Provider name: University of Northampton
UKPRN: 10007138

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON PROVIDER SUBMISSION FOR TEF 2023

1.   CONTEXT

The University of Northampton (UON) community of students and staff is committed to our mission of '**Transforming Lives and Inspiring Change**'. Our education is relevant to the world of work and values social impact for the betterment of individuals and society, and it is underpinned by personal and holistic support. Our student outcome metrics have improved since our Gold 2017 TEF submission, the gaps between outcomes for different groups of students have decreased, and our education and student support are innovative, aligned to our mission, and constantly being improved in partnership with students. In terms of the Educational Gain difference we make, we increase the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Group for two thirds of our young full-time undergraduates from families from SOC groups 4-7[1].

In Northamptonshire, very wealthy areas co-exist with areas of great poverty and deprivation; the latter have complex and significant social and economic challenges, including high unemployment. The only university in the county, we are a large local employer, **an anchor institution,** and a key driver of local and regional economic growth. In the most recent Economic Impact Report[2], the University of Northampton generated nearly £244m of output in Northampton town, an additional £45m in wider Northamptonshire and a further £132m in the rest of the East Midlands.

In recognition of our commitment to social innovation and entrepreneurship we were the first UK university to be awarded the **Ashoka U 'Changemaker Campus'[3] status**, and we are one of only 41 universities with this status in the world. In keeping with this commitment to make a positive social impact, in 2020 the University of Northampton signed the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Accord[4], the University and College sector's response to the global goals. We embed these values in the curriculum (section 2.2), in extracurricular opportunities (section 3.3), and in the culture of the university.

Our educational provision is organised in three faculties: Arts, Science and Technology, Business and Law, and Health, Education and Society. We work closely with **partners in local government, public sector providers and community groups, and with business and private sector employers**, to design and deliver our provision for the benefit of our students and Northamptonshire (sections 2.1 and 2.2). Hundreds of teachers, police officers, nurses and other health professionals graduate from UON annually and Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation is common in all three faculties:

Faculty	Number of Programmes with PSRB Accreditation
Arts, Science and Technology	26
Business and Law	17
Health, Education and Society	29

In 2021/22 we had c.14,400 students (UG, PGT and PGR) at our Waterside campus; 77% were full-time or sandwich, 22% were part time; c.1% were degree apprentices. A further 6,100 students study off campus in the UK and internationally, mainly through partnership arrangements. **We are proud to be a university that widens participation**. 21.7% of our full-time undergraduate entrants in 2021/2022 held three A level passes or more; 40.4% had at least one BTEC; the majority enter with a mix of qualifications. 22% of our FT UG students come from the most deprived areas in England (Indices of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1 and 2). 24% come from areas with the UK's highest crime rates (crime decile 1 and 2). Our UK domiciled FT undergraduate

students identify ethnically as 55% white, 28.7% Black and Black British, 7.3% Asian and Asian British, 6.3% identify as other ethnicities or as being of mixed ethnicity, and the ethnic identity of 2.3% is unknown. Many of our students commute to university from homes away from campus, and have other demands on their time in addition to their studies[5].

We opened our Waterside Campus in 2018, which was built to suit our 21st Century approach to learning and teaching, with spaces designed for collaboration, small group learning, and one-to-one conversations. It provides a full range of integrated learning environments, including 24/7 access to library resources and formal and informal social learning spaces. In order to enable all our students to study in the ways and at the times that suit them best, without sacrificing peer group learning and support, face-to-face teaching has been **enhanced by technology to give our students flexibility in the way they learn**, an approach we call **Active Blended Learning**[6] (ABL) (section 2.1). In a learning environment which is both physical and virtual, ABL enables us to combine face-to-face activities with synchronous and asynchronous digitally enabled learning, and this is inherent in our course development, review processes, and staff development. ABL complements our policy of **Integrated Learner Support**[7] (ILS) (section 2.5). In recognition that many of our student can find navigating a university support offer difficult, ILS co-ordinates multiple teams to ensure students can access the support they need when and where they need it, without having to contact different university departments. Research conducted by the Head of Learning and Teaching Enhancement showed that some categories of students, including Black students, are less likely to seek support at critical times such as their first assessment deadline. In response to this, we integrate multiple forms of support into students' experience. We continue to refine aspects of ILS, including the underpinning technology systems, but many elements of the model are working and have contributed to reducing gaps in the awards made to different groups of students[8], and the progression outcomes for students (section 3.3).

> *The support received has been incredible. Smaller teaching groups have meant that it is easier to receive greater amounts of support, and lecturers are always keen to help wherever they can. Lectures are fun and always engaging. I feel I have learnt a lot more at Northampton than I would have anywhere else and have consequently been able to produce work at a good standard. I am really grateful for my experience at Northampton.* (Sociology student, 2022 NSS)

We take an **evidence-based approach to educational enhancements**, with **students as active stakeholders**. To **embed innovative effective approaches,** we establish pipelines of developments with students as partners, supported by small grants, guidance and mentors. Once proof of concept has been established, developments are integrated into university frameworks. This builds staff and student ownership of initiatives that can be **tailored to the needs of different subject areas and groups of students**. Examples of activities to support pipelines of innovation include URB@N and the UON Learning and Learning Enhancement and Innovation Fund (section 2.3), leading to outcomes such as the Cultural Integration Workshops and the Learning Development Mentors (section 2.5).

In the 2022 UON's NSS scores increased numerically for all question sections compared to 2021. Our largest increase was 8.9 percentage points (pp) in Learning Resources. Overall Satisfaction rose 5pp to 72.7%; the Teaching on my Course rose 1.9pp to 76.8%; Assessment and Feedback rose 0.9pp to 69.3%, Academic Support rose 2.7pp to 71.4%, and Student Voice rose 2.25pp to 64%. While still lower than we want, these results have narrowed the gap between UON and the sector mean.

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1.2   PARTNERS

We have UK and international partners, supported by a dedicated Academic Partnerships team. We ensure quality and standards in multiple ways, including sharing our UON model of curriculum development, Creating Aligned Interactive Educational Resource Opportunity (CAIeROIs), with partners, approval of all partner academic staff to ensure that they meet our requirements; and tailored training sessions for all partner academic staff which include an overview of UK HE, ABL, best practice in assessment and feedback, academic integrity, and policies and procedures. Partners are aware of our expectations regarding the student voice and we observe partner Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC). We provide training in UON professional service practices to ensure comparability. Depending on the terms of the partnership, partner students access our online resources and support services. Partner staff can access UON online support materials and staff training and development sessions. We host partner days, where partner teams come on site to meet UON colleagues and take part in workshops personalised to the partner. Every assessment cycle we review partner academic outcomes to raise any areas of concerns and offer additional training and support if outcomes are outside of benchmark. We hold regular Partner Reviews, to ensure the partnership is still aligned to our expectations as a provider. As a result of these reviews, we terminate partnership agreements when necessary. We are very proud when partners lead Changemaker activities locally, such as our Sri Lankan partner, the Human Resource Management Institute, who won our 2022 International Changemaker award[9], for their work to increase Sri Lankan hospital capacity in response to COVID-19.

1.3   COVID-19

Throughout the pandemic and lockdowns, we did our utmost to protect and provide continuity for students. In March 2020, we established a Critical Incident Group (CIG) covering Student Support, Teaching, Learning and Academic Quality, Partnerships and Placements. The CIG had representatives from the Students' Union, all Faculties and professional services, and was co-chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Academic Registrar. It initially met weekly, and later fortnightly, to take executive decisions and monitor actions and feedback. By 30 March 2020, UON had developed, approved and published emergency academic regulations to maintain the integrity of our awards, our reputation, and educational benefits to our students, combined with a 'no detriment' approach which maximised flexibility and personalisation, taking account of guidance from the Office for Students (OfS) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

ABL was a significant positive factor in the university's ability to deliver education remotely in response to COVID-19. Staff revised hundreds of modules to adjust to remote learning, teaching and assessment, and these changes were approved and communicated to students rapidly when the first lockdown was announced. Learning, teaching and assessment approaches for remote study were developed, supported and monitored. Existing student support plans were reviewed and augmented for remote delivery, and to ensure any groups of students who were particularly vulnerable at that time had appropriate support. The Additional Needs Services, comprising the Additional Student Support and Inclusion Services Team (ASSIST), Counselling and Mental Health Team and the Needs Assessment Centre, all moved seamlessly to remote provision of support for students to aid them in overcoming the challenges associated with adapting to remote learning, providing increased hours of support as well as establishing dedicated 'points of contact' to ensure more vulnerable students were supported with regular targeted 1:1 provision. During UK and international lockdown periods, UON taught international students remotely until they were able to join us in person, which eased student concerns around travel disruption. For students who were required to quarantine on arrival, the university provided discounted accommodation to ease the

financial burden. For students isolating in accommodation, hampers of food, toiletries and cleaning products were provided.[10]

We communicated the key principles and requirements of our approach to partners so they could interpret these locally for their specific circumstances, and we provided ongoing support and guidance to partners.

