is explored below.

4.4.1.2. The submissions

Curriculum: Review processes and principles.

A number of GP discuss recent, university-wide reviews of their entire provision, including **Portsmouth** (moved to year-long modules) and **Nottingham Trent** (reviewed 640 courses in 2015/16). Many institutions discuss how they involve a wide range of stakeholders in the curriculum review process. **Edge Hill** leads here with its **provision of extra funding for course teams to undertake external consultancy** with employers, on competitors, on evidence based TLA, and with alumni to insure any curriculum changes are up-to-date. **Essex, Aston, Liverpool Hope** and **Portsmouth** have been commended by the QAA during recent reviews for the depth and breadth of research and innovation taking place during their curriculum development processes.

Design principles in curriculum review and development are used at **Aston** (CDIO - conceive, design, implement, and operate), **Nottingham Trent** (Curriculum Refresh), **Coventry** (through its CQEM process, Course Quality Enhancement Monitoring), **Bath** (Transforming Curriculum and Assessment - TraCA) and **Loughborough** (whose teaching and learning framework requires two key principles to appear in all processes: consistency and creativity). How these principles enhance curriculum is not fully explored or discussed in any submission, except for that of **De Montfort** which discusses how department teams use **Universal Design for Learning** (UDL) principles to embed inclusivity across the curriculum.

Edge Hill's curriculum design principles are called the 'Taught Degree Framework'. The document opens with the following:

Working within the credit structures defined within Academic Regulations the Framework is essentially 'enabling, yet constraining'; enabling, in that it signposts available guidance and best practice for effective curriculum design; but also constraining, in that course teams are required to engage with a series of 'lenses' containing essential questions about teaching and learning, assessment and student support... (<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/clt/centre-learning-teaching-clt/taught-degrees-framework/>).

The framework is largely accessible to others via this website where there is also guidance on the range of issues to consider when undertaking review.

Another notable example of a university that has embraced design principles as part of curriculum development is the University of **Leeds**. The following is a model of core attributes to be embedded in all curriculum design and revalidation:

Figure 12: Leeds model of curriculum development



FIGURE 2, THE LEEDS CURRICULUM AND LEEDSFORLIFE

Source: Leeds TEF submission, 2017

Aside from these specific mentions, most other institutions used terms and phrases such as ‘robust’, ‘external engagement’, ‘stakeholders’, ‘scrutiny’, ‘comprehensive’, ‘quality assurance’, ‘ensuring rigour and stretch’, ‘students as partners’ in describing their review processes – words one would typically expect to see in validation activities.

Curriculum Innovation

Interesting innovations in curriculum include allowing students to take subjects in other disciplines to broaden their perspectives, adopting year-long modules to allow for better development of knowledge and skills (**Portsmouth, Lancaster, Liverpool Hope, Dundee, Exeter, Bath, Edge Hill**); opportunities for students to work on real problems with experts and research active staff; opportunities to study abroad; student-led research forums; and heavy investments in digital delivery (discussed in more detail in section 4.8. Resources). Below is an overview of various institutional curriculum innovations.



Key philosophy in the curriculum is multidisciplinarity and all students have the opportunity to explore the relevance if different disciplines to contemporary global challenges; 30 credits each year in other disciplines; 3 fully multidisciplinary programmes -approach shortlisted for Reimagine Education Award in the Cultivating Curiosity Category 2016 - students work with employers, researchers on particular problems building climate apps, public health documents etc.; Students run an annual 'Research Uncovered' lecture series



University of Essex

Challenge Essex gives students opportunity to work on real life, interdisciplinary research projects and take on a global problem; co-curricular THINK seminar series winner of Guardian Award for Student Experience, 2016 - 300 students on average attend student led debates; all undergraduates must do a final year research project



Aston University
Birmingham

Engineering and Applied Science has developed an innovative curriculum design process CDIO - conceive, design, implement, operate now used across the University; 1% of Universities with triple accreditation; strong focus on professional vocational subjects.



Liberal arts based curriculum; all students take courses in history, fine art, english, philosophy, music, politics, drama; year long modules for greater depth and breadth; 12 hours contact time minimum, including 2 per week in 10 member seminars with personal tutors to allow for closer contact and feedback; timetable spread across entire week to ensure students engage; attendance monitored and followed up on all students build a personal development portfolio from year one to show learning and distance travelled.



Highly advanced in digital delivery. Digital Derby steering group provides ongoing recommendations to management. Dedicated content commissioning team and a process of digital design ensures very high quality online content and use of learning analytics to track student progress; Derby Theatre is a commercial theatre that has been adapted for lecture use; highest score on 2016 Student Barometer survey for quality of lectures.



Have integrated the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development into the curriculum - have been in top 10 in People and Planet League 3 times. Curriculum is constantly under review; completely refreshed across all 640 courses in 2015/16; lead the UK in doctoral training (757 students); member of British Conference of Undergraduate research - 56 students have presented there; recognised by QAA for research informed teaching.



Internationalisation is one of 6 educational pillars - every course must have international activities for 12,000 students; 3158 students went abroad during the TEF period. Integrative assessments are used where students bring learning from across all three years, including work placements which are highly encouraged and supported.



Curriculum review must include developments in evidence based pedagogy; recently has added a range of cross-disciplinary learning opportunities to broaden students knowledge and thinking of global issues



Robust curriculum review process that draws on two complementary and interrelated principles of consistency and creativity that are applied in 3 key areas of learning and teaching: curriculum design, development and evaluation; student engagement and support; professional learning and career development. Maps onto UKPSF. Clear descriptions of how students are to use independent study time.



All staff get training in curriculum design, setting programme outcomes and teaching and assessment strategies as part of the curriculum review process; guidance on how to embed appropriate assessments that lead to incremental development and ensure balance



Most comprehensive international experience programme in UK; work with the UK government's outward mobility strategy to ensure all UG programmes have at least one international experience; 1900 bursaries for students to take 135 visits abroad (e.g. January 2017, 1045 fashion, media and engineering students went to New York; #DMU Global led to Times Higher Award for Outstanding International Strategy 2016.

Curriculum: Research and Teaching

All the gold submissions discuss **research-led teaching**; most include students as research partners. Given that the phrase 'research-led teaching' has more than one meaning and can be conceptualised along different dimensions, there is no single approach taken by all 23. However, as part of their discussions on curriculum rigour and stretch, or on student-staff partnerships (or both), each institution took the opportunity to demonstrate its commitment to developing an active research community of staff and students.

Most GP discuss the role of research in teaching and learning as part of their discussion on 'rigour and stretch' (TQ3). The term 'research' was used 68 times in Exeter's and 65 times in Birmingham's submission, indicating their commitment to research and to research-led teaching. However, there is no single definition of research-led teaching common to all the submissions. Differing perspectives are taken.

- **Birmingham's** submission provides the most creative use of research and teaching themes, differentiating between research-informed and research-based learning and including researcher education. **Lancaster** prefers the phrase 'research-stimulated' teaching. Professor Alisdair Blair at **De Montfort** has helped to design a research-led teaching approach with three pillars: 1) creating real world learning environments where students work on projects both locally and globally, 2) research-led work placements, and 3) students as researchers, knowledge producers and agents of change (see for example Curtis & Blair, 2010). **Lancaster, Dundee, Essex and Exeter** explicitly link research led teaching and learning to the development of specific skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and inquiry and thinking skills - all noting in one way or another that students of our time must resign themselves to facing significant problems both in their lives and in society when they graduate. The kinds of problems referred to considered multidisciplinary in nature, and a university education should therefore prepare students with the breadth of skills and knowledge to find solutions. For example, **Lancaster** measures the success of its research-led approach through the HEA UK Engagement Survey, in which students are asked how well their programme developed their critical thinking, analysis, and real-world problem-solving skills, among nine others. Seventy-nine percent of students in year three state that their programme has developed critical thinking in particular, either 'quite a bit' or 'very much'.
- The best submissions show a real commitment to developing research skills from the first year and note that research-active staff are involved in designing curriculum and teaching at all levels. These submissions demonstrate a sense of responsibility to graduate the next generation of researchers, entrepreneurs and thinkers who will take on not only local problems but the broader challenges facing the planet.

Exeter, Essex, Birmingham, Derby, Loughborough and **De Montfort** all offer opportunities for multidisciplinary teams of students to work on real problems, either locally, nationally or internationally, with university researchers and/or companies. '**Challenge Essex**' is a competition where students work on consultancy projects to develop products, processes or policies to solve or mitigate known problems. At **Birmingham**, first year students can work in cross-disciplinary teams to tackle a 'real

world' challenge from an investigative and research perspective thus helping to develop project management, problem solving, team building and presentation skills, in addition to research skills. In addition to the #DMUGlobal outward mobility programme, **De Montfort** has student led projects underway in Hong Kong, India and the Gambia.

- **Exeter** includes as one of its aims has a specific programme called '**Research-inspired-inquiry-led-learning**' and it is now a pillar in its research and impact plan for 2015-2020. This aim is consciously applied in the design of all programmes.
- At **Exeter, Essex, Loughborough, Cambridge, Imperial College, Birmingham, De Montfort, Nottingham, Nottingham Trent and Edge Hill**, students can apply for paid research work or for summer research bursaries to work alongside academics or employers on specific research projects. At the research-intensive universities, much of the funding comes from grants won by academics, but **Edge Hill** has its own £1 million **Student Opportunity Fund** student extracurricular opportunities. **Nottingham Trent** also funds scholarships and bursaries for undergraduate research projects through its SPUR programme.
- Most GP require all undergraduate students to undertake a capstone research project, either a dissertation or one involving a local client.
- **Loughborough, Exeter and Birmingham** make awards for the best research-informed teaching.

The gold awarded universities make it clear that a commitment to research-led teaching is happening at both research-intensive and teaching-intensive institutions. Most have created multiple opportunities for students to become part of the research culture within the university; to involve them in research debates and seminars; and to engage in research in their assessment (as well as in co-curricular research with academics and/or practitioners, and through extracurricular opportunities). As noted above, the 2017 Student Academic Experience Survey (HEA.HEPI, 2017) shows students remain unconvinced that academics need to be research-active in order to provide good teaching. Having academics with teaching qualifications who engage in regular CPD is more important to them. Neves and Hillman (2017) note this may indicate "a lack of evidence to prove the benefits of research informed teaching" (p. 54). More research is needed to find out what research-led teaching means to students and how academics can use their research not only to provide up to date content and research opportunities for students but to improve teaching.

4.4.2 Assessment and Feedback

4.4.2.1. Notes from the literature

Since the National Student Survey (NSS) was introduced in 2005, assessment and feedback scores have been concerning, and even frustrating, to departments and institutions of higher

education. For most institutions, scores on assessment and feedback continue to lag behind satisfaction and the scores on many other survey questions.

In the 2017 adapted version of the NSS, the number of questions related to assessment and feedback dropped from five to four (thestudentsurvey.com). The question ‘I have received *detailed* comments on my work’ was changed to ‘I have received *helpful* comments on my work’; the word ‘*prompt*’ was replaced in another question with the word ‘*timely*’; and the question ‘Feedback on my work has helped me to clarify things I don’t understand’ was removed (authors italics). A series of new questions were added on learning opportunities (Q. 5-7), the ‘learning community’ (Q. 21-22) and ‘student voice’ (Q. 23-26), all borrowed and adapted from the more evidence-based National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) used in North America as a measure learning gain (as opposed to satisfaction).

However, the average scores on the 2017 feedback and assessment questions continue to be lower than most others. Two questions in the student voice category, however, scored lowest of all: Q. 25, ‘It is clear how students’ feedback on the course has been acted on’ and Q. 26, ‘The student’s union (association or guild) effectively represents students’ academic voice’, also, on average, scored lower. Clearly, not all students are convinced that despite all the surveys asking for their opinion their concerns are being addressed.

In terms of UK programmes, **Business and Administrative studies** (2017), for example, scored, on average, 70.5% on assessment and feedback, almost 12 percentage points lower than overall satisfaction and 10 percentage points lower than the ‘teaching on my course’ (CABS, 2017).

Table 3: Business and administrative studies (All programmes UK) - NSS averages.

Question category	Questions	Average
The teaching on my course	Q. 1-4	80%
Learning opportunities	Q. 5-6	81%
Assessment and Feedback	Q. 8-11	70.5%
Academic Support	Q. 12-14	77%
Organisation and management	Q. 15-17	75.3%
Learning resources	Q. 18-20	83%
Learning community	Q. 21-22	76.5%
Student voice (including question on student union)	Q. 23-26	68.5%
Overall satisfaction	Q. 27	82%

Response rate: 72%

Source: CABS, 2017.

Results were slightly more favorable for UK institutions as a whole, with assessment and feedback scoring 73% on average.

Table 4: All UK HE programmes - NSS Averages

Question category	Questions	Average
The teaching on my course	Q. 1-4	85%
Learning opportunities	Q. 5-6	84%
Assessment and Feedback	Q. 8-11	73%
Academic Support	Q. 12-14	80%
Organisation and management	Q. 15-17	75%
Learning resources	Q. 18-20	85%
Learning community	Q. 21-22	77%
Student voice (including question on student union)	Q. 23-26	73%
Overall satisfaction	Q. 27	84%

Source: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/lit/nss/results/2017>

As Morris (2017) noted, “anxiety over assessment and feedback NSS scores...continues to be the most significant pedagogical and student satisfaction challenge facing British universities” (<https://wonkhe.com/blogs/what-have-we-learned-from-the-new-and-improved-nss/>). Certainly, there has been improvement in these scores since 2005 as institutions have invested in evidence-based methodologies to improve assessment and feedback practices such as TESTA, authentic assessment regimes and the HEA Transforming Assessment programme, all of which are not only helping to improve NSS scores but also improving learning overall (Elton & Johnson, 2002; Gibbs, 2002; Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Gibbs & Dunbar-Goddet, 2007; HEA, 2016). Of all the topics in the higher education literature, assessment is the most researched, with studies providing an enormous amount of evidence on how to improve student outcomes, on ways to provide better, more timely feedback, and of course, how to improve assessment itself.

The research is also clear that there is no ‘quick fix’ to improve assessment and feedback scores (Black et al, 2003; Bloxham & Boyd, 2007; Gibbs & Dunbar-Goddet, 2009). Certainly, if this was the case, the NSS scores in this category would have gone up long ago. In the 2017 UK Student Academic Experience Survey, for example, students respond that they prefer feedback returned within two weeks, but are satisfied with three (HEA/HEPI, 2017));

so simply speeding up response times is only part of the answer. Providing more detailed feedback is helpful of course, but only when it acts as feed-forward (allowing students to use the feedback to improve upcoming summative assessment). Since it is well known that assessment has a profound influence on the effort students put into their studies and what they choose to focus on (Gibbs, 2010); to improve the quality of learning, the design of assessment and feedback needs to be based on tested principles; furthermore, the designing must be done at the programme level with programme-level objectives in mind. One very powerful evidence-based approach used at four GP is TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment) designed by Gibbs and colleagues (testa.ac.uk).

