



TEF Submission 2023

At the University of Exeter, we are growing our global reputation for combining excellence in education and research and we are pivotal to the educational and industrial development of the South West of England. Partnership with our student community is the hallmark of the University. Our students are active participants in the production and dissemination of knowledge; innovation in education; and, in all strategic decisions and policies. Our pursuit of excellence in education is built on the foundation of our 2017 TEF Gold award; a culture of continuous improvement and data-informed decision-making; and our longstanding commitment to co-creation with our learning community of students and staff. Our values-led response to supporting our students' learning and outcomes, our educators and our community in the face of the pandemic testify to our ethos. This submission will demonstrate consistent provision at the highest level across this TEF period.

'Contentment has grown year-on-year within the student body, according to our analysis of the latest National Student Survey. Exeter has risen 35 places to reach the top 25 for student satisfaction with the undergraduate experience. ...Graduate prospects have soared into the top 20 (19=), up nine places from its performance in 2021.'

Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide commentary on status as Runner-up University of the Year 2023⁽ⁱ⁾.

The University of Exeter is a full-service University based on two campuses in Devon (Streatham and St Luke's) and two in Cornwall (Penryn, shared with Falmouth University, and Truro). Students are served by two students' unions: the Exeter Students' Guild (the Guild) and the Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union (the SU). In 2021/22 we enrolled 30,012 FTE students (22,823 UG; 5,416 PGT; 1,773 PGR) – an increase of 33% over a five-year period.

The University 2030 Strategy⁽ⁱⁱ⁾, co-created with our students, staff and alumni, captures our collective mission: 'We will use the power of our education and research to create a sustainable, healthy and socially just future.' This statement affirms our social and economic purpose and an important recurrent theme: the synergy between education and research. The 2030 Strategy also recognises the inherent potential of our students and their contribution to our mission, stating that we will 'challenge and inspire our community of learners from every background to thrive, develop the skills they will need for the future and lead the change the world needs.'

In pursuit of our mission, we have adopted a comprehensive definition of excellence to direct policy and practice over the TEF period. This definition is captured in our Education Strategy (2019–25)⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾, co-created with students and staff, in five characteristics of excellence: a)

– ours is a culturally rich community in which we welcome learners of potential from every background. We promote inclusivity, wellbeing and accessibility through our curriculum, policies and processes. We continually strive to eliminate gaps in access, award and progression to employment. b)

– we are creating an inspiring and cooperative learning community for staff and students, in which education and research are synergistic and equally valued. We develop and reward excellent educators, and we foster evidence-based innovation. c)

– we are forging a globally attractive and inclusive curriculum and educational experience.

Our approach makes meaningful global opportunities open to all and enables engagement with other perspectives, ideas and challenges. d) – through data analysis, literature review and rigorous experimentation, we ensure that pedagogic innovation enhances learning. We engage students as active participants in the production of knowledge. e)

During the 2021/22 and 2022/23 academic years the University has developed and implemented a change in structure to align more closely to the 2030 Strategy. This has seen the creation of larger and stronger departments located in three Faculties (amalgamating the six Colleges that existed through the TEF period) that promote interdisciplinary solutions to the challenges of environmental sustainability; health and wellbeing; and social justice. In these years of transition to new structures and recovery from COVID-19, we have introduced the [redacted] (para 18) to increase agility in resource allocation to pressure points and to support pivotal departments to address improvement in student experience during the transition.

Strong evidence-based decision-making in all of our governance groups is enabled by our longstanding and comprehensive data-driven approach to the strategic management of education. The pervasive institutional focus on the use of evidence to drive improvement is also reflected in the student submission led by our Guild. Through our Management Information (MI) Hub, live data are available to education leaders on: module engagement; assessment submission and return; career registration and planning; and student numbers and withdrawals. The MI Hub also provides access to trend data on the NSS and PTES; Graduate Outcomes and Longitudinal Educational Outcomes LEO; degree classifications; pulse surveys; and performance against Access and Participation Plan targets. Tools enable interrogation of the data at aggregation levels from module, through department, to Faculty and University; and by gender, ethnicity, age, domicile and social dis/advantage. In addition to underpinning the TEMs (para 17), these data are pivotal to the work of Success for All working groups (paras 62, 86-87, 92) and the Degree Outcomes Steering Group (para 88) that are crucial to our progress in driving down awarding gaps (para 96).