Case studies from UON of how the rapid transition to studying online inspired students to demonstrate great creativity, in some cases exceeding the outcomes previously expected from course assignments, were published in national collections of sector best practice[11]. For example, Fashion, Textiles and Footwear and Accessories students undertake an industry challenge to design a collection for an employer partner. When lockdown restrictions prevented them making the presentation to the partner in person, the students produced video presentations of their collections. The industry partner was so impressed that they increased the winning team's prize. Students reported that the project helped them develop communication skills, professionalism, resilience and contributed to their employability.

In terms of student access to resources, library and learning services were electronic-first prior to COVID-19. Approximately 85% of our collection was online and our support services offered physical and online alternatives, e.g., our virtual Skills Hub[12] which won a national award in 2015[13], tutorials and drop-ins (face to face and online), postal loans and a 24/7 physical self-service issue and return, an alternative formats service for students with additional needs, and a 24/7 chat service complementing the physical help desk. With additional investment in e-textbooks and other e-resources, we were able to transition seamlessly when lockdown happened. Students could order physical resources online and return them via prepaid packages. In addition, Library and Learning Services (LLS) set up virtual rooms for group study for students, provided online drop-ins with library staff and opened fully to provide resource access as soon as it was legally possible.

Having many professional programmes with integral work-based learning, placements presented numerous challenges, and required the reconciliation of duty of care to multiple stakeholders with resolution of operational challenges. We were able to ensure that the majority of health students progressed and completed their programmes on time through innovative online placements, hybrid placements, virtual rehabilitation programmes, and working with partners. Our hospital partner signed off health students using simulations so they could graduate and join the NHS workforce. A change of assessment or alternative activity was required in 164 placement and work-based learning modules so that students could progress. However, despite virtual work experience and reduced placement requirements, many students were impacted. 235 students had their awards delayed because of the need to complete placements postponed due to lockdown and due to the impact of the pandemic on emergency services which reduced their ability to support placement students. 76 students took a break in their studies because of the impact of COVID-19 on their opportunity to undertake a placement.

Students whose studies depended on access to on-site specialist facilities were also particularly impacted, e.g., fine art, engineering and computing students. When it was possible to return to campus, student requirements to access specialist facilities were prioritised. We identified students whose field trips were intrinsic to their learning outcomes and put alternatives in place in consultation with the students. Digital poverty and lack of suitable space to study at home were factors for many students, and the IT support team worked extensively with individual students to

help them maximise their network connectivity if they lived somewhere with poor connectivity or with multiple users sharing a connection, as well as issuing new and loan laptops by post.

The Students' Union societies continued to run a social programme, and established virtual communities to support specific student groups, e.g., LGBTQIA+ students who were amongst those particularly severely impacted by lockdown, as for many, leaving home for university can be a time of major life stage transition.

1.4　IT

Following recent strategic developments in response to the student voice, 2022 NSS Q18 scores for IT have risen. A new leadership and governance approach to IT, and new strategy from 2022/23, will drive further improvements. IT has been a source of concern since 2018 when we opened the Waterside campus despite investment in state-of-the-art systems, cloud storage and hardware. Students have consistently expressed dissatisfaction with IT provision, and specifically Wi-Fi. Because staff and students use laptops to work, learn and teach, we are very reliant on Wi-Fi and any disruption has a profound impact. NSS Q18 results in 2019, 2020, and 2021 have been in the lowest quartile and student comments in these years frequently cited the Wi-Fi as a problem (21 comments in 2019 when satisfaction was just 65.1%, 15 comments in 2020, and 2 comments in 2021). The 2022 NSS Q18 score improved to 71.1% satisfaction, and no negative comments mentioned the Wi-Fi or internet connectivity. Despite poor IT results in the NSS, other evidence suggests that IT is in many ways performing well compared to the sector (section 2.2 and 2.4).

1.5　CYBER-ATTACK

UON suffered a severe cyber-attack in March 2021, a year after the first COVID-19 lock-down, which disrupted student learning and other university functions almost entirely for three weeks. Severe restrictions on activities persisted for a further two months due to our restoration of services rather than submitting to the attackers. After months of further work full services were restored and functions which students depended on were prioritised. However, as we were still in lockdown at and working remotely, there was inevitably a negative impact on students preparing to submit assessments, contributing to our NSS scores falling in 2021 in relation to the sector. Extensive improvements to the university cyber security approach have been implemented to prevent a further student disrupting breach. Early results are positive with no reportable information security breaches in 2022 and good outcomes from both internal and external security audits.

2.　STUDENT EXPERIENCE

2.1　TEACHING, FEEDBACK AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Teaching, feedback and assessment practices at UON are based in **Active Blended Learning**[14] (ABL), aligned to the world of work and with a focus on student agency. As already described, ABL combines face-to-face teaching with synchronous and asynchronous digital experiences, so students can study at their own pace and in their own time. Activities are co-designed with employers to reflect the workplace, and with student voice input from student course and faculty representatives and through Student-Staff Liaison Committees.

A variety of approaches are used to **embed realistic scenarios** to enhance learning and provide relevant and engaging assessment. Guest sessions from industry practitioners, visiting professors and alumni provide current real-life examples. Client projects are used to create assessments based on real organisational problems, with employers contributing to defining problems and briefing students, whilst students present their solutions back to the employer. Simulations are used to replicate realistic scenarios, enabling students to rehearse and reflect on decisions and

actions in a safe learning environment. For example, students studying on our professional Policing programmes use a dedicated Hydra suite, a high- tech immersive learning suite consisting of a central control room linked to three syndicate rooms and a plenary room with audio visual capability. Problem solving scenarios are live time fed to cohorts by subject matter experts via a range of media, allowing for peer observation and engagement whilst replicating real life conditions providing a safe learning environment.

ABL enables **immediate application of theory to practice** e.g., our Podiatry Clinic provides an environment for students to apply the theory they have learnt with patients whilst being supervised by lecturers. Students in Paramedic Science experience a simulated car crash, deploying Acting students assisted by Hair, Make-Up and Prosthetics for Stage and Screen students to create realistic 'crash victims', to build students' confidence and skills in emergency scenarios in a safe and supportive environment.

ABL assumes **authentic assessment** that simulates, or takes place in, the workplace. To experience the limitations and stresses of pressured work in a controlled environment and as preparation for employment, students on Journalism courses undertake real-time work simulation activities such as News Days. Digital Film, Television and Digital Media Production students undertake live filming. CEOs talk to Marketing students about how their company use metrics with a question and answer session as part of the assignment preparation. BA Business Management students prepare business reports and plans, undertake role-plays and projects with live client briefs, and create digital artifacts to gain experience of identifying, analysing and resolving business issues, challenges and opportunities. Initial Teacher Training (ITT) students produce presentations that reflect on their experiences in social enterprises, charities and organisations that provide a public service when addressing a social issue.

As discussed in section 1.3, many programmes **require work placements** or include an **optional placement year**, giving students an opportunity to participate in an extended period of supported industry experience through which to apply theory to practice and enhance their employability skills. Employer feedback regarding work placements in Events, Tourism and Hospitality programmes includes:

> "Our placement student has been a huge addition to our team, willing to learn and a positive, proactive part of each event."