Among the key recommendations in the TESTA methodology and from other studies on effective assessment are the following: 1) Use peer marking exercises with real (anonymised) student work to help demystify the grading process early on in the students academic programme. 2) Increase the volume of formative feedback, particularly oral feedback, and provide it so that students can use it to improve their summative assessment. 3) Avoid using summative assessments that allow students to be overly selective in what they choose to focus on. 4) Design assessment at the programme level (as touched on above) to ensure that there is not too much variety and where assessments are subject to different marking criteria (as this leads to confusion). 5) Ensure that programme level outcomes are being evaluated. 6) Set a good balance between applied projects, essays and exams. 7) Allow opportunities for students to reflect on their learning and engage their metacognitive processes.

By using a programme-based approach to assessment and feedback that also involves students (in designing assessment, in peer marking, and in peer support of students at lower levels), many departments have seen significant improvements not only in assessment and feedback scores on the NSS, but in learning and student outcomes (Guilikers et al., 2004; Gibbs & Dunbar-Goddet, 2009). The key is not to try to fix lower scores on assessment and feedback (NSS) by using a single tool or approach, but to invest the time and resources to co-ordinate programme-wide assessment policy and practice. A number of GP have made this investment and as is demonstrated in the examples below, have seen significant, long-term improvements in feedback scores as well as student engagement with learning.

4.4.2.2. The submissions

GP generally score highly on NSS measures related to teaching quality and assessment/feedback, certainly higher than sector averages. The majority have improved their scores over the past five years by investing in evidence-based assessment and

feedback frameworks such as TESTA, HEA change programmes or other local initiatives. There is evidence of institution-wide commitment to understanding assessment and feedback from the students' point of view as well as the challenges that different groups of students face (e.g. BME, disabled students, mature and international students), while also allowing for variation based on what works best for individual disciplines. It is important to point out that **no single change has improved scores**, such as reducing feedback times or reducing the number of assessments; improvements come from adapting and revising **a whole range of processes and procedures**. In all cases, students have been involved in helping to identify issues as well as in providing recommendations. Examples from the submissions are provided below.

- Four universities - (**Exeter, Dundee, Birmingham and Loughborough**) - have adopted the **TESTA** approach to assessment and feedback, each making significant changes to their strategies based upon the principles discussed above. Three key pillars of TESTA as generally employed include staff assessment and feedback development workshops; development of student assessment literacy by allowing them to mark anonymized work against specific marking criteria; and quicker turn-around times for feedback so it can act as feed forward. At all four institutions, scores on NSS assessment and feedback metrics have gone up since the adoption of TESTA.
- **Birmingham** has adapted the TESTA framework to develop its own strategy, **BALI** (Birmingham Assessment for Learning Initiative), to improve the coherence of assessment across programmes and to ensure feedback acts as feed forward to improve future student work. Examples of good practice at the university have been shared through the LEAF initiative (Leading Enhancement through Assessment and Feedback). Other new practices include a 15-day turn-around for marking policy and the creation of a reference bank of 580 pieces of various completed coursework so that students can review and learn what tutors are looking for. No commentary was provided on whether the 15-day marking requirement is actually working, but it is clear that Birmingham allows wide scope for schools to develop and pilot their own initiatives rather than imposing strategies across the university. Good practice is then shared through the university's HEFi teaching and learning institute.
- **Liverpool Hope** continues to have the highest scores for 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback' amongst the 12 North Western universities - with scores on all questions above 85%. Modules are year-long, and students always know from the start of the year exactly when all their assessments are due. In addition, every module has an early 5% assessment that acts as a diagnostic of students' knowledge and skill levels, giving both students and personal tutors insight into what support might be needed. The early assessment also helps students to understand how the procedure works and exposes them to what feedback will look like. **Liverpool Hope** is one of only three universities that includes first year grades in students' final classification, so a great deal of support is available to ensure students take their work seriously from the beginning and that assessment acts to aid learning rather than complicate it. All first-year students engage in a portfolio project, one objective of which is to provide a vehicle for regular feedback throughout the year.
- Both **Nottingham Trent** and **Derby** are at the cutting edge in terms of using digital tools for assessment and feedback. The **Digital Derby Steering Group** conducts research

and provides recommendations to management throughout the year on ways to use digital tools to enhance feedback. All modules must have at least one piece of formative assessment and feedback is provided in both **video and audio formats** which students rate very highly. **Derby** has also pioneered the use of learning analytics to monitor online group discussions for evidence of learning (see below); feedback can be provided quickly where there is evidence of learning challenges or group issues. **Nottingham Trent** has a 17-point grade system with detailed descriptors and has been commended by external examiners for using the full range of marks and recognizing exceptional work. It is one of many universities that has a sophisticated **dashboard system** to monitor student progress and to allow for early intervention (more on the use of dashboards in Section 4.6. Monitoring Mechanisms and Responding to Student Feedback, below).

- At **Aston**, the School of Languages has pioneered an innovative assessment approach that allows students to negotiate the types of assessment they will be given, to co-create the assessment rubrics and for peer assessment of group work. Scores for assessment and feedback in the school are well above benchmarks.
- **Portsmouth** has built more opportunities for formative assessment/feedback and reflective learning into their year-long modules; staff are given training in how to scaffold learning and assessment over the three-year degree to ensure that students develop key knowledge and skills at the right pace and time.
- **Edge Hill, Liverpool Hope and Dundee** require course documentation to provide students with detailed information and suggested resources for how they may best use the **independent study hours** included in modules. A National Teaching Fellow at Edge Hill has developed an assessment and feedback toolkit for each department that is periodically fine-tuned with the relevant results from the latest evidence-based research. Students go through an **assessment literacy programme** during induction in which they practice writing feedback for themselves; and most modules include marking rubrics.
- Outcomes from **Kent's Student Success Project** has helped to enhance student engagement and outcomes, particularly for students with known attainment gaps. An early student barometer survey is used to identify skill weaknesses particularly in numeracy, statistical and research skills. **Kent** is part of the £19.5 million Nuffield Foundation and ESRC **QStep** programme to improve numeracy in the social sciences (see <http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/q-step>). Quantitative reasoning skills have been embedded in all core courses. Support programmes are available to tackle maths anxiety and each summer a free, intensive, two-week module worth 5 credits is offered to enhance quantitative skills. Students are required to pass this module if they wish to study a highly quantitative subject.
- **Huddersfield's** submission notes that they “recognise that assessment for learning is crucial to student success and are aware that decoding assessment criteria, understanding precisely what is required and having the ability to understand and engage with feedback is something many students need to learn, particularly those from backgrounds where HE is not well understood” (Huddersfield TEF submission, 2017, p. 6). A number of initiatives are discussed towards these ends.

Recommendation Eleven:

Assess the time and resources needed to undertake curriculum review such that all stakeholders can effectively provide input and all factors can be thoroughly considered. Ensure that all aspects of the review are grounded in evidence-based pedagogy; consider developing design principles to inform review and development. Use the review time to create collaboration and discussion amongst all teaching staff as well as with students as a foundation to build a department that is more collaborative and focused on pedagogy - one which builds in the research-teaching nexus and includes opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning and research. Allocate resources for conducting research to support an improved and up-to-date curriculum

Recommendation Twelve:

Review the current research-teaching nexus within the institution for examples of best practice. Commit to developing opportunities for all quadrants of the nexus within curricula and assess the outcomes of each in terms of improved student outcomes – to allow for more cross disciplinary learning opportunities; to find ways for students to contribute to solving local, national and global problems that are multi-disciplinary in scope and solution; to engage in knowledge production that addresses local, national and global problems; and to increase engagement with the community. Use these examples in the TEF submission to demonstrate the holistic nature of research and teaching.

Enhance the curriculum to better develop students' higher-level thinking and reasoning skills (synthesis, evaluation, critical thinking, problem solving). Expose students often to ill-structured problems – without easy solutions and which require reasoning and judgement. Employ before and after measures to determine learning gain in terms of critical thinking and reasoning.

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4.5. EMPLOYABILITY SKILL DEVELOPMENT, OPPORTUNITIES AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

4.5.1. Notes from the literature

Employability as a concept and as a set of processes to prepare students for their careers is well-embedded in UK higher education. Most institutions have a range of approaches to enhance employability. These include: 1) career services and placement/work experience; 2) study abroad or other international opportunities; 3) employability development in stand-alone modules and/or embedded within the curriculum; 4) co- and extra-curricular activities that can be tracked and recorded in a separate document such as a personal development plan or the Higher Education Academic Record (HEAR); 5) enterprise education and entrepreneurial programmes and support; and 6) engagement with employers through accreditation schemes, as speakers, as clients for student projects, in joint student/employer research projects, as mentors and for input into the curriculum, particularly during revalidation periods (Cole & Tibby, 2013; HEA, 2013; Jones, 2013; Blackmore et al., 2016; Artess, et al., 2017). Work experience can be made available in a variety of ways – through a sandwich or placement year, via summer-based internships, work shadowing, work-based learning or through jobs-on-campus schemes. Research points to the value of formalized work experience (that is, not simply having an unchallenging part-time job) in terms of graduate employment, self-confidence and self-efficacy, as well as in improving grades (Hazenbergh et al, 2015; Coetzee, 2014; Heyler & Lee, 2014). How long the benefits of work experience last is contested, with some studies demonstrating that students who undertake work placements are likely to get better starting jobs, and more quickly, than those who have chosen not to take them, but that the two groups show similar outcomes in the longer term (Artess et al, 2017).

The differing concepts of employment and employability have been high on the government's agenda since the Dearing Report of 1997 recommended that every student be given the opportunity to take a work placement (Dearing, 1997). However, ten years after the report was published, only 29% of students were taking up available opportunities, compared with 80% in Germany and 72% in France (Little, 2007). One of the reasons often given for not taking a placement is cost. Until 2012, universities were able to charge students a fee of up to £4500 for sandwich years. The Wilson Review (2012) on business-university collaboration recommended that fee caps of £1000 be put in place to encourage more students to take a sandwich year, and, in 2014, the government responded by setting a fee cap of £1800. This may have had some effect on increasing the number of students choosing to do placements as 35% more students undertook a full year placement in 2014/15 compared with 2009/10.

Some universities provide subsidies for students to take the placement year, particularly as part of their widening participation programmes because it is known that students from BME and disadvantaged backgrounds tend to take up placements at a much lower rate (Pollard et al., 2015). Loughborough, for example, charges only £840 for a placement year and others provide direct subsidies to students from disadvantaged groups to do placements overseas or offer job schemes on campus to eliminate the cost of having to travel or relocate to another workplace. The rise in the number of students taking up placements has also been linked to the financial crisis, the increasing competition for jobs, and the shifting of higher education fees onto the student (Arora, 2015). However, the numbers remain lower than in other European countries.

The literature on employability is broad and diverse. Among the key debates are what kinds of skills should be taught; 2) how to embed employability skill development within the curriculum; 3) ways to offer opportunities for and to measure the benefits of all forms of work-based learning on student and graduate outcomes; 4) approaches to including employers or to building university-employer collaborations; 5) the value of co- and extra-curricular activities in developing employability skills and how best to track and record these for students; 6) the value of enterprise education as a way to prepare students for four decades or more of work; 7) the value of various international experiences in employability; 8) best practice in designing and delivering career services; and 9) how to ensure that students get the most out of employability related training and development (for an extensive review of the employability literature see Artess et al., 2017).

Although creating lists of useful skills is not seen as particularly helpful (Pegg et al., 2012), they can still be of some value in developing an institution's framework around employability. The most comprehensive of such lists is probably that of Yorke and Knight (2004; see Table 5). While this is one of the older lists, what gives it value within the more recent discussions of employability is the addition of attributes or personal qualities. The more recent research offers a more expansive view of employability training as contributing not only to potential employment, but to preparing graduates to manage their careers over a lifetime of potentially many different jobs and career changes. Key dispositional factors such as resilience, adaptability and emotional intelligence are deemed important in an employment market that is unstable and often highly competitive and where day-to-day work can present personal challenges (Bridgstock, 2009). In addition to preparing graduates for career management, employability and graduate attributes are tools to help individuals realise their full potential, not only in work, but in their wider lives as "citizens and members of families, communities and societies" (Artess et al., 2017, p.5).

Table 5: Aspects of Employability as conceived by Yorke and Knight, 2004

A. PERSONAL QUALITIES
1 Malleable self-theory: belief that attributes [eg intelligence] are not fixed and can be developed.
2 Self-awareness: awareness of own strengths and weaknesses, aims and values.
3 Self-confidence: confidence in dealing with the challenges that employment and life throw up.
4 Independence: ability to work without supervision.
5 Emotional intelligence: sensitivity to others' emotions and the effects that they can have.
6 Adaptability: ability to respond positively to changing circumstances and new challenges.
7 Stress tolerance: ability to retain effectiveness under pressure.
8 Initiative: ability to take action unprompted.
9 Willingness to learn: commitment to ongoing learning to meet the needs of employment and life.
10 Reflectiveness: the disposition to reflect evaluatively on the performance of oneself and others.
B. CORE SKILLS
11 Reading effectiveness: the recognition and retention of key points.
12 Numeracy: ability to use numbers at an appropriate level of accuracy.
13 Information retrieval: ability to access different sources.
14 Language skills: possession of more than a single language.
15 Self-management: ability to work in an efficient and structured manner.
16 Critical analysis: ability to 'deconstruct' a problem or situation.
17 Creativity: ability to be original or inventive and to apply lateral thinking.
18 Listening: focused attention in which key points are recognised.
19 Written communication: clear reports, letters etc written specifically for the reader.
20 Oral presentations: clear and confident presentation of information to a group [also 21, 35].
21 Explaining: orally and in writing [see also 20, 35].
22 Global awareness: in terms of both cultures and economics.
C. PROCESS SKILLS
23 Computer literacy: ability to use a range of software.
24 Commercial awareness: operating with an understanding of business issues and priorities.
25 Political sensitivity: appreciates how organisations actually work and acts accordingly.
26 Ability to work cross-culturally: both within and beyond the UK.
27 Ethical sensitivity: appreciates ethical aspects of employment and acts accordingly.
28 Prioritising: ability to rank tasks according to importance.
29 Planning: setting of achievable goals and structuring action.
30 Applying subject understanding: use of disciplinary understanding from the HE programme.
31 Acting morally: has a moral code and acts accordingly.
32 Coping with complexity: ability to handle ambiguous and complex situations.
33 Problem solving: selection and use of appropriate methods to find solutions.
34 Influencing: convincing others of the validity of one's point of view
35 Arguing for and/or justifying a point of view or a course of action [see also 20, 21, 34].
36 Resolving conflict: both intra-personally and in relationships with others.
37 Decision making: choice of the best option from a range of alternatives.
38 Negotiating: discussion to achieve mutually satisfactory resolution of contentious issues.
39 Team work: can work constructively with others on a common task.

Source: Yorke & Knight, 2004

Since no one-size-fits-all model exists of how to develop and embed employability skills, a useful approach to helping institutions develop their employability programmes is through best practice case studies. To this end, many helpful case studies have come from the research and practice undertaken by the 22 employability-related Centers for Excellence in teaching and learning, as well as from the work of the Higher Education Academy (Butcher, et al, 2011). The HEA's Framework for Embedding Employability into the Curriculum offers a step-by-step approach to reviewing an institution's current provision, followed by guidance on embedding employability skill development into the programme curricula (<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/framework-embedding-employability-higher-education>). What stands out clearly is that employability, the development of career management capabilities and attributes, and the need for universities to take the lead in these areas (in part to demonstrate their wider value) will continue to be important. The gold provider submissions provide very good examples of how employability as an institution-wide ethos leads to creative and innovative approaches to ensuring that all students have opportunities to develop skills for employability and for life.