We are proud of how we instantiated our characteristics of excellence, especially our Success for All our Students and Valuing Educators in the way we handled the COVID-19 pandemic, the single greatest challenge faced by all UK universities over the TEF period. We placed our students, staff and community first and ensured that our pedagogy fit the changed circumstances (paras 25-28). We secured £9.7M funding from Council for [redacted] (para 74) to make investments in digitally enhanced teaching and learning that have great enduring value beyond the pandemic. We supported our students and led the sector in our pioneering [redacted] (para 27), co-created with Elected Officers and student activists^(iv)



Academic experience and assessment

Academic experience and assessment

Across the TEF period, our institutional focus realised improvements in the timeliness and quality of feedback. Supported by strategic prioritisation post-pandemic and a longstanding three-week turnaround policy, we have seen an +8.8% improvement in question 10 (Feedback on my work has been timely) in NSS 2022. The TEAP and Student Experience Gold processes have prompted College and departmental reforms. For example, Humanities introduced College-wide assessment norms in 2020/21 to create greater consistency between programmes, especially across extensive Combined Honours provision in the College. Biosciences introduced feedback norms on quantity and quality of feedback for staff in 2021/22. In NSS 2022 the Biosciences Assessment & Feedback category average increased to

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Throughout the pandemic we sought to protect student assessment experiences and outcomes. Critically,

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

Fieldwork, Virtual Fieldwork, and Public Educational and Attention-Raising Role

Fieldwork comprises a substantial component of programmes in Biosciences, Geography, Environmental Sciences, Geology, Mining and Archaeology. In addition to providing essential skills for students, through social media posting in 'Fieldtrip Fortnight', they fulfil an important public educational and attention-raising role with regard to the environment and climate emergency.

During the pandemic, we committed to offer physical fieldwork wherever possible, working closely with county Public Health organisations to enable this. Where not possible, we enabled students to meet the learning outcomes of field trips, exchanges and work placements through the design of virtual experiences that will enhance future practice. a) The History module, Post-Colonial History in South Asia, involved a virtual exchange with Lahore University enriching the experience of students from both universities and deepening contact between the cohorts. b) The Camborne School of Mines created a virtual mine experience enabling more accessible and frequent interaction with the mine environment, enhancing student learning and skills acquisition of direct relevance to future employment. c) Medical students usually develop cultural competency skills in a different medical context on a field trip to Colombia. This has been virtualised, employing the Collaborative Online International Learning framework to ensure the key skills are developed.

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

The synergy between education and research infuses every aspect of our University and the quality of the research that inspires all of our teaching and learning is outstanding. The University found 99% of our research to be of International Quality and 94% to have Internationally excellent impact^(xix). It is the normal experience of Exeter students to be taught by academics working in a research-intensive environment and contributing to advancing their disciplines and understanding of critical interdisciplinary challenges.

During the co-creation of the Education Strategy, our community of staff and students defined the University as an International Learning Community of Staff and Students in a number of ways. We identified seven characteristics of the synergy between research and education: a) the community advances knowledge and scholarship; b) inspirational teaching and learning is informed by staff research; c) the staff-student dynamic in teaching and learning inspires research ideas; d) students and staff undertake research that enhances their own learning; e) students and staff engage in knowledge exchange activities; f) published student research contributes to knowledge; g) graduates are change agents and ambassadors for the knowledge creation undertaken in the University.

Across the University, we create opportunities for students to learn through their own research both within and outside the curriculum. Student group and independent research projects benefit from access not only to supervision by active researchers but also access to the facilities and resources that enable the world-class research undertaken by those staff. Paid research internships have been offered across the TEF period in all Colleges, including Wellcome Trust-funded STEMM and social science internships offered through our Translational Research Exchange scheme and Digital Humanities internships offered to students who are passionate about cutting-edge digital methods and careers in the cultural heritage sector.