> "It has been a pleasure to be part of preparing these students for the real world and it's helped us to trial a way of working for our staff team in relation to our global recruitment during the pandemic."

Students' feedback on their industry engagement includes that it

> "…made it relevant and interesting and I am excited about working in the industry" and "having an external client made it all very real, not just theory in a classroom and it felt like we were working for something bigger than just an assessment".

ABL builds **formative feedback and feedforward** opportunities into all learning and teaching. Examples include written and oral feedback from module tutors on work in progress and following summative assessments; self- and peer-assessment; staged and scaffolded assessments (e.g., patchwork assessments, projects and portfolios) which incorporate reflection and feedback opportunities.

Education and Teaching used NSS feedback to monitor their students' views about assessment and feedback (3.9pp below benchmark), and this informed their Quality Improvement Plan (QuIP). Changes include ensuring assignment briefs scaffold the rubric and provide specific examples for students; module leaders clarify assignment expectations in asynchronous recordings which students can watch when they choose, and repeat view if necessary; staff now consistently provide feedback on the strengths of students' submissions as well as areas for development; and mid-module reviews are used as a mechanism for the student voice to inform future assignment briefs and rubrics. These initiatives have not yet impacted NSS metrics but we have had positive student feedback in Student Voice meetings and mid-module reviews.

In a further example of how ABL enables students to **learn, be assessed, and receive feedback using real world scenarios in collaboration with employers**, UON and Barclays have collaborated for eight years to support the education and recruitment of computing graduates. Barclays annually contributes experts to speak to UON computing students on relevant subjects; a Barclaycard industry challenge event provides an industry resident project for students to gain work experience[15], as part of which project students use Barclaycard industry payment gate technology. Barclays staff participate in assessing student dissertations, and make a Barclaycard Best Business Relevant Dissertation award. An annual recruitment round secures up to 20 UON computing graduates per year into graduate positions at Barclays at salaries starting at £32,000.

2.2   COURSE CONTENT AND DELIVERY

We shape course content and delivery at development and approval stages through **CAIeROs[16]**. CAIeROs are mandatory co-production events that include students, partners, service users, employers, library professionals and staff from other professional services and critical friends. Facilitated by Learning Designers and academic staff, and informed by educational theory, CAIeROs start from the foundation of learning outcomes to build up course content and delivery. They were used to drive the whole university transition to ABL in the preparations for the move to our Waterside campus in 2018[17], and we continue to use them at Approvals, Periodic Subject Reviews, and to refresh a module or programme.

The **University Modular Framework**[18] supports subject teams to develop modules according to best practice. Library and Learning Services staff support module teams in producing high quality **dynamic online module reading lists** to support learning.

Our **Changemaker Outcomes for Graduate Success** (COGS) framework[19] is embedded in all programme design, development and approval. The COGs framework provides guidance for developing learning outcomes that enable students to progress through each academic level and simultaneously develop their skills and experience for achieving employability, social and environmental outcomes.

The content of some modules is aligned with curriculum from professional bodies to reflect industry priorities and prepare students to complete professional qualifications. As an example of **Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body** involvement (referenced in section 1), an Ofsted Inspection of our Initial Teacher Education gave us an overall rating of Good with the sub-ratings also all Good. In Ofsted's summary: "Trainees are well prepared for their first teaching positions in a 'super supportive' environment". In keeping with our Changemaker and anchor institution ethos, the report also stated: "Leaders have a clear vision for generating high-quality teachers for the region." (May 2022).

Inherent in our educational approach are **digital skills for life and work**. The 2022 Jisc Digital Insights survey indicates the success of our integration of digital skills into our provision. Benchmarked against other UK HE providers, UON students score above the sector mean in multiple aspects of learning, teaching and assessment; UON scores nearly 7% above the sector mean for the digital environment being excellent or the best imaginable.

Finding	UON%	Sector %	Difference
Students more likely to agree that learning online makes them feel part of a community of staff and students	40	28	12
Students more likely to agree that we have provided an assessment of their digital skills and training needs	45	33	12
Students more likely to indicate we have provided reward and recognition for their digital skills	35	24	11
Students more likely to agree that learning online allows them to contribute in the ways that they prefer	59	49	10
Students more likely to say the online learning environment is excellent or best imaginable	37	30	7

Visits and field trips are a fundamental part of many of our programmes, helping build student communities as well ensuring an authentic, relevant learning experience in keeping with our ABL approach. Occupational Therapy students have the opportunity to participate in an exchange programme with students at Jamk University in Finland, enabling students to learn about health and patient care from an international perspective which prepares them to gain employment outside the UK. Fieldwork is a key component of programmes in Environmental Sciences and Geography which make extensive use of the local environment. Students also experience residential fieldwork in urban and rural environments elsewhere in the UK. These trips focus on students' skills development, in preparation for independent research in the final year. Staff in this subject area are researching how fieldwork can be made more inclusive and accessible to students, with particular focus on the experience of Global Ethnic Majority (GEM) students and those with mental health conditions such as anxiety. Research outcomes will inform future practice at UON to enhance the student experience.

As part of curriculum development, and to address the ethnicity awarding gap, we implemented **Decolonising Education: Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA)** in October 2020. Six groups form the DELTA project: Own Learning and Development; Provision of Relevant Key Data; Inclusive Curriculum; Effective Policy Change; Staff CPD and Research and Evaluation. Other initiatives to address the ethnicity awarding gap include research projects by university staff with students; augmenting the voices of Black students and staff in partnership with the GEM staff network, and the Black Advocates scheme[20], developed as a result of a Learning and Teaching Innovation Project and implemented by the Students' Union. Black students are recruited to paid roles, supported with training, in order to liaise with Black students across the university and advocate on their behalf on issues that affect them. Black Advocates are members of the UON Student Experience Forum.

2.3   USE OF RESEARCH

Research is integral to our approach to engaging and developing students, to evidenced-based innovation, to research-informed curricula, and to staff development. Learning through undertaking

research is embedded as part of our ABL model, fostering agency and independence, and tailored for different disciplinary requirements and student developmental stages. The University holds an annual **Learning and Teaching Conference** where students and staff present innovations in learning, teaching, assessment and student support.

In Life Sciences, undergraduate students and staff publish in collaboration. Dissertation students complete projects that take forward staff research programmes, and those which make a strong contribution have their data included in publications and conference presentations. Recent examples have been published in *Scientific Reports* (the 5th most cited journal in the world)[21]. In 2019, five UON Sports, Exercise and Life Sciences UG students were awarded very competitive paid eight week Wellcome Trust summer vacation studentships. In 2022 a BSc Biomedical Science student was awarded a paid six week Biochemical Society summer vacation studentship to undertake a project with a UON professor on brain tumour biology. The student was supported to develop an independent project aligned to the professor's research, in which they produced publication quality data, and their data is now being used as preliminary data in grant applications.

The Undergraduate Research Bursaries at Northampton (**URB@N**)[22] scheme has run since 2008/9, and over 170 projects[23] have been completed. Staff and students work together to explore pedagogic issues that impact on the student experience, and present their projects at the annual UON Learning and Teaching Conference, as well as disseminating their work at other internal and external events, and via publications[24].

In the last four years, the UON Learning Enhancement and Innovation Fund[25] has supported over 50 projects, including course redesign, digital approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, Changemaker, developing learning and teaching resources, changing learning and teaching practice, students as partners in learning and teaching, evaluating the student experience and attainment, retention, and progression. Projects are often cross institutional and include students in the project teams as paid researchers or contributors. Awardees are allocated an external mentor and communicate their project process and project outcomes through blog posts, the Library and Learning Services seminar series, and by presenting at the annual Learning and Teaching conference. Many projects have been published in journals and books and have directly influenced whole university innovations, including Learning Development Mentors (section 2.5), and the Black Student Advocate Programme (section 2.2).

2.4 SUPPORT FOR STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ACADEMIC PRACTICE

Staff development focusses on student experience and outcomes including curriculum development, learning and teaching development, equality, diversity and inclusion, digital development, training for personal academic tutors, pedagogic research opportunities, and routes to recognition and promotion. We are committed to learning and teaching as a route to academic career progression and we support opportunities to achieve national recognition. All staff have annual Professional Development Reviews (PDRs) where their development objectives are agreed with their line manager.