4.5.2. The submissions

Students at the majority of gold provider institutions have a very extensive range of opportunities to develop employability skills, to engage in extracurricular activities and to work closely with employers. Perhaps more than any other component of the submissions, that related to employability provides the most evidence in terms of how employability programme support has led to higher numbers of graduates in good employment (DLH), in highly skilled employment, and in reducing attainment gaps (The University of **Nottingham** was ranked highest in both categories, as was **Cambridge**).

The narratives are not always clear on how employability skills are developed. Some, such as **Edge Hill** and the University of **Birmingham**, discuss embedding employability across the curriculum, while others refer to dedicated employability modules open to all. **Loughborough** has created 'My Loughborough Journey', an in-curricula series of career and employability workshops designed to reach all students and in particular, those who are less active and confident in their career search. **Huddersfield** provides a very clear statement on how employability fits into the curriculum:

Each of the seven schools has a School Employability Group which audits employability activity, initiates and shares best practice, plans Schools-based employability events, incorporates student voice and feedback and benchmarks outcomes against the University as a whole. This collaborative and innovative approach has led to 5 national awards in 3 years, including being recognised as the "overall winner" by their

professional body, AGCAS, in the 2013 Awards for Excellence. (Huddersfield TEF submission, 2017 p. 13)

One section that is quite weak in the submissions is the discussion of work placements. The majority of submissions mention their placement programmes, but only **Nottingham Trent** provides data on how many students take them up (35%). No submission mentions the number of programmes that require work placement (sandwich degrees), although one assumes that they do exist. (The University of **Nottingham** does note that ranks number one globally for engineering placements but does not mention if work placement on these programmes is a requirement). The implication is that fewer students than the universities would like are taking up placements with the result that they are finding other ways to develop, recognize and record how students build employability skills. **Lancaster, De Montfort, Loughborough, Bath** and others mention the positive effect that placements have on final classifications and on DLHE scores but fail to clarify that this is not in fact a direct relationship; other factors, such as discipline, student aptitude, social capital and prior background also affect whether students will gain good or highly skilled employment. **Exeter, Coventry, Nottingham Trent, Nottingham** and **Birmingham** discuss their use of bursaries to support students - particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds - to undertake placements or internships either at home or abroad. **Loughborough** notes that its DLHE scores are the same for students from all backgrounds.

The **Bath Litebox** initiative is used to share good practice in learning and teaching across the university. One element of this initiative, the '**Bath Connection**', connects current students with alumni who provide students with insights into different careers. The service has 964 active alumni. **Bath** is also one of the largest providers of placement opportunities amongst UK Universities and it remains one of their main competitive advantages. **Imperial** has links with some of the top companies in the UK who make their facilities available to students. For example, in the Shell Techno-Economic project, the company organizes full day roll-play exercises on their premises for engineering students. Besides such well-known companies, the university's Design Engineering programme has arrangements with some 150 others and invites experts from industry to take up visiting professor posts.

The section below provides examples of services provided by dedicated career teams, how various GP reward students for undertaking employability related activities, and of the support offered for entrepreneurship and innovation.

Career Services and support

- Loughborough has made a £452,000 investment in its **Career Network**, holding 100s of events and fairs over the past three years; last year advertised 6000 jobs; it is the #1 provider of engineering placements in the world.
- Bath's **Career Service** works with students right from their first year, encouraging placements.
- In year one, students at Exeter take 'eXfactor' organized by the careers - a day long training programme to introduce them to career planning.
- Each year, Coventry's **Career Service** team takes at least 450 students through procedures at an employment assessment centre.
- Aston's **Career+Placements** team advertised 25,000 graduate and placement jobs via the **Aston Futures** website in 2016-17; they also run a Talent Bank to match students with the right placement (330 of which last year were overseas).
- At Essex all departments offer a **Career Development Learning** programme that allows students to research and explore career ideas and develop plans for their future. To support this, in addition to the central career service, each faculty has its own Employability Team running up to 95 career development sessions each year and hosting online employability diagnostics. Enterprise Mentors support students to develop their own businesses.
- Imperial College's **Careers Service** provides seminars and training sessions for up to 1800 students annually in addition to running Career Focus weeks, Career Cafés and career forums attended yearly by 5700 students and involving 150 employers. The College also has its own 'Recruiter in Residence'.
- The University of Nottingham has created 40 new posts in its Careers and Employability Service since 2013 to support its already highly successful employment programme for students. The university has been ranked either first or second for the past five years in the annual Graduate Career's survey.

Not all the GP have been equally as successful at achieving high scores on DLHE or HSE. For example, Liverpool Hope received a negative flag for its DLHE score, however this was explained in the submission as resulting from the financial crisis and austerity policies which had a significant effect on the city of Liverpool. For a number of years, the rate of employment was only 61.8% and public services were hit particularly hard thus affecting recruitment to Liverpool Hope's large and successful teacher training programme.

Employability Recognition Schemes

Many GP discussed schemes that have been set up to provide recognition for students' volunteer, community-related, extra and co-curricular activities. Students have opportunities to engage in a range of activities over two to three years to gain recognition in the form of an award or as part of their HEAR (Higher Education Achievement Report). These schemes are particularly valuable in terms of employability for students on non-vocational programmes. Some examples are provided below.



Central Careers Services manages the Add+vantage scheme, one of the most innovative and comprehensive employability programmes in the UK; 234 modules are grouped into 11 thematic areas including Global Languages, Work Experience, Entrepreneurship, Professional Accreditation and Employer Engagement; some are for credit ; CUSU (the student union) currently run 15 Add+vantage modules on behalf of the University based on volunteering in schools, in the community and their roles as sports and societies officials; 3158 went abroad in 2015 as part of an Add+vantage programme



DMULocal and DMU Mile offer volunteering opportunities, wherein the objective is to build employability skills while bringing positive change to Leicster; DMUMile has won the Mahatma Gandhi International Award. The university also won the THE Award 2013 for Outstanding Contribution to Local Community.



Kent's Advantage initiative provides 16 distinct employment programmes. Their Employability Points scheme allows students to accumulate points from volunteering, placements, and attendance at work-related events which they may trade in for internships or work shadowing with 132 different companies; 'Kent Extra' offers extra- and co-curricular modules. Volunteering activities earn students a certificate from the student union - currently there are some 3000 roles; students earn points and everything is recorded in their HEAR report; Kent Union Jobshop placed 2319 in 2015/16.



The Exeter Award gives formal recognition to extracurricular activities , in which 5000 students are enrolled with 600 completing annually. 'Community Action' volunteering has a significant impact, as 14% of graduates plan to work in social innovation or the charity sector. 'MyCareerZone' is an online tool allowing engagement with all the career-related activities on campus; it is used by 98% of students.



In 2014/15 the university participated in HEA's strategic enhancement programme for embedding employability into the curriculum. Edge Hill has since created the 'Student Journey Programme' that all students participate in starting in their first few weeks; it includes multiple employment related opportunities; 400 employers speak on campus each year; with many acting as employment mentors. There is a seven-figure Student Opportunity Fund, specifically designed to finance extracurricular activities. The university has a 95.7% ranking in DLHE and 72% in HSE and is in the top 5 for sustained employment according to the LEO data.



Mapping documents are used to embed employability and transferability skills into all levels of the curriculum. Essex's Employability Strategy includes a team delivering career development seminars (95 in 2014/15, with 4654 students attending). Career advisors exist in every faculty. The Big Essex Employability Award' recognises extracurricular activities and achievements; students must complete a specified number of verified units plus a minimum number of hours, write a skills profile and a reflective. Essex has also implemented HEAR.



Nottingham was awarded the 2016/17 Times/Sunday Times University of the year for graduate employment. The Institute of Fiscal studies ranks its graduates amongst the country's highest earners. The Nottingham Advantage Award (NAA) offers more than 400 modules related to work, volunteering, extra - and co-curricular activities. Students, currently numbering around 10,500, complete 3 modules to get the full award.



The student union runs the Imperial Plus scheme which allows students to obtain a certificate of recognition for work done as student representatives, as volunteers, or in other community engagement. The Skills Development programme allows students to gain a formal qualification from the Institute of Leadership and Management



The Lancaster Award was created to reward work experience, extra- and co-curricular activities, volunteering and campus based engagement activities; it takes two years to earn the award and has been shown to enhance employment prospects



NTU has created the Acceler8 Employability Award. Opportunities can be found via the 'MyCareer Explorer' website ; currently 38,845 activities have been logged. Students track activities via their HEAR reports; The 'Futures Award' recognises extra- and co-curricular activities.



Derby offers a Diploma in Professional Practice between years 5 and 6 so students on non-vocational education paths can develop career skills. All undergraduates are required to undertake a minimum of 30 hours of work-related experience. The university ranked 5th for employability out of the 42 UK institutions taking part in the International Student Barometer Survey



The Personal Skills Award (PSA) to encourages engagement with employment related activities and skill development. Students may earn points through any of 240 extra-curricular activities, from taking employment related modules, and from a foundation pathway offering dozens of short courses. Employers are involved in development of the PSA, and offer mentoring and bespoke skills' sessions.

Entrepreneurship Programmes and Innovation Hubs

Many GP have innovative programmes to develop entrepreneurs and start-ups.

- **Cambridge University Entrepreneurs** (CUE) is a student society and one of the world's most successful business creation competitions, offering £500,000 in prize money and dozens of events and networking opportunities; the university also hosts the Dyson Creativity Centre for students to create and develop large-scale projects. There are numerous other student societies focusing on enterprise and entrepreneurship.
- **De Montfort** has a global entrepreneurship week and a Pitch2Win competition for start-ups. Their Innovation Centre offers the 'Crucible' programme that takes students' ideas to market – one project was recently supported with £9000.

- Coventry's International Centre for Transformative Entrepreneurship (ICTE) has been shortlisted for numerous awards including the Times Higher Entrepreneurial University of the Year. It is a unique institution formed to support sustainable socio-economic transformation through approaches to entrepreneurship in communities nationally and internationally (<https://www.coventry.ac.uk/business/our-services/transformational-entrepreneurship/>). Coventry's Chancellor's Circle of leading entrepreneurs and business people provides a fund that invests amounts ranging from £5,000 to £10,000 in student entrepreneurs. This group also manage a programme of business support, mentoring and provides access to office space.
- Portsmouth's Future Technology Centre allows engineering students to learn and work within the facility to develop new and creative solutions to global challenges using specialist technology. Some ideas are commercialised (<http://www.port.ac.uk/realising-the-vision/major-change-projects/future-technology-centre/>)
- Imperial College's Enterprise Lab opened in 2016 to support innovators and entrepreneurs; among the many services is a drop-in centre where mentors help students to develop their projects. The Lab also supports an early-stage women's entrepreneurial initiative, an emerging technology ventures team, and welcomes contributions from alumni and corporate innovators. The Imperial Advanced Hackspace provides access to workshops across the various campuses so that students can access prototyping capabilities helpful to developing and commercialising students' technology-based business ideas.
- The University of Nottingham runs the largest entrepreneurship competition in the UK - 'Ingenuity'; open to all students it offers £100,000 in prizes and has created many micro-businesses. In 2016, students from Nottingham won the Enactus UK entrepreneurship prize for projects that transform lives.
- Loughborough's Institute for Design Innovation based in London is a multidisciplinary team of academics, researchers and students working on design-based projects. The Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship helps students build effective business plans, grow niche start-ups and share innovative solutions to business and social challenges. LSU Apprentice supports students with industrial mentors. To date 40 graduate businesses have created 61 jobs, 43 volunteer positions and 9 intern roles. The Studio provides tailored support to help commercialise student ideas and Loughborough's Science and Enterprise Park is home to over 60 organisations including four graduate companies.
- Birmingham's B-Enterprising scheme offers a business start-up programme for current students and alumni.
- Lancaster's Entrepreneurs in Residence programme has over 50 entrepreneurs who offer talks and masterclasses for both students and business owners and, who also bring in new ideas for development.
- Kent's Hub for Innovation and Enterprise is a co-working incubator space where business advice sessions are offered to students. 119 companies and 190 jobs have been created with £8.8 million generated for the local economy.
- Exeter's Innovation Centre offers accommodation for high-tech businesses undertaking research and development. In 2017, the Centre facilitated 500 student, staff and employer projects that generated £5.6 million.

- Derby's Network of Entrepreneurs creates links between students, staff and entrepreneurs from across the UK. Four enterprise festivals have been held since 2014 as part of their annual Global Enterprise Week.
- As part of the 'Student's as Producers' ethos at Lincoln, all students and staff are given support to set up their own **websites** to showcase their activities. To date, more than 4000 student websites and blogs have been created.

Recommendation Thirteen:

Consider using the Higher Education Academy's Framework for Embedding Employability in the Curriculum, or Cole and Tibby's "Defining and developing your approach to employability: A framework for higher education institution" (2013) as part of curriculum review to enhance how the programme integrates employability across the curriculum, to build links with all relevant employment and career services, and to provide opportunities for academics to refresh their perspectives and ideas for developing students' employability skills, attributes and capabilities.

Enhance the links between all employability, skills development and career services and provision at the institution to ensure it is comprehensive, shares good practice, and provides wrap-around support for all student employability needs. Develop an employability recognition scheme that gives credit of some kind to co- and extra-curricular activities which enhance employability.

Recommendation Fourteen:

Review the employability provision to ensure it offers opportunities for students to develop life-long career management skills and attributes such as those presented in the Yorke and Knight list above (Personal Qualities). Consider using tools such as career readiness or career confidence surveys from first year to identify students' needs for support; and implement a system to track progress over the degree. This will also help encourage groups of students who are less likely to take up work experience.

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4.6 MONITORING MECHANISMS AND RESPONDING TO STUDENT FEEDBACK

4.6.1 Notes from the literature

UK universities could be described as data gathering machines because they must report on so many metrics (see for example: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reg/of/operaterfhe/>). A partial list would include

- The National Student Survey (NSS)
- DLHE scores
- Percentages of students attaining 2.1 and first degrees ('good degrees')
- Retention and drop-out rates
- Student demographics including POLAR data and economic profiles
- Entry qualifications and UCAS tariff points
- Fees, student-staff ratios, contact hours, teaching qualifications and REF rankings (Lynch 2015).

In addition to the NSS, many universities also use the HEA's UK Engagement Survey (UKES) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) measuring student learning gain. Some also add the International Student Barometer Survey. Internally, data may be gathered from module feedback questionnaires, delivered during and/or at the end of a taught module; from ongoing, online student feedback systems; from course representatives, the student union or guild; or from a range of other bespoke mechanisms that involve students' feedback as part of their participation in university, department and programme committees.

Externally reported data appears in the public domain via League Tables, the Key Information Sets (KiS data via Unistats), HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency), HEA publications and survey reports, The Office of Students, and each university's own website. Internal data is typically shared with managers and academics, but often also with students for quality assurance purposes, for enhancing and improving university services, and to improve student outcomes and engagement.