Research opportunities enrich student learning, bring original ideas to research and enable students to develop skills and attributes that boost their employability: a) On the Penryn campus Law and Business programme, week-long 'hackathons' have been embedded in core modules across all years of study. Students work in teams to research and produce solutions to interdisciplinary problems for real-world industry partners, including (in 2020) Rick Stein, Wild Harbour and Swannacot Manor. This work was recognised as sector leading in a peer-reviewed journal article ^(xx). b) The Arts Council England-funded 'Unlimited Value' research project was embedded in several Business School modules (UG and PGT) between 2016 and 2018. Over 500 students engaged with the project, tackling themes such as leadership development, data analysis and management information systems. The example was used as a 'best-practice' case-study in HE partnerships with public libraries by Arts Council England ^(xxi). c) In interdisciplinary STEM, since 2012, Exeter students have participated in the annual iGEM competition. In this worldwide event, students push the boundaries of synthetic biology by tackling issues facing societies around the world, from clearing minefields to removing microplastics from washing machine effluent. The Exeter student teams have experienced considerable success in this competition, winning gold medals in each of the last five years and, in 2022, also winning awards for Best Inclusivity, Best Manufacturing Project and Best Human Practices.

We have strong relationships, internationally, nationally, and regionally with more than 250 partner organisations, including J.P. Morgan, Amazon, BT and IBM. These have been further strengthened through collaboration in degree apprenticeships. Across our taught portfolio, we build industry partner



Resources, support and
student engagement

Resources, support and student engagement

Our Education Strategy declares a commitment to nurturing an international learning community of students and staff. This involves support for staff development; investment in resources and student support, and outstanding student engagement.

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

We support all academic staff to develop as educators and integrate the quality of contribution to teaching, learning and student support into all contracts and promotion criteria. We ensure equality of opportunity for Education and Research (E&R) and Education and Scholarship (E&S) staff by establishing clear progression pathways through all career stages to professor for both in the Exeter Academic programme of support. Between April 2016 and November 2022 there were 50 E&S promotions, with 9 of these being promotion to professor.

Our sector-leading (Accrediting Staff Professionalism in Research-led Education) Framework has been accredited continuously by Advance HE (since 2011 as separate pathways and since 2016 as a framework)^(xxvi). Exeter was the first to be accredited at all 4 fellowship descriptors from Associate (AFHEA) to Principal Fellow (PFHEA) and is still 1 of only 33 institutions accredited for all 4. Open to all academic and professional services staff, it comprises three routes to HEA fellowship: the experiential ASPIRE Professional Recognition Pathway (covering from AFHEA to PFHEA); our taught Academic Professional Programme (APP, for FHEA); the initial Learning and Teaching in Higher Education taught programme (for AFHEA). Our 2021/22 percentage of academic staff with any fellowship stood at 56%, well ahead of the sector average of 46.7%. The Provost and two DVCs are PFHEA.

Over the assessment period, 21 AFHEA, 96 FHEA, 89 SFHEA and 19 PFHEA have been awarded on the PRP. We offer flexible support to applicants. Alongside regular guidance workshops, assessor calibration sessions and mentor forums, we have embedded synchronous and asynchronous online support for applicants. In addition, we hold fortnightly online writing sessions in which applicants can post questions or draft text for live feedback from the PRP team. Since 2020, we have further enhanced flexibility by offering a dialogic PRP route based on constructive conversation with an expert panel of assessors.

In 2018, the University replaced the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PCAP) with a level 7 apprenticeship APP, which is mandatory for new lecturing staff. Since then, 343 colleagues have been awarded the APP and Fellowship. Of those, 97 colleagues have completed the programme as ESFA-funded apprentices and, therefore, have completed an end-point assessment with Advance HE. Advance HE included one of our lecturers in their 'Perfect Apprentices' feature last year^(xxvii). Exeter's programme is often regarded as an exemplar: we presented a 2019 session with Advance HE for DVCs and PVCs and 15 other HEIs have requested information about our programme.