Changemaker@Northampton Development Opportunities (C@N-DO[26]) is the **academic staff continuous professional development framework**, accredited by AdvanceHE, and leading to AdvanceHE Fellowship recognition. C@N-DO provides workshops and opportunities for staff to engage with expertise related to learning and teaching. There are nearly 30 workshops which result in 300+ interactions annually. On average, 35 to 40 staff achieve AdvanceHE recognition annually via this route, and 56.6% of substantive academic staff have achieved Fellowship

recognition compared to the sector average of 46.1%[27]. AdvanceHE accreditation is a probationary requirement for most teaching staff and the number of accredited staff has been a Board Key Performance Indicator. We also offer an optional Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice for colleagues to further develop their Learning and Teaching expertise.

Most teaching staff are **personal academic tutors** (PATs), and all PATs are trained to fulfil their roles (section 2.5). We have adapted our training for PATs based on consultation and feedback from staff. The training is now run by PATs for PATs, includes a community of practice, and is supported by new web resources, and by institutional membership of UKAT, the United Kingdom Advising and Tutoring association, a society of professional practitioners and researchers interested in advancing the scholarship and practice of student advising and personal tutoring in UK Higher Education. In response to staff feedback, we have implemented new, devolved levels of responsibility for the management of PAT.

To support staff in specific activities we have established **Communities of Practice**, for PATs, academic staff teaching on Postgraduate programmes, and Programme Leaders. The CoP networks meet 3 to 4 times per academic year to discuss topics of interest and hear guest speakers. These debates inform the practice and approach of university work in Learning and Teaching Enhancement. At monthly Learning and Teaching Enhancement Seminars colleagues share an aspect of their practice or research, both face to face and online since 2020. Topics have included student engagement and Personal Academic Tutoring; engaging students in social innovation; GEM student attainment and experiences of African students; Cohesive Hybrid Learning Models; Critical Discourse Analysis; and children as researchers of their own well-being.

UON offers routes to **Associate Professor (AP) and Professor in Learning and Teaching**. The scheme was substantially revised in 2021 to clarify the criteria and to align with wider sector expectations, and to make the process as supportive as possible, with guidance beforehand and personal feedback afterwards for anyone who is unsuccessful. The Head of Learning and Teaching Enhancement leads an Action Learning Set for staff who want to apply to become an AP which meets six times a year to share the challenges, benefits, and approaches of applying to be an AP, and several members were successful in their AP applications in 2021-2022. Five APs have been appointed since the routes were revised, and they are mentored to support their progression to full professor by our Visiting Professor from the University of South Wales, Professor Karen Fitzgibbon. They meet with the Director of LLS and Head of Learning and Teaching Enhancement three times a year to support their progress. All APs work on Learning and Teaching research projects, contributing to communities within the university, increasing the impact of their work externally, and supporting other colleagues to develop their teaching and learning practices. With effect from 2021, we also provide support and mentoring for applicants for National Teaching Fellowships. In 2022, two applicants were successful. Regular events where staff present their personal journeys to career achievements such as Associate Professor and National Teaching Fellow offer transparency, insight and guidance.

We run a programme to support all aspects of digital development and delivery. Our academic staff report digital support and competence at the rate above the sector average[28].

Finding	UON %	Sector %	Difference
more likely to go to teaching and learning/e-learning staff for help with online and digital skills	65	43	22

more likely to use collaborative applications e.g., Teams, virtual boards, wikis	54	39	15
more likely to have had support or training for digital copyright and licensing	37	24	13
more likely to have had support or training for creating accessible digital content	46	35	11

Library and Learning Services (LLS) staff hold a biennial Library Research Conference for library professionals which attracts international delegates. It showcases research undertaken by LLS at UON. Conference presentations include how to create a Student Skills Hub, and the innovative student library induction escape rooms, originally face to face but also virtual since COVID-19, and which have been adopted by other HEIs.

2.5 SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

As described in Section 1, in recognition of the complexity of our students' lives and their diverse needs we have developed a highly supportive learning environment, **Integrated Learner Support**.

ILS comprises four elements:

1. Academic, information, employability and digital skills support delivered to all students as integral sessions within academic programmes twice during each year of study by professional services teams. This approach ensures that all students have expert advice and support.
2. Academic support provided to all students by their Personal Academic Tutor. PATs are integral to guiding students through their university journey, including signposting them to specialist support services.
3. Specialist support teams: disability support, financial guidance, mental health and counselling, student support and academic advice, international student support, Residential Life, Academic Librarians, and Changemaker teams supporting students' employability.
4. A Student Support and Advice Team accessed in person through the Student Information Desk, by telephone and online.

All students have access to our virtual Skills Hub[29] which incorporates resources and expertise from multiple teams including Academic Librarians, Learning Development Tutors, and Maths and Statistics Tutors. Over the last four years, there have been 905,076 views on the Skills Hub (an average of c.226,000 views per year).

UON's **learner analytics system** informs the conversation between PAT and student; it is a developmental and supportive tool to enable interventions before a student is at risk of failure or withdrawal and allows Personal Academic Tutors to link with teams to provide specialist support for students including Student Support and Advice, Mental Health, and Residential Life. Previously known as LEARN, the system was heavily impacted by the March 2021 cyber-attack and was out of action for the following year. It was relaunched in September 2022 under the new name of MyEngagement.

As well as embedding learning development within taught programmes, **Learning Development Tutors** work with students to enhance academic, study and maths and statistical skills and foster independence in these areas. This support is offered as part of ILS through bespoke workshops within academic programme timetables, bookable tutorials, and drop-in provision. The five-year average of tutorials attended is 2,562 per year, and in 2021/22 3,264 tutorials were attended, the

highest to date. **Nine undergraduate students have been recruited as Learning Development Mentors**[30] to supplement the Learning Development Service. Their role is as peers to reduce barriers for students seeking support for academic skills and to signpost students to other university support services. Learning Development Mentors co-designed the university plagiarism awareness course, created a social media presence, and co-created a series of audio study hacks. Students who engage with a Learning Development tutorial increase their grades by two to four sub grades (with a greater impact on the outcomes for Black students than white students).

As part of creating a more inclusive learning environment, the **Cultural Integration Workshop** (CIW) is in the process of being scaled up and implemented across UON. The CIW started in 2018 in response to students of colour who reported racist microaggressions by white students to the Programme Leader of the Acting programme. It was initially a single workshop exploring race and equality, run by the students who reported the microaggressions and supported by the Programme Leader. The Programme Leader realised that creating safe environments in which to learn went beyond issues of race and beyond the Acting programme. Through partnerships with staff in other subject areas, the CIW began to run in other subjects, and as a result of students' input, the single workshop was extended to an eight workshop programme including sessions on neurodiversity, gender and sexual orientation. The inclusion and development of the neurodiversity workshop was driven by an Acting student who identified the need to educate others on how neurodiverse minds work, based on lived experience as a neurodiverse student finding it harder to be accepted and to feel a sense of belonging. The CIW workshop has expanded to Marketing, Fine Art, and Midwifery, with plans to extend it across UON. Feedback is that 100% of student participants felt they were better able to create an inclusive environment for others, 94% of students felt they could engage more freely with others, create a more inclusive environment for themselves and felt a greater sense of belonging to UON. 100% of staff felt they had more awareness of others' life experiences/perspectives, understood better how their privilege affected relationships with others, and felt the workshops were a useful tool. 87.5% of staff felt they could create a more inclusive environment for themselves and others. This project was supported by a Learning Enhancement and Innovation Fund award in 2021 (section 2.3) and won a UON Changemaker award in 2022 for its innovative approach. In another diversity and inclusion initiative, from 2020 UON has offered fully funded Diversity PhD studentships to build a pipeline from under-represented groups into research and academic careers.

Students who require **assistive technology** are provided with appropriate devices and software to help them access their course and undertake their studies. 14.3% of students report using screen readers (text to speech); 11.8% use dictation software (speech to text); 6.5% use screen magnification; and 4.3% use captions or transcripts on video (data from Northampton digital experience tracker 2022). During 20221/22 ASSIST provided 195 hours of 1:1 specialist Assistive Technology Training to 42 students who were ineligible for the Disabled Students Allowance to support their independent study and access to information, enabling them to utilise their own systems, software and equipment.