How a university gathers and makes use of data varies considerably across the sector, but it is widely accepted that most universities gather a great deal of quantitative data. This approach to management in public sector institutions has been termed 'new managerialism' because of its similarities to performance driven management in the corporate sector (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Exworthy & Halford, 1999; Deem and Brehony, 2005). Martin (2016) argues, however, that just as companies are becoming less centralised in order to better respond to the competitive pressures of globalisation, and as the management literature is showing greater consensus about the value of a less centralised organisational structure for innovation

and effectiveness, universities are developing in the other direction -- becoming more centralised with “top-down university management, bureaucratic administrative procedures, teaching to a prescribed formula, and research driven by assessment and performance targets” (Martin, 2016, p.9). Where scores on various metrics such as the NSS and module surveys are lower than expected, everyone involved feels pressured to quickly explain the shortfall and implement plans for improvement. The responses may be highly reactive and short-term in outlook, failing to get to the root of the real problem, if in fact there is a problem at all (Gibbs, 2010, 2012).

This kind of **performative approach** to quality enhancement when not balanced with dialogue and qualitative insights has been discussed above and has been shown to contribute to greater stress, reduce collaboration, increase an unhealthy style of competitiveness, and “run the risk of standardising teaching and assessment practices [with the potential suppression of] diversity and innovation of pedagogic approaches2 (Stevenson, Burke & Whelan, 2014, p. 6; See also Martin, 2015; Fredman & Doughney, 2012; Thompson, 2005).

New approaches to gathering data: In order to improve how a University gathers and responds to data, many institutions are now investing in sophisticated **data analytics platforms** where multivariate and longitudinal analyses can be undertaken to clarify the causes of particular problems, identify contributing factors and determine whether the data represent a trend or simply a blip in an otherwise positive outlook. As Gibbs (2010) noted, so many of the metrics that are gathered in the UK are not good indicators of teaching quality or whether learning gain is occurring and at the very least data from various sources should be triangulated or subject to multivariate analysis if we are to identify what will best inform decision makers on where improvements are needed. As shown below, many GP have invested in real-time data gathering of both student concerns and feedback, but also their grades, attendance, demographic data, involvement in University activities, and any interventions to support their learning. These ‘dashboards’ are available to personal tutors who in conversation with the student can then suggest appropriate interventions and/or alert other specialist services. Six GP also discuss apps they have developed so students can monitor their own progress.

A second mechanism for gathering and responding to data is through **student-staff partnerships** (see section 4.2 above) where via their own initiatives or working along with staff, students investigate, report on and make recommendations for improvements. Student-staff partnerships are particularly important for raising the quality and value of qualitative data within the quality assurance process. Data analysis that includes both quantitative and rich qualitative data from open-ended questions, focus groups, and student participation in key

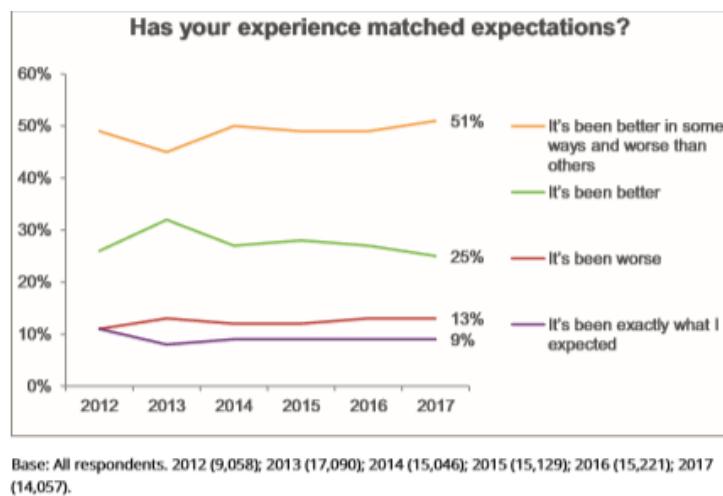
committees, for example, provide a much more nuanced and complete picture of the student journey and of issues affecting student engagement and outcomes.

What to measure? While universities must continue to report on an ever-growing range of metrics, those that make student **learning gain** their core measure of effectiveness as an institution are more likely to value student participation in quality processes, and to interrogate the data gathered to determine what combination of factors (institutional, student-related, teaching, discipline and context specific) is either hindering or contributing to student learning. As Biggs (1989) and Astin (1970, 2012) have argued, universities need to isolate the issues that may be affecting student outcomes. Some of these issues are 1) ‘environmental’ or institutional, departmental, situational or context-related such as study, personal and well-being support; 2) how contact time is used; 3) who is doing the teaching (full-time, part-time teachers and/or graduate students); 4) teaching and learning resources; and 5) whether students are being given adequate support to make the best use of their independent study hours (See Gibbs, 2010). Student-related factors are also important, or what Astin (2012) terms ‘input’ factors. He views input differences as both fixed, such as demographic and educational background characteristics, and those that can vary over time such as “cognitive functioning, aspirations, [motivation] and expectations, self-ratings, values, [and] behavioural patterns” (p. 76). Many teaching and learning researchers have found support for Astin’s view that how students approach learning will be affected by prior teaching and learning experiences, by demographic, social and economic factors, (see section 4.1 above) as well as by their self-confidence, motivations, and attitudes (Prosser & Trigwell, 1999; Ramsden, 1992; Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983). The key to supporting students is to be able to identify which factors may be hindering their learning and then make the appropriate interventions. As noted above, learning analytics and data dashboards are very useful in ensuring that problems are identified before a student falls too far behind.

Another set of factors discussed in Vos & Armstrong (forthcoming) are **transactional and procedural factors** in the learning relationship between teacher and student. These have to do with student and tutor expectations which may, unknown to both parties, be running along different lines. For example, in dissertation study, students may report that their tutors did not meet their expectations for timely or sufficiently detailed feedback whereas tutors complain that students often failed to show up for meetings or come prepared. Where institutions, departments, and tutors have a better understanding of students’ expectations from the outset, issues can be better managed through early communication and partnerships. As noted above, qualitative feedback is particularly important in understanding the nuances around

expectations. Unfortunately, students' perceptions that their expectations are being met is in decline (See Figure 13).

Figure13: Student expectations: 2017 UK Academic Experience Survey, p.19



Source: HEA/HEPI, 2017

The 2017 UK Student Academic Experience Survey (HEA/HEPI, 2017) had some interesting observations with respect to this decline:

- There seems to be a year on year decline in perceptions that students are getting value for money in their undergraduate studies. (34% felt they had received either poor or very poor value for money in 2017; 37% in 2016 and 53% in 2012 before £9000 fees were introduced).
- Students of black ethnicity are more likely to be critical of themselves, feeling they have not put in enough effort.
- Students who live at home are more likely to say their experience is worse than expected; this may be due to feelings of isolation and disconnection resulting from too little interaction with staff and a sense of not being given enough support for independent study.

One promising trend, however, is that first year students are significantly more likely than average to find their experience better than expected (HEA/HEPI, 2017).

In summary, universities should monitor not only student feedback and satisfaction with teaching, but also a range of factors known to affect learning gain and learning outcomes, such as demographic and economic characteristics, attendance, assignment submissions, grades, performance on diagnostic tests in areas such as numeracy and communication, well-being, and uptake of extra-curricular activities. Learning analytics systems that match personal characteristics (demographics, economic profiles, entry qualifications) with behaviours and performance while at university can be used to make early predictions about

student learning and engagement to allow the right interventions to occur in a timely fashion. These systems are being rolled out across the UK and many GP are already using and developing them. As noted below, the University of **Kent** goes one step farther, and with the students' consent compares their feedback on student surveys with their personal data to try and separate out the factors explored that Astin (2012) (student characteristics vs environmental characteristics) has demonstrated to be possible contributors to the issues students face as well as the outcomes they achieve.

4.6.2 The submissions

All GP use a range of mechanisms to gather and monitor student feedback and outcomes. However, only **Kent** compares the feedback gathered from students using module and university related surveys about student perceptions of their experience and the information gathered from systems used to monitor student engagement, learning gain, prior characteristics, and behaviours (such as attendance, take up of extra-curricular activities, and assignment submissions). On the other hand, it is clear that the investment in learning analytics platforms is making the gathering and interpretation of student data much more efficient and is providing richer, real-time profiles of student characteristics, engagement and learning. Since all GP report using module and programme surveys (either internal or external such as the NSS, UK Engagement Survey and/or UK Student Academic Experience Survey), this section will focus on those providers who have invested in **data and learner analytics systems** as a means to improve the quality of data gathering and evaluation, as well as the efficiency with which institutional, programme, teaching-related and student issues are identified and managed.

Lincoln, Huddersfield, Nottingham Trent, Exeter, Derby, Essex, Loughborough, Aston, Coventry and Newcastle are all using learning analytics tools to track a range of metrics and use the data to make improvements in student engagement and outcomes. Many are part of a JISC supported or HEFCE Catalyst Fund project and all provide excellent examples of how live data on student engagement and performance can lead to improvements in outcomes.

- **Lincoln** provides dashboards for both Programme Leaders (a resource it invests heavily in, providing financial rewards and extensive training for every member of the PL team) and personal tutors. The personal tutor's dashboard includes data on students' marks, attendance, library visits and Blackboard usage (see below Figures 14 and 15). Since its roll-out, attendance at personal tutor sessions has increased to 77%.

Figure 14: Lincoln Personal Tutor Analytics Dashboard - View A

Personal Tutor - Student Level Tutor Report

Name and Contact Details



Disability On Application: No known disability
Mode Of Study: Full-Time

Attendance



- This Years Events Attended
- Not Attended - Authorised Absence
- Not Attended - Unauthorised Abs...

Overview

Academic Year	Programme Level	Mean Student Mark	Attendance
14/15	1	69.9	94.68%
15/16	2	72.5	98.85%
16/17	3	-	97.30%

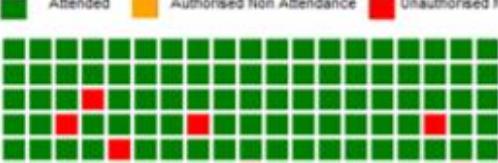
Student engagement
Attendance History - Each segment represents a single event
Hover over each event to view the date.

5 days spent visiting the library so far this year compared to a course average of 14.2

5 unique visits to the library so far this year compared to a course average of 17.6

84 days spent logging onto Blackboard so far this year compared to a course average of 67.1

254 unique logins to Blackboard so far this year compared to a course average of 137.9



Module Attendance

Academic Year	Module Code	Module Level	Module Title	Attendance
14/15	BMS1071M	1	Health and Disease	100.00%
14/15	BGY1008M	1	Biochemistry and Metabolism	100.00%
14/15	BGY1002M	1	Integrative Biochemistry	92.31%
14/15	BGY1003M	1	Cell Biology	88.46%
14/15	BGY1001M	1	Research Methods for Life Scientists 1	95.65%

Besides the dashboard, Programme Leaders and personal tutors at Lincoln have additional quantitative and qualitative data from the NSS, module evaluation scores, DHLE, HESA, and applications for admission.

Figure 15: Lincoln Personal Tutor Analytics Dashboard - View B

Student Numbers (16/17)				Applications (17/18)			
	Programme Name	v Previous Year	Versus Comparator		Programme Name	v Previous Year	Versus Comparator
All	422	↑ 26.3%	4.7%	All	258	↑ 1.6%	3.1%
Summary Outcome Indicators							
	School Name	Programme Name	v Prev Year		School Name	Programme Name	v Prev Year
Teaching Quality	78.8%	81.3%	↑ 1.7%	Mean Score	4.33	4.37	↑ 0.01
Learning Experience	84.3%	89.5%	↑ 2.9%	% Agree	90.3%	93.5%	↑ 5.5%
Completions	66.7%	75.7%	↑ 5.5%	Module Evaluation (15/16)			
Non Continuation	6.5%	5.6%	↑ 0.0%		School Name	Programme Name	
Employability	90.2%	91.7%	↑ 0.0%	All		65.8%	65.2%
Graduate Employability	85.2%	89.5%	↑ 1.3%	Attendance Data (16/17)			
Average Marks (16/17)					School Name	Programme Name	v Prev Year
	School Name	Programme Name	v Prev Year	All	73.6%	73.0%	↑ 1.0%
All	51.2	72.0	↑ 0.5	Good Honours (14/15)			
Recruitment v Target (16/17)					School Name	Programme Name	v Prev Year
	Programme Name	Target	Good Honours	69.4%	75.7%	↑ 16.4%	
All	177	168					

Figure 4. Screenshot of the core metric Programme Leader Dashboard at the University of Lincoln. Splits of these data by a variety of student characteristics are also provided through this system.

Source: Lincoln's TEF submission 2017

- **Exeter** is currently undertaking a three-year analytics project with staff and students to improve diagnostics and interventions. Dashboards are accessed through a university smartphone app called ‘iExeter’, allowing students to track and monitor their own progress, keep track of all grades and feedback, and keep up to date with assignment due dates, among other information. The project team is mining the engagement data to better understand what supports student success and achievement. More than 25,000 dashboard accesses were recorded in the first four weeks of launch.
- **Essex** has begun a four-year learning analytics project, using a dashboard of its own design, populated with live data on a range of KPI’s including student satisfaction, retention, employment, and success.
- **Nottingham Trent** has hired a data analysts who work with academic and support staff so that everyone can have data readily available, in order to make decisions that will “improve student progression... increase students’ sense of belonging to their courses, and ...increase attainment.” (Nottingham Trent TEF submission, 2017, p. 7). Students also have access to data via the NTU Student Dashboard; they work with their personal tutors to make improvements in any areas tracked by the dashboard such as attendance, amount of time spent on the VLE, amount of time using library resources, and assignment hand-ins, among others. Since its inception, 81% of students have

increased their study time and 22% followed up on a prompt by their personal tutor to book an appointment. This JISC-supported project has been written up as a case study (<https://analytics.jiscinvolve.org/wp/files/2016/04/CASE-STUDY-I-Nottingham-Trent-University.pdf>) and won the 2014 Times Higher Education Award for Outstanding Support for Students. NTU's dashboard is also being used to research student engagement with European partners as part of two Erasmus+ projects.

- **Loughborough** has developed its own analytics platform to aid the collection, analysis and reporting of data to improve student outcomes. One tool is 'Co-Tutor' a student and staff relationship management system: "It allows staff and administrators to communicate with and manage students, including personal tutees, project students, industrial placement activities, post graduate research supervision and course cohorts" (<https://dspace.lboro.ac.uk/dspace-jspui/bitstream/2134/13693/3/King-Co-tutor.pdf>). Co-tutor is a large PHP/mysql web application that interfaces with the university's student information system, attendance monitoring software and the VLE. In 2014, Loughborough won the Departmental ICT Initiative of the Year Award from the Times Higher for developing a web application to improve the engineering placement process.
- Of all GP, **Coventry** has perhaps the greatest amount of data available, via its Course Performance Dashboard (introduced in 2012) with 58 individual metrics from the NSS, DHLE, demographic data and module surveys, in seven reporting pillars, for 221 undergraduate and 188 postgraduate courses. Course Directors review the data twice yearly in day long events before completing their annual monitoring reports.
- **Huddersfield** was one of the first universities to use learning analytics. Their Student Priority Support System (SPSS) analyses historic data on students who withdrew or were likely to withdraw and maps it onto first-year student profiles; this allows a wide range of potential problems to stand out in relief, so to speak. Huddersfield is a commuter campus, with many students living at home, often the first in their families to attend university; and frequently not engaging as much with what is available. It has an excellent track record in helping these students to engage and succeed, particularly through the 'Back on Track Service' that uses a number of processes to refocus students' efforts and prevent withdrawals. 1840 students were helped in 2013-2017.