Our LTHE (taught) programme is mandatory for postgraduate researchers who are teaching and assessing and is encouraged for professional services staff who support education. To ensure continuous improvement in the programme across the TEF cycle, the following enhancements have been made: incorporating more accessibility and inclusivity information for learners; focusing assessment on the Education Employability Portfolio (accepted as more authentic and helpful than previous models); supporting participants with marking in their disciplines; and incorporating the student voice via student-led taught sessions and resources.

The Leadership Difference, the core programme of the new Exeter Leader initiative, brings together mixed cohorts of professional and academic staff to share experience and cross-fertilise ideas. We also tailor a range of specific development opportunities to education leaders including coaching. We are also working with academic leaders to offer a more structured rollout of coaching skills using both our Accredited Internal Coaching network and local initiatives.

Short courses support priority areas and a particular focus of CPD in the TEF period has been ensuring colleagues are equipped to support our students' mental health. During the assessment period over 380 colleagues have attended courses, including Mental Health Awareness, Mental Health First Aid for Higher Education, and Mental Health First Aid for Personal Tutors. Other courses included: Handling Difficult Conversations, Academic and Personal Tutoring, Giving and Receiving Feedback, Researcher Development: Getting Stuff Done, Strategies for Developing Self-Confidence, Esteem and Value, Building Our Own Support Network, Overcoming Imposter Syndrome, and Recognising and Controlling Fatigue. In 2021, 463 academic colleagues attended 840 development sessions on 89 topics amounting to over 1,000 hours of learning.

Six of our leading educators from across the University have been awarded NTFs in the assessment period. These colleagues are drawn from Natural Sciences, Renewable Energy, Law, Bioscience, Geography and our Academic Development and Skills professional service team.

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

Our *Academic Support Working Group*, chaired by the DVC-ESE, leads comprehensive and in-depth scrutiny and direction of support for academic experience and outcomes. Focusing on ensuring equality of opportunity in a supportive learning environment for all of our students, working groups address key aspects of student life (Access; Transition and Induction; Progression; Financial Support; Inclusive Education) and on ensuring special attention to underrepresented groups (mature students; underrepresented students; international students; diversity in postgraduate education). Examples of initiatives led by the working groups are outlined below and in the consideration of outcomes (para 87). The efficacy of these interventions is evidenced by the outstanding continuation and completion metrics (consistently exceeding 95%) and strong progression into graduate employment.

In 2018, the University reflected upon instances of racism and harassment within our student community and instituted a root-and-branch review of our practices and culture. The [redacted] searched for best practice in student induction and support, learning and teaching, culture and environment and funded racial equity projects. Collaboration with the Advance HE 'Embedding EDI in the Curriculum' project led to the creation of a self-assessment toolkit for departments. The Provost Commission established enhanced reporting tools for harassment and discrimination and raised awareness of our commitment to inclusivity through events, speaker series and targeted actions in Freshers' Week. The work of the Commission was used to develop a new Vision for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity 2025 and is mainstreamed through the Success for All working groups and the Transformative Education Framework (paras 62, 86-87, 112-113). The effectiveness of these measures is reflected in outstanding performance for Student Voice amongst students of Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnicity (5.1 to 6.3% above benchmark).

Recognising that our increasingly diverse cohorts seek tailored support and information ahead of arrival, we have developed a range of engaging, discipline-specific, online pre-arrival courses. These offer students the opportunity to connect with each other prior to arrival and have enabled us to focus more resource during Freshers' Week on interactive events that prioritise community and friendship formation rather than information delivery. Following three successful years in the Business School, the approach was rolled out across the whole institution in 2021, when 6,000 students enrolled on online pre-arrival courses. This is complemented by the New Students' Guide, launched in 2020 in partnership with a student spin-out company, Loomery^(xxviii). This web-based guide has checklists of tasks to complete before and at arrival and has a facility to connect with current students to ask questions about life in Devon and Cornwall.