The **Students' Union**[31] provides over **30 free student sports clubs and societies** and supports over 40 networks and societies for subject groups[32], special interest groups and groups based on student characteristics, including GEM students, mature students, LGBTQIA+ students, disabled students and international students. The SU supports elite sports and participatory sports[33], with an annual sports dinner to celebrate participation and achievements up to international level. The SU supports students in multiple ways, including providing students with immediate crisis payments, academic advice, welfare and support[34], complementing and enhancing UON provision through the

integration of the student voice in service provision, supported by course and subject student representatives and via the monthly pulse survey (see section 2.7).

2.6   USE OF PHYSICAL AND VIRTUAL LEARNING RESOURCES

The design of the Learning Hub at Waterside campus creates a library service everywhere, rather than a library in a specific location, blurring the line between learning and teaching while still providing appropriate environments for study. The Learning Hub integrates social spaces, group study spaces, silent study areas, cafes, library and learning support and resource access. It provides accessible online resources, Alternative Formats Services checked for WCAG 2.1 compliance, and supplemented by the Alternative Formats Service, for students with hearing loss or who are print disabled.

Eligible Home fee status students have the choice to receive a laptop and IT software (section 3.1) as part of the UON Access and Participation package[35]. We have arrangements for students whose specialist courses (e.g., Games Design) mean they require a higher specification laptop, and we provide laptops for loan in recognition of digital poverty. Our 24/7 Learning Hub means commuting students can always have somewhere warm where they can access WI-FI and resources and get a hot drink or heat up their own food.

LinkedIn Learning[36] is a popular supplement to study. Between September-November 2022, 1,797 staff and students used the service, and 4,305 hours of content were viewed. The average time per viewer was two hours and 24 minutes. The most popular courses are SPSS, NVivo, Logistics, Tableau, Excel, Communication Foundations, Writing Business Reports, Marketing and Office Skills.

In addition to resources that all students access, many programmes use specialist facilities and spaces. Nursing and Midwifery, Podiatry, Journalism, Sports Journalism, Hair, Makeup and Prosthetics, Creative Film, Television and Digital Media Production, Engineering, Computer Science and Gaming, Paramedic, Occupational Therapy, Fine Art, Drama and Theatre Studies, Fashion and Early Years Education all use specialist equipment in specialist spaces. Law students have a mooting chamber with bespoke court room furniture; Accounting and Finance students use the Bloomberg terminal for testing finance and investment theories with up-to-date market data. Simulation suites (e.g., the Hydra suite, section 2.1), enable students in Policing and Health to practice risk free in complex professional scenarios drawn from real life and played out in real time. Leather, Science and Technology are taught in the Institute for Creative Leather Technologies, which houses the only tannery at a UK university. Film and recording studios are complemented by a UON owned and operated radio station NLive[37] which serves the town of Northampton, provides work-based learning opportunities for journalism students and was shortlisted for a national award in 2021.

Our Learning Resource metrics are, however, below benchmark. In Creative Arts and Design and Performing Arts, low metrics in Learning Resources derive partly from the decision to delay these programmes moving from the former Avenue Campus to the Waterside campus with the rest of the university in 2018, resulting in students experiencing a sense of isolation and lack of community and resources. In response to student feedback about this, new premises with significantly better physical resources located on, and close by, the Waterside site, were prepared in 2019/20 but the move was delayed by COVID-19. This meant that student cohorts who joined these courses in 2019/20 still had their overall experience disrupted, despite efforts of the teams to rebuild a sense of community. Computing and Engineering are significantly below benchmark in Learning Resources. In 2021/22 UON invested in laboratories, studios, practical resources and IT facilities

totalling over £1.1M. Fundamental changes have been made to this portfolio of courses and the curriculum in response to the metrics, with further changes planned. In Architecture, Building and Planning, the BSc and HND in Architectural Technology are 26.2pp below benchmark in Learning Resources, as well as being profoundly below benchmark in other metrics. This very small programme area has suffered from the combination of the pandemic and the cyber-attack, as students were unable to access specialist resources and software, depressing the 2021 and 2022 NSS results. UON has since invested in new hardware and software for this programme, which will be rolled out in 2022/23. In addition, we are in the early stages of developing an offer in Architecture, which will allow us to increase staffing and invest in new specialist studio space. Geography students experienced loss of access to specialist GIS software, due to loss of a staff member as well as the cyber-attack; both issues now fully resolved.

2.7   STUDENT ENGAGEMENT LEADING TO CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT OF STUDENT EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES

Student voice is a fundamental aspect of the **development and evaluation of programmes;** students are members of panels to approve new programmes and to review the academic quality and currency of existing programmes. Students with knowledge of programmes under consideration (or a related one in the case of new programmes) meet panel members to share their experience. Independent student panel members are recruited annually to consider programmes outside their own Faculty, and are trained by the Academic Quality team alongside academic staff. Applications from students interested in the independent student role have increased to c.100 in 2022/23**.**

Health and Social Care (where Student Experience metrics are below benchmark) provides an example of the involvement of students in programme design. Health and Social Care Foundation Degree and Top Up have recently been replaced with a new three-year Health and Social Care Practice Degree, created in consultation with students, providers and staff. Students were consulted about changes to the awards and also about the content for the new programme. The staff team has introduced a Black Student Experience group and an EDI development day to explore how to better engage students and to address issues raised by students. As a result, 1:1 work with students has been increased, and all assessment briefs have been standardised across all modules. Some changes have already been implemented ahead of the first intake to the new programme in September 2023. Students are positive about the increased 1:1 support and report that the standardised brief clarifies what is expected in assignments.

Student Course Representatives[38] represent the student voice on their course. They raise issues with course and module leaders at any time, and at termly Student-Staff Liaison Committees, and Subject Representatives raise matters at subject forums. Course Reps and Subject Reps are trained and supported by the SU throughout their tenure. The STAAR (Student Teaching Activities and Academic Representation) Awards[39] celebrate and raise the profile of student representation.

Student voice on academic experiences is heard through survey and dialogue-based approaches. Module evaluation data allows students to feed back anonymously, and helps us to track the effectiveness of interventions over time. Student-Staff Liaison Committees engage students in dialogue using the Student Rep scheme. Module and programme teams reflect on all forms of feedback and implement actions to continuously improve curriculum design, delivery and assessment. In 2020, to **engage with students' feedback and drive improvements** in modules and programmes more effectively, we established a working group to review module and programme feedback that included a member of staff undertaking a PhD in the field of student

surveys, feedback and evaluation. The new approach places greater emphasis on dialogue and responding in a timely way so that the current cohort of students benefits from the feedback cycle[40]. The university also makes use of data from the SU pulse survey[41], which surveys a percentage of students monthly, to manage and reduce survey fatigue. UON also takes part in the Global Student Living Index Survey and uses student responses and insights to inform student experience and support programmes.

The Criminology team (in the subject group of Sociology, Social Policy and Anthropology, which is 7.5pp below benchmark for Student Voice) was aware their programme had student voice and engagement issues. Using module feedback and other student input, they have made a step-change in student engagement and student voice. Daily "meet a criminologist" drop-ins provide office hours which students can attend without an appointment or agenda. Weekly "meet your programme leader" drop-ins enable students to discuss course issues and module choices. A weekly message is sent to all Criminology students, which combines good news stories, upcoming assessments, team news and activities, relevant university events and information about the course and the drop-ins. As a result of student feedback, an annual poster competition has been reshaped into a collective activity across years and the brief now simulates a work-related task. Townhall meetings have been introduced to hear and address issues and concerns students face. The staff team maintains a regular blog and has been encouraging student contributions, with the most successful contributions arising from students providing an overview of their completed dissertation. We expect to see an uplift in student voice scores as a result of positive student engagement with these changes.

We monitor student experience and student outcomes data at the Student Experience Forum which reports to Senate and which has student representation including Subject Representatives, SU representatives and Black Advocates. The Student Experience Forum[42] is responsible for developing and monitoring university action plans for the NSS, student experience and outcomes.