In addition to these universities, other GP are also using innovative ways to respond to student concerns and to behaviours that may hinder their progression. These are considered in the section below in 4.7 Support for Students.

Recommendation Fifteen:
Invest in a personal tutoring and training scheme.

Recommendation Sixteen:

Invest in learning analytics to capture student characteristics and track their engagement, progress, feedback, and use of university services. Make the data available to personal tutors. Investigate learning analytics data for patterns of behaviour that could lead to lower engagement and possible withdrawal. Map this data onto incoming student profiles to allow for earlier detection of potential problems. Engage students in the feedback gathering process as researchers. Have them gather more qualitative data to help contextualise the data from surveys.

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4.7 STUDENT SUPPORT AND PERSONALISED LEARNING

4.7.1 Notes from the literature

Although the TEF contextual data does not include a section on student support, most GP did discuss the range of support services available to students in the narrative sections on student engagement, personalised learning, or positive outcomes.

Student support can be offered in many forms and at many levels:

- Personal tutoring;
- Transitions into higher education and first year student support;
- Academic support;
- Peer support for study, social and personal issues;
- Careers support and advice including work placements and internships, employability skill development, and entrepreneurship;
- Personal development support in the forms of international work and study opportunities, co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities including volunteering (and broader engagement generally), sports, and research projects with staff;
- Support for special populations such as mature students, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with attainment gaps, international students and part time students;
- Financial support for hardship and to allow students to take advantage of internships, international trips/study and trips/visits, and
- Health and well-being support.

Most universities offer support in all these areas. The keys to success, however, are how well these services are integrated with academic provision; how well linked each service is to others; how well informed both student and staff are about what is available; and following up in order to measure or assess the effectiveness of the intervention (Bartram, 2009; Buultjens & Robinson, 2011; Roberts et al., 2018). If a personal tutor recognises that a student needs some form of support, knowing where to most appropriately refer that student is obviously very important. In addition, where a student requires the support of more than one service, there needs to be continuity of care to ensure that one service supports and communicates with the other to meet the student's overall needs. Follow-up after they have engaged with support services helps to measure the effectiveness of and investment in the services, but more importantly ensures that the student has in fact benefited and is progressing. None of these criteria (good integration with other university systems, continuity of care, knowledge of available services or follow-up) can be taken for granted in the complexity of most university support systems, but if the heavy investment in these services is to pay off in terms of improved student well-being and outcomes, they should all be a priority.

The **personal tutoring system** can be a very effective way of identifying student support needs, but the tutor may need training in how to identify particular skill deficits or well-being issues and also what services are available (Ghenghesh, 2018; Thomas & Hixenbaugh, 2006). Since the personal tutor is also an academic with a multitude of other responsibilities, they must often count upon the student's taking the initiative to consult them if they have problems; it must also be remembered that not all departments mandate specific tutor-student meetings during the year. But where the university provides each tutor with a dashboard of student data that is updated in real time, the tutor can review student data at regular intervals to flag up any issues (see 4.6 above). If this kind of data is not available or is not up-to-date, then students may fail to get the support they need at the right time, which may of course lead to weaker performance, outright withdrawal, or worse.

Support systems that rely upon the student to contact the services they need can work only where there is also a well-developed set of processes to monitor student engagement/attendance, progression, and achievement (Ghenghesh, 2018). Universities that put students through a set of **competency tests** prior to or during induction tend to succeed in identifying academic skill weaknesses; things go even better if students are then directed to specific upgrading through one-to-one or small groups sessions. The earlier this support can be offered, the better (Thomas et al., 2017).

The best support systems provide specific services to special population groups known to have special needs. **International students** may need language and linguistic support, but they often also feel isolated and would benefit from social support as well (Bartram, 2008; Robert et al, 2018). **Mature** students who have not been in full time study for a long time are likely to be very motivated but require skills upgrading (Tones et al., 2009; Bolam & Hodgson, 2003). Students who **live at home** while at University may have lower engagement and lower achievement and thus support services are needed to ensure they feel connected to staff and other students (HEA/HEPI, 2017). **BME** student groups generally have good levels of engagement but despite coming to university with similar grades to their peers, often perform less well. This attainment gap, which is also experienced by white male students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds, is not fully understood. However, those institutions that have done the most to reduce these gaps are those that recognise the widest range of hurdles that students face – and which have consequently instituted the greatest variety of support mechanisms, including peer mentoring and support (Cotton et al., 2016; HEFCE, 2014; Grebennikov & Skaines, 2009; Broecke & Nicholls, 2008; Fielding et al., 2008).

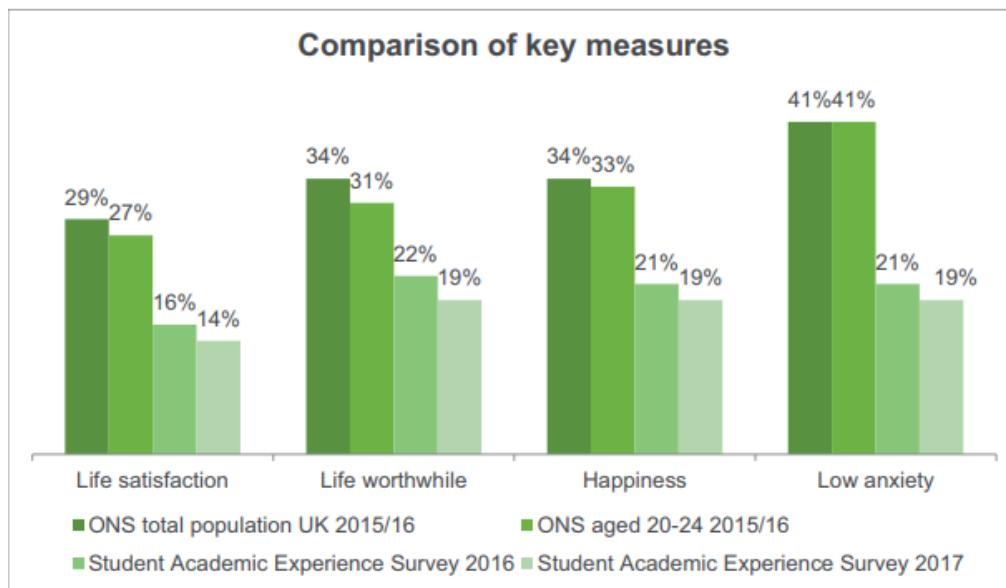
Research has demonstrated how important it is to provide support to students who are making the transition into University and during their **first year of study** (Thomas et al., 2017). In their six-year ‘What Works?’ research project, Thomas and colleagues (2017) found that “[i]t is the human side of higher education that comes first – finding friends, feeling confident and, above all, feeling a part of your course of study and the institution” (p. 3) that contributes the most to student success and retention. They found that

the exact type of intervention or approach was less important than its intended outcomes and the way it was delivered. Interventions or activities [should] aim to enhance student engagement and belonging through supportive peer relations, meaningful interaction between staff and students, developing students’ capacity as successful higher education (HE) learners, and providing an HE experience that is relevant to students’ interests and future goals (p. 4).

These interventions should ideally begin in the transition phase between school and university and peer mentoring has been found to be particularly helpful in developing new students’ confidence and self-esteem (Hall & Jaugietis, 2011).

A growing problem for university students is well-being. The **2017 HEA/HEPI Student Academic Survey** showed that for a third year in a row, student well-being is below that of both the national population and those not at university but in a similar age category (20-24 years) (See Figure 16).

Figure 16: University student well-being compared with the general population, 2017.



Source: HEA-HEPI 2017 Student Academic Experience Survey, p. 45 (Source Base: ONS (Office for National Statistics) total UK (circa 157,000); ONS aged 20-24 UK (circa 6,000); Student Academic Experience Survey (2016 15,221/ 2017 14,057)).

In her detailed HEPI study on student well-being, Brown (2016) identified a number of explanations for this worrisome phenomenon. Among them are the challenges of making the adjustment to a much less structured teaching and learning approach; living away from home for the first time; high levels of debt carried upon entering a very competitive job market; having to work for necessary cash while studying; and constant comparison of oneself to others through social media. While most universities have well-being services, demand outstrips supply on most campuses. More needs to be done given that the HEA/HEPI (2017) experience survey also demonstrates just how significant can be the effect of poor well-being on student learning and outcomes. Brown (2016) reports: "A recent study found that 92 per cent of students attending university counselling sessions were having problems completing their academic work" (p. 12), but where there are good support services at the university, genuinely good things can happen. Providing some examples, she notes that "[b]ased on student responses, Ruth Caleb, Head of Counselling at Brunel University, estimates her service saves the university £2.5 million a year in fees that otherwise would be lost due to students not completing their course" (p. 12) and in a 2012 study of 5500 students who had used the counselling services at one of 65 HE and FE institutions, 81% felt it allowed them to stay on the course and 79% felt it helped to improve their grades.

It is critical that students be followed up on to be sure their issue has been managed. In their pamphlet 'The Positive and Mindful University' Seldon and Martin (2017) provide a framework for developing a university-wide culture of student well-being and support through the

evidence-based approach of positive psychology. They provide a series of illustrations of how the framework has worked, at school level in the UK, and at universities in the United States, Australia and Mexico. The message is common to all other initiatives that work to improve student and staff outcomes and to bring lasting change: it takes an institution-wide approach and a commitment to a cultural change that moves from simply reacting to students (or staff) in distress to one in which well-being is supported, resilience is developed, and everyone looks out for each other. Another approach is that of compassion-focused pedagogy (Gilbert, 2017), one element of which is to assist students to become more self-compassionate as a means to reduce stressful thoughts and to build better relationships with peers.

4.7.2 The submissions

Gold submissions discussed the support offered to students, often at considerable length. For example, the term *support* occurs 103 times in the **Portsmouth** submission and 93 times in that of **Newcastle**.

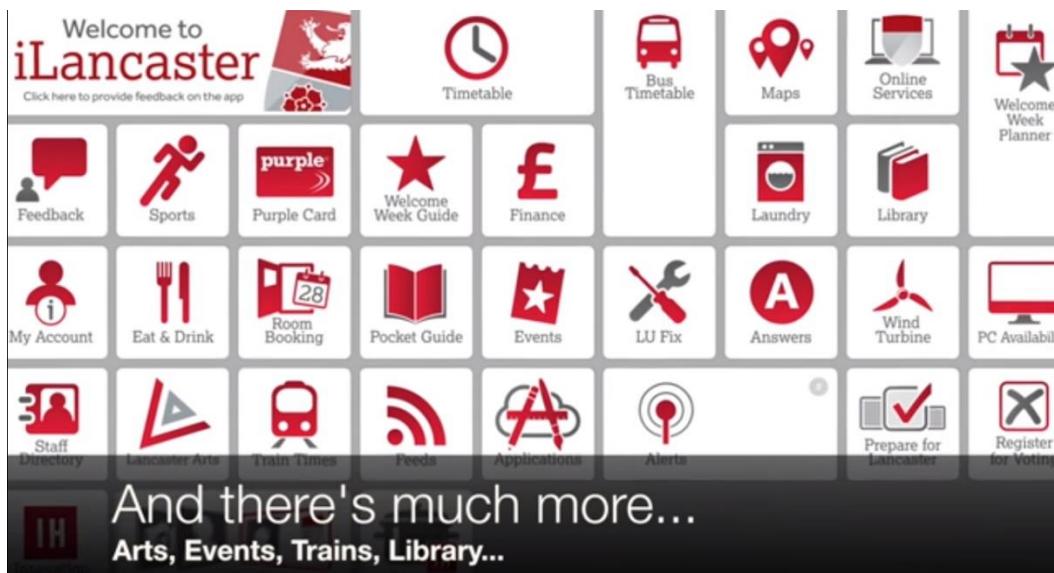
All 23 of the reviewed GP have a **personal tutoring** scheme, and most see it as the cornerstone of support for students given that the personal tutor is often the first to identify issues related to student engagement, progression and/or well-being. Most institutions also provide training for personal tutors and (as noted above) they often have access to highly detailed and up-to-date information via the learning analytics dashboard to allow them to lead timely, informed discussions with students before referring them on to other support services, if required.

A number of universities invest significant resources into applicants, those in transition into year one and first-year students, with many stating that first year is the most crucial to retention and good degrees. At **Bath**, **Newcastle**, **Aston**, **Essex**, **Exeter**, **Portsmouth** and **Kent**, all first-year students are given a peer mentor. **Edge Hill** goes farther in this regard and pairs applicants with a peer mentor, so they can ask questions about university life before they make a final decision on entering. This university is leading the field in their support for transition to higher education and for first-year students. All Edge Hill applicants and students also have access to a UniSkills package with details on support offered for every aspect of student life. Professor Liz Thomas of Edge Hill wrote the HEA report **What Works? Student Retention and Success** (HEA, 2017) report for the HEA that underpins the Academy's change programme on student retention. **Essex** provides a suite of online resources called **Essex101** to help new students with academic skills in questioning, writing, finding ideas, supporting their work and challenging the status quo, among other resources.

A noteworthy approach to transition is used at **Liverpool Hope**, where many programme teams take their first-year students on a residential field trip to the university's outdoor recreation centre in Wales (Plas Caerdeon) to help ensure that they have a smooth integration into university life and, most importantly, develop friendships and a support network. This is also one of only three universities that count first-year grades in the degree classification, so they do much to support first-years socially, academically, and personally. Through a student-staff partnership project, students at **Nottingham** helped to develop a Nottingham Open Online Course called 'Your University Journey,' with a series of two-week modules offered throughout the first year on topics such as getting to know fellow students, reading strategies, and what to expect at university, thus helping to shape student expectations from first year. **Portsmouth's** 'Induction PrepUP' initiative provides all new students with personalized online information about all aspects of the university experience *before* they arrive. **Bath** offers a flexible, integrated foundation year so that entrants from a range of backgrounds who apply without the published UCAS tariff points can develop the skills needed to make a smooth transition.

Aston (MyAstonPortal) **Nottingham Trent** (MyNTU), **Exeter**, (iExeterKent (VSA - Virtual Student Advisor), **Portsmouth** (WhatsUP!), **Lancaster** (iLancaster); **Essex** (Pocket Essex), and **Cambridge** (Spacefinder) have developed various apps (named in the parentheses) to provide on-the-go student support. **Portsmouth** uses WhatsUP! to provide quick contact between students who may be suffering from mental or physical health problems and a specialist. Many of the other apps listed above allow students to view their timetables, assessment due dates, and grade history, and to collect feedback from prior assignments. The ability to look at feedback from across modules allows students to pinpoint areas where they need to develop their skills and then find and book the appropriate workshop or service. In addition to app support, many GP talked about their '**one-stop shop**' for student services. Some have redesigned or built new structures to house all support services in one place (e.g. **De Montfort** and **Dundee**) while others, such as **Nottingham**, have 'Support Bars' in all libraries. The iLancaster app is a sector leader, hosting a huge range of services that can be set up with notifications (see Figure 17).