An [redacted] provides support for those who may find the transition to university more challenging (e.g. due to disability, experience of being a carer or in care)^(xxix). This programme includes whole- or half-day events on campus before the start of term, where new [redacted] 00D10045004Fup2(en)5.7 (t)97 (stude3.7 (ee suoug6.7uin 3.3 (out c (ampus be)161.7 (tner)27.7 75 e)15.INT)54 eeryf beingEx (eb)-13 (t)16.7 (e be)17 75

The University's Study Zone was established in 2018 to provide a one-stop centre for learning resources and support with study skills^(xxx). Through both digital and physical offerings, the service tailors support to the needs of students in a timely fashion. The first port of call is the comprehensive and easily accessed platform designed to normalise engagement with academic skills support. The platform has seen 633,000 site visits since its launch in 2020, with the most visited pages including 'academic writing process', 'referencing', 'exams and revision' and 'critical reading'. Study Zone also offered 170 in-curriculum workshops and lectures, integrating with the module content to ensure support for 17,000 students. More intensive support is offered to students who require it and, over the assessment period, 500 students have taken advantage of 106 workshops and 1,600 students have received 2,713 one-to-one

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total visits since launch. f) Develop our distance-learning support. Through the Alibaba interface we have been able to ensure continued access to key online systems and resources for students in China, and supported around 10% of our student body to study remotely in 2021/22. g) Invest in LinkedIn Learning to provide access to a wealth of professional study and personal development resources; and in Studiosity, a service to provide rapid feedback on written work. Our students accumulated over 500,000 minutes of Studiosity usage in the last year.

Our ^(xxxiv) was planned pre-pandemic and established in 2020. Modelled on the Apple Genius Bar concept, it is a face-to-face and online digital skills support service. Since launch in March 2020 and supported by 52 student digital ambassadors, we have helped more than 5,900 students face-to-face, resolving 78% of queries instantly. Online, our Digital Hub site has had 36,163 unique visitors and 437,796 page views (of over 200 Guides and 100+ videos). With the pandemic pivot to online and hybrid learning, the Digital Hub was able to react rapidly, supporting new and returning students delivering training on all digital tools used for learning and teaching.

In tandem with the introduction of the Digital Hub, the University invests £160k annually in digital tools to support collaborative teaching efforts, with rollout accelerated by COVID-19. These include Mural, Mentimeter, Padlet and Zoom. This complements our annual investment in the Microsoft suite licences, including Teams, for all staff and students.





Positive outcomes

Positive outcomes

Success for All our Students is a core commitment in our Education Strategy, now embedded in our strategic governance through the creation of the Success for All Strategy Group (para 62). In 2018 we established our place as a national leader in this area by bringing academic researchers and professional practitioners together, under joint leadership, to form the [Success for All Strategy Group](#). This is dedicated to improving access, success and progression in Higher Education through research, evaluation and evidence-informed practice and policy that we enact ^(xxviii).

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support', followed by a second award in 2022 for 'innovation and creativity in supporting estranged students' emotional wellbeing' ^(xi). We are a University of Sanctuary and offer an Access to Exeter Bursary for all UG refugee and asylum seekers from low-income households, and award a number of Sanctuary Scholarships each year, with 24 such scholarships offered to date.

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

Our data demonstrates outstanding rates of continuation and completion, exceeding the high TEF benchmark for most of our courses and groups of students. This is testament to our work within the TEF cycle: overseen by the Success for All Strategy Group, informed by data and targeted especially at underrepresented and at-risk groups.

As outlined in paragraphs 64 and 65, induction has been enhanced across the University. This is supported by a best-practice framework developed by our Success for All Working Group focused on Induction and Transition. Our aim is to grow peer relationships, flag the support and help available, foster a sense of belonging and enable students to better navigate university life.

Through our strengthened personal tutoring system, we monitor students' submissions of work to identify those at risk. For example, the 'frequent look, rapid remediation' system on the BMBS course in the Medical School is designed so that frequent assessments allow early support where appropriate. This system contributes to the >99% continuation rate for Medicine.

We are proud to be above the TEF benchmarks for the continuation and completion of mature students, both in the 21 to 30 and over-31 age ranges. Support for these cohorts is overseen by our Success for All Mature Students Working Group. After their engagement in the Enhanced Induction programme, mature students are encouraged to join a peer support programme and are provided with information and advice about the range of academic support available to them ^(xii).