The SU and the university work closely together to build **strong relationships between the SU and the university staff community**, allowing us to respond nimbly and effectively to challenges such as COVID-19 and the 2021 cyber-attack. SU sabbatical officers and students are members of the Board of Governors, Senate, the Student Experience Forum, the Student EDI Forum, the Academic Quality and Standards Committee, and the Research, Impact and Innovation Committee, and Faculty Academic Committees. SU Sabbatical Officers were on the appointment panels for the Vice Chancellor, the Chief Operating Officer and the Chief Finance Officer. The Chief Executive of the SU is a member of the University Leadership Team, which meets weekly, and the Health, Safety and Security Committee. This ensures the student voice contributes to all major university decisions, and students are aware of discussions and topics in the university, and can cascade relevant information to the wider student body.

3.   STUDENT OUTCOMES

3.1   OVERVIEW

UON takes a holistic and evidence-based approach, informed by the student voice, to support our students and enable them to fulfil their academic and career goals. We place great emphasis on our Access and Participation support, and student outcomes show progress since our last TEF submission in 2017. Our Access and Participation offer includes**:**

- All sports and societies are free and any kit is supplied free of charge;
- All travel and accommodation costs are funded on any compulsory study trip;

- Bursaries support student success and graduate outcomes and include bursaries for care leavers and estranged students and student carers;
- Every eligible Home fee status student has the choice to receive either a laptop and IT software, or discount off their accommodation fees, or food retail vouchers;
- All students have full access to Office365 and LinkedIn Learning.

This package is reviewed annually through our APP *Financial Evaluation Report*[43], which is informed by interviews with students to ensure it is what students need and that it continues to make a positive difference to student outcomes.

UON has seen strong improvements in student outcomes[44].

- We are **at the sector median of 6.7% for full-time first degree non-continuation** one year after entry for students who entered in 2019/20, an improvement from 12.8% two years before in 2017/18.
- Our internal data shows that total withdrawals from Integrated Foundation Year and Level Four students have improved from 22.9% for all 2018/19 undergraduate entrants to 14.3% for 2020/21 entrants, and total continuation for all the entrants in the data underlying the HESA performance indicators has improved from 81.8% for 2017/18 entrants to 90.3% for 2019/20 entrants.
- Also drawing on the data underlying the HESA PIs, there is **greater equity** in continuation between GEM students and white students. A gap of -11.4% in the 2017/18 year of entry narrowed to -1.5% in 2019/20.
- **Entrants from low participation neighbourhoods now continue at a higher rate than other entrants;** the 2017/18 to 2019/20 trend has reversed from -0.5% to +1.3%.
- The Graduate Outcomes survey showed 69.3% positive outcomes for FT first degree 2019/20 graduates.
- The disparity in rates at which GEM and white graduates gain higher level employment or enter HE or professional further study is -11.6pp. For the Faculty of Arts, Science and Technology, the gap between outcomes for GEM and white FT first degree graduates has improved from -4.5pp in 2017/18 to 11.2pp in 2019/20.
- At university level, we **monitor** student experience and student outcomes at the Student Experience Forum, chaired by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, which leads on developing and enhancing students' positive experiences and outcomes throughout their transition into, during, and from higher education. This informs the development of university initiatives and strategic change. Staff can access the latest programme data live via the QlikView platform, including up-to-date data and information about continuation and completion, Graduate Outcomes data and trends for their subject areas, labour market trends, and comparators across the sector. Board level KPIs include continuation and student outcomes.

Since 2019, UON has **reviewed and revised our programme portfolio** with the aim of improving students' experience and outcomes by rationalising the allocation and deployment of resources. As a result, Joint Honours provision is being phased out, based on evidence that includes NSS results, outcomes metrics, and the disproportionate negative impact of joint honours on functions that underpin the whole student experience, such as timetabling. The most popular Joint Honours combinations have been integrated into new single honours programmes. HND and part time programmes have been largely phased out.

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We foster **tailored initiatives at programme level aimed at equalising awards** to our students, utilising different levers in different subjects based on the student and staff profile. We capture these to inform the development of university wide practice via a virtual Best Practice Hub[45] The Hub enables colleagues to share what works to remove continuation, progression and award gaps, together with successful graduate employability interventions. Four illustrations are:

- **Technology and Engineering** has introduced an online guest seminar programme to support student aspirations and highlight employment options to students. Short videos in NILE explain assessment briefs and processes. In recognition that study can be more challenging with family and other commitments, students who missed a session can access short videos to catch up at their own convenience. Following these interventions, the data underlying HESA's continuation indicators shows an improvement from 69.3% for 2017/2018 entrants to 88.7% for 2019/2020 entrants and the POLAR gap reduced from 11.6pp to 3.9pp between 2018/19 and 2019/20.
- **BA Advertising and Digital Marketing** and **BSc Marketing** addressed falling continuation rates by integrating structured LinkedIn Learning courses into the assessment elements of core modules, supporting students by using timetabled session hours to undertake the assessments. Assessment submission and module pass rates increased. As part of the approach, students set up LinkedIn profiles and linked their profile to the tutors, helping students develop their professional networks and promote themselves to future employers. This has produced an improvement in the continuation gap between GEM and white students from 12.3% in 2017/8 to 4% for 2019/20. Over the same period, for students from the Marketing and Entrepreneurship subject group, the gap in continuation between entrants from POLAR Q1 and Q5 has dropped from 10.5pp to 0.2pp.
- **BSc Pre-registration Nursing** addressed rising student withdrawal rates by introducing an enhanced student support package delivered by academic staff, with a study pack and FAQs developed as a result of feedback from students. Support is personalised to address the complex personal barriers students face. This has had a positive impact with withdrawal rates improved from 11.3% in 2018/2019 to 5.1% in 2020/21 year of entry and continuation up from 92.2% for 2017/2018 entrants, all modes and deliveries, to 95.2% for 2019/20 entrants.
- **Sports and Exercise** changed support for students at key milestones by developing vignettes with student input to help staff understand the lived experiences of students and to inform practice. In BSc Sports and Exercise Science, the continuation gap between GEM and white entrants closed from -36% 2017/18 to 0% in 2019/20 year of entry.

3.2   CONTINUATION AND COMPLETION

Overall, continuation for full time students is in line with benchmark. For part time students, continuation is 10.8pp above benchmark. Full time student completion is approximately in line with benchmark (-1.2%) but for part time students, completion is 13pp below benchmark. Part time first degree completion is 73.2%, 9.4% above benchmark. However, with respect to what appears to be a very poor completion rate for OUG PT, a large proportion of this can be traced to an historic data error affecting Education and Teaching. The data includes 272 students who successfully completed their awards but this was not reflected in the 2013/14 HESA return. The correct figure for the OUG PT Education and Teaching subject area should be 84.1%, which is above the benchmark of 82.4%.

We **track assignment non-submissions as an early warning** that students may be at risk of failure and withdrawal. This is a lead indicator for good degrees and completion, and potential graduate employability. Between 2019/20 and 2020/21 non-submissions fell from 26.6% to 15.0%.

Non-submissions by Black students fell from 33.5% to 22.5%, and for white male students from 28.1% to 13.8%. In addition to the activity discussed in sections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.5, targeted university-wide interventions to improve student continuation and completion include:

- Information of the support is made available to all prospective students through the Stepping into University[46] online course, an interactive guide navigating the university from pre-arrival to the end of the first term through the stories and narratives of UON students who share their experience and insights;
- The Financial Guidance Team[47] provides pastoral and financial support to students;
- Welcome and induction[48] has been redesigned in the last three years to become more inclusive, address student belonging, engagement and the need to build friendships;
- UON was one of the first universities in the UK to have a specialist Counselling and Mental Health Team to support students in managing their emotional and mental wellbeing, and our Mental Health Service[49] has just celebrated its 25th anniversary. Provision includes the online service Togetherall[50];
- Additional Student Support and Inclusion Services, ASSIST[51], support students with a wide variety of disabilities. Provision includes Notetakers, Study Skills Tutors, Specialist Autism Mentors and Assistive Technology Trainers. Students receive tailored support irrespective of eligibility for government funding;
- UON is a nationally recognised Epilepsy Friendly university;
- A support package is provided for care leavers and estranged students[52]; UON has made the Standalone Pledge[53];
- Wraparound support is provided for students living in University accommodation and throughout the town, through our Residential Life team, fostering a sense of community and signposting to internal and external services.