Figure 17: The iLancaster App



Source: Youtube.com

Most GP support systems are made up of personal tutors, peer mentors, centralized or school based academic support units, career and employability units, student engagement officers and health/well-being services. In various submissions, the institutions demonstrate how they have developed a complete and integrated package of support services. They refer to their support systems in particular ways. For example, **Huddersfield** calls their offering a 'seamless, individualized academic, personal and social support system'. That of **Essex** has an inspiring name: the 'Talent Development Centre'. **Leeds** has '**LeedsforLife**' and **Newcastle** has created the '**Newcastle Offer**' brand to represent all the support services available to students, including the year-by-year development of each student's ePortfolio to show their progress, assessments and feedback, uptake of services, and engagement with co- and extra-curricular activities. **Portsmouth** calls their system 'wrap around provision'. In all cases, peer support and mentoring form a large part of the package offered to students.

Those from BME backgrounds may not always turn to support services first, so **Portsmouth** uses trained peer mentors to offer support on finance issues, relationships, and mental health, for example. **De Montfort's** 'MyUniPal' programme provides all first-year students with peer mentors as well as providing other specialized support throughout the first year. **Birmingham's** Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) scheme is made up of second and third year students who support first years with collaborative, exploratory discussions on academic and other issues. In addition to its academic support provision, **Loughborough's** Peer Assisted Learning

programme (PAL) has provided additional study support to over 1400 students. As the project has grown, more and more students have signed up to be mentors.

Many GP provide **hardship funds or support funds**, made available to students from low income backgrounds and as part of their widening access programmes (**Portsmouth, De Montfort, Edge Hill, Kent, Exeter, Birmingham, Lancaster, and Coventry**). **Edge Hill** has set aside £7 million in a **student opportunity fund** to ensure that every student can take advantage of the same opportunities, from field visits to international placements or study. To ensure that every student has access to work experience, **Essex** has created the **Frontrunners** project to give up to 300 students placement opportunities annually on campus. Students work up to eight hours per week and also commit to a professional development training programme made up of 28 workshops with additional mentoring. The programme won the 2013 Times Higher Outstanding Support for Students Award and a Business in the Community Work Inspiration Award.

Many GP have recognized that **international students** are often less well supported and integrated into the university, particularly if they come for a single year. **Birmingham** provides an intensive induction and full year support to track their progress. **Huddersfield** receives very high scores on the International Student Barometer Survey each year and credits this to its programme of support directed at the particular needs of students from overseas, including intensive pre-study language courses and helping them to integrate into the university and make friends. **Kent** has identified specific groups of students who need tailored support, including mature, part-time and international student cohorts, all who have bespoke support services for their particular needs. **De Montfort** provides an alternative pathway for international students who are not quite ready for full time study. Their partner college, the Leicester International Pathway College (LIPC) provides ongoing language training for international students, beginning before sessions proper. **Bath** also provides pre-sessional courses for international students and has a £50K annual fund for further support.

Although the accounts are largely descriptive, the GP generally provide some evidence of how many students took up a particular type of support. Many also provide data on how the support contributed to better outcomes.

Additional examples of support services and projects are highlighted below:



The Student Success Project (SSP) has been gathering data since 2013 on students with attainment gaps and other support needs. The University also, with students consent links their responses on the annual Student Barometer Survey to their academic performance and uses this data to choose amongst a range of interventions. Students are encouraged to select the support options that best suit them - online, face to face or small group. With funding from the Nuffield Foundation, Kent is also part of the QStep programme conducting research into and offering support for numeracy and maths anxiety.



LIVERPOOL HOPE

In year one, all students are required to develop a structured portfolio or equivalent and get oral formative feedback from their personal tutor since they meet with their tutor in groups of up to ten twice per week. Personal development planning is used to develop each student's proposed learning journey and it also acts as a way to identify student support needs as well as demonstrate distance travelled through each year of study. Students attend a minimum of 12 hours spread across the week and two of these hours are spent with their personalised tutor. If they fail to attend, they are followed up on and referred to other services. Retention rate very high.



University of
HUDDERSFIELD

The majority of students commute to campus and live in the family home. This has been shown to reduce engagement so the University developed a Student Priority Support System (SPSS) to analyse historic data on student characteristics, engagement and outcomes are mapped onto first year student profiles to enable them to monitor progress from day one and to intervene quickly. Very high retention rates.

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Leeds has one of the largest contextual admissions schemes in the country, called 'Access to Leeds' for students who are not able to evidence their potential for study through grades alone. In 2016, 791 students studied on a pre-entry module covering a range of academic topics. In order to progress into first year, they must complete and pass a piece of work marked by an academic in their chosen subject. Over 79% of students who take this route graduate with a 2.1 or a first.

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Leeds has particularly good collaboration for student mental health. The Leeds Primary Care Trust has a senior health improvement specialist for students who coordinates communications. The Leeds Student mental health group has representatives from three campuses, student unions, the NHS Primary Care Trust and the Community Mental Health Team.



De Montfort has a very diverse student population: 56% BAME, 49% the first in the family to enter HE, 25% with a disability. They also have special support programmes for Asylum Seekers, students who are estranged from family and carers. In addition they are sector leading in their support for students with mental health issues.



Has invested in over 100 student led research projects as part of their students as change agents programme (SACA) to identify areas for improvement in student support, among others.



The 'No Hidden Extras' programme is available to all UG students. They are provided with a course specific start up pack including relevant textbooks and support materials such as professional subscriptions, software licenses and large number of printing credits. Cost of any visits or trips are also included .

Recommendation Seventeen:

Ensure that staff and students are aware of all the support services on campus, including academic and personal. Develop a tracking system to reduce the chances of students falling through the cracks because services are not well linked and communicating with each other. Ensure students develop strong personal networks from the start by investing in social activities during induction and in the first year. Enhance the University's well-being and support culture for both staff and students.

Review the support provision for distinct groups such as international, mature, part-time, disabled, students living at home and commuters, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, etc., to ensure it is tailored to their specific needs.

Using iLancaster as a model, develop a 'one-stop' shop app for students.

Recommendation Eighteen:

Manage students' expectations from the beginning – instituting peer mentors for all first-year students is one good way to do so. Along with this, develop peer mentoring related support services.

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4.8. RESOURCES AND INVESTMENT

Both academic support and learning resources are considered in all the main student surveys used in the UK: The National Student Survey¹², UK Student Academic Experience Survey, UK Engagement Survey and the International Student Barometer Survey. As noted in section 4.3 above on teaching, Gibbs (2010) has shown that there is no direct correlation between institutional funding per student on learning resources and other investments, and student learning gain. Even institutions that spend less per student can achieve strong student outcomes if they are investing in a) training and supporting academics to teach well, b) learning centres and pedagogical research, c) training and supporting personal tutors and counsellors, and d) effective provision of academic and other support that is delivered cohesively and within an institutional ethos devoted to student success.

Since academic support has been discussed above, this section will look at how the GP are investing in key learning and teaching resources, in particular for specialized teaching provision, and in digital and library resources.

Investment in specialized resources: A number of GP have made significant investments into STEM resources, including buildings, refurbishments and technology, simulations, problem-based learning labs, and on-campus services for the public such as dentistry and optometry, often with support from HEFCE STEM teaching capital grants (£5 million). **Exeter** recently spent £230 million to build industry-standard laboratories and teaching spaces, and to hire more academics and specialists as part of a strategy to increase interdisciplinary teaching and learning. Thirty-four new problem-based collaborative learning spaces have been created, along with virtualization and simulation labs. In conjunction with Labster, simulations have been designed with gamification elements and an immersive 3D environment for science disciplines. **Birmingham** has also invested in more interdisciplinary STEM educational facilities and technology; indeed, the university hosts a cyclotron – the only research dedicated particle accelerator in the country. **Loughborough**, well known for its engineering programmes, has erected a new building with laboratories that allow for cross-STEM collaborations, with computer-aided design equipment and prototyping facilities. In addition, a new outdoor

¹²NSS Academic support questions 12. I have been able to contact staff when I needed to. 13. I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course. 14. Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course.

NSS Learning resources questions 18. The IT resources and facilities provided have supported my learning well. 19. The library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) have supported my learning well. 20. I have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g. equipment, facilities, software, collections) when I needed to.

learning zone with virtual reality technology opened in 2016. **Portsmouth** has made further investments in their award-winning forensic innovation centre; it is the first operational police forensic research facility in the country and students work with the police, digital crime investigators and staff to solve real crimes. The university is also known for using simulation games and scenarios across a range of programmes; these include a healthcare simulation, a simulated ambulance system, a 13-bay optometry centre, a 25-seat standard newsroom for journalism, a virtual reality suite for arts and culture, a dispensing pharmacy with audio and video links to a large local pharmacy, a mock law court, and a dental academy (in collaboration with Kings College and the NHS) in a full simulation suite offering care in the community. They also have a Bloomberg suite in the business school with access to the same data, analytics and software used by finance and trading professionals. **Edge Hill** has also invested in health care simulation suites, a new media building with industry-standard studios for television and animation work, and a performing arts centre with two theatres.

Library services. Every gold provider is making ongoing investments to enlarge their library spaces and resources, and each has achieved NSS high scores on questions related to learning resources, in all cases above sector averages. The majority of GP offer 24/7, 365 day opening times for at least one of their libraries; for all, the library is a key provider of learning support. Many universities involve students in the decisions about library provision, having students conduct research into this with their peers, and in one case even holding some budgetary responsibilities for acquisitions (**Exeter**). Another key investment is in study spaces, as the demand for a variety of different types of spaces – individual, quiet, collaborative – is rising at all institutions. Some examples of library buildings, investments and services are provided below:

- **Huddersfield** hosts the award-winning Heritage Quay interdisciplinary space with access to historic collections of music and sports from the 1600s. This building won the 2016 Guardian University Award for buildings that inspire.
- **Nottingham** has invested £21 million in redeveloping their science and engineering library, their learning hub and the medical library (£8 million).
- **Nottingham Trent** has an innovative book programme called ‘Your Books, More Books’ in which the library does its best to get any book that a student needs for their course within three days. Their library staff have won two awards for customer service excellence.
- The **Essex** Albert Solman Library won a Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) innovation award in 2015.
- **Exeter** has a student-led Library Champions scheme which puts a proportion of the library’s purchasing decisions in the hands of students. Over the past few years, the Champions have run focus groups to identify what online resources students want more of.

- **Cambridge** has one of the best library services in the world, winning the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2017 award for the best services and facilities spend. The university has come second in this category for three straight years. (**Bath** was ranked joint first on this award in 2017.)
- **Imperial** has one of the most generous book and digital book offers in the country. Students and staff can sign out books for 40 days and students do not have to pay for any inter-library loans, no matter how many they require.
- **Leeds** has one of the largest and most distinguished library systems in the UK with collections dating back over its 100-year history and well before. Five of its special collections have been awarded designated status by the Arts Council as collections of outstanding international importance. The university has five library sites and spends more than £12 million per year on services, upgrades and resources.
- **Birmingham** recently spent £60 million on a new library. Students were involved in all stages of the project.
- **Newcastle** manages the need for library space at exam time in an innovative way. Using available space in many of its buildings, the University creates 'Pop-Up' library spaces to manage the extra demand. Having a particularly effective Wi-Fi system across the university helps to make this system feasible.
- **Derby** has created outdoor learning spaces on the library balconies and has made funds available to create, trial, and evaluate new types of learning and study spaces.

Investments in digital resources include those for

- learning (e.g. e-books, software, Wi-Fi, online chat forums, learning apps such as Evernote and GoConqr, technology such as laptops and simulations, MOOCs and online courses)
- teaching (lecture capture, audio and video feedback, virtual learning environments, online assessments and marking)
- access to services (e.g. university apps, online chat with IT/library/health/well-being services) and, as noted above,
- learning analytics to track and support student progress.

Birmingham and **Derby** discuss their digital strategies in terms of 'future-proofing,' with the **Derby** submission including the most extended discussion of plans to expand digital technologies and learning into all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.

De Montfort, Newcastle, Essex, Exeter, Bath, Leeds, Birmingham, and **Imperial** describe their use of lecture capture systems. **Newcastle's**, to name one, is called ReCap, through which 24,385 lectures were recorded in 2015/16. In all cases where lecture capture is discussed, the provider states that it acts largely as a revision tool. For example, **Newcastle** notes that the average viewing time for a recorded lecture is only 23 minutes, thus providing potential evidence that it does not actually replace the lecture. In all cases, the submissions demonstrate a commitment to continued investment in digital resources.

Other significant investments include those for teaching and learning resource centres (see above, page 66-67) and in pedagogic CPD, in new or refurbished teaching buildings or spaces with digital capabilities, and in support services.

Recommendation Nineteen:

Involve students in resource decisions. Have them conduct research as paid researchers and feed into resource investments at each stage. Invest in lecture capture technology, simulations for learning, learning apps (following research with students), and 24/7 library provision and IT support and other active learning technologies such as simulations.

5. UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

The gold provider statements offer a wealth of examples of highly innovative ways of meeting particular challenges or providing opportunities for student growth and development. While some of the initiatives have been discussed above, in this final section, they are highlighted with additional detail, and a few others not yet mentioned are briefly outlined.

Table 6: Unique attributes from the gold provider statements

CURRICULUM INNOVATION	
Cross-disciplinary Curriculum	<p>Exeter – committed to broadening students' viewpoints and global perspectives; allows 30 credits per year to be taken in another discipline of the students' choice.</p> <p>Flexible combined honours programme has up to 2000 combinations, the largest such variety in the UK.</p> <p>Liverpool Hope University – all programmes have year-long modules with a liberal arts basis.</p>
Cross-disciplinary work and projects related to global challenges (research informed)	<p>Essex's co-curricular THINK seminar won the 2016 Guardian University Award for Student Experience. It is attended by 300 students per event and allows students to debate controversial and thought-provoking subjects outside of the classroom and broaden their views on national and global challenges.</p> <p>Exeter's Grand Challenges Room. Students across a range of disciplines work together with practitioners and leading experts to find solutions to global issues such as climate change, global security, fast fashion and social justice. Exeter has created apps and other outputs with the contributions of at least 500 students to date.</p> <p>Loughborough has a similar scheme: 'Tackling real problems'.</p>
Using Design Principles for Curriculum Development	<p>Aston University has developed Conceive, Design, Implement & Operate (CDIO), a School of Engineering initiative to improve curriculum design. De Montfort embeds UDL (Universal Design for Learning) principles in all its programmes to ensure a truly inclusive curriculum.</p>
INNOVATIVE USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES	
Online and Blended Learning	<p>De Montfort has a lecture capture system available for all modules. DMU Replay provides students with online resources comprising audio-visual feedback options and lectures among other content and learning materials.</p> <p>Newcastle University uses ReCap which allows all lectures to be recorded: 24,385 were recorded in 2015/16 with over 647,000 views.</p> <p>Essex uses 'Listen Again' software as well as a lecture capture system in 42 main teaching theatres; 6846 lectures were recorded in semester one of 2016-17. Most teaching rooms at Bath have Panopto lecture capture. Leeds has the</p>