We are 30.6% materially above benchmark for completion of Black students and are addressing the below benchmark completion for Asian students as a Success for All Strategy Group priority action in 2022/23. We have made . We have closed the disability awarding gap for three years. With respect to ethnicity awarding gaps, in order to determine progress in

We are continually monitoring data on progression in order to identify emerging issues, including through our TEAP process. This enables swift intervention by departments, illustrated in two examples: a) in Physics, we noted that excellent rates of progression for MPhys programmes contrasted to lower rates for students leaving after three years with a BSc. In response, in 2020 the department redesigned core modules, reinforced the BSc project work support which was identified as key to students' employability, and focused Stage 3 tutorials around careers skills, assigning key staff responsible for employability to these core areas. b) Allied Health (constituting Medical Science and Neuroscience students) was another outlier in 2017/18 and 2018/19. In response, the programme lead developed the Academic, Personal and Professional Learning Evaluation, which aids students in identifying, acquiring and evidencing the most commonly required employability skills. These disciplines now perform above the TEF benchmark (reporting as Medical Sciences).

Our positive and improving progression data is a result of our strategic emphasis on supporting employability skills for all students, independent of background, both within our curricula and through SEAS. Strong performance against benchmark aligns with our Career Destination Survey and, given the historically strong correlation between it and Graduate Outcomes results, we are confident of further improvement in the 2020/21 Graduate Outcomes survey.

University, positions us well to maintain our outstanding performance.



Educational gains

Educational gains

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

Our commitment to outstanding educational gain is embedded both in curriculum design and enhancement (paras 32–46) and in co- and extracurricular opportunities available to all through our partnership with the Guild and the SU and through our Careers Zone. Each student is enabled to personalise their experience through engagement with these opportunities. Our intended educational gains are articulated to prospective students alongside other information that helps inform their choice of University, programme of study and future career. We clearly communicate that we are working to create a sustainable, healthy and socially just future and emphasise that, through education and research, our students and staff can together 'create the possible'. This communication and engagement continues throughout our students' educational journeys and, as alumni, beyond.

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

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Educational gain at Exeter is focused on the development of core graduate attributes. Our Education Strategy defined curiosity, creativity, critical thinking and global understanding as key for life beyond graduation. Informed by our excellent relationships with industry (para 49), feedback from alumni and analysis of the global changes in the world of work, we have refined these target attributes in our University Strategy 2030 as follows:

- We believe that students and staff alike learn through research and discovery, and this is reflected in our curricula. We provide a multitude of opportunities for students to engage in research to enhance their learning (paras 43-46).
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- The National Data Strategy recognises that the data revolution has implications for the entire UK workforce. Therefore, we promote Digital Literacy through core modules across our programmes and through: a) our Q-Step Centre, funded since 2014 by the Nuffield Foundation and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), embeds quantitative methods training in social science into substantive degree programmes and modules; b) our Digital Maker Spaces and HPC capacity support students in both research-led teaching and also digital skills development (paras 71-72); c) our

run in 2020/21, was a finalist for the Green Gown 2021 Award in the Tomorrow's Employees Category^(xlvii)

During 2021/22, the University conducted the Data Foundations Project, a qualitative research project aiming to identify the data and analysis needs of its educators and student-facing professional services teams. Key findings and priorities for action included: a renewed focus on how education and student experience data is captured, stored and managed; the development of integrated and readily accessible student data analytics, to facilitate focused student support including interventions to close attainment and awarding gaps; and the development of analytics to support the whole student journey, academically and pastorally. A new Data Strategy is currently under development as a result of this work and will equip us to efficiently and effectively capture all our students' educational gains over time.

Throughout the TEF period we have been committed to internationally excellent education that creates a sustainable, healthy and socially just future. This is founded on:

- talented, engaged students from all backgrounds studying collaboratively with passionate educators whose subject expertise is informed by their world-leading research and whose teaching is informed by scholarly engagement with pedagogy and innovation;
- comprehensive focus on 'success for all our students' to ensure equality of opportunity and outstanding outcomes;
- student progression to graduate-level employment supported through structured programmes delivered by professional staff in partnership with

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