3.3   PROGRESSION

Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) data show that one year after graduation, in the 2019/2020 tax year, **UON graduates earn a median of £20,900 which is above the sector median of £20,100**. Three years after graduation, graduates earn the sector median of £23,400.

We have an extensive careers and employability offer[54] which complements our professionally focussed portfolio and pedagogy, and includes preparation for work that is integrated into the curriculum (a and b below), Careers Advice, Guidance and online resources (c and d), support for volunteering and paid work opportunities so students can gain work experience and confidence (e and f), an award to develop and certificate students' employability skills (g), and post-graduation support (h and i).

(a) Developed in partnership with employers, students and alumni, the COGs framework (section 2.2) is embedded in the **learning outcomes of every programme**, placing social innovation and graduate employability at the heart of the curriculum.

(b) UON has extensive **embedded work-based learning**[55]**,** as described in sections 1.3 and 2.2. The Placements and Work-based Learning (PWBL) policy provides overarching direction and guidance, and the Placements and Work-Based Learning team supports programme level requirements, providing consistency in quality assurance and in reporting and risk management across the university. All work-based learning meets high standards of health and safety. Students undertake placement readiness workshops to help them make the best of the opportunities, create

relationships, and build networks that could lead to employment when they graduate. Between September 2019 and August 2022, 5291 students in 68 programmes undertook PWBL, an area we continue to grow.

Summary data for PWBL activities

	2019/20	**2020/21**	**2021/22**
Number of students who undertook PWBL activities	2189	2645	2826
Number of PWBL learning experiences	5191	5019	5982
Number of PWBL partner organisations	606	718	764

(c) The university's Changemaker Hub provides students with access to **high quality careers advice and guidance,** a wide range of work experience and volunteering, enterprise support, and UON's Changemaker social innovation offer. **Employability support is tailored to meet individual student aspirations and subject requirements**. For example, Sport and Exercise are working with Changemaker to embed it within their work placement modules. Themed weeks run throughout the year providing opportunities for employers and students to interact and access employment opportunities, and Subject Areas offer Careers Days where former students return to talk about their career journeys. For students experiencing poor mental health, a Transitioning into the Workplace Programme is delivered by our mental health counselling service and employability team in partnership, and ASSIST work with the employability team to create pathways into employment for students with a declared disability. Students are issued with a Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR), as a record of activities and achievements they have undertaken in addition to their studies such as mentoring, volunteering, and additional training and qualifications achieved. HEARs are given to students alongside their certificate and transcript following their official award and can be used in conjunction with these documents when applying for further study or employment.

(d) Our online **Changemaker portal** provides sector intelligence and resources and activities to support job searches, interview skills. Usage has increased from 3,951 individual users completing 92,775 activities in 2018/19 to 6,537 users completing 250,776 activities in 2021/22. In addition, our **CV 360 online CV checker** reviewed 4,351 student CVs in 2021/22, an increase from 3,704 in 2019/20. CV 360 improves the quality of CVs through the application of AI technology, freeing careers advisers to added value engagements supporting students' employability journeys. Through feedback and resubmission, CV quality scores rise on average from 76% to 83% between students' initial and final submissions. We see this as a potential measure of Educational Gain (section 3.4).

(f) Unitemps provides **part time temporary, temporary to permanent work to students, as well as permanent graduate roles**. In 2021/22 1,631 students obtained work through Unitemps, an increase from 959 in 2020/21 and 390 in 2019/20. Students identify roles targeted towards their career aspirations and are remunerated according to equal pay legislation. Over 250 local employers support students through Unitemps, which provides roles such as secondary school and private tutors, translation services, administration, social media, marketing positions, security, events, catering and hospitality. Through Unitemps, UON provides internal paid work to students including events management, student ambassadors, welcome week team, catering and hospitality, administration, residential life assistants, and work within schools through our Widening Access activity. All students registered with Unitemps are provided with full careers advice and support, including interview skills training, mock interviews, and guidance on workplace etiquette,

an induction linked to the Employability Plus Award, and references from the companies they work for and from Unitemps, to support their future employability.

(e) **Volunteering is aligned to UON's Changemaker Campus** social impact agenda, supporting students in contributing to one of the UON's Changemaker Commitments[56] as well as building their employability skills. UON supports formal volunteering opportunities and volunteering placements in curriculum with a register of organisations which support students and ensure their learning opportunities are maximised. We can support students to volunteer locally to where they live, whether in Northamptonshire or elsewhere in the UK. Our volunteering and changemaker community engagement work is linked with the Volunteer Passport Scheme[57] which increases the training and support available to students, and offers an increased range of community and public sector-based volunteering opportunities, and recognition for the community engagement undertaken.

(g) The **Employability Plus Award** is UON's extracurricular certificate which recognises achievement beyond the curriculum. Completed at bronze, silver, and gold levels, the award enables students to develop their employability skills through self-reflection, action planning, engaging in Changemaker activities, student entrepreneurship, internships and placements. Over the last three years, the proportion of final year students completing all three levels has risen from 1.5% to nearly 32% of graduates, with over 850 of 2020/21 graduates completing all three levels. Overall, 43% of all students were working towards their employability plus award in 2020/21 academic year. Our informal target for students working towards this award is 50%, taking into account that students on highly vocational pathways like Nursing are less likely to undertake the Employability Plus Award. The latest evaluation undertaken by UON's Institute for Social Impact and Innovation reports that that "*the Employability Plus Award builds a bridge between what students learn and how they apply it to their jobs after graduation*", (pp9-10). Employer feedback includes: '*the Changemaker Hub at the University of Northampton is really, really strong in the sense that it's supportive and it gives really good guidance to the students*', (p10).

(h) Our **Northampton Employment Promise** to all our students is that 12 months after graduating if they have not found a job in a career they want, they can enrol for free in a Postgraduate Certificate and they will be supported in their job search through our Graduate Internship Programme, provided they met engagement expectations with their studies, and gained either an Employability Plus Award or a Changemaker Certificate while they were studying with us. UON provides careers and enterprise support for life to all alumni, and all graduates have access to careers and business support, online careers materials and personal 1:1 support for career transitions, a return to education, or continuing professional development options.

(i) UON provides a comprehensive **paid internships** offer to students and recent graduates so they can gain relevant work experience in a chosen industry. These internships, known as Time2Grow internships[58], provide subsidised 12-week paid internships in industry. Out of 109 participants, 55 secured a permanent role as a result of the internship in 2020/21 to 2021/22. Student feedback included:

> "*I loved every minute of my contract, as it gave me creative freedom to write, as well as use my marketing skills within a real business. I gained an invaluable experience through Time2Grow, which I can add to my CV.*"

With respect to self-employment, **over 330 graduates reported starting their own business, freelancing, or sub-contracting** in the 2019/20 GO survey, with 69.3% classed as high skilled

compared to a sector average of 77%. 96% of businesses started by UON students and graduates survive over one year, with 59.1% surviving and growing their turnover over three years, comparable with the national rate of 60% (Office for National Statistics 2022). Support for self-employment is provided in curriculum through our Business Adviser Team, and extracurricular advice is provided through our Changemaker Incubator and South East Midlands Start Up Programme. A full business planning service is provided, together with networking, access to start-up grant funding, and introductions to local banks to open accounts and negotiate start-up funding. The Changemaker Incubator supports all student start-ups for up to five years, and all alumni have access to business start-up advice and funding for life. Targeted programmes are offered to support underrepresented groups into self-employment including women into business.