	largest automated lecture capture system in Europe, installed in all teaching spaces, with 70% of lectures captured in 2015-16. Birmingham provides Panopto lecture capture in 230 teaching venues. Imperial's Panopto system includes 77,000 hours of lecture capture to date.
Using technology for assessment	Cambridge is developing an online system to reproduce the university's traditional three-hour written essay style exam system.
Providing students with digital learning technologies	At Imperial College all medical students are given an iPad upon entry with 'Sofia' software providing the entire 6-year curriculum as an interactive map. Students know at any point what they should be doing and the learning outcomes for the day. The software allows for note-taking, recording of lectures, and sharing of notes. 28,000 notes have been shared to date and the system is credited with helping to achieve the 100% pass rate in year 6 after the system was implemented. Edge Hill provides full versions of four apps to all students including RefMe , Evernote , Instapaper and GoConqr based on findings from a student-led research project.
MOOCs	Leeds has created 48 online courses on their FutureLearn platform for both Leeds students and external learners; students interact from around the world thus enhancing cultural awareness as well as providing credits. Exeter created MOOCs for 100,000 learners from 105 countries; some were created and led by students. Academics in the physics department at Cambridge have begun a project to create undergraduate teaching materials that are now co-produced with five other universities in the UK.
STUDENT-STAFF PARTNERSHIPS	
Students as Producers	Lincoln University is a leader in this area and is recognized internationally. The Student and Staff Insight Team provides all key management staff with a student mentor including VC, Department Chairs, and the Board of Governors' Chair. The Student Recruiter scheme trains students to be part of interview panels and selection. Lincoln provides many examples of collaborative production of knowledge such as a design team working on real products for emerging markets called Co-Lab. Students at Lincoln share their knowledge with others and can create their own websites through a dedicated Wordpress facility - 4000 websites and blogs are currently hosted.
Students as change agents	Exeter's Students as Change Agents project (SACA) provides funding for student-led research projects to change aspects of TLA, including a buddy system for students on study abroad, improved seminar delivery and support for mental health issues. As part of the University of Derby's Digital Literacy project, student ' Digichamps ' are appointed to work with peers and staff on developing digital capabilities. Digichamps helped to

	create the 'Provisional Grades and Feedback' tool in Blackboard so students can keep a record of all feedback during their study.
Identifying Educational Priorities/ Student Staff Partnership	Loughborough University - works with LSU and the 500 course reps to identify the top priorities students want addressed each year.
Interacting with senior staff	Derby has a renowned annual panel debate between student reps and the senior management team. Students ask questions via a Twitter feed as well as face-to-face.
Peer support projects	Loughborough has a very large peer mentoring, peer support and peer assisted learning (PAL) system, with 244 mentors and 35 PAL facilitators who have helped 1400 students since its inception. At Newcastle , all first-year students are provided with a peer mentor. A University of Kent research study found that students with attainment gaps tend to go to peers rather than tutors for feedback, so they enhanced the Academic Student Peer Mentoring Scheme (APM) . Second and third year top performing students are trained to provide mentoring to over 1000 students per year.
SUPPORTING STUDENTS FROM PRE-ENTRY TO GRADUATION	
Induction/Pre-Entry Development	Aston uses a Flexible Foundation Year as part of its programme to widen access; those not quite ready for full time study take a year of preparation modules via a flexibly paced online learning programme, which has made a significant contribution to retention and support for low attainment groups. De Montfort puts all new entrants through a series of diagnostic tests to identify skill weaknesses and then develops a learning support programme for each (4503 students in 2015-16); the data is shared with each personal tutor who then supports and tracks student development. The Portsmouth PreUP initiative develops online, personalized information on each student, and provides it to them prior to their study; support services are recommended as needed. Lincoln has a New Starters Survey to assess perceived learning needs on entry to guide decisions regarding support resources. All students in year one at Liverpool Hope take a 5% assessment within the first two weeks of the year so that skill weaknesses can be diagnosed, and so students are exposed to feedback and can make better use of it.
Strategic Initiatives	Newcastle has a strategic initiative called the Newcastle Offer , an institution-wide change programme that won a Times Higher Education Leadership award . The offer sets out the opportunities that all students have access to and all of the university's support services.
Tracking and supporting students throughout their degree	Edge Hill has created the Student Journey Programme , in which all interactions between students and any university

	<p>service are tracked to provide a roadmap of all support provided. Kent uses progress profiles to allow students to monitor their attendance and progress jointly with their personal tutors; they have also created an interactive phone app so students can find the right support. Kent also has student peer mentors, writing clubs, SMART targets as agreed by tutors and a re-sit support programme.</p>
Identifying students who are at risk/with skill deficits	<p>Loughborough has developed a PhP/MySQL web application backed with learning analytics technology, assisted by a grant from JISC. Called Co-Tutor, the app provides a dashboard for staff to examine a student's record to provide for early intervention as needed; all staff contribute notes. The app also allocates personal tutors. (available to other universities).</p> <p>Aston's MyAstonPortal uses learner analytics to identify at-risk students and those with skill weaknesses. All staff contribute to so that early interventions can be made.</p> <p>Liverpool Hope maintains a Students at Risk database built on six nationally recognized criteria such as postcode, ethnicity etc. Scores are initially calculated for students and updated over time as they engage with support services and receive their grades.</p> <p>Kent is piloting interventions to develop numeracy skills via an ESRC + Nuffield Foundation 2013 QStep project.</p> <p>Portsmouth is one of 12 HEI's piloting the JISC Student Digital Experience learning analytics programme to track student experiences, expectations, and outcomes to inform future developments in digital learning.</p>
Attainment gap projects	<p>Kent's Student Success Project identified pockets of exceptionally high degree outcome expectations among BME students which were coupled with poor attendance and low awareness of support services. The project has led to many published outputs, a national conference on student attainment (2016), and regular symposia. Other important findings about lowered performance are: difficulties adjusting to formal lectures and seminars; reduced motivation following unexpectedly low marks; lack of exam practice and essay-writing skills; fear of disappointing family; lack of experience of academic communities; and occasionally, module content that privileges students from some cultural heritages. Many new interventions have consequently been put in place.</p>
Digital technology to connect staff and students	<p>Loughborough created the Lboro Connect app allowing students to identify office and other support hours across campus and make bookings as well as all other university services (see Figure 17, p. 126).</p> <p>Aston created the WASS web-tool, so students can make bookings to see staff from anywhere.</p>
Alternative provision frameworks	<p>Coventry offers courses in 6-week blocks at a lower price point for those without time and resources for full time study; they also offer HND and HNC.</p>
Innovative financial support mechanisms	<p>Portsmouth's Student Finance team provides each student with a Financial Advisor accredited by the Institute of Money</p>

	Advisors (IMA) to help them manage money and debt. They also have a large hardship fund.
Support for final year students	Liverpool Hope provides all final year students with an 'honours pass' giving them unique access to study spaces in library and elsewhere and extended borrowing rights.
ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY	
Employability Programmes	<p>Coventry's Add+Vantage scheme has 234 modules in 11 thematic areas including Global Languages, Creativity and Entrepreneurship, Work experience, Professional Development, Global Field Trips, Volunteering, Professional Accreditation (e.g. Cisco, Adobe qualifications) and Projects and Skills' – all to enhance employability.</p> <p>Kent's Employability Points Scheme allows students to engage in volunteering and obtain placements; they may also attend hundreds of available employment events and cash them in for other employment opportunities. Kent Extra includes a range of extra- and co-curricular activities such as volunteering (1000 opportunities) or short courses (58). Kent Union Jobshop placed 2319 in part time work. Students may also go to one of four campuses abroad.</p> <p>Newcastle's 'ncl+ brand' publicises extracurricular activities around six themes: enterprise and entrepreneurship, work experience and student jobs, cultural and social activities, volunteering, global opportunities, and university and community representation. There is also a high level of support for enterprise activity.</p>
Enterprise/Entrepreneurship Support	<p>Loughborough: The Studio provides support and a tailored route to commercialization of products/services.</p> <p>Cambridge's University Entrepreneurs (CUE) runs an extensive programme of events and workshops including one of the most successful business creation competitions in the world with £1.5 million in available prize money.</p> <p>De Montfort has the #DMILocal volunteering programme (2500 students) and #DMUGlobal, the most comprehensive international experience programme in the UK. It is embedded in curriculum and all students must engage in at least one international experience; bursaries are available for those without funds. DMUSquareMile is an award winning programme that sets up student-led projects to benefit the local community.</p>
Employer/Student Partnerships	In Portsmouth's Business Consultancy Project Unit , 350 Business Students per year work with 50 local firms on applied projects to solve business problems.
Careers Awareness and Support	Loughborough offers My Loughborough Journey to all students, which includes in-curricula careers, employability lectures and workshops so that all students are reached, including those less likely to engage with the careers service.
Tracking employability+	At Newcastle all students have ePortofolio to track and monitor all employability related activities, in addition to allowing for ongoing communication with personal tutors.

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK	
Student Assessment Literacy	Newcastle used an Innovation Fund grant to run 10 projects on Assessment and Feedback. One outcome was a series of videos for students on how all aspects of A&F work.
Online audio and video feedback.	Derby uses technology in innovative ways across the university; one increasingly used system is video and audio feedback which students rate very highly.
Evidence-based processes	Exeter, Dundee and Loughborough have all adopted the TESTA approach to assessment and feedback, each making significant changes to their strategies based upon its principles and all seeing improvements in student outcomes and scores on assessment and feedback survey questions. Birmingham has adapted TESTA and created its own approach (BALI).
RESEARCH INFORMED TEACHING	
Approaches	Newcastle embeds research-informed teaching into the curriculum design process; each year, external examiners must comment on their view of the links between teaching and research to inform annual monitoring reports and periodic reviews. Newcastle has also created an additional NSS question : 'My learning has benefitted from modules that are informed by current research' to gather student impressions. Birmingham's monthly university-wide TLA discussion topic recently included a question, 'what is research informed teaching and learning?' Responses will be used to design a new policy and set of processes.
DEVELOPING LEARNING AND TEACHING EXPERTISE	
Teaching and Learning Hubs	Coventry's Disruptive Media Learning Lab (DMLL) focuses on innovation in teaching and learning. It is a highly supported and collaborative framework using expertise, creativity and technology to drive major advances in T&L. (See http://dmll.org.uk/) This initiative features highly innovative use of technology and creative ideas. Liverpool Hope has set up a series of cross-university 'Communities of Practice' on different themes associated with TLA (for example, inclusive teaching). All staff are encouraged to participate in at least one Community. The project was started with a £25,000 catalyst grant from HEFCE. Birmingham has created HEFi (Higher Education Futures Institute). Professors work 50% in discipline and 50% in HEFi bringing all L&T development under one roof – pedagogical research projects, development of weekly videos on a range of evidence-based L&T innovations, monthly discussion topics (e.g. what is research informed teaching), accreditation, etc. Students are also involved.
Innovation in Reward/Recognition/Promotion of Teaching Staff	Portsmouth makes cash awards to around 70 particularly good teachers each year. Newcastle has set up a reward and recognition track for those applying for promotion via teaching excellence, run by two

	NTF who did an international project on this theme. Specific resources were developed to help applicants provide an evidence base towards promotion. Newcastle also created a series of case studies on those who have gained promotion and has run numerous workshops and events. One-to-one support is also provided. 58% of promotions are now via teaching and scholarship.
Research in Teaching and Learning	Newcastle has given out 82 grants for TLA projects since 2010; all such projects must include students to gain their perspective as well as to develop their research skills.
RESOURCES, DIGITAL AND PHYSICAL SPACE	
Innovative use of space	Liverpool Hope has internationally recognized ‘inspiring, aesthetically pleasing and accessible garden campuses.’ It has also earned architectural awards for its ‘Creative Campus’ in Liverpool centre and for its outdoor education centre in Wales. Newcastle uses ‘ Pop-Up ’ spaces during assessment periods (setting up additional study spaces when needed).
Finding spaces to study	Cambridge created a ‘Spacefinder’ app to allow users to search for study spaces throughout the university and the city; the app provides information on available Wi-Fi strength, food and drink, natural daylight and size of space (for individual or group study).
SUSTAINABILITY	
Embedding sustainability across the curriculum	Nottingham Trent has adopted the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals and embedded them into curricula. This, combined with its sustainable campus management, has won the university the award for the Learning in Future Environments (LiFE) Index Gold in 2016. In 2014, Nottingham invested in a team of four who set up a Green Academy, initially as part of an HEA programme (academics, Estates Department and NTSU). The team leader won the Sustainability Professional of the Year at the 2016 EAUC Green Gown Awards for helping the university embed sustainability across the curricula of every school. In December 2016, in partnership with NTSU, Nottingham achieved the Responsible Futures Accreditation from the NUS.
Outstanding external green spaces	Nottingham Trent has green zones and a green roof garden. Liverpool Hope is committed to maintaining and enhancing its inspiring, aesthetically pleasing and accessible garden campuses (which have been featured in ‘The New English Garden’ and ‘International Cityscapes’).
INNOVATIONS IN STUDENT SUPPORT	
Learning resources	Nottingham Trent created the ‘ Your Books, More Books ’ scheme to guarantee that a student needing a book will get it within three days if at all possible, even if the library must purchase the material. The initiative won a 2015 National Acquisitions Award for Excellence; the library staff also gained two Customer Service Excellence Awards for their culture of student support.

Coventry's 'No Hidden Extras' offer provides all first-year students with the books and other learning resources they need.

6. SPECIAL MENTIONS

Although each of the gold submissions is distinctive and interesting to read in its own right, ten stand out from the rest for the unique ways in which they have developed their case and for providing outstanding evidence of commitment to a particular ethos or set of values. Below is a brief overview of what is most noteworthy in these submissions.



Excellent for use of evidence to support claims made, thus adding to the credibility of the submission.

The Nottingham submission is packed with metrics: for almost every claim, data is provided showing progress against benchmarks and/or against sector norms. In addition, the university employs the i-graduate Student Barometer study, an international survey used at 180 institutions in 18 countries, including 50 in the UK. Known at Nottingham as the Nottingham Student Experience Survey (NSE) students comment on aspects of teaching and learning, academic support, and learning facilities, via a 21-question survey in each year of study. See pages 5-6 of the Nottingham submission for question categories and how the findings are used to enhance the student experience.



Strong submission showing student care and a commitment to widening participation.

It is impossible to read the Edge Hill submission without feeling the strong commitment to staff and student well-being and success. The sense is of a nurturing, value-based institution that demonstrates the best of what a university should stand for – equality of opportunity, fairness, strength of purpose, collaboration, and personal and intellectual growth. The submission demonstrates that student success is linked closely to staff satisfaction and engagement; it is not surprising that the university has been awarded the Times Higher Education's Best University Workplace 2015, and the UKTI sponsored, European Business Awards, UK Employer of the Year award in 2016.



Also a strong submission for student care and a commitment to widening participation, but also for its work with and commitment to the local community.

A cornerstone of De Montfort's strategy is the 'university as a force for the public good'. The submission explains how this principle is embedded through all educational decision-making and also through the provision of opportunities for students to make a contribution to improving the lives of people in the local community and abroad. Through projects such as DMU Square Mile, #DMUlocal and #DMUglobal, university staff and students are addressing inequality, and growth and development issues both in Leicester and internationally. All students are encouraged to take on volunteering opportunities and to study abroad or take an international educational trip, which has earned the university the Outstanding International Strategy Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Award

(THELMA) in 2016. In addition, through its access programme and a curriculum that is built upon UDL principles of accessibility for all, De Montfort has one of the most comprehensive approaches to widening participation.



Most comprehensive use of metrics to assess and enhance performance.

Recognised as the Times Modern University of the Year in 2014, 2015 and 2016, and the Times Higher Education University of the Year in 2015, Coventry has taken a business-oriented approach to development including investing in new schools (five campuses including The Institute for Advanced Manufacturing and Engineering) and a highly metrics-driven approach to quality and performance. The CQEM (Course Quality Enhancement Monitoring) system and dashboard is the core reporting mechanism integrating input from all sources, including External Examiners and Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies, to provide a holistic view of the course performance. Data is continuously updated and available via dashboards for all key staff and is used in all decision making.



Strong for purpose, voicing success, student-staff partnerships and investment in innovation. Excellent in terms of employability.

The Loughborough submission conveys financial strength, strength of purpose and thoughtful, well-planned strategic investment in innovative practices and facilities. It exudes confidence and authority. Credit for success is attributed to the strong commitment to student-staff partnerships, not only in terms of listening to the student voice, but through actively engaging students in research and decision making:

“The constructive partnership at every level between students and staff at Loughborough in shaping and delivering an outstanding student experience is at the heart of everything we do” (Loughborough submission, p. 2).

The submission demonstrates the University’s willingness to use genuinely evidence-based processes such as TESTA. Other common teaching and learning practices cross-disciplinary problem solving and employer/student projects to give student work opportunities while also adding value to the local economy through new product design and development. The submission demonstrates that Loughborough has a strong global reputation.



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

For the commitment to enhancing teaching and learning evidenced in part by the new teaching and learning institute (HEFi) run by professors on part secondment from their disciplines (50%) and for commitment to accessibility and support for high performing students from all walks of life.

Over 80% of Birmingham’s students come from state schools, 28% are BME and 20% come from Polar Quintiles 1 and 2; the university remains committed to opening access and to developing ways to ensure the success of all. It is one of the largest universities in the UK, but the submission provides evidence of how well all groups are supported. The new teaching and learning institute manifests real commitment to evidence-based practice. To ensure that both decision-making and outcomes are collaborative and shared, appointees are active professors in their disciplines who dedicate 50% of their time to institute work.

Overall the submission gives the impression of richness, variety, and breadth of exciting opportunities for students and to continuous innovation.



On how a smaller University can carve out a unique niche with an innovative approach to curriculum and student support.

Liverpool Hope is a unique institution. The smallest of the GP reviewed for this report, it has developed a distinctive approach to education with its year one foundation in the liberal arts for all students, its year-long modules and programme-oriented approach to curriculum design, and the focus on small class teaching and strong investment in first-year students (it is only one of three universities in the UK to include year one grades in final classifications). The university takes a holistic view of the educational journey, including campus design, gardens and architecture as an important part of the overall experience of learning.



For the commitment to developing globally aware, capable graduates through its wealth of learning opportunities, cross-disciplinary learning, and engagement with employers and industry.

Exeter has been shortlisted for University of the Year four times in the past decade and won the Sunday Times award in 2013. The submission gives the impression of an exciting, rigorous and comprehensive approach to the student experience with more and more opportunities offered each year to "give students the ability to go on to make a difference in the world" (Exeter submission, pg. 1). With globally-aware citizenship as a key educational outcome, the university is committed to cross-disciplinary learning, to giving students opportunities to develop real solutions to global problems in conjunction with academics and industry, and to maintaining high expectations and a learning environment that stretches the student.



For its institution wide 2 phased Student Success project and institution wide commitment to using the outcomes of this research to reduce attainment gaps.

Kent has made a commitment to tackling the causes of attainment gaps in higher education through a range of approaches, including a research-intensive two-phase Student Success Project, the outcomes of which inform all aspects of the student experience (and are available to other universities who wish to implement the findings). KPI's are set and monitored on a range of attainment issues. The submission conveys a sense of compassion, care, and demonstrated concern for the well-being and attainment of all students.

For identifying the core ingredients of success, for codifying and branding them to drive innovation and a transformational student experience.

Leeds has used a design-principles approach to innovation and change. Key aspects of a Leeds education are articulated, designed, branded, and embedded in all aspects of education. These include the 'Leeds Partnership' ("an agreement drawn up with Leeds University Union (LUU) which sets out a shared set of expectations, not only between staff and students, but also within these groups on a peer-to-peer level" – Leeds submission, p. 1), 'The Leeds Curriculum' and 'LeedsforLife'. Three 'core programme threads' are embedded in all curricula - ethics and responsibility, global and cultural insight, and employability. LeedsforLife is a programme that gives students access to a wide range of co-curricular opportunities such as volunteering, placements and study abroad, along with structured advice and guidance to help them make the most of their opportunities, to develop them as competent citizens and to enhance their CV's. Each opportunity undertaken is recorded in a PD portfolio.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Below is a restatement of the recommendations from key themes identified in the submissions and based upon both a review of the literature and a careful reading of each of the twenty-three narratives. While they may at times be quite broad in scope, the hope is that they can act to start conversations and to offer a basis upon which to compare current practice.

1. Academics and the TEF (pp. 21 - 22)

Recommendation One:

Engage academic staff in the TEF submission both as a means to address specific challenges they may be facing and to provide validity to the submission. This should not be done in a way that adds additional pressure to teachers' schedules.

2. Language, Tone and Style (pp. 23-25)

Recommendation Two:

Language use and tone are very important in creating a convincing and compelling narrative. Choice of key words should flow from and be linked to a clear mission statement, ethos and/or values.

Use the submission to provide examples of how the institutional ethos and values are demonstrated, have had an impact on student outcomes and are foundational in decision making. A narrative with a richer prose style (as opposed to one that is quite terse and economical) is more convincing because of the subject matter - the ways an institution invests in and commits to educating and transforming the lives of students.

3. Mission Vision and Values (pp. 26 - 31)

Recommendation Three:

If using a mission statement, aim for a distinctive vision of the institution that is emergent rather than determined and one that shows a capacity for flexibility and adaptability in a rapidly changing higher education sector.

Demonstrate how the mission and values underpin all aspects of the strategy discussed in the submission, thus creating coherence and focus while also providing evidence that all organisational structures, systems and processes are aligned to these outcomes and are flexible in the face of change. Provide examples of how the institution measures the achievement of values. Give clear evidence of an institutional ethos at work.

Use language that shows evidence of distinctiveness.

4. Key themes and Findings

4.1 Widening Participation (pp. 34 - 43)

Recommendation Four:

Gold submissions provide considerable evidence of support for disadvantaged students, those with gaps in attainment, disabled students across a wide range of disabilities and support for student well-being. Evidence is given comparing attainments (grades, employment, HSE) of these groups against peers and showing improvements over the past three to five years. These metrics are linked to specific, often highly innovative support projects. Four demonstrate an embedded, institution-wide commitment to inclusivity, diversity and equality.

Institutions should work towards an institutional culture of inclusivity that celebrates difference rather than focuses on individual attainment challenges. The language used in inclusivity documents and practices should avoid deficit phrases such as 'attainment gap' and 'disadvantaged' wherever possible.

Submissions should provide clear evidence of benefits to all stakeholders of an effective widening participation and inclusion strategy, showcase innovative projects to reduce gaps, and provide compelling evidence of improvements in attainments across all groups.

4.2 Students as partners/producers (pp. 44 - 54)

Recommendation Five:

Commit to developing a university-wide policy of student-staff partnerships. Begin by examining current instances of exemplary staff-student partnerships that have resulted in effective change or innovative outputs. Set up department or school-based working groups to emulate these partnerships and, over time, develop partnerships at all of the levels suggested by Healy, Flint and Harrington (2014): students managing or collaborating with staff to identify and deliver quality enhancements to learning and teaching; students co-producing knowledge through research amongst themselves and with staff, in both pedagogy and subject-based research; students designing, co-designing curricula and assessments (such as MOOCs) and also delivering the curricula, and students providing peer academic support as well as peer marking.

As a starting point, consider student driven and designed processes for gathering, analyzing, and reporting both quantitative and qualitative feedback on teaching and learning. Staff-student partnerships can determine sets of annual priorities, conduct pedagogical research to provide an evidence-base, agree on time-frames for change and set KPI's to measure achievement. Allow all students to participate by instituting a live feedback mechanism and opportunities to engage in implementation.

4.3 Teaching, scholarship and reward and promotion mechanisms (pp. 55 - 75)

Recommendation Six:

Involve teaching staff in the TEF submission process. Make an institution wide commitment to understanding the health and well-being of teaching staff, the pressures they are under and how they perceive departmental and institutional leadership with respect to teaching and

learning. Commit to identifying all the barriers to effective teaching at the individual, departmental, school and institutional level. Set annual priorities and/or KPI's for reducing or eliminating these barriers.

Provide training for all, but particularly for departmental managers in transformative and collaborative leadership styles. Develop effective performance management systems for teachers who need support and development and mentoring, and also set up communities of practice within departments to share good practice. Where possible, use as many full-time academics for core teaching as possible.

Recommendation Seven:

Avoid a performative approach to excellence, that is, one which views teaching quality as something that can be quantified, codified and thus rewarded based on numerical data alone. Recognise the contradiction within an institution that invests in accreditation only to then assess teaching quality almost exclusively according to survey outcomes.

Recognise qualitative strengths of individual teachers and consider ways to improve the institutional training and CPD for teaching and learning. Make use of Senior, Principal and National Teaching fellows in CPD. Include discussions of types of CPD in TEF submissions that show evidence of improving teaching quality.

Recommendation Eight:

Develop an institution-wide commitment to evidence-based pedagogy of the highest quality and make it a performance indicator – in order to give it the recognition and status it deserves and to enhance the credibility of marketing materials that report on the institution's pedagogy. Ensure that engagement with this evidence and critical reflection on teaching is a requirement for ALL staff, including specialist services and support staff. Include pedagogical CPD and research as part of reward and recognition. Discuss the outcomes on teaching quality and student learning gain of investments made in pedagogy in the TEF submission. Ensure that all course reviews and revalidations include robust evidence and support from the pedagogical literature for all TLA strategies.

Recommendation Nine:

Following from Gibbs' Dimensions of Quality (2010), ensure that institutional measures of teaching quality are linked to learning gain, not only to satisfaction. Use evidence-based measures of learning gain where possible, perhaps using the HEA UK Engagement Survey annually. Establish a qualitative framework for teaching quality using evidence-based frameworks such as Chickering and Gamson's (1987) Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education. Discuss current practices that demonstrate these principles and their outcomes in the TEF submission. Encourage more qualitative feedback from students and develop processes to make better use of qualitative data.

Recommendation Ten:

Involve students in all teaching related developments including appointments and promotions, curriculum development, and pedagogical projects, as part of a student-staff partnership model that involves students in teaching and learning (see above). From induction, educate

students about responding to surveys to improve the usefulness of their feedback and to manage their expectations.

4.4 Curriculum, Research Led Teaching, Assessment and Feedback (pp. 76 - 97)

Recommendation Eleven:

Assess the time and resources needed to undertake curriculum review such that all stakeholders can effectively provide input and all factors can be thoroughly considered. Ensure that all aspects of the review are grounded in evidence-based pedagogy; consider developing design principles to inform review and development. Use the opportunity to create collaboration and discussion amongst all teaching staff as well as with students as a foundation to build a department that is more collaborative and focused on pedagogy – one which builds in the research-teaching nexus and includes opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning and research. Allocate resources for conducting research that will support an improved and up-to-date curriculum.

Recommendation Twelve:

Review the current research-teaching nexus within the institution for examples of best practice. Commit to developing opportunities for all quadrants of the nexus within the curriculum and assess the outcomes of each in terms of improved student outcomes. Allow for more cross disciplinary learning opportunities. Find ways for students to contribute to solving local, national and global problems that call for a multi-disciplinary approach, and to produce ideas that address local, national and global problems. Use these as examples in the TEF submission to demonstrate the holistic nature of research and teaching.

Enhance the curriculum to better develop students' higher-level thinking and reasoning skills (synthesis, evaluation, critical thinking, problem solving). Expose students often to ill-structured problems – without easy solutions and which require reasoning and judgement. Employ before and after measures to determine learning gain in terms of critical thinking and reasoning.

4.5 Employability skill development, opportunities and graduate employment (pp. 98 - 109)

Recommendation Thirteen:

Consider using the Higher Education Academy's Framework for Embedding Employability in the Curriculum, or Cole and Tibby's "Defining and developing your approach to employability: A framework for higher education institution" (2013) as part of curriculum review to enhance how the programme integrates employability across the curriculum, to build links with all relevant employment and career services, and to provide opportunities for academics to refresh their perspectives and ideas for developing students' employability skills, attributes and capabilities.

Enhance the links between all employability, skills development and career services and provision at the institution to ensure it is comprehensive, shares good practice, and provides wrap-around support for all student employability needs. Develop an employability recognition scheme that gives credit of some kind to co- and extra-curricular activities which enhance employability.

Recommendation Fourteen:

Review the employability provision to ensure it offers opportunities for students to develop life-long career management skills and attributes such as those presented in the Yorke and Knight list above (Personal Qualities). Consider using tools such as career readiness or career confidence surveys from first year to identify students' needs for support; and implement a system to track progress over the degree. This will also help encourage groups of students who are less likely to take up work experience.

4.6 Monitoring Mechanisms and responding to student feedback (pp. 110 - 118)**Recommendation Fifteen:**

Invest in a personal tutoring and training scheme.

Recommendation Sixteen:

Invest in learning analytics to capture student characteristics and track their engagement, progress, feedback, and use of university services. Make the data available to personal tutors. Investigate learning analytics data for patterns of behaviour that could lead to lower engagement and possible withdrawal. Map this data onto incoming student profiles to allow for earlier detection of potential problems. Engage students in the feedback gathering process as researchers. Have them gather more qualitative data to help contextualise the data from surveys.

4.7 Student support and personalised learning (pp. 119 - 131)**Recommendation Seventeen:**

Ensure that staff and students are aware of all the support services on campus, including academic and personal. Develop a tracking system to reduce the chances of students falling through the cracks because services are not well linked and communicating with each other. Ensure students develop strong personal networks from the start by investing in social activities during induction and in the first year. Enhance the University's well-being and support culture for both staff and students.

Review the support provision for distinct groups such as international, mature, part-time, disabled, students living at home and commuters, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, etc., to ensure it is tailored to their specific needs.

Using iLancaster as a model, develop a 'one-stop' shop app for students.

Recommendation Eighteen:

Manage students' expectations from the beginning – instituting peer mentors for all first-year students is one good way to do so. Along with this, develop peer mentoring related support services.

4.8 Resources and Investment (pp. 132 - 135)

Recommendation Nineteen:

Involve students in resource decisions. Have them conduct research as paid researchers and feed into resource investments at each stage. Invest in lecture capture technology, simulations for learning, learning apps (following research with students), and 24/7 library provision and IT support and other active learning technologies such as simulations.

Lynn Vos

University of Hertfordshire, July 2018.

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APPENDIX ONE: Total student numbers (Undergraduate and postgraduate) at the 23 gold awarded providers 2016-2017

Birmingham - 34835	Leeds - 33300	Nottingham - 32515	Coventry-31690
Nottingham Trent - 29370	Newcastle - 24980	Portsmouth - 23505	De Montfort - 23205
Exeter - 23175	Kent - 20220	Cambridge -19955	Huddersfield - 18280
Imperial College – 17690	Derby – 17585	Loughborough – 17130	Bath – 16910
Dundee - 15390	Edge Hill - 15220	Essex - 14585	Lincoln - 14105
Lancaster - 13615	Aston - 13610	Liverpool Hope - 5240	