Outcomes for courses with an **Integrated Foundation Year** (IFY) are within benchmark for continuation and progression but below benchmark for completion**.** To address this, in 2020 the Foundation Year team redesigned the curriculum, based on student feedback and an analysis of the data, to deliver the 120 credit foundation curriculum in one year rather than concurrently with Level 4 over two years. The revised IFY supports 75 programmes for all three Faculties and now embeds our Changemaker ethos in academic skills and employability more strongly from the start. It focusses on developing students' resilience and independence in learning, preparing them for navigating barriers to success, and enhancing their experience. Students participate in introductory modules to the subject they plan to study after their IFY, offering an opportunity to understand and prepare for the programme that they intend to study. The team have also intensified early interventions with students whose engagement has been low or who have not submitted assignments. The changes have not yet had an opportunity to impact completion numbers, but student feedback has been positive and internal evaluations indicate that students who complete at Level 6 outperform all students grade outcomes by a margin of 3%-6%.

We keep graduates' progression under review at programme level and make changes as necessary. For example, our Business and Management programmes are below benchmark between academic years 2017/18 to 2019/20 for graduates progressing to professional or managerial employment or further study. In response, new and fully redesigned programmes were introduced in 2019/20. The curriculum has been redesigned to increase the emphasis on transferable skills and attributes including digital skills, interpreting financial information, data analysis, project management, critical thinking, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. All three-year undergraduate programmes have a year in industry placement option, offering students opportunities for high quality work experience. The staff team partners with professional bodies such as Chartered Management Institute (CMI), Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and the Association for Events Management Education (AEME), which offer a wide range of beneficial experiences, events, learning resources and industry-recognised accreditations. The extensive business contacts of staff are utilised to bring employers onto campus to engage students in business projects, master-classes and networking opportunities. These changes will better equip our business graduates with the confidence and social capital to transition into professional employment. Although Business and Management programmes are below the benchmark for progression, median earnings in the 2019/20 tax year for UON graduates are close to the sector median for earnings one year after graduation (£21,200 compared to sector median £21,600).

In order to address the lower than benchmark student outcomes relating to employability and further study, the Psychology team has developed and commenced implementation of an employability strategy. They have introduced a core module 'Psychology for life', which all UG

students take, and which focuses on the development of transferable skills, and they have developed and promoted placement and work-based learning opportunities for students. Students now complete work readiness evaluations twice a semester in order to track their work readiness skill development and module specific skills are mapped onto specific job roles and career trajectories. The subject area has established a new embedded local career fair and 20 local employers are committed to attend. Student feedback at thrice semesterly student voice meetings and in module evaluations has been largely positive and all changes implemented recently have been well received according to Student Representatives. Although the university's Progression data is below benchmark for Psychology graduates, the LEO data indicates that median earnings three years after graduation (in the 2019/20 tax year) were above the sector median (£23,400 compared to a sector figure of £22,000).

With respect to our below benchmark PT Nursing and Midwifery progression metric, this is influenced by our UK partners which often have students in demographics less likely to enter and succeed in higher education. One example is the Certificate of Higher Education in Mental Health qualification, part of the St Andrew's Hospital *Aspire* programme, a route for staff with few or no qualifications to become qualified nurses. The *Aspire* programme aims to widen participation for health care assistants and staff from all areas of the organisation to access a career in nursing and creates a pipeline for future nursing programmes. Many students come from deprived backgrounds and have no formal entry qualifications, therefore academic and financial support to help learners pass GCSE Maths and English is available. Once these are achieved, students can apply for the Level 4 Cert HE which gives them access to nursing degrees, and the *Aspire* programme also offers up to £18,000 per year of financial support for students on a formal nursing degree. While some students choose not to go into nursing straight away or decide not to go through the whole programme, St Andrew's feels strongly that everyone who wants the opportunity should have access to the programme because the impact it can have on people's lives is so important. On balance UON believes this is a valuable programme and while we will continue to do everything we can to improve outcome metrics for students, we also recognise that many will pause, fail or withdraw from the programme.

3.4 EDUCATIONAL GAIN

Our approach to **supporting students to achieve intended educational gains** and to become the Changemakers of the future is embedded in students' education and extracurricular opportunities, in their records via their Higher Education Achievement Record, and into our quality processes. This submission has already described many aspects of our approach, including:

• **Academic development** gains through ABL relating to the development of subject knowledge as well as academic skills, e.g., critical thinking, analytic reasoning, problem solving, academic writing, research integrity, and referencing skills.

• **Personal development** gains through ILS relating to the development of student resilience, motivation and confidence as well as communication, presentation, time management, networking, and interpersonal skills.

• **Work readiness** gains through the curriculum and through employability provision, relating to the development of digital skills and employability skills, e.g., teamworking, commercial awareness, responsible leadership and influencing.

We have four **measures for Educational Gain**. Two are well established, two are more recent with a single year of data:

- Numbers of students moving socio-economic group following graduation, using the proxy of Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Group;
- Whether graduates consider themselves to be: on-track in their careers; using the skills they gained; and employed in meaningful activity (from the Graduate Outcomes Survey);
- CV360 quality scores (details below; reporting too early to show trends);
- General Self-Efficacy scores (details below; reporting too early to show trends).

33.2% of our young FT undergraduates with Graduate Outcomes data come from families from SOC groups 4-7. Of these, 48.5% of the graduates in scope report after graduation that that they are in a professional or intermediate SOC1-3 role; a further 14.9% have another type of positive outcome. **Based on this measure, 63.4% of UON graduates in scope experience the Educational Gain of an improved SOC outcome.**

Graduate Outcomes Survey responses show that UON students report they are on-track in their careers at a rate above the sector median (76.7% over three years, compared to the sector median of 75.6%) and employed in a meaningful way (85.8% median 84%). In these measures, UON is ranked 76/189 and 52/189 respectively; **UON is in the upper quartile for graduates reporting they are using the skills they gained at 72.9%, ranked 45/189.**

CV360 is a digital service that provides a quality score for all students who submit their CV for review (section 3.3). A score is provided to students on their initial submission with feedback on how to improve. The average initial score is 76% with an average final score of 83% after an average of 3.3 submissions. We are monitoring the increase in average score between initial and final submission and the average number of submissions as a potential measure of engagement and future employability.

To improve our evaluation of Educational Gain in future, UON has adopted a General Self-Efficacy (GSE) questionnaire as part of the Employability Plus Award (section 3.3). GSE measures an individual's belief in their ability to complete a task and the strength of this belief. An individual with high self-efficacy will attempt to complete a task despite repeated failures; failure will more easily deter a person with lower self-efficacy. Many of our practice-based programmes embed the notion of iteration and learning from previous attempts as essential to improvement and success, as well as enhancing personal and professional self-awareness. When students register for the Employability Plus award they generate self-efficacy scores twice a year via online forms. In 2021/22, over half of participating students (491/875) reported an increase in general self-efficacy at the second evaluation point. This exercise is repeated every year for Levels 4, 5, and 6, to supply insight into whether students' GSE has increased. The inclusion of GSE within the Employability Plus Award is based on research that shows that self-efficacy is strongly linked to employment. We will be tracking longitudinal data and using it to inform our institutional approach in future.

4.   CONCLUSION

UON is a Changemaker University and we are passionate about the difference we make by transforming lives and inspiring change. We do our utmost to enable our students to fulfil their academic, career and life goals, and to make a difference in the world. Our education and student support is innovative, developed in partnership with students, and informed by evidence and research, and we tailor it to meet the needs of many different groups of students, particularly those who often face barriers to success in higher education. We can demonstrate we change the Standard Occupational Group of two thirds of our young full-time undergraduates from families from SOC groups 4-7, and have closed the gaps between outcomes for different student groups.

Provider name: University of Northampton
UKPRN: 10007138

We serve our locality and work as a community of students, staff and stakeholder partners to make a difference collectively and individually.

> *Recently (27th September-6th October 2022) I found myself on ward 9 (maternity ward) in Milton Keynes university hospital… for an induction, which turned into an emergency C-section … During my stay I encountered two of your [midwifery] students… I saw students from other universities when at the hospital but none of them compared to these.* **During a time where I was scared and anxious they really brought a bit of relief and understanding to my situation, if these are the quality of the students you are producing then thank you.**

(Email from a new mother, 11/10/22)

This submission was prepared by a team of 12 UON academic and professional service staff and two SU sabbatical officers. For a three-week period prior to submission it was made available for comments and amendments to the whole UON staff community, the Board of Governors and the SU, and as a result was enriched considerably by the examples and feedback provided.

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